

Merry Christmas



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 11 • December 2016



Capitol Hill creates community with unhoused

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

WITH IN THE United Methodist Church, the vision is to do ministry “with,” not ministry “to” or “for” the poor. At Capitol Hill UMC, they know this deep in their souls.

As a small and unusual testament to the idea of “with,” a cross now hangs in one of the church’s men’s restrooms. On the back of the cross is written the name of Kyler Howe.

It’s there as a silent witness only Jesus can see. It tells a humble story of a church that has given its heart to engage the poor and marginalized. It also marks the spot where Kyler, who was unhoused and struggled with addiction, died earlier this fall at age 32.

Church provides a place of sanctuary

Howe’s mother, who used to live near the church,

remembers sitting in the Exxon station parking lot across from the church in Washington, D.C., in the morning, waiting to see if Kyler walked into the church for breakfast. If he showed up at the church, she would know he had survived the night. “I thank God for this church,” she said after visiting the space where her son died.

Howe’s death shook the church, partly because it followed three weeks after the death of Ernie Dalton, a formerly unhoused man who found his footing and faith at Capitol Hill, became a trustee and hosted the church’s fellowship hour, said the Rev. Alisa Lasater Wailoo, the church’s senior pastor.

Dalton, church members say, was a brilliant man who was married at 19, had seven children, became a plumber, and ended up doing drugs and running a drug house. About five years ago, he complained to a friend, at a soup kitchen, that the problem with kids today is that they didn’t go to Sunday School.

His friend challenged him about his own Sunday School attendance and Dalton found himself at Capitol



Hill, in a class led by Sam and Sue Marullo. The first day Sue casually invited him to worship after the class. He went for the hour and never stopped attending.

“Ernie was my right-hand man,” said Lasater. “He was so unique, so funny, so smart. He understood and embodied what we are trying to do.” When a neighbor criticized the church, demanding to know what they were trying to do, Dalton replied simply, “they’re saving souls. This church saved my soul.”

See Unhoused, page 4

Community UMC celebrates 20 years of ‘ZimVim’

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

IT WAS MARCH 4 – “yes, March forth,” the Rev. Chris Holmes remembers, in 1997, when the first team of Volunteers in Mission from Community UMC set out for a trip to the Murewa/UMP District in Zimbabwe.

For the past 20 years, volunteers from this church in Crofton have regularly traveled the 7,938 miles to share God’s love in action in Zimbabwe. The volunteers pay their own way, and have raised an additional \$700,000 to support mission initiatives.

At a celebration Nov. 19 and 20, they remembered the work and the shared experiences with “cheers and tears” that included a banquet and worship service.

During Community’s 11 visits, the

volunteers-in-mission helped build a 125-seat church in Maponongwe, a new parsonage in Muchinjik, a new 200-seat church in Chipfunde, a medical clinic and staff house in Dindi, a new 400-seat church in Juru, a primary and



second school building at the Hanwa Mission, two new secondary school buildings at Mashambanhaka, a church roof at DomboRaTenzi, provided wells and power to Hanwa Mission, and led a six-week sewing project.

Members of Community also established three new orphan trusts and supported a fourth in Murewa and contributed more than \$100,000 for Fortune Masamba, the son of Zimbabwean pastors, to come to the United States and attend college.

This one congregation also contributed to solar power projects, providing school supplies, furniture and uniforms, medical supplies, the salaries of active and retired clergy, cars and parsonages, sewing machines for United Methodist Women, food, a communication project, bicycles for pastors, programs for orphans, and repairs to church buildings.

See Zimvim, page 3

... well said

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

By MANDY SAYERS
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

WHEN I WAS a kid I used to love driving by this particular Arby's fast food place in Macon, Ga., where I lived, because it was enormous and shaped like a cowboy hat. It was illuminated by all these lights at night. To my little 6-year-old brain, it was like being in Las Vegas. I could not imagine anything more impressive.

Our family loves to go see Christmas lights, and to light candles on our Advent wreath, and certainly this is the time of year for that sort of activity.

What I've noticed this year is some of the light displays that used to thrill our little tykes are no longer so thrilling now that they are teenagers. Our son requested going to see some "new lights" instead of the old tried-and-true displays we've gone to for years.

At first I thought he was being cynical or just being a teenager, but then I thought perhaps many folks desired to see some "new lights" this year. How many of us come to Christmas longing for a fresh and new encounter with the Christ child? How many of us wish for "less heat and more light" in our walk and in our communities?

The light that Christmas brings, the Light of the World, is not a gigantic twinkling Arby's hat, or even a breathtaking Santa's Workshop light display. It's not something to be admired, or sighed over, or to use as background for our hot chocolate sipping.

No. The Light that is Christ shines in darkness – the darkness of divisiveness and injustice and oppression – and it lights a pathway through it. When that happens, we are called out of our comfort zones and shown things we don't always want to see. People are hungry, and oppressed and discriminated against. Christ's Light shows us the faces of brothers and sisters where once there were strangers. Christ's Light calls us to be reflections of his light ourselves, working for justice and for peace.

Christ's Light shows us the way to the Christmas God has in mind – where everyone living in darkness can walk in the Light of the Lord. God's giving the Light of the world this Christmas – it's even brighter than an Arby's hat or last year's drive-through light display.

We don't need to be afraid of the dark with a flashlight like this. Remember, "The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

... 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

YOU DON'T REALLY know you're home until you have to navigate it in the dark. You think you know where everything is, where the walls are and how all the furniture is positioned, and where you left everything right up until you have to do it all without light. This revelation came to me as I went to get a glass of water a few nights ago. When I went to bed I had left everything just so, but somehow in the dark as I walked, there were suddenly dog toys, baby toys and someone moved the couch at least a foot. I know this because I stubbed my toe and let out a shriek that could have awakened the dead, but luckily the baby slept right through it. It was in that moment that I better understood God.

The first recorded words of God in Genesis 1:3 are, "Let there be light!" It is not that I think God stubbed His toe or didn't know where the cosmic couch was, I think God understood that man simply does not do well in the dark.

No matter how well laid out we have our lives, or how we think we have it all together, there are always dark times when we will stub our toe, cry out in pain and be looking for light. In times of sadness, heartbreak, loss and uncertainty we all find ourselves looking for light. We cry out and wonder how did this get here, how did I get here and why did I not see it. It is in those times that we realize that we desperately need a light.

Luckily for us, there is always a light no matter how dark the time we find ourselves in. You see, when God said, "Let there be light," he turned on the lights in the heavens so that we could see. Long after that when we had lost our way again, God sent His son Jesus to be the light of the world.

As we enter into the Advent season, take some time to remember that in all the shopping, the planning and the celebrating, we are really celebrating that there is still light in the world. Do not be afraid, do not worry, just remember that God said, "Let there be light," and His son said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Today and every day, there is light. May you have a joyous and light-filled Advent and a very Merry Christmas.

... well said

EVENTS

Resolutions due for 2017 Annual Conference

Those wishing to have resolutions considered by the 2017 Annual Conference should submit them before Sunday, Jan. 15, to Cynthia Taylor, the Conference Secretary, at ctaylor@bwcumc.org. The Annual Conference session will be held Wednesday, May 31, through Friday, June 2, at the Wardman Park Marriott in Washington. Registration for the event is expected to open Feb. 8.

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

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

Videos for lay leadership on the local church Finance and Staff-Parish Relations committees and the Board of Trustees are available at <http://tinyurl.com/bwcleadership>

Order your 2016 Journal

This year's Conference Journal is being printed and produced by an Amazon-owned company. The process for ordering is similar to other online purchases. The cost is \$27. Payment will be made at the time you place your online order. If you are unable to order online, contact Kayla Spears at kspears@bwcumc.org or 410-309-3420, who will ensure you receive a copy. The text of the Journal, minus the Alphabetical Clergy, Lay Member and Surviving Spouse listings, which contain personal contact information, is also online. For more information and to order, visit bwcumc.org/resources/journal/

Courageous Leadership

"If it's important to you, you'll make it happen; if it's not important, you'll make excuses," Bishop Jonathan Holston of South Carolina told more than 800 United Methodist leaders at an Extended Cabinet Summit in Florida in November. Learn how you can "make it happen" and how to better practice courageous leadership with a series of resources from the summit.

Visit bwcumc.org/resources/courageous-leadership/

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

Pastors reflect on ‘precursors’ at Advent day apart

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff



TO PREPARE FOR Advent, Bishop LaTrelle Easterling called the clergy of the Baltimore-Washington Conference to a time away for deep engagement with God’s Word, one another and the teaching of the Rev. Robert Hill, a New Testament professor and dean of Marsh Chapel at Boston University. The Pre-Advent Day Apart was held Nov. 15 at Brook Hill UMC in Frederick.

Easterling, an alumna of Boston University, introduced Hill as a pastor and academic whose passion lies at the intersection of theology and our lives.

The theme of Hill’s teaching was “Precursors,” and he began the first of his three sessions with the clergy that day by running his hands along the blue fabric that flowed from the altar, representing the River Jordan.

“Our lives are rivers and rivers move and flow to the sea,” he said, quoting poet Antonio Machado. “Far down by the river, we hear John the Baptist, a precursor. ... To get to Bethlehem, we have to go down by the river and there he is.”

“Start with memory,” Hill said. John the Baptist challenges today’s Christians to remember, note and unite the seeming opposites of heart and mind, or creation and

consciousness. Like theologian C.S. Lewis, he said, when we cast our eyes to the night sky we will probably have “starry skies above me and the moral law within.”

Paul offers a voice of consciousness. It’s a voice that precedes Charles Wesley’s charge to “Unite the pair disjointed, knowledge and vital piety.” “That’s your song to sing, ring that bell, tell that tale,” Hill challenged the pastors.

But, there must also be a connection between the mind and the heart, he said. In academia, “sometimes we mistakenly think that if you can get it down on paper, you don’t have to live it through in life.” This simply is not so.

“Empathy,” said Hill, “is like oxygen.” It enables others to breathe deeply, “it allows another person’s soul to emerge.”

He encouraged the pastors to claim and preach from the head and the heart – and to not forget the hands. “Real change is hard,” he said. “But it can happen in real time, when real people apply some real elbow grease to it.”

The Rev. Howard Thurman was one of Hill’s predecessors at Marsh Chapel.

Thurman wrote in a poem: “When the song of the angels is stilled, When the star in the sky is gone, When the kings and princes return home, When the shepherds are back with their flocks, The work of Christmas begins ...”

The work of Christmas, Thurman said, is to care for the lost, broken, hungry, prisoners, and nation, and “to make music in the heart.”

This heart-music is possible, Hill said, in part, when we “lean back a little bit

into some of the arms holding us over many generations.”

“Who told you who you was,” he playfully asked. “We are shaped by those who have brought us to this place and

brought out the height, depth and breadth of who we hope to become.”

“One of our shared precursors,” Hill told the more than 350 clergy, is Elijah, the prophet and “troubler of Israel,” who in 800 BCE traveled by the River Jordan and still influences our faith today.

Hill outlined some of the precursors who have shaped his life and church. Elijah’s spirit, he claimed, moved in the mind of:

- Jonathan Edwards, the Puritan, who saw the divine light shining in every soul, and recognized the centrality of the experience of faith. He believed a person may know honey is sweet, but won’t know what sweet means until he tastes honey.
- President Abraham Lincoln who, in his second inaugural address, said, “With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds.”

- Ray Bradbury, the author of “Fahrenheit 451,” who wrote about legacy and the burning of books. He wrote, “The magic is only in what books say, how they stitched the patches of the universe together into one garment for us.” And, “It doesn’t matter what you do, so long as you change something from the way it was before you touched it into something that’s like you after you take your hands away.”

• Rabbi Abraham Heschel, who said, different are the languages of prayer, but the tears are all the same.

- And, the Spirit of Elijah also lingered in the lives of, author Harper Lee; Congressman John Lewis, who courageously walked across the Edmund Pettus Bridge to protest segregation; the Rev. Gardner Calvin Taylor, known as the dean of the nation’s black preachers; the ubiquitous Rev. Peter Gomes, chaplain of Harvard Chapel; Hiawatha, the co-founder of the Iroquois Confederacy; the abolitionists Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass; and Susan B. Anthony, the suffragette.

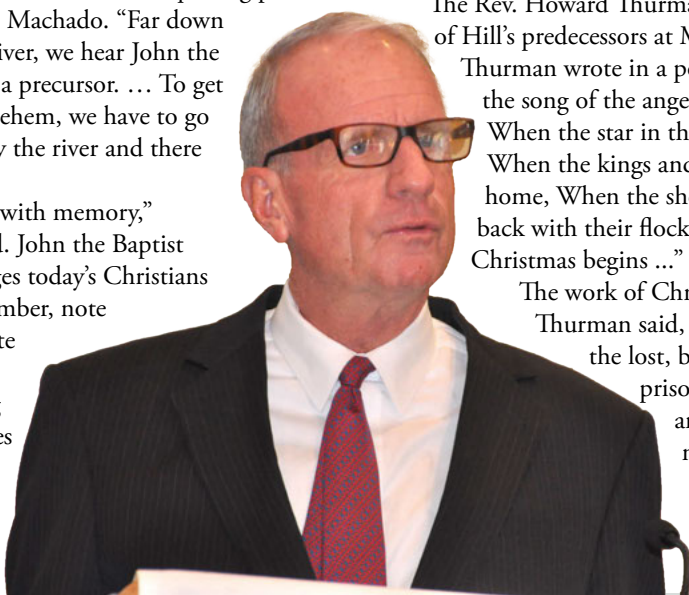
Hill encouraged the pastors to take time this Advent to reflect upon their precursors – the Elijahs who shaped their spirits – “authors, pastors, relatives, all the people who ‘told you who you was.’”

“I also wonder if you will have a chance to share memories with your people, to offer stories of precursors and to allow those stories to be woven into the Advent community?” Hill asked.

“You have the capacity to speak an intervening word, a saving word,” he said. “It is our role in life and work. ... That’s what we’re here to do – to preach the Gospel that it may be heard in a careful and loving manner.”

The Rev. Patricia Sebring tells the story of John the Baptist.

Photos by Melissa Lauber



The Rev. Robert Hill, a professor and chaplain at Boston University, teaches at the Pre-Advent Day Apart.

ZimVim: With partnership, ‘sky is the limit’

From page 1

Holmes, who was pastor of Community UMC at the time, remembers the experience of the first 12 VIM pioneers. “We drove an hour to the Mopanogue Church, which needed a roof and concrete floor. Our little team was a novelty in this remote area where some of the children had never seen a white person, and where there were no phones, running water or electricity.

“Upon arrival, a large, singing crowd of Methodists surrounded our van and greeted us with hugs. We joined in this singing procession circling the church three times, prayed and then participated in the traditional exchanging of gifts – giving them school supplies, Bibles and children’s toys, and receiving sugar cane, corn and a live chicken.”

That initial experience was relived and expanded upon as United Methodists from two continents and very different lifestyles found a sense of meaning and love working together.

Their partnership is grounded in, and enriched, by “*chabadza*,” said the Rev. Alan Gurupira, assistant to Zimbabwe’s bishop, at the banquet in

Community’s Fellowship Hall.

Chabadza, in Shona, means “coming alongside.” The spirit of *chabadza*, is one of a partnership in which a passerby stops to help someone already at work. It’s that spirit that makes the farmer bring an extra hoe to the field, Gurupira said, and makes the person coming down the road want to stop for conversation and to share in the labor.

Stepping out of the sanctuary and beyond the borders of their lives has allowed Community UMC to model the idea of “beloved community,” and dare to take on “the scandalous work of the Gospel,” said Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, who preached and celebrated with the congregation in worship Nov. 20.

Easterling is the bishop of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, which has a covenant partnership with the two Zimbabwe annual conferences.

She pledged to support this

partnership, but also praised the work of Community UMC, for “drawing the circle wide, and wider still,” and crossing language, racial-ethnic, social, cultural and geographic boundaries so that they could “do the work of God” with the people of Zimbabwe.

The leader and driving heartbeat behind most of Community’s ZIM VIM efforts is Charlie Moore, a lay person at Community UMC who has made Zimbabwe the focus of his considerable entrepreneurial and missional gifts. His impact is so great that there is even a child in Zimbabwe now named Charlie Moore.

But throughout the celebration, Moore took on a humble role, celebrating the “two-way blessing,” and the way the people from Community and the Murewa UMP District have enriched each other’s lives.

“People ask me why we don’t just send money to Zimbabwe, why do we go,” Moore said. Then he introduced Lincoln, a mission partner from Zimbabwe. “He is one of the answers to the question of why we keep going back.”

Lincoln recalled his first encounter with the volunteers from Community, and walking more than an hour-and-a-half without shoes to meet them. He wiped tears from his eyes, remembering how he fell in love with *GoGo* (grandmother) the late Cleo McCoy and Emily Frye and the rest of the group and how they helped mold him into the person he has become.

The Rev. Mary Masamba, Zimbabwe’s first woman district superintendent and the DS of Murewa for several years, thanked the

people from Community and received their thanks as well. She led them in song and ululation.

Gurupira joined her in the appreciation. “Community VIM members came as a force to reckon with,” he said. “With the glory of God in their efforts, the ball started rolling in Murewa and Murewa will never be the same again.”

He brought with him a letter from students in Mashambanhaka, where Community UMC built a new secondary school.

The students said simply, “With you, the sky is the limit.”

As a gift to the people of the Murewa District, the Rev. Stan Cardwell, pastor of Community UMC, presented Gurupira with 50 children’s Bibles.

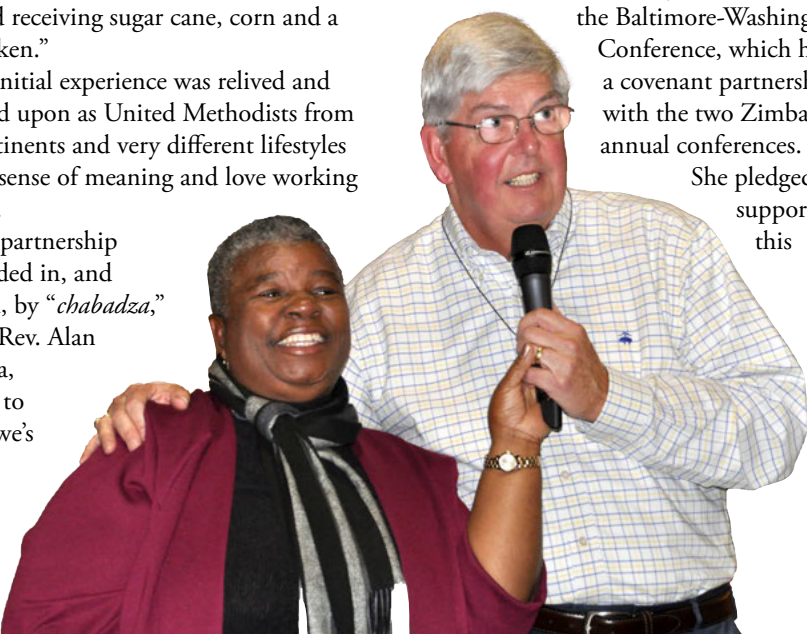
It is the same version of the Bible that the children of Community are currently reading with their families. Cardwell said he imagines the children of both continents reading the same book.

“Love is risky, he said. “Love requires a servant’s heart.”

Throughout the celebration, the volunteers all remarked that while the work is crucial, it is the relationships they form that matter most.

When each of them finishes working in Zimbabwe, they are emotional and know it will be a long flight back, Holmes said. “But they also know Zimbabwe is not really so very far from home after all.”

For photos of 20 years of ZimVim visit www.bucumc.org.



Unhoused: United Methodists ‘called to serve in love’

From page 1

Among his fellow church members and the homeless, he would joke, “this place sticks to you like grease on Popeye’s chicken.”

Church is a Constant Work in Progress

Focusing on the “with,” over the past decade, Capitol Hill UMC has grown into a cross-cultural church – of the housed and unhoused. They unite in God’s love as one community, which is both beautiful and messy, Lasater said. A constant work in progress, boundaries that separate the ministers and ministered to are blurred and many people usually find themselves in both roles at one time or another.

The scope of the offerings to the unhoused at Capitol Hill UMC is daunting. In the Food and Friendship ministry, they serve breakfast Monday through Friday and lunch every Sunday. It is all volunteer led, without any paid staff. During breakfasts, they also offer a short devotional, as well as Bible study on Wednesdays. In total, they share more than 14,000 meals annually.

The church also partners with and provides space and a number of creative outreach opportunities to community groups, including Capitol Hill Group Ministries, Community Connections, the Green Door, Pathways to Housing and Food for Life.

Lasater estimates that about 30 unhoused people attend Bible Study in a good week and that 75 unhoused people consider Capitol Hill their church home.

‘God Happened’

The outreach to the unhoused, she said, began in the late 1990s when the Rev. David Argo spent a night with the homeless who slept outside the church. But it was raised to new heights when “God happened,” to Rob Farley, a D.C. lawyer.

Farley came to faith late in life. He felt there was a “faith component” to the presidential elections 12 years ago, and began to attend church to learn more. Eleven months later he was

baptized. In the mornings, while running, it was his habit to stop and give a “wake-up call” to the homeless sleeping outside the church so that they wouldn’t have to be roused by the police. In 2009, on a cold winter morning, he was asked by the men to allow them into the church to have a cup of coffee. Farley was on his way to work, and hesitated. But, he remembered Jesus’ words in Matthew 25 saying, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. “We are called to serve in love,” he said. Farley invited the men in, started a pot of coffee, and an informal tradition started. On Maundy Thursday of that year, a homeless man named Lester spent his disability check from the government buying six bags full of eggs, hotdogs and beans and offered a gift of breakfast to those gathering for coffee.

Moved, Farley accepted Lester’s generosity and began to make breakfast for the men each morning. Since that first Good Friday, the church has offered breakfast every weekday, including Christmas, and lunch on Sundays. Farley is there most days, as is his partner in this ministry, Margot Eyring.

From these breakfasts at the church, food became intentionally linked to friendship, and friendship

to faith, said Lasater. “We are one body in Christ,” she continued. The burdens and joys of one are the burdens and joys of all. So we eat together, study Scripture together, worship together and whatever else the other needs – be that a ride to rehab intake, a phone to call a family member, a uniform for a new job, or a cake and birthday celebration.”

However, not all of the church’s affluent neighbors, who live just a few blocks from the U.S. Capitol, are comfortable with the presence of the poor in their midst. Some have expressed outright anger, fear and

hostility at having to share the neighborhood with homeless people, many of whom struggle with addictions, mental illness and other issues.

Messengers of Grace / Messages of Hope

Throughout it all, Lasater and the congregation have held firm to what they believe are Christian imperatives of welcoming and caring for all of God’s children. But they

thoughts of Heather Bouley, a Capitol Hill member, who said, “Each week we pray, ‘Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done.’ Well, in God’s Kingdom, everyone has a room (John 14) so we need to be answers to our prayers and help everyone be housed.”

One idea is to partner with Inspire DC, a new United Methodist missional initiative, and give a significant portion of the funds raised in

have also taken intentional steps to respond to their neighbors’ concerns and to reach out to them as “messengers of grace.”

Through a series of community conversations, many neighbors have experienced a change of heart. At a recent meeting, they applauded the congregation for the big, complicated and ever-changing job they do to “get help for people in the best way.”

Some still harbor concerns, but Lasater’s heart is lifted when she receives feedback from some of the 600 student volunteers who do service trips to Capitol Hill UMC annually. One student, on an exchange program from Myanmar, wrote that “the most inspiring part of the whole journey was the visit to the Fellowship Breakfast.”

Lasater cherishes these messages. Even in dark times, she never loses hope, embracing the promises of Christ.

But the work before her and the congregation can seem daunting to some.

A new report on homelessness from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development reports that while homelessness dropped three percent nationwide in 2015, the number of homeless people rose 14 percent in the District of Columbia.

On Jan. 28, 2016, HUD counted 8,350 people living in Washington – about 1,000 more than the year before. Of those, 96 percent were in shelters or transitional housing and about 35 people lived on the streets.

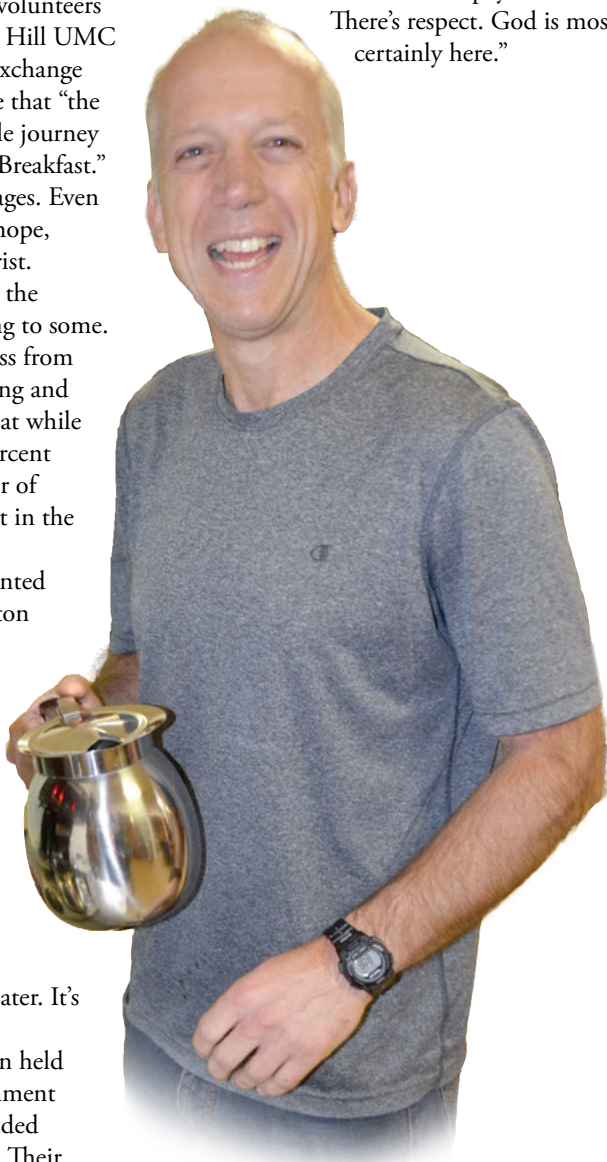
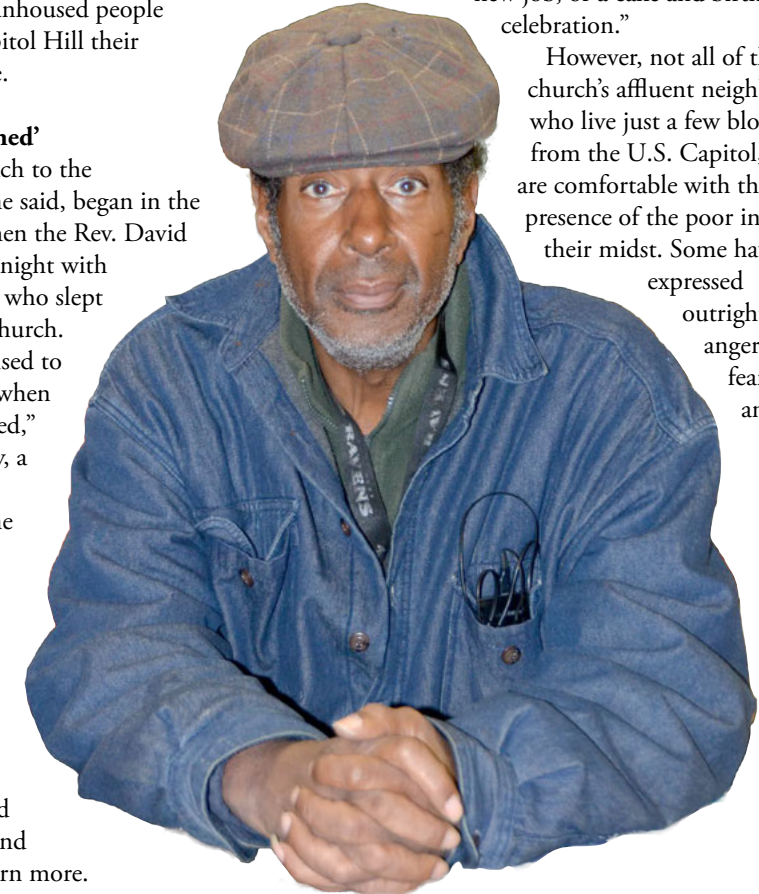
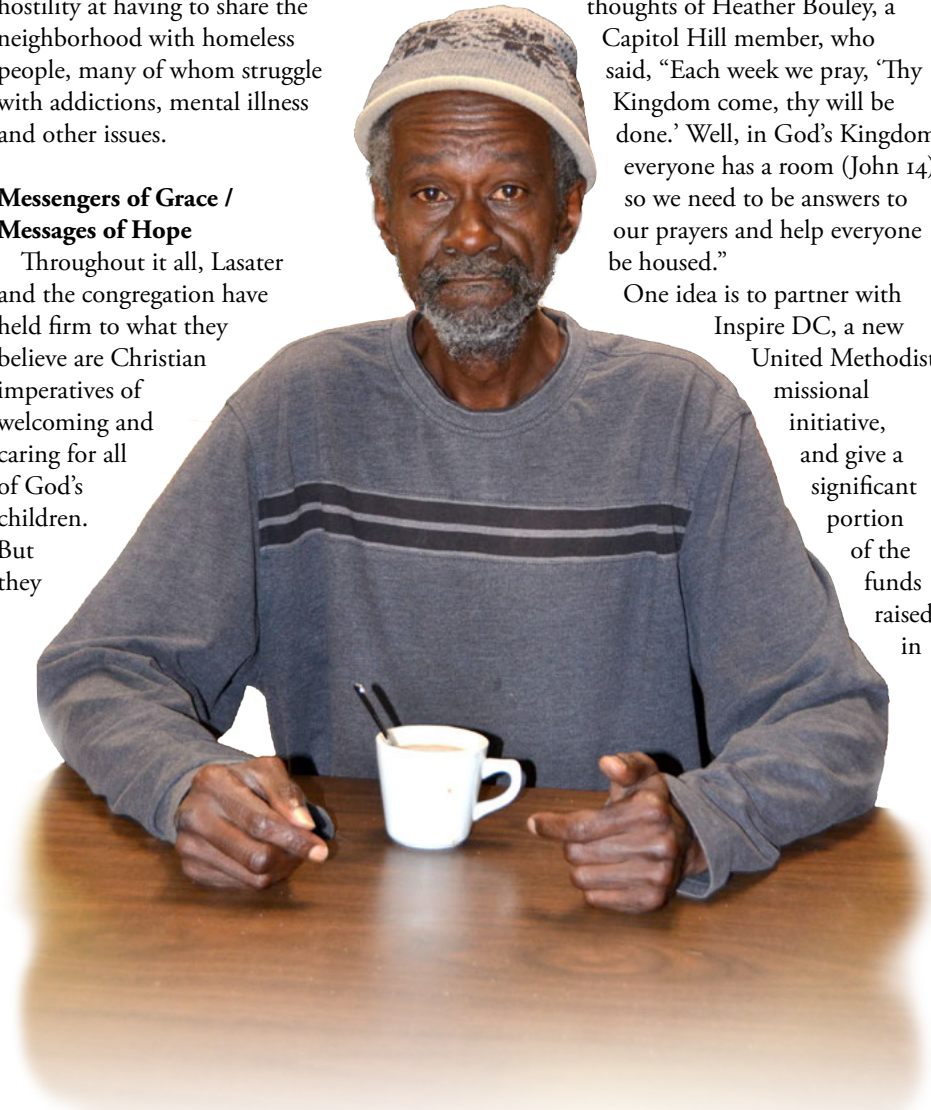
At Capitol Hill, they are committed to meeting the needs of the unhoused by continuing to create what Pope Francis calls “a culture of encounter,” said Farley and Lasater. It’s how they do ministry “with.”

On Nov. 19, the congregation held a churchwide Housing Discernment Meeting and unanimously decided to invest in affordable housing. Their motivation was summed up in the

Capitol Hill UMC’s upcoming capital campaign to purchase homes to provide affordable housing for others, Lasater said.

She doesn’t know exactly what form future ministries with the unhoused will take. But she is certain the congregation – both the housed and unhoused – will strive to respond to their call “to be the heart of God in the community.”

It’s a way to continue to honor the legacy of Kyler Howe and Ernie Dalton. “The people here serve,” said Frank Williams, one of the guests at breakfast. “The spirit is here. We don’t pay for this. There’s respect. God is most certainly here.”



Portraits by Alison Burdett

Ministry of the Laity defined

By JULIE FLINCHUM
Director of Lay Servant Ministries



THE UNITED METHODIST Church embraces the ministry of all believers, claiming the faith and service of the laity as an essential part of the church as United Methodists work to make disciples for the transformation of the world.

Recently, the ministry of the laity has undergone some changes as lay people are celebrated and held accountable for their training to better prepare them for their efforts in the church.

According to the Discipline, to be recognized as Certified Lay Speakers or Certified Lay Servants, people must complete a prescribed amount of training.

The Book of Discipline now contains three categories of Lay Servant Ministry: *Certified Lay Servant* [¶ 266], *Certified Lay Speaker* [¶ 267], and *Certified Lay Minister* [¶ 268]. Each one is a different calling for the lay person.

The district directors of Lay Servant Ministries are working with the Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries to support, equip and empower the laity and to help them grow their skills to serve God's

world and to carry out our mission as United Methodists to make disciples for the transformation of the world.

The Baltimore-Washington Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries is specifically reaching out to all who have served as Local Lay Servants in order to help them understand the denomination's new rules and move forward if they wish to become a Certified Lay Servant. Current Local Lay Servants will need to take an advanced course in Spring 2017 to become a Certified Lay Servant by Charge Conference season in Fall 2017. Local Lay Servants will not be an option on the 2017 Charge Conference forms.

The denomination's Discipleship Ministries is at work creating new studies for Lay Servants. Released earlier this year were Leading Bible Study and a Volunteers in Mission Study, which will soon be followed by The Laity in Conflict Resolution as well as a new curriculum just for youth.

To find out more about Lay Servant ministries, visit the conference website at bwcumc.org/ministries/ministry-of-the-laity.



Lay Servant, Lay Speaker, Lay Minister - What's the difference?

The Ministry of the Laity has three opportunities for certification. You must be certified in one in order to proceed to the next. A Certified Lay Servant serves the local church or charge. Once you are a Certified Lay Servant, you can then begin the track to become a Certified Lay Speaker. Certified Lay Speakers serve by preaching the Word when requested by the pastor, district superintendent or Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries. The last lay ministry track you can become certified in is as a Certified Lay Minister. They have the same responsibilities as Lay Servants and Lay Speakers, and are also a part of a ministry team with supervision and support of a clergy person.

**Please see bwcumc.org/ministries/ministry-of-the-laity for more details on the roles of each lay ministry.*

Cookie Factory turns snacks into mission trips

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

HOW DO YOU turn chocolate chip cookies into a mission trip? At Calvary UMC in Annapolis, they've been doing it for 34 years.

On the first Saturday of the month during the school year, a small army of volunteers descends to the church's kitchen, there to prepare and bake made-from-scratch chocolate chip cookies by the dozen. The Cookie Factory, as it's called, makes lots of dozens of cookies. On this first Saturday in November, it's 827 dozen. Or 9,924 cookies, plus a few dozen extra for the helpers and the cookies that don't pass the quality inspection.

Each of the orders goes to a Naval Academy midshipman. It's a small taste of home for young adults often far away from home.

Joan Moored is the Cookie Factory coordinator. For the past 10 or 15 years – she's not exactly sure – she takes in all the orders from the parents and the parents' clubs and enters it into the computer. The computer, she said, spits out an order form with the name of the person who placed the order and who it's for. The computer also totals all the orders so she knows how many dozen cookies to make.

And in a well-used binder are the needed ingredients for making 827 dozen cookies. Or 1,000 dozen. Or 1,500 dozen. Pounds and pounds of butter, flour, chocolate chips, salt and sugar are all listed with the precision of a Navy quartermaster. No guesswork is allowed.

This month, the order number is a little low. During February – Valentine's Day – the order is often 1,200 to 1,500 dozen, "because everybody wants to send a

Valentine," Moored said. "On 'I-Day,' we have a representative at the Naval Academy," Moored said, "passing out order forms to parents." She also sends out order forms to parents who placed orders the previous year. A lot of the information is shared via word of mouth, she said, and there's a spot on the church's website to place an order.

Each dozen costs \$3.50, Moored said, which includes delivery. The money that is "profit" goes to the youth to pay for their mission trips throughout the year. Calvary typically sends 15 to 25 youth on mission trips in the summer, Moored said, and the Cookie Factory pays for them and their chaperones to go.

The money they raise also goes to support youth activities throughout the year, such as a winter relief dinner or angel tree shopping, said Sarah Lanzi who serves Calvary as its youth director while also attending Wesley Theological Seminary full-time.

"We support the local missions that our church, as a whole, takes part in," she said. "The youth can take part without any costs to them."

Lanzi has been with Calvary for 30 months, but has come to know and love the Cookie Factory.

"It's a crazy, elaborate process," she said. "It's organized chaos. The church supports us so well; we have adults who have been doing this forever, walking alongside the youth. It brings everybody together for a common purpose and a common goal."

Joe Gryder, one of the volunteers at the Cookie Factory, experienced first-hand the power of receiving the cookies while at the Academy. He was a midshipman in the 90s who joined Calvary, in part, because of the cookie ministry.



Members of all ages at Calvary UMC in Annapolis make 827 dozen cookies. The monthly Cookie Factory raises funds for mission trips.

"I'm from California," Gryder said. "Cookies shipped from there take five days to get here. By the time they arrive, they're all rock hard. What you get here are home-made cookies. I can go get store-bought soft cookies, but they're not the same."

Gryder also knows the human touch the cookies provide.

"The midshipmen are 17 and this is their first chance away from home," he said. "The Navy protects them and keeps them safe, but there's not the TLC that you need for the human soul coming from the Navy. This gives a little piece of that."

The Cookie Factory is inter-generational. Helena Gryder is Joe's sixth-grade daughter. She was a "flipper" on this day, taking the freshly baked cookies off the tray with a spatula and placing them on a cooling tray.

"I have a lot of fun here," she said. "I like

that everybody's really, really nice and, no matter what, you'll have a job to do."

With an infectious smile, Helena Gryder knows the cookies are more than about just her fun.

"It's really nice for the midshipmen, too," she said. "I think it's really cool that my dad used to get cookies from here. Now we're here at the church, doing it for other midshipmen."

The cookies aren't just a reminder that someone back home loves them, Joe Gryder said, it's also a way that the community affirms the midshipmen.

"It's a piece of love from the community," he said, "that says, 'We're glad you're here; we're thankful for what you do and we support you.'"



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MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, left, shares a moment with Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, just days after the November election. These two United Methodist leaders met at the Children's Defense Fund's Beat the Odds Gala, which celebrated the accomplishments of students who overcame adversity and excelled academically while giving back to their communities.

Walk to end hunger

MARTINSBURG, W. VA.- About 40 residents of the area walked three miles to help feed hungry people one recent afternoon. They were part of an annual CROP walk, which nationwide included 114,000 others who together raised \$11.2 million last year in 1,100 walks, according to CROP statistics. Nationwide the walks are sponsored by Church World Service.

The Rev. Mark C. Mooney, pastor of Otterbein UMC, said that a quarter of the money raised will go to the local Loaves and Fishes, an emergency social service agency and outreach ministry. Many of its clients are seniors and people who have lost their jobs.

The rest of the money goes to international CROP for distribution.

This year's walk was held in memory of the Rev. Al Clipp, who organized the original CROP Walks, and "had such a passion for the CROP project," Mooney said. Otterbein UMC took up a special collection in Clipp's name at their morning service, he said.

Pastor honored for historical work

The Rev. Dr. Douglas Tzan, pastor of Sykesville Parish (St. Paul's UMC and Gaither UMC) and a member of the Strawbridge Shrine Association Board of Directors, is the winner of the 2015 Jesse Lee Prize, awarded by the General Commission on Archives and

History every four years. The prize is named for The United Methodist Church's first historian, given for a serious, book-length manuscript about the denomination's history. Tzan's manuscript is titled, "The World His Circuit: The Methodist Odyssey of William Taylor."

Reunion of two old friends

When Bishop Gabriel Unda Yemba of the United Methodist's Congo East Area attended the General Commission on Religion and Race in Washington in October, two former playmates at the Kindu Mission had a brief reunion. The bishop and the Rev. Jeffrey W. Jones, pastor of North Bethesda UMC, had been playmates in 1960, sharing Jones' little cars in an anthill. Jeff's father, the Rev. Ken S. Jones, was the district missionary. At the time there were 23 churches, today there are 295 churches in two annual conferences, several with more than 1,000 members.



Bishop Gabriel Unda Yemba, right, with the Rev. Jeff Jones.



In November a group of young adults from the Conference Young Adult Council spent a rousing afternoon playing trampoline dodgeball at Skyzone, to help raise funds for the flood recovery effort in Ellicott City.

Pastor reflects on faith in post-election landscpae

By MATT POOLE*

LIKE MANY OF us, following the presidential elections Nov. 8, I spent a day or two not knowing what to say. I watched some people simply trying to make sense of the new president-elect and what it means for our nation. Others were frustrated. Their shock moved to anger. There are also those who felt disenfranchised by the results of this election.

I don't have all the right words, but one thing I do want to say – now is the time for us to be the people of God.

I woke up Thursday morning after the election and this message just flowed out of me. I share it because I want us to be the people of God – not Republicans, not Democrats, and not Independents. I am asking us to consider being who God created us to be (the me I want to be) and not the reactive people I am seeing. This election has certainly not brought out the best in some of us.

There are a few questions to help us center ourselves in God.

Who are we placing our hope in?

Some people are responding to the election out of fear and concern for the future. People are feeling disenfranchised by the president-elect. This has created quite a bit of frustration and anger.

I don't know where your hope is today, but mine is in the Lord.

In Psalm 20 we read, “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.” And in Psalm 121:1-2, the Psalmist helps us reframe our hope: “I lift up my eyes to the hills – from where will my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.”

So when did some of us start placing our hope in politics? Or a politician? Or a president? Or what the media was telling you? Who have we been placing our hope in? I want to remind us all that we put our hope and trust in God.

The second question I have for us is...

What is our mission?

We have a new president. We do not have a new God. Our mission has not changed. Our mission is to love God and love others.

And then the question everyone can't seem to answer:

What do we do now?

Let me share with you what John Wesley said about voting:

“October 6, 1774 – I met those of our society who had votes in the ensuing election, and advised them 1. To vote, without fee or reward, for the person they judged most worthy 2. To speak no evil of

the person they voted against, and 3. To take care their spirits were not sharpened against those that voted on the other side.”

Before modern warfare, people fought with swords. When they got upset and wanted to go to war they would sharpen their weapons. We have been sharpening our tongues and taking to social media – not a good place to resolve issues. I know people whose friendships have been strained or even lost over this election.

We are to be people who work toward the healing of divisions. We need to be able to cross the lines that now separate people.

Jesus crossed lines. Jesus, a Jewish rabbi, crossed the religious line between saint and sinner. He crossed the national line between Jew and Roman. He crossed a political line between Samaritan and Jew. He crossed the line between life and death with Lazarus. He crossed the dividing line between heaven and earth.

We are to love even those who voted differently than us. Disagree all you want, just don't stop loving and doing it in love. Remember that relationships are more important than being right. Don't sever ties with people who didn't vote your way. Talk to them and speak the truth in love to one another.

Jesus crossed lines because he had a different vision for humanity. In Revelation

22:2-3, we read about a vision of the new city of God in heaven. God's vision is for a place filled with people of all nations.

“On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse.”

We are either a part of that healing or a part of its demise. We are people of hope and healing or people of division and destruction. The job of God's people is to bring heaven to earth and reveal a better way.

So, I want us to be the people of God and that for us means... **be a people of prayer.**

Whenever we are worried or anxious, we are to be people of prayer. Whenever there is a problem or a joy, we are to be people of prayer. We are to pray in all circumstances.

I want to ask you to spend some time praying for our country and leaders.

- Pray for the healing of our nation – what would that look like?
- Pray for someone different than you or who voted differently than you.
- Pray for our newly elected leaders. What will your prayer be?

**The Rev. Matt Poole is the senior pastor of Glen Mar UMC in Ellicott City. This essay is excerpted from one of his sermons.*



Pastor shares her ‘Diary of a Mad Sad White Woman’

By TERRI COFIELL*

Graphic details in this commentary may be offensive or disturbing to some readers.

DURING THE SUMMER, a small group of Elders accepted my invitation to lunch in order to begin what I hoped would be an ongoing discussion of race and racism. A few brave souls travelled to West Virginia while others immediately began to grouse – “We’ve tried this before” or “I don’t want to hear about how privileged I am.”

But white people, in my view, have left it to everyone else to raise these issues because it’s just too uncomfortable for us. So, at the Spirit’s prompting – make that relentless nagging – I issued the call. Let me explain why by looking back over nearly 60 years.

2010s – In the aftermath of the shooting at Emmanuel AME Church in South Carolina, I named racism in a sermon. “Someone taught that young man to hate; it’s our job to make sure we teach our young people that hatred is sin. ... If you’re tired of hearing about racism, do something to end it.”

A member (someone I truly love) greeted me after worship with “maybe you should apply for a job with the NAACP — I hear they’re hiring whites pretending to be black.”

2000s – I was writing for Faithlink, one of the United Methodist Publishing House’s online adult resources. One of my sessions examined the deaths of two children near Kalamazoo, Michigan. Search parties immediately formed to look for the white boy while the black girl was assumed to be, and labeled, a runaway.

When her body was found (she had been sexually assaulted and set on fire) the city’s white police chief held a press conference to confess the injustice done, as well as the

systemic, unfair treatment of non-white communities by law enforcement. After the piece was published I received hate mail from white United Methodists across America.

1990s – Before ROCK, there was Youth Assembly, a gathering of conference teens on a college campus. A puppet troupe provided one night’s entertainment. “Jesus loves the little children,” they sang. But when they came to “red and yellow, black and white” (I’m sure in an effort to be inclusive) I started to squirm. The first puppet was blood red, sporting feathers and war paint, and waving a tomahawk. The fluorescent yellow puppet had slanted lines for eyes and hid behind a fan as she bowed repeatedly. The black puppet wore a heavy neck chain and sunglasses; the only thing bigger than his hair was the boom box on his shoulder as he launched into a tribal dance. The white puppet? A peach-skinned boy in a Cub Scout uniform waving an American flag.

The kids loved it. During our staff meeting, when I raised concerns about perpetuating stereotypes, I was told by a lay volunteer, “Little white boys need Jesus too, Terri” and asked “you just don’t like white people, do you?”

1980s – While serving my first appointment as chaplain at Gallaudet University, I asked what the campus ministry team was doing for Black History Month. I was told “nothing—no black students come to our fellowship groups.”

So I hosted an event. Someone interpreted “The Creation” from J.W. Johnson’s “God’s Trombones” into ASL. Sixty students of all colors showed up and we had church. Simmy, the custodian from Wesley Seminary, baked 15 sweet potato pies

for a reception afterward – and from that day on my white colleagues referred to me as the “black chaplain.”

1970s – I became a youth leader in my home church when I graduated high school in 1976; before that I was actively involved as a participant. When we suggested a trip to Hershey Park, our youth leader said, “No way; too many N-----s there.”

I didn’t sleep that night, but when I went to my pastor (long gone from ministry) he said, “What can I do? He and his wife are the only people willing to work with youth.”

1960s – I was 10-years-old when Dr. King was killed. I remember how quickly the anger turned against those protesters who became violent – while little outrage was expressed over his murder. During a visit to my aunt’s home, an older cousin told a joke that included the death of blacks – using the “N” word. While no one laughed, no one challenged him. Later, I asked my parents why they didn’t speak up. “Because we didn’t want to risk starting a family fight. Sometimes you just have to let things go.”

I am weary of letting things go. Things are where they are because too many people have “let things go” too many times. People sometimes ask me, “If you weren’t a pastor, what would you be?” It took me a while to figure it out, but now I know the answer: “A lightning rod.”

God has called and anointed me to rock the boat – even when some white people accuse me of wanting to be black, and some blacks paint me as a know-it-all enlightened liberal. I’ve been called “N----- lover,” “Rev. Not-Quite-White,” a “wannabe,” a “pretender,” a “Feminazi,” a “reverse racist,” and a “traitor” to my kind. And I just don’t care anymore. The abuse I put

up with is nothing compared to what my minority brothers and sisters have endured generation after generation.

Let’s be blunt, I’m fed up with hearing, “Well, they hate us,” or “I didn’t own slaves. I don’t use racial slurs. I’m tired of being labeled.”

Sin, boys and girls, has a corporate nature. Would you stand before the Cross saying, “I didn’t touch the hammer, so don’t blame me for putting him there?”

My parents were wrong not to speak up when my cousin spewed racist venom in front of their child. My pastor, in that moment, was a coward. If we, as whites, are not proactively naming, confronting, and working to eliminate racism, we are indeed complicit in its perpetuation by our silence.

If you’re white and feeling attacked, I encourage you to entertain the possibility that you do because it’s easier to feel defensive than to acknowledge responsibility – especially, I think, for white men, many of whom feel they are blamed for everyone else’s suffering.

If, when you hear “Black Lives Matter,” you are offended because you assume an unspoken “more than yours,” I urge you in the name of our Savior to admit that, in our society, All Lives Really Don’t Matter to too many people.

Bigotry, hatred, and prejudice are sin; racism is the institutionalization – the normalization – of these sins. Treat them as any other sin. Stop making excuses, get on your knees, and ask the One who makes all things new to free you, to transform you, and to empower you to be a voice for justice. It is that simple, and it’s way overdue.

**Rev. Terri Cofield is pastor of Harmony UMC in Marlowe, W.Va.*

Districts welcome Bishop Easterling to the BWC

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff



HELLO, BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON CONFERENCE! Your new episcopal leader is a self-described Jesus freak, a cat-whisperer, a bishop for everybody, a bold believer in Holy Ghost power, a tither, a Sabbath-taker, a prophetic witness for justice, a former newspaper delivery girl, a grateful daughter, mother and clergy spouse, a poet, and a singer of sacred songs whose spirit gives honor to God.

But, more than anything, she is a child of the living God.

During the months of October and November, Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, who was consecrated as a bishop in The United Methodist Church in July, introduced herself to the people of the Baltimore-Washington Conference in a series of eight sessions, one with each of the districts.

From the opening chords of banjo and trumpet music at the Big Blue Worship Center in Cumberland-Hagerstown, to a traditional Korean dance with fans and benediction in Central Maryland, each session took on a unique character.

In Washington East, churches placed themselves on the map and had speed dating with the bishop; in Annapolis, there were conversations and icebreaker questions; in Baltimore-Suburban, musicians shared their gifts; in Greater Washington, churches introduced the many ministries in their ZIP codes. Frederick's session resembled a family reunion, and Baltimore Metropolitan lifted up the diversity and needs of the city.

Amidst the diversity, Easterling noted the faith that unites the people of the Baltimore-Washington Conference. "This is a strong conference with many gifted leaders, both lay and clergy," she said. "This is a vibrant conference. It is spiritually and economically strong and poised to take even greater risks in Christ's name."

To encourage conference leaders to think about spiritual growth and discipleship, Bishop Easterling lifted up the passage of



In the Washington East District, pastors introduced Bishop Easterling to where their churches were located on a map of Southern Maryland.

Acts 1:6, which she sometimes looks at as "the greater commission." In this passage, Jesus tells the disciples that the power of the Holy Spirit will come upon them and they shall be God's witnesses at home in Jerusalem, in their communities in Judea, in places beyond where they are comfortable in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Easterling, who worked as a prosecuting attorney before entering the ministry, explained that to be an effective witness one must have first-hand knowledge. "We can't be witnesses to that which we haven't seen, known and experienced for ourselves," she said.

When serving as a superintendent in Boston, she was tasked with asking people to share their Christian witness during their Church Conferences. "They talked about their relationships with their dogs, their cats, their grandchildren and, sometimes, their spouses. But it broke my heart how few people could talk about their relationship with Christ. If we don't have that, what is it that we are testifying to?"

Do you know that you are saved, she asked. "Can you offer that to somebody else?"

Easterling admitted that her expectations of herself are "pretty high." Her expectations of the leaders of the Baltimore-Washington Conference are high as well. "I expect we will operate with standards of excellence in all that we do," she said. "The days of mediocrity are over. If anyone was dancing to the tune of

mediocrity, understand the dance floor for that in the BWC is closed." The work the church is called to do is too serious. "Life and death can hang in the balance," the bishop said. "We do not serve a God who wants us to walk in timidity. There ought not be anything we're too shy to face. There ought not be anywhere we're too afraid to go. We have to be our best selves."

Toward this end, the bishop said, she expects church leaders to practice daily spiritual disciplines. This includes regular, fervent prayer, grounded in listening, trust and obedience. "God is not our cosmic bellhop, standing at the ready to give us all we want and desire," she said.

Easterling also expects conference leaders to tithe, recognizing that "our bank statement is our love story." And she hopes they will be involved in deep Bible study, fasting,

worship and service. "We can't lead where we have not gone," she said. In addition, Easterling expects conference clergy, who belong to an

itinerate system, to be willing to move, when they are asked, to wherever the Cabinet discerns that their gifts are most needed.

Being a Christ-follower is not easy, she said. "You have to get up every morning, reclaim your baptism and then live it."

The bishop's expectations of the conference's churches are equally high.

Too many United Methodist congregations are Ichabod churches, she said, "The spirit has departed from them."

At the very least, Easterling said, members must see the image of God – the *Imago Dei* – in one another and work to be making true and positive changes in their communities.

In frank and honest sharing, she said, the greatest challenge before the Baltimore-Washington Conference is starting several new faith communities. "It's not just enough to be insularly fruitful. If a church is growing, I want to ask what church plant are you working on," she said. To do this, churches need to be willing to risk and not be afraid to try. "If we're not failing, we're not trying, and if we're not trying, we've already failed."

She also expects churches to bring young people into ministry in meaningful ways and to be a significant presence in the neighborhood, having relationships and partnerships with community leaders.

In the eight sessions, the bishop fielded many questions; some were about her vision, others were about the church's response to LGBTQ people, the relationship between lay and clergy, the national landscape after the presidential elections, to what extent she values church metrics in measuring success and several more.

In conversation with those at the district gatherings, she shared how she'll be taking time to watch and discern before she announces any plans; that she believes all people are entitled to have full membership in The United Methodist Church, and that any potential schism would be a failure of our faith in God and love for one another. She hopes the conference will embrace its continued work for justice and the idea that "the eagle should never fly higher than the cross;" and declared her conviction that deepening faith and Christian witness, rather than just counting how many seats are filled, is the true measure of discipleship. But, she also stated that when we are living out our commission, we are also drawing others to Christ. It is both and, not either or.

Easterling also asked people to pray for her that she might have stamina and wisdom to meet this moment and the seasons ahead.

"There are still too many people who have never heard the name of Jesus," Easterling said. "God wants us to go further, deeper and to soar higher. To God be the glory."



Taeron Flemming tells God's story in a unique fashion, performing in mime, in the Annapolis District's welcome worship experience.



Music played a large role in welcoming Bishop Easterling. The Rev. Frankie Revell played the banjo, above, and a children's Korean choir sang.

Photos by Melissa Lauber