

Some people trust in chariots, others in horses;  
but we praise the LORD's name." — Psalm 20:7

# 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 27, Issue 08 • September 2016



## BWC welcomes Bishop Easterling

By MELISSA LAUBER  
UMConnection Staff

SINCE 1784, WHEN Francis Asbury put out the call for pastors to meet in Baltimore to create the Methodist Church, 35 men have served as a bishop in the Baltimore-Washington Conference or one of its predecessors. On Sept. 1, Bishop LaTrelle Easterling changed all that by becoming the first female bishop to serve the area.

Bishop Easterling was elected to the episcopacy at the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference on July 14, after serving as superintendent of the Metro Boston Hope District, and as pastor of Union, Pearl Street and Old West UMCs in Massachusetts. She was ordained a Deacon in 1995 and an Elder in 1997, having worked previously as a director of human resources and as an attorney.

Easterling was raised in the church by parents whose faith infused all parts of her life. God and the church

are "truly a part of the fabric of my life, and I claim the Gospel as a living, breathing story," she said.

Easterling remembers playing on the floor at church while her parents attended committee meetings and taught Bible study. She served the church "in every position one could imagine." But it wasn't until she was in her 20s, and living in Colorado, that she saw a woman associate pastor "preaching, leading and doing amazing work for God."

Seeing a woman in this leadership role made her begin to wonder if that might be a way God could use her. "I think it opened me to being able to fully hear God's call on my life," she said.

That's why having a female bishop is important. "It's bigger than just me," she said. "Often young people imagine who they can be by what they observe others doing. This is significant for that reason."

While observing the historic milestone is cause for celebration, it produces strong feelings of humility and anticipation, Easterling said. "I look forward to how

God will use us together to continue to be in mission and ministry in the Beloved Community in which the Baltimore-Washington Conference sits."

Her first order of business, the new bishop said, is to listen and to learn. A leader who focuses on collaboration and consensus building, she is excited by the conference's rich diversity and hearing the stories and learning about its more than 165,000 people, 632 churches and their ministries.

Building relationships and partnerships in churches and communities will be among her priorities.

The United Methodist Church is facing a number of challenges. Easterling is excited about working with BWC leaders to meet them head on.

"I think right now our fear about numbers, concerns that we don't have the strength in numbers we once had, has become too dominant in our thinking," Easterling said. "I really wish we'd spend our time instead focusing on the gifts of our Wesleyan heritage. Methodism

*See Easterling, page 8*

## New faith community, the Bridge, to premier at Asbury

By MELISSA LAUBER  
UMConnection Staff

WHEN THE BRIDGE's leadership team gathered at Asbury UMC in Washington, D.C., earlier this year, Matthew Wilke looked around the room and realized that "literally nowhere else in the world would this group of people be sitting together in a room."

Even in a city as diverse as D.C., this was uncommon diversity, he said. However, it was diversity with a purpose – all kinds of God's children gathered together to create a unique weekly experience that would draw people into an encounter with Christ.

He couldn't wait to get started.

The Bridge, a new faith community designed to bring the community around Asbury UMC for "the Word,

worship, wheat and wine," is scheduled to launch Sept. 25 at 6 p.m.



Matthew Wilke preaches at a preview service.

Two preview services were held in July and August.

Among the more than 50 in attendance were people of different genders, ages, cultures, sexual orientations, economic status, religious backgrounds and family experiences.

"We don't all have a lot in common, but when people come together around worship in Christ, in this kind of environment, amazing things can happen," Wilke said.

The initial plan for The Bridge, said Asbury's senior pastor, the Rev. Ianther Mills, called for the re-creation of "a walkable parish," at Asbury, where the new downtown community could walk to church. The people living around 901 11th St. NW in D.C., are millennials, said Mills.

Asbury is a historic African-American congregation, with two traditional worship services on Sunday

*See Bridge, page 5*



# ... well said

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

By MANDY SAYERS  
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

I'M A BUSY mom of two teenagers, and as I write this, we're getting ready for another school year. I've got an amazing church to serve, and I'm the chairperson of a district committee. I've got a lot to remember.

I have calendars and lists and systems, none of which ensure that I will remember all of it. I live in fear of standing up a parishioner for our Chat Over Coffee That's Really About Her Grief or standing up a child waiting for a ride home from play practice. There's so much to remember.

This is not a new problem, as God's people have always had a sort of forgetfulness. The Israelites forgot what it was like to be slaves in Egypt and they began to oppress the poor, the alien and the widow. God sent prophets to remind them who they were and what they had forgotten.

Jesus commanded his followers to pass on his teachings and to "remember" him at the Communion table, in community, as the whole story of God's faithfulness is again proclaimed and we "take and eat" the bread and "drink from this" cup.

That way to remember is not just "Remember that time Jesus said, 'Do this'? I think it was a Thursday, right, and he was wearing the blue sandals..." This way to remember actually invokes God's presence, right then, so that in the sharing of the bread and cup, we can experience the presence, right then, of the risen Christ.

God brings all those past events of God's faithfulness into the present. We remember, not just with our minds but also with our hearts and even, in community, with our bodies. God even has a way for us to remember the future — as the Eucharist is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet to come.

In the end, I know that my mental abilities will not last forever. Indeed, disease or the ravages of time could take the expensive hunk of knowledge I have crammed into my brain.

But as I've seen with people who have battled Alzheimer's, even then, God will still help me "remember" with my spirit, with my heart, what my brain cannot hold, in the sacraments, in worship, in prayer. The gathered community of faith will help me remember, will remember for me when I cannot, and the Holy Spirit will pray for me when I cannot.

After all, Jesus said, "Remember, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

... 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

I WAS OUT WALKING my dog Rocky, and there it was. We were in a hurry, trying to get through our morning ritual, and didn't remember that the change had come. Yet, there it was.

It didn't ask for permission, it didn't give notice, it was just there. Forty-five feet long, 100 inches wide, towering at least 10 feet tall, and covered in yellow paint, it drove up with the roar reserved for large engines letting you know they are coming through. It was a school bus.

As we stood there, and Rocky started barking, I was transported back to my first day of school in the fourth grade. The memories of that day were so clear to me.

I was walking up to the school, feeling pretty good about myself. I knew that it was going to be a great school year. I was excited to see all of my friends and get back to work. Most of all, I was excited to see my 3rd grade crush.

As I walked up to the school there she was talking to a friend of hers. They were talking a little louder than they thought, as fourth grade girls tend to do, so I overheard their conversation as I was walking. "Look, there's Daryl, he got fat."

Memories are a powerful thing. All these years later, the site of a school bus still takes me back to the fourth grade. I still remember the walk. I still remember the comment. I also, still remember my response.

I could have been crushed. I could have been angry. I could have started a downward spiral of diets and eating disorders, instead I said, "Nice to see you too," and kept walking.

That day I also remembered that in Sunday School, I had memorized Psalm 139:14, "I will praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are your works, and that my soul knows very well." So, in that moment I remembered that I was made just right by God, no matter what anyone else thought. Even my former crush.

All these years later, when the first day of school rolls around, I remember that day because it was the day I learned the value of remembering Scripture. I remember that day, because it was the day I learned to remember that God made me and he doesn't make junk in any size. So I invite you today to remember.

Remember, no matter what, you are a child of God. Remember, no matter what, God loves you. Finally remember, no matter what, you are fearfully and wonderfully made.

... well said

## EVENTS

**In the Afternoon of Life: Clergy and Retirement**  
**Sept. 22**  
**BWC Mission Center**

The Board of Ordained Ministry is sponsoring a seminar for clergy and their spouses in any stage of the retirement process. Registration is \$35 and includes lunch and materials. E-mail Rev. Linda Warehime to register: [lindawarehime@myactv.net](mailto:lindawarehime@myactv.net)

**Welcome Bishop LaTrelle Easterling**  
**Oct. 1**  
**First UMC, 6201 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville**

You are invited to welcome our new episcopal leader, Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, at a special worship service Saturday, Oct. 1, starting at 1 p.m. No registration is required. A reception will take place after the service.

**UMM Gathering - 'Lead Like Jesus'**  
**Oct. 15**  
**First UMC, 6201 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville**

The United Methodist Men are embarking on a special mission/outreach project at their Gathering. Motivational speakers will provide insights into coaching, faith and leadership. In the afternoon, the men will

participate in a faith action "Stop Hunger Now" project, that involves preparing and packaging 60,000 meals to feed the hungry around the world. Contributions are being accepted. More information at [bwcumc.org/event/umm-gathering-lead-like-jesus/](http://bwcumc.org/event/umm-gathering-lead-like-jesus/)

**United Methodist Women Annual Celebration**  
**Oct. 22, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**  
**Towson UMC, 501 Hampton Lane, Towson**

The conference UMW gathers for business, worship and fellowship. Lunch is \$10. Contact Linda Yost at 443-605-8296 or Gwendolyn Brooks at 410-325-1323.

### HealthFlex insurance workshops


- Sept. 27 – Two sessions from 9:30 a.m. to noon and 1:30 to 4 p.m. at the BWC Mission Center
- Sept. 28 – 9 a.m. to noon at Hancock UMC, 170 W. Main Street in Hancock, and 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. at Jackson Chapel UMC, 5609 Ballenger Creek Pike in Frederick;
- Sept. 29 – 9 a.m. to noon at Good Shepherd UMC, 305 Smallwood Drive in Waldorf, and 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. at Nichols-Bethel UMC, 1239 Murray Road in Odenton.

NOW, JUST IMAGINE

Abundant Health

OUR PROMISE TO CHILDREN

UMCMISSION.ORG/ABUNDANT-HEALTH/CHURCHCHALLENGE



**Bishop LaTrelle Easterling**  
**Maidstone Mulenga**

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

Resident Bishop  
Assistant to the Bishop,  
Director of Connectional Ministries

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

UMConnection is the newspaper of the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church, whose vision is to become fully alive in Christ and make a difference in a diverse and ever-changing world

The UMConnection (ISSN 005386) is owned and published by the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church, 11711 East Market Place, Fulton, MD 20759-2594.  
Telephone: (410) 309-3400 • (800) 492-2525 • fax: (410) 309-9794 • e-mail: [mlauber@bwcumc.org](mailto:mlauber@bwcumc.org).  
Subscriptions are \$15 per year. The UMConnection is published monthly.  
To subscribe, email [kspears@bwcumc.org](mailto:kspears@bwcumc.org).  
Postmaster: Send address changes to: UMConnection, 11711 East Market Place, Fulton, MD 20759-2594.



# UMs respond to Ellicott City flood

By ERIK ALSGAARD  
UMConnection Staff



NATURAL DISASTERS HAVE been in the headlines throughout the summer, with recent flooding in Louisiana and, closer to home, Ellicott City, causing loss of life and millions of dollars’ worth of damage. Through it all, United Methodists have responded and will continue to respond to the community’s needs.

A devastating flash flood hit Ellicott City July 30, causing two deaths and destroying several businesses and homes. The Baltimore-Washington Conference has two churches in Ellicott City: Emory UMC and Mt. Zion UMC. Neither church sustained damage, but the Education Building at Emory had raw sewage back-up into their building. Because of road closures, neither church was able to hold worship services July 31.

At Mt. Zion, members were allowed back in the church building in late August and they held their first worship service since the flood on Aug. 28.

At Emory, restoration and clean-up at the Education Building is “almost done,” said the church’s pastor, Sam Moore, on Aug. 30.

The church is also serving as a storage space for a local business, Great Panes, which sustained major damage in the flood. The business made stained glass windows for several churches in town, and what glass that was salvageable is being stored at Emory.

Moore told a local TV station the fact that some pieces remain untouched is a gift. “I think you see God in these little miracles, and I think you see God in the helping hands of the community people so willing to help,” he said to Fox45.



Pastor Wilhelmina Street of Mt. Zion UMC.



Richard Blood, a trustee at Emory UMC in Ellicott City, stands in the church’s Education Building Aug. 1 as they work to clean up from the flash flood of July 30.

Emory has also sent volunteers to help clean up in the West End of the city, Moore said. “Mostly, they are looking for experienced volunteers with hazmat training, so that lets out a lot of willing if not qualified help,” he said.

An Ecumenical Prayer service was held at Emory Aug. 4. About 100 people attended the service which included moments of silent prayer and two lit candles in memory of those who lost their lives. Several local TV stations reported on the service.

“This church has been in Ellicott City for 179 years,” Moore said about Emory UMC during his sermon. “We’ll be here, God willing, for the long haul. We know that this is a long path to recovery, but we’re committed to helping to restore the community.”

As prayers were lifted up in the congregation for all those who suffered loss, were facing anxiety about the future or who were simply grieving over the flood, Moore also offered a prayer of thanksgiving for the out-pouring of love and community that was being seen in Ellicott City.

“In the midst of darkness, we thank you for the light,” he prayed.

Moore also offered a unique rendition of the hymn “Amazing Grace,” playing it to the tune of “The House of the Rising Sun.” A short video of his playing the guitar and singing was seen by more than 1,300 people on the BWC’s

Facebook page.

Members at Mt. Zion UMC were unable to worship at their church because the road leading to it was not passable. Unwilling to cancel worship, Pastor Wilhelmina Street secured a space at the Ellicott City Health and Rehabilitation Nursing Center on nearby Ridge Road. The church had been ministering to residents there for years, Street said.

“We were happy to be able to help Mt. Zion,” said Stephanie Malloy, Director of Activities at the Nursing Center. “They have come here several years to minister to us. Now we can give back. Plus, the residents were thrilled to have a real Sunday morning church experience.”

The first service was held at the center on Aug. 7, with church members bringing all the needed supplies for worship. Weekly, a keyboard, speaker system, and chairs loaned by Emory UMC were packed into cars.

On Aug. 28, Mt. Zion UMC returned to their church at 8565 Main Street in Ellicott City. They are planning a celebration event, “There’s No Place Like Home” in the upcoming weeks.

To donate money to help with flood relief efforts, visit the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) website at [www.umcor.org](http://www.umcor.org).

# Baltimore church damaged in demolition accident

By ERIK ALSGAARD  
UMConnection Staff

TRACY MOFFATT, CHAIR of the Trustees at Christ UMC in Baltimore, didn’t work on Aug. 5. With some free time on her hands, and with a suggestion from her pastor, she went down to the church, near the massive Johns Hopkins Hospital complex, to watch the ongoing demolition of some row houses next to the church.



While watching, she began to video the work. In the process, she got way more than she bargained for.

In one instant, and with her camera rolling, the wall of the house nearest the church came crashing down on the church. Bricks and mortar plunged through the church’s roof, causing damage to the sanctuary. Fortunately, even though there were people in the church at the time, no one was hurt.

The church’s pastor, the Rev. Twanda Prioleau, was on vacation when the accident happened.

“We knew they were going to do the work,” Prioleau said, “we just didn’t know when. When I stopped by the church on Tuesday (Aug. 2) on my way out of town, I saw that they had begun the demolition.” It was then that she had the idea to ask Moffatt to check on the progress of the demolition work on Aug. 5.

Christ UMC was not able to worship in their building on Aug. 7, Prioleau said. Mount Zion UMC on Liberty Heights opened their doors to Prioleau’s

congregation, and the two worshiped together. “Their opening their doors to us was a real blessing,” Prioleau said. “I thank God for our connection. Because we’re a connectional church, we were able to do a lot of things quickly.”

In the wake of the accident, Prioleau said her congregation remains positive about moving forward.

“We’re rebuilding, no matter what that looks like,” she said. “We are open to what God is up to in this season.” Prioleau has already met with her church’s leadership and the Baltimore Metropolitan District’s building committee. The Rev. Ed DeLong, interim superintendent of the district, was in contact with Prioleau just hours after the damage happened.

Prioleau said that the company doing the demolition is a contractor for East Baltimore Development, Inc. According to its website, EBDI is a 501(c)3 “established by community, government, institutional and philanthropic partners to revitalize, re-energize and rebuild the East Baltimore neighborhood.” When completed, the website notes, “the project will include 2,100 units of mixed-income homeownership and rental housing units, 1.7 million square feet of life sciences research and office space, a new 7-acre community learning campus with an early childhood center, a public K- 8 elementary school, fresh food stores and other neighborhood serving retail amenities, green spaces, and a new community linear park.”

“We’re just thankful that no one was hurt,” Prioleau said. “We can replace a building.”



# Faith in the public square matters

By Erik Alsgaard  
UMConnection Staff

How do you move faith from being something intensely personal to something open and involved in public discourse? That was the question addressed to a panel of three experts last June at Mt. Vernon Place UMC in Washington, D.C., as it played host to “Faith in a Public Vocation: A Conversation about Politics, Media and Religion.” The forum was sponsored by the Center for Public Theology, a program of the Institute for Community Engagement (ICE) at Wesley Theological Seminary Downtown.

Panelists included the Rev. Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, senior pastor at Foundry UMC in Washington; David Gregory, former host of “Meet the Press” and author of the book, “How’s Your Faith? An Unlikely Spiritual Journey;” and Mike McCurry, former White House Press Secretary under President Bill Clinton and Distinguished Professor of Public Theology at Wesley.

Guiding the conversation was the Rev. David McAllister-Wilson, president of Wesley. He began by asking Gregory about his book’s title, taken from a frequent question that President George W. Bush asked Gregory when he worked in the press corps at the White House.

Gregory said that he had grown up “culturally Jewish,” but without an authentic relationship with God. Out of that experience, he began asking questions of identity: “Who am I? What else is out there?”

“Organized religion – the church – has lost the confidence of the American people faster and more dramatically than any other institution, save Congress itself” – Mike McCurry

It was only a personal relationship with God that would answer those questions, he said. Thus began, for him, a journey of moving his faith from his head to his heart. The book, he said, tells the story of that journey. McCurry, on the other hand, grew up with a strong faith but drifted away after college. It was only after he married and had children that he “wandered back in the direction of church,” he said. “I floated in my faith for a while, not really having a loving relationship with God,” he said, especially while

serving as Press Secretary. “Being at Kensington UMC was a safe sanctuary, a place where I could have a separated existence from others.” After leaving the White House, the church’s pastor invited McCurry to serve as Sunday School superintendent, a job that had gone unfilled at the church for 10 years. McCurry accepted and began teaching Middle School students.

After touching on their personal faith stories, McAllister-Wilson turned to questions of moving one’s faith into the public square. Gaines-Cirelli, who pastors a church just blocks from the White House that often has politicians from both sides of the aisle sitting in the same pew on Sunday morning, said her job in moving faith from personal to public has to do with “curating an alternative community,” she said. “What gives a person meaning?” she asked. “In Washington, D.C., that’s often answered with what you do or who you work for. At the end of the day, those are illusions.”

Gaines-Cirelli said that her role as pastor is to offer hope and promise that our world today could actually be something different, and to help people find a way to engage that.

“A pastor has a very public role to speak into the public square what is real,” she said. “Many journalists find it uncomfortable to ask about faith,” said Gregory. “There’s a lot of dysfunction in reporting today. There’s a need for more humility.” Noting that he, himself, was guilty of being self-righteous, defensive and angry in his work, Gregory said that his faith is helping him re-shape his work.

Gregory’s wife, Beth Wilkinson, attends Foundry UMC and he often goes with her. “To walk into Pastor Ginger’s church is to find a place of renewal,” he said, “to hit ‘reset,’ to lift the spirit.” He said he views her job, and that of his Rabbi, to elevate the conversation by bringing faith into the public square. To that end, he said, people of faith do have a voice when it comes to advocating on social issues.

“The challenge for the faith community is to elevate voices in the progressive community to compete with the conservatives,” Gregory said. “They (progressive voices) aren’t that prominent.” McAllister-Wilson took questions from the 100 people in attendance, asked if it was “okay to use the language of faith in the public square?” “Yes,” said Gregory. “It’s okay; even expected by some, but we need to be using the language of faith that is inclusive. It becomes divisive when the one speaking is sure that they have a monopoly on the truth. When that voice

gets in the public square, it gets to be alienating.” This was the first forum sponsored by the Center for Public Theology, a new program offered by Wesley in downtown Washington. McCurry said that classes for seminary students and others will begin in the fall to help address the brokenness in politics and to help shape seminary students for the world they will face after graduation.

“Rather than run away, we need to engage in the public square. We have got to give our children a better model of what it looks like to be in real dialogue as we talk about the serious issues that we face in the future.” – Mike McCurry

“We’ll be doing more events like the one tonight,” he said, “where we model more civil dialogue around political issues in Washington. We will have offerings of curriculum and offerings in the community, including our non-degree Certificate in Faith and Public Life.”

*\*Note – the pull quotes from Mike McCurry are taken from a recent lecture he gave in the Baltimore-Washington Conference on “Why Communicating Faith in a Public Square Matters.” It is available on the BWC’s YouTube channel, youtube.com/watch?v=ANAO1JaNWMA.*



From L to R: The Rev. David McAllister-Wilson, David Gregory, Mike McCurry, and The Rev. Ginger Gaines-Cirelli

# Women explore social issues at Mission u

By Linda Worthington  
UMConnection Staff



About 190 registrants, including 23 young people, engaged in discussions, fellowship, learning and praying at the annual Mission u (formerly School of Christian Mission) held at the Bethesda Marriott, July 29-31. Each summer the United Methodist Women and Board of Global Ministries sponsor the event in conferences throughout the country. On the agenda are classes in two or three areas and biblical plenary sessions. For those not otherwise engaged, a Discovery Room is in full swing as is a book store. A Prayer Room is always open. A Mission Market Place invited all to learn about many, mostly local, missions that churches could support. Of special interest this year was the Bible study on human sexuality, using the book, “The Bible and Human Sexuality.” The three 90-minute sessions were led by the Rev. Dr. Cynthia Belt and Pastor Matthew “Matt” Tate. Belt is a seasoned conference minister, currently pastoring two churches, teaching at Wesley Theological Seminary, an author, black and female; Tate is a young, still-in-seminary male pastor (Emmanuel UMC in Huntingtown), white, and raised as a Catholic. Meeting concurrently, the youth were led by the Rev. Raphael Koikoi, pastor of historic Sharp Street Memorial in Baltimore, a Liberian native, teacher, chairman of the conference Global Ministries, and the husband of the recently elected Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi. Also leading was Pastor Alexis Brown, who serves Van Buren UMC, and who is the daughter of the Rev. Kay Albury, pastor of St. Matthews UMC in Dundalk.

The Bible study wasn’t what most people expected. It was revealed early through table-talk discussions that most people had a bias in one way or another as they answered questions about the way sexuality was dealt with in the home and church when the participants were young. Many table reports said, “We didn’t talk about it.” Or “My mother told me not to get too close to boys.” As each table reported, many said they relied on “what the Bible says,” expecting verse by verse enlightenment. Among some of the scriptural references about sexuality, the leaders pointed out, are that sex outside of marriage was common, that concubines were acceptable, that Paul recommended “don’t marry, but if you can’t restrain yourself, ...” “If you thought we’d only talk about LGBTQ, we didn’t do that,” Tate summarized. “There is so much more to human sexuality.” By the end, nearly everyone saw new ways to think about sexuality in its many manifestations, but always coming back to “Human sexuality is part of who we are as human beings, created by God and called good,” as the book jacket says. Participants were assigned by choice to either Latin America or Climate Justice study time. Two separate classes on Latin America were taught by Chris Barona and his wife Stormi, and by Kate Mackereth. They had also taught the same class last year, often sharing from their immersion experience in Latin America. Barona is database manager in Wesley Seminary’s development office. Mackereth is Director of Operations at Mount Vernon Place UMC in Washington. Both are certified candidates for ordination. Climate Justice was divided into four different classrooms, each with 25 to 30 people. The four groups, led

by Mike Koob, Linda Yost, Mary Baldrige and Brenda Connelly, used the text, “Climate Justice: Call to Hope and Action.” Koob is a member at Middletown UMC, a leading advocate for FossilFreeUMC.org, and he launched the Environmental and Climate Justice Group in his church. Yost, lay member from Wesley UMC in Hampstead and Certified Lay Servant, is active in both district and conference levels. Baldrige spends her time between Millersville and Sarasota, Fla. She has been a delegate to General and Jurisdictional Conferences, and has filled many offices at every level of the church and UMW. Connelly, from Youngsville, North Carolina, is retired from the Board of Global Ministries where she served as Executive Secretary for Church and Community Ministries with the Mission Personnel Program Area. She wrote two past mission study guides. By the end of the four, 2-hour classes, each person was challenged to see what needs to happen for climate justice to become a reality in the world today. From morning praise services to the “Evening Service of Light” that closed the first day, worship and prayer enveloped each day. Participants gathered for a closing worship service with Communion on Sunday. At this worship and others, the Rev. Andre R. Briscoe Jr., currently pastor of St. Matthew’s New Life UMC in Baltimore, led music by playing the piano or with the choir of youth and adults that he’d gathered and trained during the weekend. “Our goal ... is to experience a transformation of head and heart that encourages our hands and feet to interact with God’s beloved community,” said Colleen Cates, dean of Mission u. Indeed, that happened for many who attended.



# New Russian connection expands covenant partnership

By CHARLES HARRELL\*



TEACH ME AS you taught Magdalene.” This prayer of Natalya N., a member of Krasnodar UMC in the Caucasus region of Russia, was just part of one among many testimonies heard by Rob Pierson and me during our May visit to southern Russia, as part of the In Mission Together — Eurasia initiative within the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

Natalya, raised in Sochi by a believing grandmother and a father who taught her to obey God’s commandments, came to a personal faith while living in Estonia in the 1990s.

Called “Believer Natalya” by her friends, she and a friend do evangelism by sharing music in a local city park. Her excitement about Christ and her love of music blend to a contagious harmony.

Stretching more than 500 miles from mountain-fringed Stavropol in the east to Sevastopol on the Black Sea in the west, the South District of the South Russia Conference embraces both the Caucasus and the Crimean Peninsula, the latter annexed by Russia in 2014.

Almost from the forming of the covenant partnership between Baltimore-Washington and the Central Black Soil District eight years ago, there has been a desire to expand the partnership to include South Russia’s second district. This year’s visit was an opportunity to get acquainted in a spirit of mutual discovery and the love of Christ: deep listening about the ministry of Russian congregations while showing the open heart of BWC United Methodists toward their Eurasian brothers and sisters in widely scattered churches.

Each church, though small by American standards, has its own unique ministry footprint. Stavropol UMC has a vibrant ministry with international students from Africa, who study at local universities and are away from home and family for four to five years. This church has also launched an outreach to Roma (“Gypsy”) people in the area, who, typically undocumented, live on the fringes of society and have difficulty accessing basic services like health care and education.

In the eastern Crimean port of Kerch, it was graduation day, and the city was teeming with happy youth wearing

brightly colored sashes and posing for the cameras. Kerch UMC has a vital children’s ministry but struggles to maintain its inadequately insulated building, resorting to running the air conditioning backwards to heat its worship space during the frigid winter months.

The church in the naval-base city of Sevastopol has an unusual history. Pastor Aleksei and his wife, Lena, were new Christians who had already formed the beginnings of a congregation when he did internet research to figure out which branch of Christianity should be their connection. He was taken with the theology of Wesley and the Methodists, and he reached out to Bishop Eduard Khegay in Moscow by e-mail. The bishop replied and welcomed them, and before too long they were an official church. Tiny but electric with enthusiasm, they have a vision for how they can reach out in this important city, and two of their members are praying about a possible call to ministry.



**Rob Pierson, one of the leaders of the Russian Partnership, visits with Roma children.**

Accompanying us from BWC on the travel through the South District were district superintendent, the Rev. Irina Mitina, as well as Elena Melnikova, a conference leader and president of the UMW, who served as translator. A member of the Sevastopol Church, Alexander, served as driver for the long trip. We journeyed to the Central Black Soil District, visiting with the two congregations in Volgograd with their powerful lay women’s leadership and signature ministries with young families and a new one in

music recording. They also visited with Resurrection UMC in Voronezh, whose pastor, Alexander Pererva, does double service as superintendent for that district.

God is doing a varied and powerful work through the ministries of the South Russia congregations. In Mission Together — Eurasia in the Baltimore-Washington Conference is now laying the groundwork for one or more teams to visit and do supportive work there with our partners in 2017. As part of this, the BWC group is reaching out to IMT-Eurasia in other conferences and at the national level to broaden and deepen the impact.

The new South District connection has hardly been the only place of new development. In June, Dr. Bruce Birch taught a five-day continuing education seminar to about 40 pastors and lay leadership at the UMC Camp Kristall near Voronezh. His teaching, along with the seminar itself, was made possible by support from the Baltimore-Washington Conference and was done under the auspices of the Methodist Theological Seminary in Moscow.

As an additional aspect of leadership development, which is a key component of BWC’s Russia partnership, one of the emerging leaders of the church there is being supported in advanced training. Elena Melnikova has begun work toward her Doctor of Ministry degree through a partnership between Wesley Theological Seminary and Cambridge University in England. Her studies are partially supported by the Baltimore-Washington Conference, Wesley, and the global United Methodist Women.

In turbulent times, we hear much in world news and about international relations that causes concern. But as Jesus taught Mary Magdalene in the garden, there is new life and a transformed world to be had in Christ. The partnership between the Baltimore-Washington and South Russia conferences continues to testify to the unity of God’s people in the Holy Spirit, greater than any division, and what can be achieved when the grace of God is realized in the love between brothers and sisters in the Lord who are working to build the Kingdom, continents apart but only a heartbeat and a prayer away.

*\*The Rev. Charles Harrell is a retired Elder in the BWC and coordinator of the Russia Partnership.*

## Bridge: Seeking people outside the church

From page 1

mornings that tend to be highly liturgical. Currently, half of the worshippers drive in from Maryland and half are D.C. residents. But none live close enough to walk to church.

The Bridge will include some members of the congregation, but it’s being designed for a new faith community to grow.

This faith community, led by a diverse leadership team, is focusing on great contemporary music, easy to follow worship, free-flowing discussions, and Communion as a mystery that binds people together and with God.

What will draw people in? “We’ll all be making sure in our own lives that we’re actively seeking people outside of the church and invite them in,” said Wilke. “Sometimes church people make visitors feel like aliens.” He advises them: “Just don’t be weird. Be normal. When we all partake in something together it’s just a beautiful thing.”

Wilke has some experience with feeling like an alien in church. As he was growing up in Kansas, the church didn’t feel very relevant. In high school, he played electric guitar in the band Mental Rush Hour, had long hair, wore skinny jeans, skateboarded and partied.

Gradually, a feeling began to grow in him. Life, everything, started feeling superficial. “I started to have a longing for something more real,” he said.

His father is a United Methodist pastor and his grandfather is a bishop. He looked at the lives of people in his family and began to think, “what do they have that I don’t have?”

Something was missing.

Something began to tug on him to read the Bible. He opened it at random and these words, from John 13:34 jumped out: “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.”

I really did fall in love with Jesus that night, Wilke said. “Go and love? That night everything changed.”

He sensed a call to become a worship leader. He moved to Chicago and began attending Urban Village Church, a new United Methodist church plant whose “mission is to create Jesus-loving inclusive communities that ignite the city.” He then spent eight months in Jerusalem studying archeology.

In the midst of these two experiences, Wilke experienced a call to ordained ministry.

When the position of associate pastor opened at Asbury, conditions conspired to lead him to Washington, accept the job and enroll in seminary at Wesley Seminary.

He will be joined in leading the Bridge experience by Rev. Alexis Brown, the BWC’s campus minister at Howard University. Brown will be creating new connections between the university and the church.

The service will be held in a newly renovated fellowship hall. Originally, the plan for The Bridge was to do “church in a box,” said Mills. But Asbury’s trustees realized a beautiful space, with a renovated stage and state-of-the-art technology, that allows all of the church’s services to be live

streamed, would be the better solution.

The renovations began last January and cost \$700,000. The space is already being sought after by community groups, and is also being used for classroom space by Wesley Seminary, by jazz and drama ministries, the Geriatric Center, and the monthly neighborhood breakfast that feeds 250.

“It’s a well-used space,” said Mills. “We’re being faithful to being church, to be in mission, to making disciples of Jesus Christ, to being faithful to who the church is supposed to be.”

“The fingerprints of God are all over this,” Wilke said. “We’ll be coming together to experience God in a real way. We’re just getting started.”





# Church called to address and eradicate racism

By MAIDSTONE MULENGA  
Editor, NEJ Dail Christian Advocate

DELEGATES TO THE 2016 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference, meeting in Lancaster, Pa., on July 14, pledged to work together as United Methodists to fight the scourge of racism.

The pledge was made after the conference unanimously approved a resolution that called for the church to do more to fight discrimination, to confront racism and to affirm that all lives matter in God’s eyes.

In the resolution brought to the floor by the Rev. Joe Daniels of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, the delegates agreed to join the bishops in leading the church

in healing “the wounds caused by unchecked racism,white privilege and internalized oppression.”

The delegates also vowed to help their annual conferences to initiate conversations on white privilege, white supremacy, racism and oppression within districts, sub-districts and each local church.

The approved resolution also called on the NEJ to evaluate and address the impact of structural and institutional racism on people of color, particularly concerning the closing of black churches and “how current ordination processes in the annual conferences affect black persons interested in ordained ministry.”

As part of their pledge, all the annual conferences will be required to provide an annual update on work to the NEJ Committee on Episcopacy and the Multi-Ethnic Center for Ministry.

The NEJ also agreed to make sure that black leaders are represented at every level of the Jurisdiction; to start more black churches, to increase the number of viable and sustainable black churches and ministries in the NEJ.

*The full text of the amended resolution is below.*

## Call to Action to the NEJ and the NEJ College of Bishops

We applaud, appreciate and fully support the College of Bishops opening challenge to us and to the church. The clear willingness of the College of Bishops to lead us toward the healing of the wounds of racism affirms and underscores the purpose and Call to Action in our original resolution/petition. We therefore stand in solidarity with the College of Bishops and those who stood together with our Bishops as their statement affirmed the value of all life and especially Black lives. What we’ve heard from our



bishops gives even more authenticity and purpose to the vision, goals and objectives found in Our Call to Action printed in the July 12, DCA. However, after prayerful consideration and undeniable moving of the Holy Spirit in this the 2016 gathering of the NEJ we have re-written with greater specificity the original document.

Following the slaughter and carnage of Black lives and officers of the law last week, several persons representing the following groups in the NEJ; Black United Methodist Pastors, (BUMP), and Black Leadership Forum, (BLF), (including several delegates) gathered for an emergency conference call Sunday evening. As a result of this conversation along with consultation with the Executive Director of the Multi-Ethnic Center for Ministry and the strong encouragement of NEJ-BMCR Coordinator/Chairperson, it is clear that the time to act is NOW.

It was unanimously agreed that it is time to break our silence. The people of faith called United Methodist have not mobilized nor been pro-active enough. While there have been pronouncements, calls to prayer, moments of silence and candlelight vigils, we have not moved from rhetoric to action. Racism, white privilege and white supremacy, which are inconsistent with the kingdom of God, are still the order of the day. To those viewing from within and from outside, the Church appears to be complicit in perpetuating a culture of racism and white privilege.

Therefore, in an effort to address, confront and otherwise demand systemic, fundamental and institutional change both within the church and the world, we strongly

encourage that the NEJ College of Bishops, the lay and clergy leadership of the NEJ, and each Annual Conference do the following:

1. Confront y/our racism, and affirm that, while all lives matter in God’s eyes, in the current cultural and social context of this country, Black lives and all lives of color really do matter.
2. That the NEJ College of Bishops collectively and as individuals commit to lead the Church in healing the wounds caused by unchecked racism, white privilege and internalized oppression.
3. That District Superintendents and staff of all conferences comply with #1 above.
4. Initiate ongoing internal and external conversations on white privilege, white supremacy, racism and oppression, including internalized oppression on every district, sub-district and within each local church, realizing that viewing each other through the eyes of Christ and remaining at the table during the hard/difficult discussion is the only way/path to new genuine relationships and partnerships. Out of this, new and more sustainable relationships and partnerships will emerge.
5. Initiate training in areas of racism, white privilege, white supremacy and racial equity for the entire College of Bishops, as well as the District Superintendents, Annual Conference staff and lay leadership within the NEJ. Furthermore, these areas shall also be a focus of all NEJ-sponsored leadership events and efforts, such as See Know Love. Those groups and agencies such as Volunteers in Mission, Association of Conference Lay Leaders, Young Adult Council, and NEJ Youth are urged to hear this call as well and to incorporate training and conversation around systemic racism and cross-racial and cross-cultural power dynamics into their gatherings and ministries.
6. Evaluate and address the impact of structural and institutional racism on people of color in the NEJ: particularly in response to the study in Section 4 of the next section, with regard to
7. The closing of Black churches; and
8. How current ordination processes in the Annual Conferences affect Black persons interested in ordained ministry.
9. That each Annual Conference provide an annual update on work in all of the above to the NEJ Committee on Episcopacy, the Vision Table and the Multi-Ethnic Center, and share experiences that may be helpful to others in the NEJ.
10. That each Annual Conference provide a written report to be included in the 2020 NEJ Advance Daily Christian Advocate. This report should include its (1) progress within the 2017-2020 quadrennium, and (2) plans for the 2021-2024 quadrennium.
11. The College of Bishops, the Vision Table, the Multi-Ethnic Center for Ministry, and each Annual Conference should identify and develop funding to support this proposal.

In addition, we encourage the College of Bishops, the Vision Table and the Multi-Ethnic Center to identify and provide seed funding for the implementation of the following goals to be accomplished by the end of the 2017-2020 quadrennium:

1. Those areas with a significant demographic of people from African descent should reflect a proportional number of Black leaders, both lay and clergy, at every level of the Jurisdiction and Annual

- Conference.
2. To establish at least one new faith community of African descent focused on engaging Black children, youth and young adults in every Episcopal Area in the NEJ, which has a ten-mile radius with a Black population of 30,000 or more.
3. To increase the number of viable and sustainable Black churches and ministries in the NEJ.
4. To study the impact of structural and institutional racism on Black people in the NEJ, in particular:
5. Closing of Black churches, and
6. The impact of the ordination process on the number of black persons interested in ordained ministry.
7. To encourage UM-related seminaries within the NEJ to intentionally recruit and offer resources to more students of color, to offer an urban ministries track that is contextual to the Black Lives Matter movement and to initiate training for faculty in the areas of racism, white privilege and white supremacy.

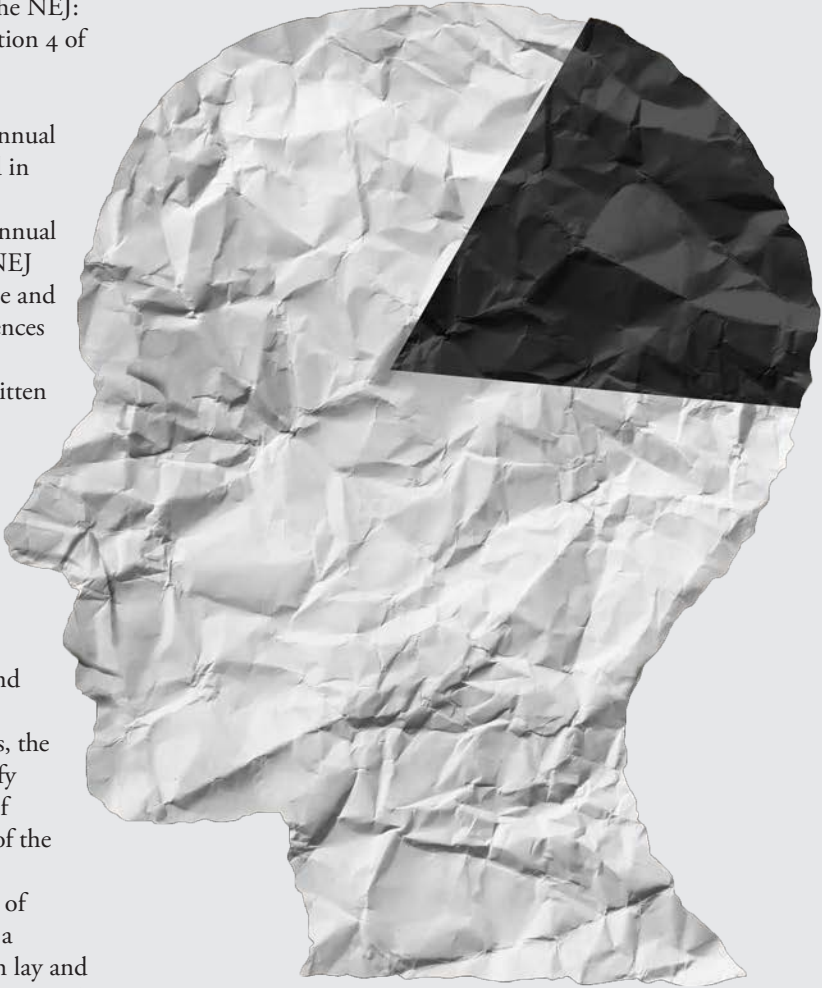
There have already been far too many Black lives taken at the hands of those who are charged to “protect and serve.” In the profound words of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “...we are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now...”.

Finally, it is as true today as it was during the civil rights era that:

“...In a real sense, all life is inter-related. All of human kind are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied to a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be, until you are what you ought to be; and you can never be what you ought to be, until I am what I ought to be...” (MLK Jr.).

TODAY IS THE TIME FOR ACTION!

*(Submitted by: NEJ BUMP, NEJ BMCR, NEJ-BLF)  
Joseph Daniels, Varlyna Wright, William Meekins, Lillian Smith, Denise Smart-Sears, Tracy Bass, Derrick Porter*





# Using the Call to Action in your life and church

By MELISSA LAUBER  
UMConnection Staff

THE CHURCHES AND leaders of the Baltimore-Washington Conference are being called upon by the Northeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church to move from “rhetoric to action,” as they address issues of racism in their congregations and communities (see story opposite page).

Confronted with what the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. called “the fierce urgency of now,” the NEJ delegates, including 24 delegates from the Baltimore-Washington Conference, passed a Call to Action that outlines 11 steps for addressing white privilege, white supremacy, racism and oppression.

Among these steps is the initiation of conversations. The General Commission on Religion and Race has created a resource, Vital Conversations, which may help as a starting point. To learn more, visit, [www.gcorr.org](http://www.gcorr.org). The commission recommends several guidelines for small groups and churches when speaking about potentially emotional issues. Among them:

1. Be curious and open about what others are trying to say.
2. Begin with where other people in the group are, not where you want them to be.
3. Notice what people are saying, and what they are not saying.
4. Be honest and authentic.
5. Take responsibility for your part in any conflict or misunderstanding.
6. Focus on the process and relationship, not just the solution.

The Call to Action also supports a July 13 statement issued by the Northeastern College of Bishops on violence and institutional racism. In that statement, the bishops ask United Methodists and churches to reflect on the following questions:

1. How will you be a peacemaker in the midst of the



Protesters take to the streets in a Black Lives Matter rally in Washington D.C.

- storms of violence and destruction?
2. How can you be a peacemaker and at the same time work for justice?
  3. What can you do to develop a sense of well-being and harmony in your life, in the lives of neighbors, strangers, friends and community?
  4. What social problems move you to want to make a difference by building bridges, making connections, and valuing people?
- Churches will want to craft the way issues are talked

about to meet the context in which they live and do ministry. Below are some conversation starters that center around the Call to Action that might be helpful. However, the spirit of this document is to engage people to actively address the sins of racism and inequality. Ultimately, the church will move beyond “thoughts and prayers” into deeds of discipleship and the transformation of the world.

1. United Methodists have been called upon repeatedly to open their eyes, ears and hearts to how racism casts its long shadow upon us. In what deep or unexpected ways has this shadow fallen upon your life? Upon your community?
2. The church was a leader in the Civil Rights Movement, but many feel it’s being complicit in the perpetuation of a culture of racism and white privilege. How can or should your church be more relevant in addressing issues of racism?
3. The question for most churches is not how can we be diverse, but how can we be more diverse? Why is diversity so important? What specific things might your church do to expand its diversity? What role does courage play in diversity? What role does power play?
4. What hard questions does the church need to be asking itself about race?
5. Which portions of the Call to Action (on page 7) most resonate with you? Do any portions make you uncomfortable? Why or why not?
6. After reading the Call to Action, how do you feel compelled to respond? What next steps do you feel called to help your community, church, district or annual conference to take?

Concerns, questions or thoughts to share? Contact us through: [bwcumc.org/contact-us](http://bwcumc.org/contact-us).



Melissa Lauber

The Rev. Joe Daniels, who introduced the Call to Action, joins hands in prayer with the Rev. Charles Parker at the Northeastern Jurisdictional Session in Lancaster, Pa., last July.

## An author of the ‘call’ reflects on race and the UMC

LILLIAN SMITH  
Pastor, Cheverly UMC

W.E. B. DuBois wrote, “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line — the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea.” In 2016, DuBois’ insight is still true and relevant. There have been weeks when, almost nightly, we heard news reports of unarmed young brown or black males who were killed under questionable circumstances. Like many people, I cried and wondered “what is going on?” “How many more people are going to die due to senseless violence because of color, fear and misunderstandings?” This carnage of brown and black persons, as well as the slaughter of police officers has to stop. Great progress has taken place in the United States of



Lillian Smith

America. We have an African American president. Our children and youth live with a multi-ethnic world view as evidenced by the cast of teen television shows and music. My teenage sons demonstrate an ease to connect with peers of diverse cultures and ethnicities that is not always demonstrated by people of older generations. Nonetheless, this country’s seeds of racism have resulted in a harvest that is rocking our very existence. In many of our congregations, worship services are still, in many effects, segregated. The growth of increased populations of racial ethnic minority persons in this nation is not evidenced in many of our churches. Why?

United Methodists are called to fully face and dismantle the sin of racism. Much was done through the dismantling of the Central Jurisdiction but remnants of racism still exist. Racism is an issue of the heart not changed by legislation. The love of God helps us overcome “our stuff” to love others of diverse ethnicities and cultures.

Defined as “prejudice plus power,” racism is a reality that affects everyone. No one is immune. If any people are

called to address the issues of racism, white privilege and internalized oppression, it is surely the people of faith of the United Methodist Church. We are called to share the good news of Jesus Christ with people of all ethnicities and cultures. When we address racism we will be able to reach out in love to share in ministry with the other – of any color and language. Let’s heal the wounds of racism.

The problem of racism is as serious today, as it has always been. Through the NEJ Call to Action, adopted by the Northeastern Jurisdiction, we have a unique opportunity to make a difference. Everyone — bishops, laity and organizations like the Multi-Ethnic Center for Ministry — has a role to play. The Holy Spirit can transform us to become the “beloved community” of God’s people. Now is the time. We are the people for such a time as this. It is my hope that every laity, clergy and congregation will heed the call to action and make a difference for God’s kingdom.

*\*Cheverly UMC is a multi-ethnic congregation in the heart of the community with the community in its heart.*



# Easterling: ‘Not called to walk in fear’

From page 1

was strongest when it was on the margins, helping the marginalized; when it was steeped in advocacy; when we delighted in exuberant worship; when we weren’t afraid to claim who we are as disciples of Jesus Christ, both in our worship and mission.”

The bishop shares the concerns of many mainstream church leaders about the increasing numbers of people who are claiming that God no longer plays a central role in their lives.

To those lay and clergy leaders working to help make the church seem more relevant, Bishop Easterling shares these thoughts: “We are not called to walk in fear, but to walk in faith,” she said. “People are still hungering and thirsting to have a deeper meaning in their lives and to find ways to make a difference in the world. We as a church simply need to be creative enough, flexible enough and resilient enough to find ways to connect to our communities.”

Easterling rejects the liberal/conservative labels some use to define United Methodist leaders. Instead, she assumes the description of “Christ-centered.”

In her preaching, which tends to be “justice-driven,” Easterling claims Scripture as her absolute foundation. She also proclaims, “we are all created in the image and likeness of God.” She laments how race, gender, religious identification, economics, sexual orientation, health or any other status can be used to diminish people. In the Bible, “time and time again,” she said, “we see Jesus Christ breaking through barriers and stepping beyond boundaries to recognize, lift and love people because of the image and likeness of God they reflect.”

For some, that makes her seem liberal, but she also believes in humbling herself before God and accepting the lordship of Christ in ways that make others view her as conservative.

“I see myself as one who is centered in Jesus Christ, one who tries to exegete and interpret Scriptures in light of how I see God moving in the world,” the bishop said. “We need to walk as Christ walked, love as Christ loved, and embrace as Christ embraced.”

This sometimes means taking risks, the bishop said. “We need to be good stewards of resources. We don’t need to be wasteful. But I don’t think to take risks for the sake of the Gospel, to start new initiatives, to try to reach new persons is, in any way, being wasteful with our resources.” It’s even okay if the church tries and fails, she said. “Because in failure, we learn how to succeed.”

Educated as an attorney, Easterling served a brief time as a prosecutor. She appreciates the law and its quest for justice. She also finds value in the Socratic method, using questions to get to the heart of a matter.

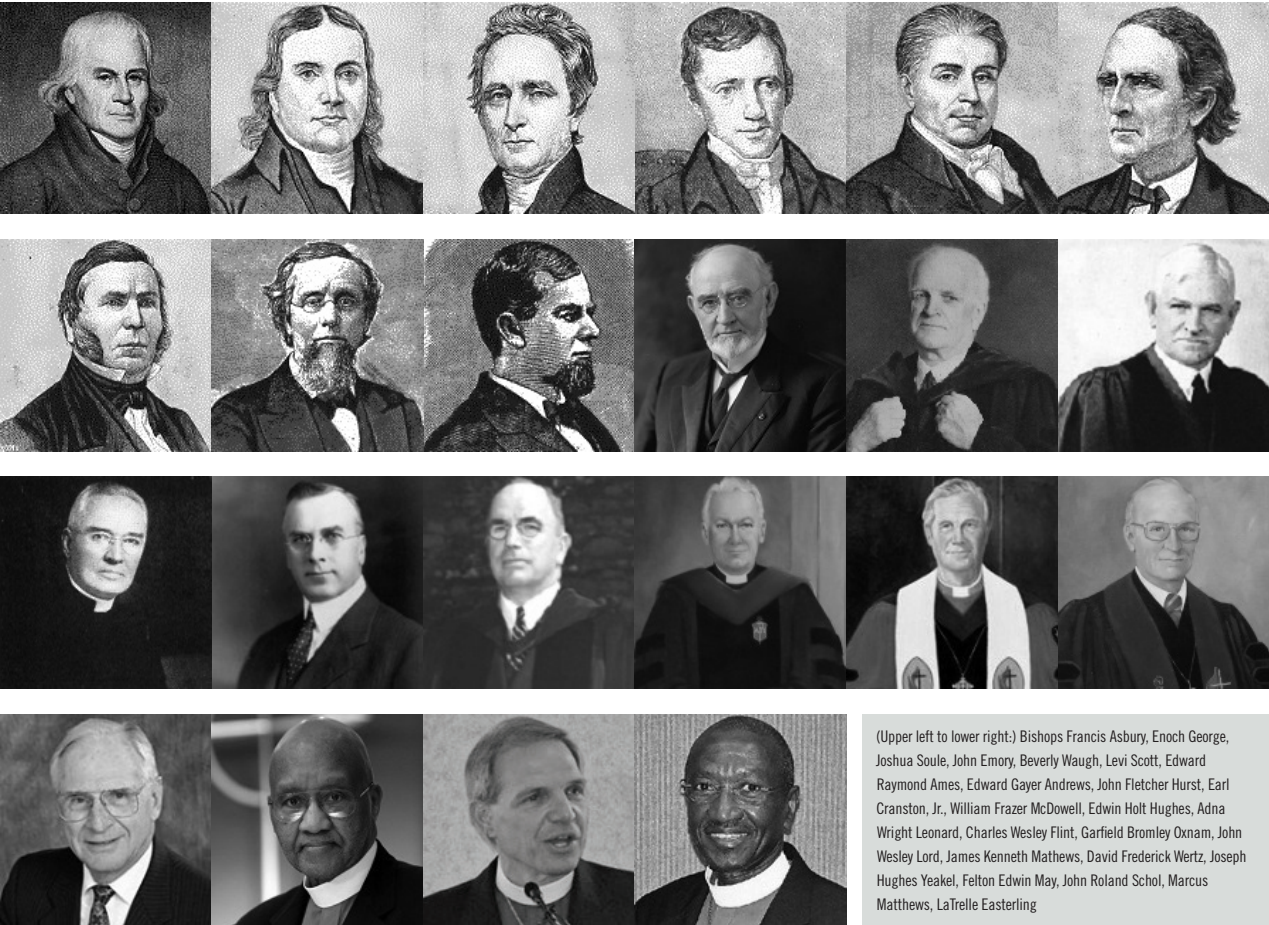
There are a few questions she hopes United Methodists will ask themselves: Are we being bold enough? Are we being courageous enough? Have we been looking too inward in terms of our time, our resources, our mission, or our ministry? Or, have we been doing what I believe God has been calling us to do, which is to constantly look outward into the community, into the world, and broadening the mission field?

Bishop Easterling is married to the Rev. Marion Easterling Jr., who, as of Sept. 1, began serving Wesley

Grove UMC in Hanover. He formerly served Parkway UMC in Milton, Mass. They have two sons, Garret Walter and Miles Teronza.

## HISTORIC FIRSTS FOR WOMEN CLERGY

- The Methodist Church granted full clergy rights to women, 60 years ago in 1956.
- The first woman to be elected as a bishop in The United Methodist Church was Marjorie Matthews, from Michigan, in 1980. She served the Wisconsin Episcopal Area for four years before retirement.
- The first African-American woman United Methodist bishop was Leontine T.C. Kelly, elected in 1984. Bishop Kelly was born in Washington, D.C.



(Upper left to lower right:) Bishops Francis Asbury, Enoch George, Joshua Soule, John Emory, Beverly Waugh, Levi Scott, Edward Raymond Ames, Edward Gayer Andrews, John Fletcher Hurst, Earl Cranston, Jr., William Frazer McDowell, Edwin Holt Hughes, Adna Wright Leonard, Charles Wesley Flint, Garfield Bromley Oxnam, John Wesley Lord, James Kenneth Matthews, David Frederick Wertz, Joseph Hughes Yeakel, Felton Edwin May, John Roland Schol, Marcus Matthews, LaTrelle Easterling



# Volunteers in Mission work on school in Chile

By MARK DERBY\*

I’VE BEEN ON many mission trips over the years, both nationally and internationally, but my trip to Chile earlier this year really touched my heart. This Volunteer in Mission trip included members from Oakdale UMC in Olney, and Fourth UMC in York, Pa.

We had the great privilege and blessing of working on two projects in Chile. My team worked at the Methodist School in Coquimbo which was constructing additional classrooms in order to be able to provide education through the 12th grade. This school, which serves a very poor population, was founded by the Methodist Church in 1953 and currently offers education through the 8th grade.

Recent changes by the Chilean government have required semi-private schools to offer education either through grades 1-6 or 1-12. This requirement led to the school board deciding to expand their facilities to be able to include high school education.

Our team worked alongside the contractor’s workers, preparing concrete forms, tying rebar, mixing, wheelbarrowing and finishing concrete. It was heavy work,



Members of the recent VIM trip at the Methodist School in Coquimbo, Chile.

but we were well fed by many of the school staff who volunteered their time to provide meals and snacks to keep us hydrated and energized.

All of the team members were overwhelmed by the high level of commitment of the school’s staff. It was obvious that they loved the children they served and deeply believed in their mission to provide high quality education while exposing the children to the Christian faith in a loving, faithful community.

Our team is currently helping to raise an additional \$100,000 to complete the construction so that the high school can open in March 2017. Many of the team members are planning to return next February to put the finishing touches on the classrooms, participate in the dedication of the building and welcome the new 9th graders.

Teams members are available to churches in the Baltimore-Washington Conference to share our story and to present the opportunity for others to join us in meeting the costs to complete the construction. Contact me if you are interested at revmaderby@gmail.com.

\*Rev. Mark Derby is a retired Elder in the BWC.



# Abundant history found at Barratt’s Chapel

By CHARLES HARRELL

THE PLAINNESS OF this small, colonial-style chapel, set on a rise just east of Highway 1 near Frederica, Del., belies its grander significance. If Lovely Lane in Baltimore is the “Mother Church of American Methodism,” here is where “Mom” got her first date with destiny. For it was from this brick meeting house that Rev. Freeborn Garrettson “rode out in all directions,” following his instructions to find all the Methodist preachers on the eastern seaboard, some of them in hiding since the Revolutionary War, and to call them to a special Christmas Conference in Baltimore. The rest, as we say, is history.

Barratt’s Chapel, less than 90 minutes drive from Annapolis (Bay Bridge traffic cooperating), is the oldest purpose-built Methodist structure in America. Preserved today in its condition from a remodeling in the 1840s, its campus also boasts a small but excellent museum with exhibits on the Chapel and on Delmarva Methodism, which also houses the Archives of the Peninsula-Delaware Conference, as well as a 3,000-volume historical library. The chapel’s property sits adjacent to the sprawling Barratt’s Chapel Cemetery, managed today by a separate corporation. Almost never a parish church in its long history, Barratt’s still hosts special services, including Christmas Eve each December and Thursday night gatherings in summertime.

It was in 1780 that Philip Barratt, a prominent figure in local business and politics and a recent convert to Methodism, donated the land and money to build a 500-seat facility in sight of his own house for the purpose of holding large meetings of local society members. Think a Hylton Chapel for the 18th century and you won’t go wrong: nothing said “event center” in its day like the fine Flemish-bond brickwork and balconied interior, situated along what was even then the main north-south thoroughfare on the peninsula. Sadly, Mr. Barratt himself had died before Nov. 14, 1784, when, during a Quarterly Conference meeting, the Rev. Dr. Thomas Coke presided at the first (authorized) Methodist Communion in America,

and the Rev. Francis Asbury entered the meeting as Dr. Coke was preaching. Visitors today can hear the story of how, armed with instructions from John Wesley himself, Asbury would guide the molding of the “connexion” into an organized church in the following months.

These were exciting, heady times, when “everybody on the peninsula could walk to a Methodist Church,” according to Rev. Phil Lawton, Pen-Del Conference



Historic Barratt’s Chapel, near Frederica, Del., is where Asbury and Coke first met.

Historian and a friendly fount of knowledge about the Chapel, Delmarva Methodism and local lore in general. In the museum, learn about Levi Scott, a cabinetmaker-turned-preacher who made his own violin (it’s there) and became the first Delawarean bishop. See the lap desk of another preacher who, devotedly single his whole life, cherished the love letters of would-be spouses in a secret compartment, discovered only recently. Besides such tantalizing glimpses of past lives, the social witness of earlier generations is on display, too: visitors can learn, for example, about the important work of the Deaconess Home in Wilmington, whose members welcomed generations of immigrants who would often arrive in America without money or work and who often

did not speak English. Thanks to the Deaconesses’ work, many were saved from the destitute streets and offered hope. Or see the exhibit on “Wesleyan Female Collegiate Institute,” a girls’ finishing school forced to close after a fever outbreak in 1881. See the quilt, lovingly crafted by the Methodist Women’s Society of nearby Viola in 1910. It includes the name of almost every person in the village on it, including members of a Jewish family – all were welcome!

And did you know that Delaware’s resort with the biblical name of Rehoboth Beach began as a camp-meeting ground? Learn of how church leaders tasked with picking the site chose “the land over the strand,” a real estate mistake but one that opened the way for developing today’s oceanfront destination. These and many other artifacts are there for discovery. The chapel and museum are open selected hours on Wednesdays and Saturdays; groups are welcome (be sure to call ahead first). The website is [www.barrattschapel.org](http://www.barrattschapel.org).

If you’re planning to make a day of it, be sure to enjoy a meal at nearby Frederica Pizza and Pasta. The family-owned restaurant boasts great food and exceptionally friendly service. Put your order in early for one of the amazing (and huge) cream puffs; they sell out daily. If seafood is more to your liking, Meding and Son along Route 1 enjoys a good reputation with local folks. And for a weekend getaway, Frederica is about midway between Dover (north) and Milford (south), both of which sport many hotels and B&Bs. Or plan to camp at nearby Killen Pond State Park, which has everything from tent sites to (year-round) cabins, plus boating, and even a water park for the whole family in warm weather. ([www.destateparks.com/parks/killens-pond](http://www.destateparks.com/parks/killens-pond). Call ahead first; non-Delaware residents should expect to pay a bit more.) Barratt’s Chapel offers a great opportunity to get more deeply in touch with our spiritual roots, and to have a great excursion in nearby Delmarva along the way. I came back more excited about Methodism’s welcoming touch and its faithful witness from the early days of our country. I think you will, too.

# The ‘third rail’ of being a pastor

By ERIK ALSGAARD

BY MOST ACCOUNTS, it is the third rail of being a local church pastor: touch it, and you’ll get zapped. “It” is the long-standing question, “Should a pastor know how much a church member gives?” In late 2015, the Connection Giving Team – a group from United Methodist Communications that “works to increase visibility, awareness and financial support for the connectional ministries of The United Methodist Church” – did a survey where 372 people responded to that question. The results were clear as mud. “Most definitely yes,” said the Rev. Tom Barnard, pastor at Crum’s UMC in Berryville, Va. “Resources come in many areas and financial resources are critical to know as this usually determines commitment to the work of the church and kingdom.” “I am a firm believer that this is something that is between the member and God,” said Carl Sudduth, supply pastor at Gainseville UMC in Livingston, Ala. “If the pastor knows too much about someone’s finances it might affect how he ministers to that family.”

Some United Methodist churches have a policy that forbids the pastor from knowing what members give. Those that do will find themselves in violation of the soon-to-be-published 2016 Book of Discipline. General Conference 2016 passed legislation amending Paragraph 340.2.c.(2)(c) of the 2012 Book of Discipline to read: “...the pastor, in cooperation with the financial secretary, shall have access to and responsibility for professional stewardship of congregational giving records.” One purpose cited is to provide pastoral care. The legislation is effective Jan. 1, 2017.

Stewardship consultant, the Rev. Clif Christopher, would agree with the move. “The church is the only nonprofit on the planet that does not want its leader to know everything he or she can about how the nonprofit functions and pays

its bills,” writes Christopher in “Whose Offering Plate Is It?” (Abingdon Press). In the book, he offers a plan for moving congregations away from this practice and writes, “Be sure that your leaders understand that your knowledge of giving is a spiritual diagnostic tool that you must have to be effective.” A pastor choosing not to know, Christopher continues, “constitutes clergy malpractice. ... It is well known that how one gives is one of the best indicators of the condition of a person’s soul,” he writes. “If a person is not giving, you can just about take it to the bank that Jesus Christ is not the Lord of his or her life.” Are there valid reasons for choosing not to know? At Oakdale Emory UMC in Olney, the Rev. Kevin Baker says “yes,” but with a twist. “I think a pastor has a right to know,” he said. “Do I know personally about you or anyone else? No. The problem with knowing how much a person gives is the potential to treat them differently. If they are big givers, you give them more attention or, if they don’t give at all, you treat them carelessly. Frankly, I don’t totally trust myself. I think I fear that if I knew what a person gave it might influence me.” Baker, however, asks for giving numbers on a regular basis. Just recently, he asked for the giving numbers by member of each of the church’s board members. “I just asked them to leave off the names,” he said. “I didn’t want to know so much how much any one person gave as much as I wanted to know how much integrity our board has in their own giving. I don’t think it is ever right to ask the congregation to do something we, the board and staff, are not doing.” Ultimately, the best way to foster a culture of greater transparency around giving is to talk about it more, notes Ann A. Michel, Associate Director of the Lewis Center and lecturer in church leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. “Pastors and other key leaders can model the way by openly discussing how much they give and why,” Michel said. “This sharing should be done in thoughtful and appropriate ways, of course. But when we share testimonies about our giving, when we take encouragement rather than offense when someone learns about our generosity, we teach and inspire others

about the importance of faithful giving.” Michel said that the “conspiracy of silence” around money and giving in local churches is contrary to responsible stewardship. “Accountable discipleship requires that we be far more honest and transparent around everything having to do with faith and money,” she said. “And being a bit more open about our giving and a little less uptight about who knows, are good steps in that direction.” Frank Robert, Associate Director of the Mid-Atlantic United Methodist Foundation, who has an office in the BWC Mission Center, teaches stewardship classes throughout the region. This question, he said, comes up “all the time.” The answer, he said, has been changing over the years. The Mid-Atlantic Foundation has put together a 2-year intensive financial academy for pastors. During part of the academy, they teach that pastors need to know, and should know, what a parishioner gives. “Me, personally, I think (knowing) is one of the measures of Christianity,” Robert said. “If your giving changes, I think the pastor needs to know that.” Changes in a person’s tithe, he said, could alert the pastor to other, perhaps more serious issues in a person’s life. “Is Frank on drugs? Is there a divorce going on? Did he lose his job? What’s going on,” he said. “It’s a great sign for the pastor to know, or, at the least, to be alerted to the fact that Frank’s giving changed.” Robert understands that people don’t want to flaunt their giving and that that is something Jesus taught. At the same time, keeping a person’s giving “just between them and God” isn’t very effective, he said. “You don’t take your money and just throw it directly up to heaven,” Robert said. “It doesn’t work that way. When you give, someone in the church is counting your money; you’re claiming it off your taxes.” Underlying all this, Robert stressed, is that giving is a spiritual discipline; something that reflects our relationship with God. “We need to teach the next generation about giving,” Robert said. “The older generation understands it as a spiritual practice, but unless we teach this to the next generation, we’re going to lose it.” This article reprinted, by permission, from the July/August issue of Interpreter Magazine.





# West River Camp hosts Hispanic Ministry Retreat

By MIGUEL GALLEGOS



IT'S AUG. 27, Friday evening, and the families start to arrive at West River Camp. Some people arrive early to start cooking a picnic and the chicken smells good. Lots of the Hispanic families brought food and the rice with beans starts to disappear from the pans. Adults and children enjoy this time to come together and enjoy a delicious meal while more families arrive.



After registering and settling into our rooms, we come together to enjoy a wonderful time of praise and worship. Around 9 p.m., we went to the camp fire, and the children and youth enjoyed this time the most because we had marshmallows, chocolate and cookies for them.

Saturday after breakfast we had our first session of the day and the theme of the retreat was "Our Identity." The Rev. Eliezer Valentin gave us an introduction to Methodist history and then the Rev. Edgardo Rivera and wife Evelyn challenged us to explore what it means to be a Methodist today. He also showed some pictures about his trip to John Wesley's House.

Saturday for lunch we celebrated August birthdays. We had three cakes and sang Happy Birthday and "Las



Mañanitas"; in the afternoon children and families enjoyed the camp's facilities, some went to the pool and others went rowing on the lake.

Saturday evening we had talent show and praise and worship; feeling God's presence in the our hearts that night felt very nice. We learned about grace and how important it is in our theology and how God works and moves in our lives. Pastor Jorge Moreno and Emma Escobar taught us about personal and social holiness. Children and youth also learned about grace.



We finished with conversations about how God is working in this world and learning about God will. Then we had a Communion Service and prayed for the children



that are staring school. Families from eight different Hispanic ministries in the area enjoyed this retreat and left with the joy in their hearts



with the courage to work for God, knowing what it means to be a Christian United Methodist and with the promise to bring more people next year.



Photos by Miguel Gallegos

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE



**Loading supplies collected at the Conference Center for West Virginia, are, on the left, the Rev. David Graves, BWC Disaster Response Coordinator, and his son David. Next to them are BWC employees Deb Trowbridge, Sanjeev Christopher and Ricky Shaw. The two Davids drove the supplies to WV Mission Central for distribution to the disaster victims and volunteers.**

### Christian and Muslim youth share meal

EDGEWOOD - Forty Muslim and Christian youth met together for an interfaith "iftar" earlier this summer. The youth, from Presbury UMC and Lord of Life Lutheran Church (ELCA) in Edgewood, shared a meal with their counterparts from Project Iman Youth Club, reported the Rev. Shannon E. Sullivan. They called the event Hungry for God.

As is the custom in the Muslim Holy Month of Ramadan, the youth spent the day fasting and learning about fasting in both Muslim and Christian traditions. Youth leaders led a workshop about world hunger.

When the sun set, before eating, the youth prayed together, first a Christian grace and then the dua prayers for breaking a fast during Ramadan. They then shared the meal together. The youth raised more than \$1,000 for Islamic Relief USA and collected several boxes of canned goods for the local Welcome One Emergency Homeless Shelter.

### Young Adult missionaries commissioned

ATLANTA, GA. - Among the 45 young adults (ages 20-30) the General Board of Global Ministries commissioned as missionaries Aug. 3, is BWC's NaQuita "Quita" Coates, a member of Patuxent UMC. As a US-2,

she'll spend the next two years as the Justice Seminar Coordinator for the Bridges District Waller Center in West Sacramento, Cal.

The commissioning took place in the denomination's new world mission center. GBGM is moved its headquarters from New York City to Atlanta this summer.

Also commissioned are two US-2s who have arrived to serve in this conference: Stephanie Quammen is from the Oklahoma Conference and will be working as Ministry Coordinator at Metropolitan Memorial UMC in Washington, D.C. Also in Washington is Rick Sullivan from the Peninsula Delaware Conference, whose service is as Placement Associate for Community Engagement at American University.

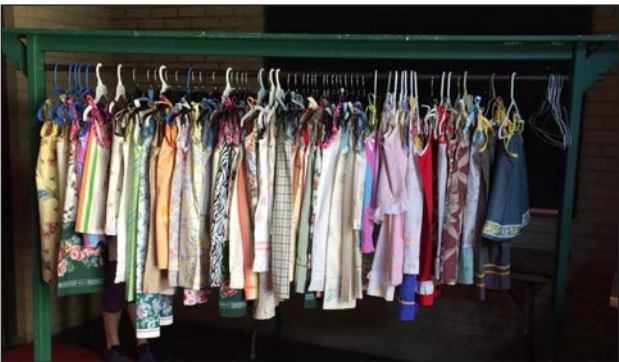


NaQuita Coates

### Little girls will smile

FINKSBURG - A group of women from Sandy Mount UMC spent a Saturday in July making dresses out of pillowcases. They brought with them to the church sewing machines, irons and ironing boards; all other supplies, including lunch, were provided by the event coordinators. Their goal: turn ordinary pillowcases into dresses for little girls.

Mission accomplished. The group completed 71 dresses, which are being delivered to Chance 2 Dance Studio's



Pillowcase dresses sewn by the women of Sandy Mount UMC.

Princess Pillowcase Project. They'll be distributed to missionaries who will give them to children in poverty-stricken areas, both in the U.S. and overseas. To date more than 14,000 dresses have been distributed.

### BWC young adult intern at GBCS

OXON HILL - Erica West, a member at St. Paul Oxon Hill UMC, finished a summer internship with the Ethnic Young Adult Program, a 36-year tradition of the General Board of Church and Society, and has returned to the College of William and Mary.

She was one of eight young adults from across the country chosen to participate in the EYA summer internship.

West's placement was as a youth educator with Men Can Stop Rape. To learn more about the non-profit organization, go to <http://www.mencanstoprape.org/>.

### 'Best Friend' and pastor walk to ordination

WASHINGTON, D.C. - June 4 was a big day for the Rev. Lisa Jordan: she was ordained a full member Elder and she received an appointment to the Mountain Ridge Cooperative Parish (Mt. Zion UMC Sabillasville and Pleasant Walk UMC in Myersville) in the Cumberland-Hagerstown District.

Accompanying her at Annual Conference was her Hearing Assist Dog, Cleo, a yellow lab. She and Cleo were recently certified by Can Do Canines as an assistance dog team.

After progressively losing hearing for a few years, Jordan became deaf in 2011.

Also accompanying her for the ordination service was Bishop Peggy Johnson, a former BWC member, who serves the Philadelphia Episcopal Area. Bishop Johnson interpreted in Sign for her during the ordination.

### BRIEF

BALTIMORE - Congratulations to the Deaf choir from Christ Deaf Church, which performed three different times at the Smithsonian Museum of African Art Aug. 13, reported the Rev. Sandi Johnson.



# Guns and Violence, What Does the Church Say?

By JULIE WILSON  
Board of Church and Society

THE PAST FEW years and particularly the past several months of 2016 have been filled with story after story of violence. Terrorism (both domestic and international), police officers shooting unarmed black men, police officers being targeted by armed gunmen, incidents of domestic violence, incidents of suicide. It seems not a day goes by when we do not hear of yet another violent act involving a firearm. While our political leaders stand on their stumps or sit on the floor of the House and speak words they think will get them (re)elected, people of faith wonder what they, what we, can do.

The United Methodist Church is a diverse group of people. Some own guns for hunting, sport or for their own security. Others are vegan and/or pacifists and totally against weapons in all forms. Yet all call themselves United Methodists. So how can we be truly united on an issue which the media and the politicians tell us is so divisive?

We can follow Scripture. We can follow the biblical witness of loving our neighbor as ourselves and live into the prophet's vision of turning our swords into plowshares.

At the 2016 General Conference, the Resolution titled "Our Call to End Gun Violence" was adopted. In it, we, as a church, look for ways to fulfill the prophet Micah's vision. We call for raised awareness of the dangers which guns present when they are in the hands of those intent on causing harm to others or even to themselves. It also

calls on local congregations to "assist those affected by gun violence through prayer, pastoral care, creating space, and encouraging survivors to share their stories..."

In addition, individual United Methodists who own guns as hunters or collectors are called "to safely and securely store their guns and to teach the importance of practicing gun safety."

One such opportunity is coming up on Sept. 25, a day designated to remember victims of homicide. On that date churches, non-profits, and citizens of communities all over the United States will be participating in a variety of concerts, all with one goal in mind: ending gun violence. Many United Methodist churches will participate in this Concert Across America to Prevent Gun Violence. The concerts are sponsored by a variety of groups, including Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence.

If you are interested in the concert, please visit [www.concert.faithsunited.org](http://www.concert.faithsunited.org). If you would like to be involved in other advocacy, education, or community support events related to gun violence, please contact me or other members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference Board of Church and Society. We are working with the General Board of Church and Society on this issue and would love to partner with you.

Rev. Julie Wilson  
Chair, BWC Board of Church and Society  
[JMW1976@gmail.com](mailto:JMW1976@gmail.com)

THE CONCERT  
ACROSS AMERICA™  
TO END GUN VIOLENCE

9.25.16



remembersept25.org

United Methodists are encouraged to work with local law enforcement to identify local retailers who operate in unethical (and illegal) ways to circumvent existing gun laws. Congregations are also encouraged to work with law enforcement to prevent gun violence.

Another action which we, as United Methodists, are encouraged to engage in is to work ecumenically and with members of other faiths to raise awareness of how to prevent gun violence, and to offer prayers and our presence in communities which are suffering as a result of gun violence.

**Local Concerts/events on Sept. 25:**

Good Shepherd UMC, Sliver Spring: 10:30-noon, Service of Word and Song with food/fellowship afterwards.

Evangelical Reformed United Church of Christ, Frederick: 2 p.m. interfaith Liturgy and Song on the steps of the church prior to an interfaith concert for peace inside the sanctuary at 3 p.m.



By CHERYL COOK\*



WE HAVE MANY churches in our conference (and denomination in general) who truly and sincerely care about young adults and want them engaged in their local congregations. A lot of these churches have great intentions but poor execution and unintentionally send young adults running out the door.

Here are our top three things NOT to do when it comes to young adults.

- 1. Don't assume you know what your young adults want.**
- Like I said, there are a lot of good intentions out there, but what usually happens is a group of people who are not young adults get together and talk about what sort of program, Bible study, fellowship hour, etc., they should start offering to grow the number of young adults attending their church. They assume that young adults want a weekly Bible study or contemporary music or fellowship events centered around dining out or lattes available in between services, etc. etc. etc.
- The group assumes a bunch of things (and you know what they say about that...) and then they start creating things but never actually go to the source and ask young adults what they want or need in a church community.
- If you want to start something for young adults in your church, the first step is to talk to the young adults you have and ask them what they want and need. If they are involved in the creation of something new, they will have more stake in it and commitment to it.

If you don't have any young adults in your church to ask, then think about asking parents of young adults (whose children don't attend) if they would help you brainstorm. Or seek out other churches with active young adults and pick their brains for ideas.

Although the movie "Field of Dreams" is famous for the line, "If you build it, they will come," this statement does not hold true for young adult ministry.

- 2. Don't have a "token" young adult.**
- Often what I see (and have experienced personally) is that once a young adult does begin regularly attending a church, they quickly become the "token" young adult that is asked to serve on EVERYTHING. Churches want to attract more young adults like this individual, so they ask the young adult to serve on every possible committee to get the "young adult viewpoint."
- While it is rooted in good intentions, it leaves the young adult feeling burned out.
- 3. Don't focus solely on having Young Adult Ministry, but also focus on having young adults in ministry.**

Another common mistake is to create a Young Adult Ministry group and pour lots of time, energy and resources into it, but then never actually focus on having the young adults of the church involved in other ministries. There is nothing wrong with having a Young Adult Ministry group; in fact, these groups are often wonderful and meaningful and provide a great space for young adults.

They become a problem, though, when we don't recognize that young adults have gifts and talents that are

applicable to the life of the church and we minimize them by ONLY giving them a spot in the Young Adult Ministry group. Young adults may have a passion for mission and service or be gifted in the areas of music or finance or teaching.

While the Young Adult Ministry group is great, allowing young adults to live out their passion and gifts in other areas of the church gives them a deeper connection to the church as a whole, and they're more likely to remain active members even once they age out of the Young Adult Ministry group.



\*Cheryl Cook, left, is Associate Director, Information Resourcing Ministry, for the BWC, and staff liaison for Young Adult Ministry.



# Microsite at Brook Hill brings in new people

By MELISSA LAUBER  
UMConnection Staff

THE CONGREGATION AT Brook Hill UMC in Frederick is undergoing a mission shift, says its pastor, the Rev. Wade Martin, moving “beyond success to significance.”

The shift centers in part around a new concept in church growth: microsites.

Microsites, in the parlance of church planters, are mini-campuses that connect unique communities with worship and discipleship.

At Brook Hill, it’s not the definitions that are important. It’s the lives of the 214 homeless people who have connected with God at the Blue Side Tavern on Saturday mornings during the past year.

They call it the Brook Hill Downtown Fellowship.

Each week, about 35 homeless people who tend to gather in that area of Frederick and the more suburban Brook Hill members, meet in a side room at the bar to sing, pray, listen to a message about faith, talk together at tables and share a buffet meal.

The gathering is intentionally low-tech and flexible, with a focus on relationship. Because of the transitional nature of Frederick’s homeless community, people tend to come and go – sometimes even in the middle of worship, said Martin. About 38 percent of those who meet each week are homeless, 37 percent are African American, 15 percent are children, some struggle with addictions.

The vision for the microsite fellowship comes from the Rev. Gary Hicks, Brook Hill’s pastor of outreach.

Hicks has had a long-time interest in missional communities. A few years ago, he was spending time in mission and conversation with people at Frederick’s rescue mission, where they feed about 300 meals a day.

He wanted to find a way for Brook Hill to join this ministry, but he didn’t want to replicate existing efforts.

“We prayed, ‘Is there a piece of the jigsaw puzzle that we can add to the big picture?’” Hicks said.

He kept praying.

“I asked God, ‘is this something you want?’ I can spin a new vision each week,” said Hicks. “The question was, is it my plan or God’s plan?”

Events began to unfold as he gathered a 10-member team to explore possibilities. When the owner of the Blue Side Tavern offered them a rent-free room and a \$10 per person buffet, the puzzle pieces fell into place.

On Oct. 10, 2015, the first worship gathering was held there.

People with all different religious tendencies sit around the tables on Saturdays.

Marley Hardin, the waitress, is unchurched, but requests to work when Brook Hill worships.

Almost everyone has a “God consciousness,” Hicks said. They’re not shy about “God conversations.”

Three of the homeless men joined members of Brook Hill on an April mission trip to rebuild homes damaged by flooding in Crisfield, Md. A Brook Hill member has started a woman’s support group on Tuesday mornings.

“A part of you is always looking for a dramatic



The Rev. Gary Hicks stands at Brook Hill UMC’s microsite: the Blue Side Tavern in Frederick.

conversion story,” said Martin. “Those are few and far between.” For him, a big part of the microsite is being connected. “It’s hard to quantify, but there is clearly a sense of joy and a hope. Even in the midst of some of the stuff folks are going through, they can find joy in their lives. They can still be hope-filled.”

Not everyone at the more affluent main Yellow Springs campus of Brook Hill is aware of the microsite and its ministry, although a car-full of homeless men do drive out for Sunday worship.

For Martin, this is okay. As the senior pastor, he’s intent on helping everyone grow in discipleship. If a lay person expresses interest in a ministry, the staff becomes encouragers and helps them find resources.

Ideas for other microsites are in the works. There is excitement about possibilities with Hispanic ministries. But Hicks and Martin are careful to remain open to the movement of the Holy Spirit and avoid any preconceived ideas.

For example, for a while, Hicks tried holding a similar service on Friday mornings. It wasn’t nearly as successful and he eventually stopped it. “Our philosophy is let’s try things. If they don’t work, move on.”

“We don’t want the size of the shoe to determine how big the foot grows,” they both say.

But they do find great joy in the growth.

Recently, there was a fight outside the bar, near the door to enter the room where they meet for worship.

One of the bar patrons said a fight took place outside the church. “Did you hear that, they called it a church,” Hicks said.

But the pair is also certain their microsite is not the space. “It’s not about a building. It’s a movement, it’s the people of God,” said Martin. “Discipleship is about making life-changing contributions in the Kingdom of God.”

## A vision from Rev. Wade Martin

For the past six months or so I have had a stirring within my soul regarding the future direction of Brook Hill UMC. By all measures (tangible and intangible), Brook Hill is a successful church and a great place to call a church home. Yet the “still small voice” of God is telling me it is time for Brook Hill to move beyond successful to significant.

During my July vacation in the Adirondack Mountains, I spent some time reflecting on what this may mean for us. Moving from success to significance is an intentional shift away from just achieving goals as a church (i.e. increasing worship attendance, new members, baptisms, serving others, etc.), which is all good, to being a life-changing influence in the kingdom of God, which is a broader God-sized vision offering great potential to transform the world.

I believe Brook Hill is uniquely gifted and positioned right now to begin an intentional wider and deeper journey toward kingdom significance focusing on making the world the way God wants it to be.

One of the unique aspects of this mission shift is that we will seek to partner with other believers, businesses (and the like), just as we have with the Blue Side Tavern and worship leaders for our Brook Hill Downtown Christian Fellowship. Our intent will be to remain fluid so as to freely move to where God leads us.

The congregation of Brook Hill Church also needs to begin thinking in terms of Brook Hill being much larger and broader than the Yellow Springs Campus, although the hub of ministry will remain in Yellow Springs as Brook Hill Church nurtures and sends out disciples to make more disciples. This means as Brook Hill moves forward in ministry, we will have a much greater impact on the kingdom of God by being a life-changing movement of the Holy Spirit seeking to connect people to Jesus in body, mind and spirit. To God be the glory.

You’re Invited

To A Service of Celebration  
of the Assignment of

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling

To the Washington Area of The United Methodist Church

Saturday, October 1, 2016, 1pm  
First United Methodist Church  
6201 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, MD 20782

Reception to follow