

UMC Connection

Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church • Becoming fully alive in Christ and making a difference in a diverse and ever-changing world • www.bwcumc.org • Volume 27, Issue 10 • November 2016



The Rev. Gerard “Gerry” Green, right, receives a United Methodist Hymnal and a Book of Worship as one of the signs of being a District Superintendent from the Rev. JW Park, Dean of the Cabinet, during installation services Oct. 23. Green serves the Greater Washington District; Park is DS of the Central Maryland District.

New DS creates housing fund

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

WORSHIPPERS AT THE Installation Service for the Rev. Gerry Green knew this wasn't a normal service when they walked in the door of Christ UMC in Washington, D.C. They were greeted with small, white cardboard boxes and told to assemble a snack box for unhoused neighbors. Each box also contained a note: “We hope this brings some light into your day. It's a simple way of showing you God's love in a practical way, no strings attached.”

Green, the new superintendent of the Greater Washington District, was welcomed to his position in front of family, friends and colleagues by Bishop LaTrelle Easterling Oct. 23.

Green stressed “family” as the theme of the two-hour worship service, noting that even in his own family, “we don't always get along, but when times are tight, we can depend on each other.”

Preaching from 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, where Paul writes about the various parts of the body, Green said that the body of Christ is called to break down walls of division and share the love of God for the transformation of the world.

“We are family,” he sang at the beginning of his sermon. Soon, the entire congregation joined in the 1979 song from Sister Sledge.

“Greater Washington District,” he asked during his sermon, “can we be the body of Christ? Will you accept the challenge to go out of your way and show Christ's love to someone you wouldn't ordinarily love that we might become a transforming force in the world?”

Green said that in being the body of Christ, it's not about being where we are comfortable or even safe, noting that on the cross, Christ was neither.

“We may need to bleed a little,” he said, “in being where the least, the last and the lost are. Our mission is not about our comfort and how we've been blessed. Our

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Online community redefines church

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

WHEN FAITHPOINT UMC, which currently meets in a middle school in Urbana, decided to start a second campus, they abandoned traditional thinking – they even rejected the idea of having a building – choosing to create an online faith community that defies most current models of “church.”

The new FaithPoint Online, which draws a community together on Saturdays at 7 p.m. via computer, tablets and cell phones, had its initial, but informal, start during a storm two years ago.

The Rev. Chris Bishop, pastor of FaithPoint, was learning how to best do ministry with an unconventional congregation at what some have lovingly called “the Land of Misfit Christians.” Some of the members had been hurt by the church, others were exploring hard questions, some were in need of grace, and others just liked the freedom and innovation that came with worshipping in a middle school, where “church” was built and dismantled each Sunday.

FaithPoint is one of the Baltimore-Washington Conference's successful new church starts, chartered in 2004 under the leadership of the Rev. Matt Poole, now at Glen Mar UMC.

“Different is kind of our jam,” Bishop said. “Our focus tends to be on doing ministry for the next five people who will come through the door, rather than those who have been there a while.”

At this same time, Ben Trawick, a member of FaithPoint, was excited about putting some of his gifts as a professional videographer and editor to work as an expression of faith.

Trawick had noted that there were “no sacred cows,” at FaithPoint. “People were willing to move things around and do things differently to best serve God.”

Because they worshipped in a Frederick County public

See Faithpoint, page 5

Emory breaks new ground in D.C.

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

OCT. 7, EMORY Fellowship in Washington, D.C., broke ground on being a new kind of church.

Founded on a vision that began in the soul of the Rev. Joseph Daniels as he stood waiting in line at Tony's Martinizing across the street from the church, the new \$56 million Beacon Center has been on the drawing board and finding the right partners and financing for eight years.

At a groundbreaking ceremony for the new facility, which will nestle the renovated church in the middle of an affordable housing complex, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, and other political, community and church leaders “turned some dirt,” on this new reality.

The 175,000 square-foot Beacon Center, located at 6100 Georgia Ave. in Washington, will include 99 units of affordable housing, eight units of transitional housing,



See Beacon, page 4

... well said

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

BY MANDY SAYERS
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

A MIRACLE, AT FIRST, appears to be a big event — a weeping statue, a sign in the stars, even a grilled cheese sandwich with the face of Jesus on it. A miracle is highly unlikely and “unnatural” in the plain course of events, folks will tell you. Something God alone can do. A miracle. A contact-the-media, no-other-explanation, miracle.

You’d think there’d be precious few miracles in this age where nearly everything has an explanation. But just between us, miracles don’t turn out to be rare events at all, at least not from where I’m sitting. Miracles often wear ordinary clothes unless they’re looked at with the eyes of faith, but once you put those faith spectacles on, miracles are everywhere.

A child born, anywhere, anytime, is a miracle (read Daryl Williams column opposite this one). A child adopted or fostered is a miracle. The therapist who makes room on a full docket of patients to take the boy with severe anxiety is a miracle. Angry voices that soften to forgiveness are miracles. Reconciliation is a miracle. The prodigal child welcomed home with an embrace is a miracle. A hungry person fed, anywhere, anytime, is a miracle. A miracle happens when World Series droughts end (something that’s going to happen either way, as I write this).

Miracles, like sunrises and sunsets, happen every day if you are paying attention to see them. In ministry, I’m up to my ears in miracles every day. I can hardly swing a stick around here without hitting a miracle. Just the other day, one of our church folk was shopping for our monthly meal at the shelter. She was buying a LOT of potato salad. The cashier said, “Wow...that’s...impressive.” Our shopper said it was for the shelter. The cashier gave the name of the place and said, “I used to live there. That shelter gave me a job and a lead on a house. They saved my life. It was a miracle.”

Ministry is all about being part of somebody’s miracle and calling it by its name. Miracles are everywhere if we just have eyes to see them. Miracles are just names for places that God acts, and our God is a God that stays busy.

May your November be full of miracles, for you and for others who need them.

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



“DO YOU BELIEVE in miracles?”

The year was 1980 and it was the voice of Al Michaels on the broadcast of the Winter Olympics as the United States hockey team defeated the seemingly unbeatable Soviet Union hockey team. Team USA had the youngest, most inexperienced team in the Olympics, and they were facing the juggernaut of the Soviet team who had won six of the last seven gold medals in hockey. As they entered the game, nobody gave Team USA a chance to win. They were, at best, playing for second place, but as the final seconds ticked off, there it was: Team USA 4, Team USSR 3, and Michaels asking the world, “Do you believe in miracles?”

What is often missed in the euphoria of the moment is the next word that Michaels said. That word was “Yes!” After seeing that hockey game, Michaels was able to exclaim that he does believe in miracles.

I have always believed in miracles, but last week I got to see one for myself. It was not water to wine, or walking on water. It was not USA over USSR, and it was not the fact that the Chicago Cubs are playing Cleveland in the World Series (although I do think that counts as a miracle as well).

No, last week I stood in a small room at Holy Cross Hospital and watched my wife give birth to our first child. Nine months ago, we were a happy couple, and in the blink of an eye we became a merry trio. At 3:59 a.m., we were Erin and Daryl. At 4:01 a.m., we were Mom and Dad.

There is no way to explain what I witnessed; there is no logic to what happened and I am absolutely flabbergasted that this little human being is now my wife’s and my responsibility.

All I can say is it was a miracle.

I have only been a father for a week now, but the one thing I do know is, like Michaels, I believe in miracles. I believe that the odds are never too long, the situation never too bleak, and things are never too bad for God to step in and do the unbelievable and the miraculous.

So one day I am going to sit my son Ryan down and show him all the miracles in the Book of John. I am going to show him the YouTube video of the end of the 1980 gold medal hockey game, and when he asks me if I believe in miracles I am going to tell him, “Son, of course I do, I’m looking at and talking to a miracle right now. You don’t know it yet, but you believe in miracles too.”

... well said

... well said

EVENTS

Pre-Advent Day Apart Nov. 15, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Brookhill UMC, Frederick

Clergy are invited to a time apart with Bishop LaTrelle Easterling to focus on the season of Advent. Rev. Robert A. Hill, Dean of the Marsh Chapel at Boston University will speak. Register at: bit.ly/2f6aGup

Retirement Seminar Nov. 17, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. BWC Mission Center in Fulton

All clergy interested in learning more about retirement are encouraged to attend the BWC’s Pre-Retirement Session discussion which will cover pension plans, the housing allowance exclusion, how to retire, and the retiree health plan. The cost is \$15, and includes lunch. Learn more and register at bwcumc.org/event/871253-2016-11-17-pre-retirement-seminar/

#Giving Tuesday is Nov. 29

After Black Friday and Cyber Monday comes Giving Tuesday, an opportunity to help others through the gift of your time, donations, goods or your voice. Last year, the UMC raised \$2.8 million on this one day. The denominations observance this year is “Give, Light, Give Love, Give Life.” Learn more at

www.umcmmission.org/give. Learn more about giving to BWC Advance Special Ministries at bwcumc.org/ministries/mission-outreach/bwc-advance-specials.

ROCK 2016 Feb. 3-5, 2017 Convention Center, Ocean City

This annual youth retreat will feature speaker Preston Centuolo. Registration is \$50. Learn more and register at www.bwcumc.org/rock.

Leadership Days In each region

Save the Date: Registration for Leadership Days begins later this month. The dates for these important learning opportunities are:
Baltimore Region: Feb. 11
Southern Region: Feb. 11 and March 4
Western Region: March 4
Washington Region: March 11

Annual Conference 2017 May 31 - June 2

Resolutions to be considered by the 2017 Annual Conference Session are due to Conference Secretary Cynthia Taylor at ctaylor@bwcumc.org before Jan. 15.

The Young Adult Council encourages and equips the Young Adult Ministry in the local churches of our Annual Conference. They are excited to partner with local congregations.

Keepin It Real
November 11 at 7p.m.
A time for young adults to gather and discuss relevant topics such as police and community relations.
Asbury UMC - 10420 Guilford Road, Jessup, MD

ONE LOVE
A NIGHT OF UNITY AND LOVE THROUGH PRAISE & WORSHIP
DECEMBER 10 - 7PM @ INSPIREDC
1459 COLUMBIA RD NW, WASHINGTON, DC 20019
www.YACOneLOVE.eventbrite.com

UMConnection

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

After blaze, Northwood-Appold UMC returns home

By ALISON BURDETT
UMConnection Staff

THREE YEARS AGO, on the morning after a devastating fire swept through Northwood-Appold UMC in Baltimore, the Rev. Cecil Gray promised to rebuild. On Oct. 16, Gray stood with two bishops and a congregation of close to 200, in the restored sanctuary, offering thanks and praise to God.

On Dec. 27, 2013, a four-alarm fire broke out at Northwood-Appold UMC in Baltimore. More than 100 fire fighters responded with 16 fire trucks, pouring eight hours of water on the 2,000-degree blaze in an attempt to save the church.

At the time, local news stations reported on the miracle of the cross standing over the collapsed roof. The cross survived the fire unharmed and now sits atop the brand new steeple of this resurrected church.

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, episcopal leader of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, and Bishop Felton Edwin May, who served the conference from 1996 to 2004, attended as a witness to the congregation for its steadfast perseverance.

Noting the faithfulness and abiding presence of God, Bishop Easterling preached on “the prayers of the righteous.” She led the people in honoring God for enabling efforts to restore the church.

Prayer, she said, should never be seen as a last resort. It should be at the center of our lives, morning, day and night. And, God, she cautioned, should never be treated as a “cosmic bellhop,” delivering on our wishes.

In all prayer, the bishop preached, we ask that God’s will be done — “not my will, but God’s will be done.” She emphasized that religion’s role is to “de-center the ego,” not pander to its desires. The prayers of the righteous are those who pray it over to God and leave it there. “We have to have enough trust to leave it there,” she said.



The Rev. Cecil Gray, left, offers a prayer during Northwood-Appold’s first service in their restored church, while Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, in white robe, joins in. The church suffered major fire damage in 2013 (inset photo).

That trust, that faith can accomplish great things. Looking around the new building, the bishop offered thanks. “Here we are,” she said, “standing on the promises of God.”

Throughout the service, Gray continually took a deep breath with his eyes towards the heavens mouthing the words, “thank you.”

He noted that Northwood-Appold changes the words on the sign outside the church weekly, and the day before the fire, they changed it to just one word, “humble.” He said it was as if God was preparing them. That word is still on the sign. It also lives in the faith of its people.

The rebuilding was not always easy, Gray

admitted. Insurance complications held up the work.

But, Gray said, God sent an angel named Jai Seunarine, CEO of Jai Medical Centers.

Seunarine had heard about the church and toured it in the dead of winter. The roof and windows were gone and snow and icy rain lay knee-deep in the sanctuary.

Seunarine saw this, made one phone call and the insurance money came forth almost immediately. “I don’t know who he was talking to, but God was listening,” Gray said.

As part of the worship, the congregation thanked the Baltimore City Fire

Department, honoring them with a plaque in recognition of their dedication and service.

The idea of persevering with God’s help was also present in the children’s sermon, when high school student Taylor Johnson gave the children pieces of paper with the hashtag #NGU on them. She told the story from Luke 18:1-8 of the widow seeking justice.

Just like the widow, Northwood-Appold never gave up, she told the children. “We never gave up, and look what God has blessed us with.”

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Mother and pastor discover astounding ‘connection’

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

“GOD IS ALL over this thing,” is the response most people offer when they hear the story about the Rev. Meredith Wilkens-Arnold and the speaker at Calvary UMC’s Stephen Ministry celebration.

They also marvel at the wonderfully coincidental connectional system that is The United Methodist Church. But mostly, they come back to talking about God, who never

ceases to amaze.

The story begins when the Rev. Broulio Torres, associate pastor at Calvary UMC in Annapolis, was putting together a presentation during worship to celebrate and promote Stephen Ministry, a program designed to equip laity to provide Christ-centered care to people who are hurting.

Amy Maynard, a former member of Calvary, had a powerful testimony of how Stephen Ministers had changed her and her husband’s lives 24 years ago, following the death of their 4-month-old son from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Because of her experiences, Maynard, who had moved to North Carolina, became a Stephen Minister and, after being invited by Torres, was happy to return on Oct. 23 to share her story.

Maynard spoke about redemption, about how Stephen ministers helped her re-discover hope and purpose, but she also shared the story of Ryan, her little boy.

As she spoke, Wilkens-Arnold began to feel an odd sensation creeping over her as she realized she was connected to Maynard in a way only God could design.

In 1992, Wilkens-Arnold was in seminary, doing her clinical pastoral education in the emergency room of Anne Arundel Medical Center. She was alerted that a “non-responsive” infant was coming in.

When the child arrived, the emergency room doctor and pediatrician told Wilkens-Arnold that there was “no hope for this baby.”

“They looked at me, as the chaplain, saying ‘do your thing,’” she said. “They

handed me the baby while they worked on him. I kept asking, ‘Where’s his mother?’ and was told, ‘She’s on the way.’ I prayed for her and prayed for the baby.”

The baby was Ryan Maynard. Amy was his mother.

As Ryan’s life slipped away, Wilkens-Arnold was instructed to take him to a helicopter for transport to a neo-natal intensive care unit.

“I was profoundly frightened,” she said. “The medical staff was relying on me in that moment. I knew we were all relying on God.”

“I absolutely felt the presence of God,” she remembers. “On the way to the helicopter the medical staff wanted to put Ryan in an isolet, but she was insistent that he be held. She instructed the paramedics on the helicopter, ‘Don’t put him down.’”

“You have to hold him,” she insisted. Over the years as a pastor, that’s a lesson Wilkens-Arnold has learned time and again. “We have to be held,” she said. “I knew that. As people of God, we have to be held.”

Wilkens-Arnold and Amy Maynard marveled when they realized the connection — as did others around them.

As part of Ryan’s legacy, the Maynards had set up a fund to provide cradle crosses for any child baptized at Calvary UMC. The nursery at the church is also named after him. Wilkens-Arnold had written Maynard a note in September, thanking her for three crosses that were given out, and she wrote a note a short while ago informing Maynard that a cross had been given to a couple who experienced a miscarriage.



Rev. Meredith Wilkens-Arnold

When she wrote, she had no idea of their connection. She was only aware of the beautiful legacy created in Ryan’s name and the way it blessed other people who never knew him.

The story of the coincidental connection between the two women has spread through the church. Wilkens-Arnold prays that Maynard and her husband will continue to know that they are held through every place and space of their lives and that they recognize how much love Ryan was able to bring to the world.”

“This is what God can do and what God does in the lives of people,” Wilkens-Arnold said. “This is not my story. It’s definitely God’s story.”

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Part of Ryan Maynard’s legacy to give cradle crosses as baptism gifts.

Beacon: Church builds \$56M housing complex

From page 1

office and commercial space, community areas, underground parking and a renovated church building, explained Hazel Broadnax, president of Emory Beacon of Light, the nonprofit associated with the church.

“Patience, persistence and prayer” were the key phrases Broadnax and others used to describe the journey toward making the Beacon Center a reality. “We want to continue to be a beacon on this hill, to the community,” she said. “This is a God-sized dream. Today is a beginning.”

The mayor joined in the celebration of the Beacon Center project, in part, because it was the one that took the D.C. Housing Production Trust Fund over its \$100 million goal for this year. Bowser has pledged to invest more than \$100 million each year to produce and preserve affordable housing in a city that is experiencing substantial gentrification.

Bowser worked with Emory on this project before she was mayor, serving as the councilwoman for Ward 4. After becoming mayor, she said, “we set out to ensure that all residents – no matter their background, income or ZIP code – could afford to live in the District.” This unprecedented amount of investment done in such a timely manner is ensuring that “real money is getting out the door that will allow over 2,600 residents to call the District home.”

Affordable housing is essential for people like teachers and firefighters, whose salaries do not always allow them to afford homes in the areas where they work, Daniels said. Affordable housing is available to those whose income level is 60 percent or less of the average median income in D.C. The project will also provide eight housing units for people moving from homelessness. Along with a home will come “wrap-around services,” that help residents move to health and wholeness.

For Daniels and the Emory congregation,

church has always been best outside of the sanctuary, serving the community. Salvation, he told the more than 200 people gathered for the groundbreaking, has its roots in the Greek word, “sozo,” which means to be healed, delivered, rescued, or to be made whole.

The church, Daniels said, is called to provide spiritual wholeness, but also physical, mental, relational, financial and every other type of wholeness. “To be anything less would not be true or faithful to what Christ died and rose for us to be,” he said.

Throughout the ceremony, Daniels gave praise, honor and glory to God. “Look what God has done!” he proclaimed.

But in order to accomplish such big ministry and navigate the incredibly complex maze of financing and development, the church had to work in partnership with the government and public and private sectors of the community, Daniels said. With such partnerships, all working for the common good, “anything is possible.”

Emory’s primary partner in this endeavor has been Community Builders, a national nonprofit real estate developer. Its representative for the Beacon Center project is Jacqueline Alexander, director of development for the Mid-Atlantic region.

Alexander likened the relationship between Emory Fellowship and Community Builders to a marriage. Both partners are in this for many years, are willing to put down deep roots into the neighborhood, and are committed to a shared purpose of “building and sustaining strong communities for people of all incomes to achieve their full potential.”

Emory developed a multitude of partnerships to create the Beacon Center. At the ground-breaking, Broadnax and Daniels offered thanks to nine private and public groups for their funding of the project and 10 organizations for their work as partners.



An artist's rendering of the Beacon Center includes the church, center, along with affordable housing, retail and community space and underground parking.

One of these partners is the United Methodist Development Fund, which provided a \$3.2 million loan for the renovation of the church. While the historic front of the church and narthex will be preserved, extensive renovations are planned, included expanding the sanctuary so that it seats 500 worshippers.

The housing, commercial and office space will wrap around the church building, which will stand as the heart of the Beacon Center.

For Emory Fellowship’s associate pastor, the Rev. Carey James, having the church at the heart of things is how it should be. Currently, the church reaches out to about 100 homeless children in a nearby school. James said he envisions the Beacon Center perhaps providing housing for some of those children.

The church also has people from about 30 nations, James said. Many of these people like to share the food from their

homelands, which has created a culture of cooking and hospitality at the church. The Beacon Center will build upon this, providing a culinary training center for people interested in learning to cook for restaurants. The culinary program will be operated by DC Union and DC Central Kitchens.

Such ministry “stretches a congregation’s faith,” James said. “God shows up.”

The Rev. Gerry Green, superintendent of the Greater Washington District, applauded the ministry of the Emory Fellowship members, who are doing church in “bold, new ways that honor God. They do not set themselves apart from the community,” he said. “As a church, they’re seeking to meet all the needs of the community, their spiritual needs, but also, for food, clothing, shelter, health, education, social needs, jobs. “That’s what the church should be. They are a light for the community.”

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Academy adds value to make a difference for clergy

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

EVERY CHURCH HAS two things they want: More members and more money to get more members. The Mid-Atlantic Foundation is working on those two “things” through the creation of the Financial Leadership Academy (FLA). What started as a dream by the Foundation more than three years ago came to reality Oct. 18, as 58 clergy graduated from the first FLA.

Frank Robert, Associate Director of the Foundation, who has offices in the BWC’s Mission Center, said that they had attended national Foundation meetings in the past and learned that pastors often had a hard time dealing with finances and money.

“Once we reached \$80 million in assets,” Robert said, “we said, ‘We’re large enough to do something about that,’ so we take part of our own profit, if you will, from the money that we manage for churches, and we plow it back into this whole program.”

The Foundation pays for about 95 percent of the cost of the FLA, he said, including the speakers, resources and food. Participants pay for CEUs and overnight lodging.

The FLA, he said, is like an executive MBA. The two-year program, which meets face-to-face six times and has monthly conference calls, is designed to teach pastors “how to do finances the right way. Instead of (churches) just surviving, financially,” Robert said, “they are thriving.”

The Rev. Bruce Jones, pastor of LaPlata

UMC, offered his testimony to the changes he’s seen in his church as he participated in the FLA.

“I was not quite sure what it was going to be like when I first got in,” he said, “but each unit provided practical and useful material that, many times in my car, I couldn’t wait to get back to my church to share.”

Jones said, for example, that the use of online giving has made a big difference in the life of his church. They’ve also established a gift acceptance policy, created an investment advisory team, and decided to have a professional auditor look at the books every five years.

Perhaps the biggest change is in Jones himself.

“My perspective, even my comfort, about asking people to make legacy-style gifts ... I’ve really become more comfortable with the idea of it, even giving the ask myself,” he said.

The Rev. Alicia Vanisko, pastor of Linden Heights UMC in Parkville, is starting in the second round of the FLA. She’s doing the FLA because she recognizes financial leadership is one of her growing edges in ministry.

“I’m looking to shore up a certain skill set,” she said. “I’m hoping to learn a whole lot about what I don’t know.”

One of the reasons Vanisko is participating in the second FLA is because of a graduate of the first, the Rev. Mary Ka Kanahan, pastor of St. John United Church in Columbia.

“This has been one of the best professional

development investments I’ve ever made,” said Kanahan. “Starting with a review of my own personal value and theology of money, a spiritual autobiography of the role money played in my family of origin, becoming clearer and unapologetic about my principals and beliefs around money and being able to talk about that with my family and friends and congregation in an authentic way has been altering for me in terms of my confidence.”

Kanahan said that stewardship, while important and often about more than money, “is not about less than money, either. Our congregants and our community look to us to lead in all areas of life,” she said. “We have to be able to talk and able to lead in this difficult area.”

The Rev. Andy Lunt, a retired Elder in the BWC, served as the Dean of the Academy. His job, he said, was to recruit students, leaders to facilitate peer groups, and presenters.

“FLA is an opportunity to help pastors grow to be strong financial leaders in their congregations,” Lunt said, “and to recognize that’s not something that’s in conflict with being the spiritual leader. It’s actually a part of helping people understand that everything we have is a gift from God.”

One of the keys to the Academy, Lunt said, that makes it different from other continuing education programs along the same line is that every participant created, developed and implemented an action plan for her/his congregation. Each participant is also in a peer group, he said, composed of six to eight pastors, who hold each other

accountable and offer support.

“One of the greatest outcomes of the FLA,” Lunt said, “is that for many pastors, they’ve developed the confidence to talk to the congregation about money without feeling guilty or inadequate.”

Part of the FLA delves into personal finance, Lunt said, because it’s important the congregations know that good stewardship and financial practices aren’t just something the pastor preaches.

“In fact,” Lunt said, “we ask them: ‘How are they going to grow their own stewardship?’”

Lunt, who has retired twice (once from Glen Mar UMC and once from the conference), said he’s involved in the FLA because his heart is in the local church.

“When I would go, as Director of Congregational Development, the first question churches would ask was, ‘How do we reach more people?’ and ‘How do we get more money?’ The whole idea of the FLA is to create healthier churches and reach more people for Jesus.”

For now, the FLA is focused solely on clergy, Lunt said, but they are working on a prototype for a laity series. The success of the first Academy has spawned a second round, with 48 students registered, Lunt said.

“You put the seed in the ground and you water it, God blesses it and it keeps going,” Robert said. “We want to be one of those change-agents in United Methodism. We see this as a way to grow Methodism again.”

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Faithpoint: Creating worship without walls

From page 1

school, the church ended up closing when the school system shut down in the face of a major storm.

Both men realized this was an opportunity to try to do church online. Having a little time to plan, they decided to video the service in pieces, with people from

is “authenticity.”

With the online worship, “people are inviting us into their homes, into their lives,” said Bishop. He wanted to return the favor in the online worship, creating intimate, genuine online experiences – inviting people to draw up a seat at each other’s tables so that they can experience God together.

Throughout the service, a running chat rolls up the side of the computer screen. This one feature is completely unlike anything in traditional worship. “Imagine if every time someone had a thought they said it out loud,” Bishop said.

During one sequence, Trawick was seated in his living room, with his cat perched behind him. The worshippers noted the cat in the chat. “Is that cat real,” they wondered. When it moved, they noted it with a sense of glee.

About 50 people tune in on a typical Saturday – more than 300 join the online worship during blizzards and other events that close churches.

Some people question how much “community” can be experienced if people are not physically together, face-to-face, or if people online hide behind masks. Trawick and Bishop are quick to refute such concerns.

They believe it may be generational, but they’ve seen people of all ages sitting in the same pew every week, wearing masks with one another, and they’ve also experienced “gut-wrenching” profound conversations unfold online. The church has also started online study groups through Facebook. They’ve even done pastoral counseling

online, communicating in the ways that people feel most comfortable.

One of the challenges, they admit, is the stewardship surrounding this ministry. While people have opportunities to give online, they don’t always realize that online church isn’t free. A unified funding grant from the Baltimore-Washington Conference helps pay Trawick’s salary and the overhead is low. But they’re always looking for ways to expand and sustain the ministry.

They’ve also begun to share the lessons they’ve learned during the last year FaithPoint online has been officially in existence. They’ll tell you to hold the camera phone steady, and make sure to hold it in a horizontal position. But the important thing, they’ve found, is to be open to new and authentic opportunities for helping people to have real encounters with Jesus.

They’re intent on helping all people understand the breadth and depth of the Good News and online church is providing an interesting platform to do this. “Expanding and opening doors in this way furthers the understanding that grace and redemption are for everyone,” Bishop said. “When Wesley said, ‘the world is my parish,’ the online world is included.”

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Ben Trawick, left, and the Rev. Chris Bishop prepare for worship at FaithPoint. They’ve created a ground-breaking online worship community.

the congregation filming small snippets – like the welcome, music, Scripture reading, and such – on their smart phones.

Trawick edited the pieces together into a cohesive whole. In those initial efforts, a new faith community and new way of worship was born.

When one thinks of online church, two images tend to come to mind. The first tends to be slip-shod video, shot on a camera placed by someone at the very back of the church sanctuary to capture the worship experience. The second is slick and high in production value, produced by a multi-media team at a megachurch that views worship as an extravaganza.

The pair from FaithPoint rejected both of these approaches and worked, instead, to create a tone that matched the spirit of their congregation. Their guiding principle

New services are broadcast on the first and third Sunday of each month; encore services are posted on the second and fourth Sundays. The fifth Sunday is a different kind of experience that explores a topic or theme.

The service is hosted by a lead worshipper who guides the gathered community from point to point throughout the experience. Portions of the worship are filmed by the participants.

One worship leader lives on a farm and shoots with her animals in the background. Another couple cozily settles in on their couch as he plays guitar and she sings along. In a dramatic Scripture reading that involves Jesus and his disciples, the person reading the words of Jesus may be in an entirely different ZIP code as the disciples who respond.

By Chris Bishop:

FAITHPOINT
REAL PEOPLE | REAL LIFE | REAL FAITH

As people who know the Good News, we have been entrusted to be curators of God’s movement throughout time and creation. This story of life-giving love sweeps us off our feet and enfolds us into an adventurous dance with the Spirit.

Sadly, we often take The Story for granted and it’s upstaged by Hogwarts, The Shire, or the newest season of the Walking Dead.

We forget that God’s story, our story, is alive and moving today just as it was when bushes burned, donkeys talked and wee little men climbed trees to get a better look at Jesus.

Today, you and I are on center stage and have been invited to share this story in a way that is meaningful and relevant. This may come via e-mail, snapchat or over a cup of coffee. We must remember that Gospel is most effective when heard in our native language. For some that means in the context of their favorite app or from the safety of their desktop. Let’s be bold enough to put all that we are behind the telling of the greatest love story ever, so that others can’t help but find their mark on the stage with us.

For an example of the flow of the worship at FaithPoint online watch this demo on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/5AkpMPXzug0>

Green: Greater Washington welcomes new DS

From page 1

mission is to be a blessing to others.”

Families, he said, don’t always agree with one another, but they don’t have to be disagreeable in the process.

Green’s own family was on display during the service as brothers, grandchildren, children, and his 98-year old mother, Ida Pearl Green, brought signs of being a district superintendent. His mother, for example, along with his brothers M. Howard Bell and Vernon Green, gave him a Bible.

Green said that he picked the location for his installation service with at least two purposes in mind. Green said that in the regentrification of the community, expensive new condominiums are being built on one side of the street while so-called “affordable housing” exists on the other.

“This is where the church needs to be,” Green said. The other reason he picked Christ UMC is because it was the church’s

former pastor, the Rev. Adrienne Terry, who, sadly, introduced him to the district. On June 25 this year, Terry suddenly died. In her memory, Green has started, along

with others, the Adrienne Terry Fund for Affordable Housing, one of the issues she worked on as part of InspireDC.

Christie Latona, the Washington Region

Strategist, introduced the Fund with Green during the service. “There are 43 ZIP Codes in our district,” Latona said, “with 70 congregations. If 12 people from each church contributed \$43 per month – less than the price of a cup of coffee per day – we’d have a cash flow of \$36,000 per month, and more than \$430,000 annually.”

Are you willing, she asked, to give up that cup of coffee “so that others may have a roof over their head?” (Visit bwcumc.org to learn more or to contribute.)

The offering at the installation service was the start of the fund, and gathered more than \$2,200.

“Taking the church beyond the walls and into the community to engage the community in a way that will cause them the love of Christ excites me,” Green said during the reception following the service. “But it’s not so much about what we say, but about what we do. When we go out beyond the walls, we need to make certain that we’re going as the body of Christ.”

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The Rev. Gerry Green, center, holds his grandson while Green’s mother, Ida Pearl Green, right, shares a laugh with family members.



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bwcumc.org/ROCK

Clergy CEUs: an updated policy

By BRUCE A. JONES*



WHEN THE BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON Conference switched computer systems from Gateway to Arena, not everything went exactly as planned. Due to a technical glitch, the record of credits for continuing education for clergy were lost.

That's the bad news.

Why? Because every ordained pastor under appointment in the BWC, per the 2012 Book of Discipline, in order to maintain their status as "fully appointable," must earn eight continuing education units (CEUs) in a four-year period. Each "unit" equals 10 direct contact hours in a training, learning or educational class or setting that is approved by a seminary, conference, or an agency of the church that has authority to issue CEUs.

Now the good news: grace abounds. Earning eight CEUs for the 2013-2016 quadrennium is not going to be counted or required to be considered for an appointment.

At the Board of Ordained Ministry (BOOM) meeting in September, the Board voted overwhelmingly to grant grace concerning the tallying of CEUs for a couple of reasons. First, in the transition from the Gateway system to the Arena system, all the records related to tracking continuing

education were lost. Second, since the days of our having "Discipler Groups," when conference-led monthly trainings fulfilled our continuing education needs, the conference and the Board of Ordained Ministry have not emphasized the importance of reaching the Discipline-required total of eight units of continuing education by Dec. 31 of this year.

It was also agreed, at that BOOM meeting, that beginning in the new quadrennium, 2017-2020, all pastors will be expected to keep up with and report their CEUs earned. There will be a place on the Charge Conference forms in the Pastor's Report to list your continuing education events, who sponsored them, and how many credits you earned. This will begin with the charge conferences of 2017. There will also be a stronger encouragement placed on the sponsoring agencies and institutions to provide certificates of completion and credit.

If clergy have any questions, they may contact me, Bruce Jones, at bajones15@gmail.com.

**Rev. Bruce A. Jones is pastor of LaPlata UMC and Chair of the Continuing Education Sub-committee of the BWC Board of Ordained Ministry.*

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Mount Zion UMC celebrates 200 years as D.C.'s oldest black church



As a call to worship, the pastor and choir of Mt. Zion in Georgetown danced down the aisle, full of the 200 years of joy and courage that marked their anniversary as the oldest black church in Washington, D.C. The year-long celebration culminated in worship Oct 16, as the Rev. Johnsie Cogman shared stories of how the congregation refused to be contained in the balcony of nearby Dumbarton Methodist Church, how the church cemetery served as a stop on the underground railroad for those escaping slavery, and how the congregation stands today committed to addressing the physical and spiritual needs of those in Georgetown and beyond. Above, Cogman serves Communion to Barbara Ricks Thompson, who, in 1972, served as the first president of the denomination's General Commission on the Status and Role of Women.

150 years and moving forward

GERMANTOWN – Trinity UMC celebrated its 150th anniversary Sept. 25. The members and friends marked the milestone by completing 150 days of prayer for Germantown, completing more than 1,500 hours of community service, and collecting more than 1,500 pounds of food for Germantown HELP.

The celebration was attended by many present and former congregants as well as District Superintendent J.W. Park, and several former Trinity pastors.

The Rev. Bonnie Scott acknowledged and gave thanks for the blessings of the past 150 years, and set an agenda for moving forward and building on that legacy by leading the church on a two-year capital campaign, called "It's Time."

It's off to a good start, by funding 11 youth and five adults for a mission trip to people in need in Western Maryland.

Volunteering – a way to celebrate

NEW WINDSOR – The Rev. Roger Burtner, a retired BWC missionary, celebrated his 90th birthday Oct. 18 by leading a group of 16 volunteers on a mission project to work at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor. They spent a six-hour day inspecting the seven items in health kits assembled for distribution throughout the world when disasters strike, including in the United States.

Ten days earlier, he had assembled a similar group to help with quality checking and pricing of weavings, carvings, baskets, jewelry and art work made by Third World artisans for sale through the Church World Service agency SERRV.

Burtner began recruiting volunteers and volunteering himself at the Service Center in the 1950s. "At that time, we worked sorting good used clothing to be shipped by CWS to Western Europe that had been devastated by Allied bombings in World War II," he said. "Now 60 years later, I'm still recruiting four teams a year to do a Workday in New Windsor."

To explore volunteer possibilities for your church, contact Burtner at reb21756@msn.com.

Bus driver is hero

BELTSVILLE – Queens Chapel UMC honored church member Renita Smith as a "home town hero," joining others who praised the bus driver, whose story went viral.

On Sept. 12, the bus she was driving caught fire. She got all 20 children from Glenarden Woods Elementary off the bus safely. "Ms. Smith saved my life," said Mikhalis Ferrier, who was on the bus. "Then she went back on the burning bus to make sure everyone is okay."

Smith sees herself not as a hero, but as just another mother who would do anything for her kids. "When I'm driving them, they're my children until I drop them off to their biological parents," she told ABC. "I have to handle each child with care, as a mommy would her own, so that's what I did. That's what I hope any human being would do for any child."

Eugene Otto Memorial Fund awards given

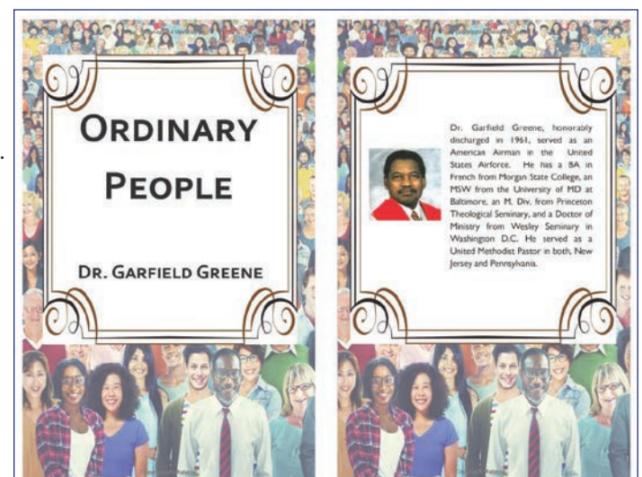


GAITHERSBURG – Four churches from the Washington Region received an award from the Eugene Otto Memorial Fund, administered by the Mid-Atlantic Foundation, on Nov. 1. Vivian Otto was on hand to give out the awards.

The four churches, Salem UMC in Brookeville, Gaither UMC in Sykesville, Albright Memorial in Washington, D.C., and Cheverly UMC in Cheverly, were chosen for their ministries dedicated to serving their communities.

The Eugene Otto Fund is designated to assist churches with a combined worship attendance of 250 or fewer in the Gaithersburg, Rockville and Bethesda areas.

"Vivian Otto is a great example of generosity," said Frank Robert with the Foundation. "We should all be so vibrant at 91."



Rev. Dr. Garfield Greene, United Methodist pastor, writes a heartwarming story about how Ordinary People have been touched by God and how it has changed their lives for the better.

A great holiday gift available on Amazon, Kindle and Kindle unlimited.

BWC team among first to visit Haiti after violent storm

KATIE BISHOP*

NEW HOPE UMC in Brunswick has been going to Haiti for the last five years. While initially the congregation served in other places, the rural mountains of Furcy, Haiti, have been our home for the last three trips as we worked to build relationships with the congregation and church leadership.

Our trip in late October had been planned for some time, but after Hurricane Matthew and UMCOR's request for mission teams to stand down, we were in limbo. Furcy is not close to the most devastated parts of Haiti, and both the people of Furcy and the Methodist Guest House leadership in Petionville assured the team we would be safe and asked us to please come.

With that green light, our team packed suitcases full of medical supplies, vitamins and protein bars, and prayed for protection and guidance as we set off, with support from several local BWC churches: Good Shepherd, Chase, and the Jefferson/Doubs Charge.

The five-member team – all women – noticed a difference in the landscape even before the plane landed. While mudslides and erosion have plagued this country that has little forestation, further damage by the hurricane could be seen. On the way to the Methodist Guest House, children lined the streets begging for food or a dollar. At the Guest House, the team surprisingly learned they were the first team to arrive there since the hurricane. Several teams had cancelled and two were due in shortly.

Before heading to Furcy, we learned about the struggle that is just beginning for Haiti. Mr. Brulan, the head of the Guest House in Petionville, had just returned from Jeremie (an 8-hour drive) where the Methodist Church of Haiti had been distributing food kits for about 2,200 families every 10 days. These kits, which cost \$20 each, feed a family of six for about 7 to 10 days.

The destruction in Jeremie and places on the Southern peninsula of Haiti is catastrophic. Churches, schools, clinics,

orphanages, crops, farm animals and homes were destroyed. We were told that not one banana tree was left standing.

With little access to food and clean water, cholera and other illness is growing. Jeremie and places near it are what one missionary called “the breadbasket of Haiti” – where much of the food for the country of Haiti was produced. Famine and high prices are imminent as they struggle to feed an already struggling community.

The mission team, led by Patty Thornton, accomplished much of the work we had initially planned when we scheduled the trip last April. The community of Furcy had a great need for a motorcycle to transport food to the more remote villages, a medical transport for those who had to travel to the hospital, and for the pastor who had to previously walk 6 to 8 hours one way to reach some of the churches on his five-church circuit. After partnering with a local American Legion Riders group to do a fundraiser, the team purchased a motorcycle to leave with the community.

New Hope also fed the Furcy church a community meal on Sunday and distributed rice and beans for families to take home. We left funds to feed the other rural communities on the circuit, worked with a group of young women on producing items to be sold in the U.S. to sustain their families, and visited the school where each class learned the song “Jesus Loves Me.”

The team helped address some of the devastation caused by Hurricane Matthew. The team replaced chickens and pigs and left money for food to be distributed in the months to come. The school had major damage to the roof that we were able to address.

The team also launched a Facebook campaign from Haiti to raise funds for the Jeremie meal kits. We raised more than \$6,000 for the effort to feed the people through the Methodist Church of Haiti, with funds coming from church members, friends on Facebook, and the sharing of the post many, many times over.

The next greatest thing the Haitian people are looking for is our presence. I preached at the church in Furcy, using

Ephesians 4, proclaiming, “You are not alone. Your suffering is our suffering. Your pain is our pain. We are one Big God Family.”

We spent time connecting with people, hearing their heartache and brainstorming with the people ways to move forward. One

coming into the Guest Houses in Furcy and Petionville, people lose their jobs and are not able to support their families. Translators, transportation, cooks and support staff were longing to be employed, hoping for teams to come after ours. The Haitian people are incredibly resistant



New Hope's Team Leader Patty Thornton hops on the back of the motorcycle with Pastor Ezaus, donated by the American Legion Post #96.

of the Guest House employees shared that he had three family members in the morgue in Jeremie, waiting for him to raise enough money to bury their bodies.

When there are no mission teams

and hopeful, despite the heartache. While Hurricane Matthew has dealt another devastating blow, there is hope for a future.

**The Rev. Katie Bishop is pastor of New Hope UMC in Brunswick.*

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) acted quickly in response to the destruction and death caused by Hurricane Matthew in the United States and in the Caribbean, notably in Haiti. For more information on how your church can help, visit www.umcor.org.

Deaf mother reflects on journey with special needs child

LEO YATES, JR.*

HAVE YOU EVER walked through a dark room in order to get to the light switch? Once you turned the light on you were then able to better see.

This metaphor is how Donna Easton describes her experience when she discovered in her second and part of her third trimester that her baby would have Down Syndrome.

Donna and her husband, Horatio, are both deaf and members of Magothy United Methodist Church of the Deaf.

Along with the darkness experience, Donna shared that there was a moment prior to the labor and delivery that she attributes to God, giving her the ability to look at her child's medical condition differently.

“Love filled my heart and replaced my despair,” is how Donna expressed this in American Sign Language, her primary mode of communication. Donna also shared that she felt love and encouragement from her Deaf church.

After a required hearing test for newborns at the hospital, Donna and Horatio discovered that their new born, Sarah, was hard of hearing.

Being a part of the Deaf community and

being culturally Deaf, Donna and Horatio welcomed the news of Sarah's hearing loss, which would likely be the opposite reaction of most hearing parents who may grieve over such news.

Prior to being discharged from the Baltimore Washington Medical Center in Glen Burnie, the couple met with a social worker, a nurse and a sign language interpreter, who all provided them with education about Down Syndrome.

Donna shared, “I was in shock to learn that my beautiful girl will have a shorter life, which is common for people with Down Syndrome. I do remember, though, God soon gave me peace about this, as I prefer to focus on the time I will have with her, not on her shorter life because tomorrow is not promised.” In addition, the social worker gave Donna a book to read and some online resources to become familiar with.

Sarah, their daughter, is now seven-years-old and attends a nearby elementary school. She has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) which requires the school to provide a sign language interpreter for her. A sign language interpreter is also present at all IEP meetings.

Sarah's older siblings, both hearing, are protective of her and care for her.

“We instill family values,” said Donna



Donna Easton shares her unexpected and marvelous journey as the mother of Sarah, a child with Down Syndrome.

during a church potluck. She went on to say that the whole family loves Sarah, including their extended Magothy (church) family, also referring to Sarah as their little light, a reference to their love for Christ.

**The Rev. Leo Yates, Jr. is a leader of the BWC Committee on Disabilities.*

BWC celebrates Hispanic heritage and culture

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff



IN A FESTIVAL of language and culture, members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference gathered for worship and to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month at Trinity UMC in Frederick Oct. 16.

There was dancing in the aisles, prayers and sacred commitment, and Communion served in front of an altar decorated with flags from 22 Spanish-speaking countries.

Posing for a photograph with the Cuban flag were two new missionaries to the Baltimore-Washington Conference, Junia Licea Orasma and Alexis Pena Vazquez.

A little over a year ago, the pair, who were residents of Cuba and had done ministry there for more than a decade, were praying and felt God's call to do something new in ministry.

A relationship with the Rev. Leo Rodriguez, who at that time was working as coordinator for Hispanic ministries for the Conference, prompted them to consider serving the immigrant community in Frederick.

In July of last year, they moved to Frederick County and

began work as missionaries, reaching out to the Latino community and sharing God's love. The move was a bold one. They came with limited knowledge of English, lived in a home provided for them and depended on others for transportation. The Rev. Eliezer Valentin Castanon, pastor of Trinity UMC, provided vital support.

It has been an exciting, sometimes scary, always Spirit-filled time, the couple said.

Recently, Brook Hill UMC in Frederick intentionally expanded their outreach to the growing Hispanic population in the area by inviting Pena and Licea to start a new faith community at their church.

The response has been extremely encouraging, Pena said. After only two weeks, 35 people are attending the Spanish-language worship service.

The Rev. Wade Martin, senior pastor of Brook Hill, said the couple is already an integral part of the church community. He has been especially impressed at how they relate to the Hispanic families who participate in the church's clothing ministry on Tuesday mornings.

Both Martin and Pena believe there will be 100 people in the Latino worship within a year.

The missionaries new outreach in the Baltimore-Washington Conference is an indication of a renewed commitment to Hispanic Ministry.

In July, Emma Escobar joined the conference staff as a fulltime coordinator of Hispanic-Latino Ministries.

She pointed out that in 2015, 57 million people, or 17 percent of the US population, were Hispanic and that Hispanics account for more than half of US population growth.

The Washington region has this nation's 12th largest Hispanic population, with 906,000 Latino residents, half of whom were born outside the U.S.

This rich mission field opens up many opportunities for United Methodist churches, said Escobar, who noted that there are currently eight

congregations with Hispanic ministries in the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

They include Calvary UMC in Martinsburg, College Park UMC, Epworth UMC in Gaithersburg; Brook Hill UMC in Frederick, Hughes-El Buen Samaritano in Wheaton, Millian Memorial in Rockville, Piney Grove UMC in Middle River and Salem UMC in Baltimore.

Escobar is excited about the possibility of new faith communities and of English-speaking congregations reaching out to the Latino community in mission and ministry.

At the celebration of Hispanic Heritage, the pastors present gathered around Escobar and prayed for this growing initiative.

Those gathered also took an offering for the conference's partnership with the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico.

This almost two-year old partnership includes mission trips and opportunities for faith-sharing, said the Rev. Edgardo Rivera, superintendent of the Frederick District, who chairs the BWC's Partnership with Puerto Rico.

At the worship service, one of these partners, the Rev. Ediberto Lopez, a professor of New Testament at the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico, preached.

Lopez addressed the sins of racism, prejudice, the abuse of power and wealth, and other evils confronting today's culture.

He challenged those present to listen for, and respond boldly to, the calling of God and the pain of people around them.

"A que nos llama el Senor," – to what is God calling us? Lopez asked.

He encouraged those present not to fall prey to or be burned up by crisis. Rather, he said, "people of faith need to ascend the mountain," which in the Bible "is always a symbol for the presence of God."

"Whatever you are experiencing, the Lord is calling you into his presence," Lopez said, as Castanon translated. "The mountain is accessible to us by the promise of God."

To truly experience this metaphorical mountain, Christians need to be willing to reach out and offer healing and to name and rebuke demons.

A church that knows it is needed to go out and heal is filled with the presence of God; a church that doesn't run away from human suffering honors God, Lopez said. "The cross and flame of our church is an eloquent sign that there is no difficulty you can't overcome."

For more information about Hispanic ministries, visit [FamiliaBWC on Facebook](#) or [bwcumc.org/ministries/Hispanic-Latino-ministry](#).



Emma Escobar, conference coordinator of Hispanic-Latino Ministries, serves Communion at the Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration Oct. 16.

UMM gathers to build the spirit of men in the BWC

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff



“UMM,” IN NORMAL United Methodist acronym-speak, stands for “United Methodist Men.”

But at their annual gathering Oct. 15, “UMM” stood for “Uniting Men in Ministry.” That difference, according to Bill Weller, is important.

“The purpose of our meeting is to build the spirit of United Methodist Men so that they can go home from this event, take that spirit with them and learn how to reach out into the community and make disciples for Christ,” said Weller, president of the UMM for the past four years.

That spirit was fed by guest speakers and a service opportunity as nearly 150 men gathered at First UMC in Hyattsville.

The Rev. Rod Hairston, senior pastor at Messiah Community Church in Reisterstown, and former chaplain to the Baltimore Ravens for 14 seasons, challenged the men in order to make them better disciples.

Hairston told the men that they could accomplish more for God by being together. “We are better, together,” he said.

Being together, however, also has its challenges, he said, much like a family going on vacation.

“The challenge is not the mode of transportation,” he said, “it’s not the destination. The bigger challenge comes when family members have different agendas for what they want to do on vacation. Soon, somebody disagrees with somebody, and everyone gets mad.”

Hairston said that men are healthier when they are together, popping the bubble that says men are self-sufficient. “The truth is, we’re not as healthy as we could be,” he said. “Our pride often gets in our way, and we think, ‘I

can do this myself.’ If you keep on living, you’re gonna need somebody to help you.”

Hairston also said that men are “less smelly” when they are together; that is, they are less prone to sin. By being in fellowship with one another, he said, men stay connected to the body of Christ and become accountable to one another.

Hairston called on the men to encourage one another every day, to exhort to and with one another, and to talk with other men.

“We can get the job done if we link arms and fight together,” Hairston said in noting that men are more effective together. “The enemy of the church necessitates the fullness of the Lord’s Army. We need to set aside our irritations, come together, and then the enemy will be horrified but the Lord will be glorified.”

The Rev. Chris Holmes, a former District Superintendent, offered key points in starting or enhancing men’s small group ministry. Now one of the lead trainers for Coach Approach Skill Training, Holmes said that there is an inherent need for men to connect with other men.

“Men are drawn to get together,” Holmes said, “whether that’s for hunting, fixing cars or playing poker. That kind of connection is vital to their spiritual health, too; there



United Methodist Men packaged thousands of meals for Stop Hunger Now during their annual meeting Oct. 15 at First UMC in Hyattsville.

is a need for men to belong to something bigger than themselves.”

Men, he said, “converse better when they’re standing side-by-side, doing something. We need to provide opportunities to do some service projects.”

Holmes encouraged UMM to take their ministry outside the walls of the church and create new groups because, he said, it’s very difficult for a newcomer to join an established men’s group.

As its service project of the day, the UMM set up and packaged 10,000 meals for “Stop Hunger Now.”