

HE IS NOT HERE;  
HE HAS RISEN,  
JUST AS HE SAID.

— MATTHEW 28:6

# 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 28, Issue 4 • April 2017



**Pastor EunJoung Joo, of Washington Grove UMC, worships at the Multiethnic Church Conference in Oklahoma City March 30. Surrounding her are the Revs. Brenda Lewis, Laura Easto and George Winkfield. The two-day conference focused on becoming diversity-oriented so that the church can reflect the many faces of God.**

## Diversity is key to discipleship

By MELISSA LAUBER  
UMConnection Staff

**T**O REALLY BE the church God intends, United Methodists “need to get comfortable with being uncomfortable,” said Pastor Ramon Jackson of Inspire D.C. in Washington, D.C. Jackson was one of seven members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference who traveled last month to a Path One Multiethnic Church Conference in Oklahoma City to learn how to do just that as they explored how “differences matter” and what it means for a church to reflect the many faces of God.

Their participation was underwritten by the BWC’s Office of Vibrant Communities, which is committed to creating vital local churches that reflect the fullness of God. The purpose of the gathering, said the Rev. Elaine Robinson, a professor of Methodist studies at Oklahoma City University, was to live out “the mystery of our Gracious God, which lies in our ability to enter into right and radical relationship with the vast irreducible whole of God’s creation.” Within The United Methodist Church, 90 percent of the members in the United States are white.

Nationally, 64 percent of the population is white. This dominant white culture can lead people to believe “the image of God is what I look like. The image of God is what I prefer,” Robinson said. But homogeneous churches are nothing new, Robinson said. In one of the first Christian churches in Corinth, which was a bubbling cauldron of diversity, the apostle Paul scolded the people — Jews, Greeks, Romans, freed and slaves — for their division and lack of unity in Christ. “When you isolate a people-group for the sake of Christ, they become less effective,” said Brian Leander of Adelphi

University, plenary speaker for the Conference. A researcher on intercultural competencies and their impact on churches and businesses, Leander has found that there is one thing multiethnic, multicultural, multiracial and multifaith groups have in common: they are “diversity oriented.” Rather than focusing on trying to attract certain quotas of groups of people, Leander encourages churches to become diversity-oriented churches. Cultural, economic, social and religious diversity “comes right from the heart of

*See Multicultural, page 3*

## Celebrating past with new vision

By MELISSA LAUBER  
UMConnection Staff

**A**FTER THE ISRAELITES defeated the Philistines, the story goes, the prophet Samuel erected a stone and named it Ebenezer, which means “Thus far the Lord has helped us.” On March 19, echoes of that same story continued as the people of Ebenezer UMC in Washington, D.C., met to praise God and celebrate their Founder’s Day — claiming God’s power as they seek to renew their historic church. The congregation began 215 years ago, as part of Capitol Hill Methodist Episcopal Church, with 61 white and 25 black members. They worshipped in the spot where the National’s Baseball Park stands today, said Sam Ford, a member Ebenezer’s Historical Committee and a

*See Ebenezer, page 4*



**Pastor Bresean Jenkins prays at Ebenezer UMC.**

## Church honors Bishop May’s life

By ERIK ALSGAARD  
UMConnection Staff

**T**HE INTROIT AT the Celebration of Life service for Bishop Felton Edwin May was Copland’s “Fanfare for the Common Man.” Nothing could have been further from the truth. Bishop May was, in fact, anything but a “common man.” The hundreds of mourners who gathered at Asbury UMC in Washington, D.C., April 1, bore witness to that fact.



*Courtesy of the Council of Bishops*

In a worship service packed with Bishop May’s favorite hymns — including “Joy to the World” as the opening hymn — and special music that brought people to their feet, bishops, district superintendents, General Secretaries, clergy and laity came together to say goodbye to a lion of the faith.

- A man who was born in 1935 Chicago, educated in public schools, and who was elected to the episcopacy in 1984.
- A man who started a new church in Chicago, with his wife, Phyliss, that began with 15 families and grew to 300 members.
- A man who became the first bishop in United

*See May, page 3*

# ... well said

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

BY MANDY SAYERS

Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

**E**ASTER IS AT the heart of what the church has to offer the world. We can't promise that life with Christ will mean you won't get cancer or car trouble. After all, the One we follow said "Foxes have holes, birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

We can't promise that people will like you, or say nice things about you. Jesus even said, "Blessed are you" when people revile you on account of him and other scary and unappealing things (like blessed are the meek, those who mourn...and that bit about losing your life to save it). What we can give, what we can promise, is Easter.

Our Easter is not just one single day, a kind of Mardi Gras party with a hangover following it. Our Easter is not about chocolate eggs (though I do love a good chocolate egg), or that toxic plastic Easter basket grass.

The Easter we offer is about new life and new life eternal, the sure and certain hope of the resurrection. The Easter we offer has made sin, hell and death mere shadows of their former selves. And if that's all Easter did, that would be enough to make confirmation class worthwhile.

But Easter is more than that — this Easter that we offer the world. The Easter we offer tugs on our present life, on our morning routines. It whispers new life into old marriages and sends hope into desperate situations. It causes stones in front of tombs everywhere to shudder: the tomb of the 17th IEP meeting for a precious boy, the tomb of the layoff, the tomb of the midlife crises, the tomb of addiction, the tomb of despair.

What's a well-meaning, lifelong Methodist to do with such an Easter as this? It's enough to make even the most jaded among us stare wide-eyed and slack-jawed. A stone rolled away. Graveclothes folded. Normal, rational, reasonable people... United Methodists, even... running from the tomb full of joy, like children released into the sunshine of a blue-sky world on the last day of school. Joy rising up in the throat with a song that says, "I have seen the Lord."

That's the Easter that God offers the world. It's not a plastic bunny Easter. It's a hope and a love so strong that no Good Friday can withstand it. Christ the Lord is risen today!

REJOICE!

... 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

**R**EJOICE IN THE Lord always, again I say Rejoice! These words from the book of Philippians and sung so well by Israel Haughton are the cornerstone of a Christian life, yet they can be very difficult to live by.

That's because there are simply times when one does not feel like rejoicing. In times of sorrow, in times of tragedy, in times of uncertainty, sometimes just watching the news, it is hard to rejoice. Yet, Paul and Israel seem very insistent that we should rejoice always.

In thinking about this instruction to rejoice, I finally began to understand Paul's instruction and why it can be so difficult. So many times in life, we look to have joy on our own terms. We look for joy in our circumstances, in our bank accounts, in our own success and realize that many times those things are here today and gone tomorrow. When we look for joy in temporary things, it can never be permanent or available always.

Paul tells us not to simply rejoice always, but to rejoice in the Lord always. Paul understood that there will be times when our circumstances will not dictate joy as a response, and when our feelings will not dictate joy as a response, but when we put our joy in the Lord, joy is always available.

No matter how good or bad things may be, the Lord is always there. The Lord is there in our highest of highs, and does not abandon us in our lowest of lows. The Lord promised us that he will be there always. It is in this promise that we can find peace, contentment and joy.

As we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord this month, take time to rejoice. Rejoice that God loves you. Rejoice that the Lord will always be there for you. Rejoice that Jesus conquered death and the grave. No matter where you are, or what you are going through, always know that the Lord cares for you, and that is a reason to rejoice!

... well said



## EVENTS

### Registration open for Annual Conference session

Rates go up April 13

[www.bwcumc.org](http://www.bwcumc.org)

Online registration costs go up April 13 for the 233rd session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, which will be held Wednesday, May 31-Friday, June 1, at the Wardman Park Marriott Hotel in Washington, D.C.

### Older Adult Day Apart

April 26, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

West River

The theme is "Replanting Yourself in Christ." Rev. Michael Parker leads worship and Bible study; workshops include art with Ruth Bailey, discovering your spiritual gifts with the Rev. Mary Dennis, gardening for small spaces, and boat rides on West River. [bwcumc.org/event/940688-2017-04-26-west-river-center-spring-day-away/](http://bwcumc.org/event/940688-2017-04-26-west-river-center-spring-day-away/)

### VIM Training

April 29, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Conference Mission Center

The training will educate participants on all VIM procedures, selecting destinations and projects, registering your trip, recruiting a volunteer team, obtaining volunteer accident insurance and necessary travel

documents. The cost is \$25. [bwcumc.org/event/940094-2017-04-29-volunteers-in-mission-leader-training-vim/](http://bwcumc.org/event/940094-2017-04-29-volunteers-in-mission-leader-training-vim/)

### Native American Ministries Sunday

April 30

Half of the Native American Ministries Sunday special offering supports Native American outreach within the BWC to strengthen Native American ministries. [umcgiving.org](http://umcgiving.org)

### Mission u

July 28-30

Come join the Global Board of Ministries and the United Methodist Women for Spiritual Growth and to expand your knowledge and concepts of mission. Studies are: Living as a Covenant Community, Climate Justice: Call to Hope and Action, and Missionary Conferences of The United Methodist Church in the United States. Registration and refund deadline: July 11. [bwcumc.org/event/945502-2017-07-28-mission-u/](http://bwcumc.org/event/945502-2017-07-28-mission-u/)

Camp Harmison will host a camping experience from July 31 to August 4. Conference leaders are seeking 50 churches to invest \$100 to be a part of putting children on the track God has for them. Camperships will be given to children in grades four through eight who are living in rural poverty.

If you or your church are interested in this opportunity, send your investment to the Conference Treasurer marked "Camping Opportunities for Children in Rural Poverty." For more information, contact Rev. Conrad Link, superintendent of the Cumberland-Hagerstown District, at 301-739-6659 or Andy Thornton, Director of Camping Ministries, at 800-922-6795.

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

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Telephone: (410) 309-3400 • (800) 492-2525 • fax: (410) 309-9794 • e-mail: [milauber@bwcumc.org](mailto:milauber@bwcumc.org). Subscriptions are \$15 per year. The UMConnection is published monthly.

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

# May: Bishop created life of holy and bold faith

From page 1

Methodist history to request and receive a special assignment from the Council of Bishops. He was sent to Washington, D.C., to work on the epidemic of drug and alcohol abuse.

- A man who created “Saving Stations” in more than 60 cities around the United States.
- A man who raised funds to build a non-denominational chapel at Camp David.
- A man who was named by President Clinton as a member of the White House Presidential Mission on Children Orphaned by AIDS.
- A man who played a key role in the development of Africa University and who, himself, made at least a dozen trips to Africa.
- A man who, in retirement, continued to actively serve the church he loved.
- Those very public highlights of his life are well known. The more intimate, personal side, was revealed during his Celebration of Life, as long-time friend, Bishop F. Herbert Skeete, brought the eulogy.

Preaching from Romans 8, some of Bishop May’s favorite verses, Bishop Skeete painted a portrait of a man who had the “confidence of an old warrior who had walked with Christ from the ghetto in South Chicago to the highest leadership of The United Methodist Church,” Bishop Skeete said.

Drawing a knowing laugh, Bishop Skeete said that “Bishop May lived intentionally. You knew where he stood. He was serious about his faith and had little patience for

distractions.”

He fought, Bishop Skeete said, for love and justice all his life that way.

He illustrated that with a story of Bishop May and himself going to church one day while attending a Council of Bishops’ meeting. They came back to the hotel which, Bishop Skeete said, was “located right next to the tracks.” They noticed that two little boys had crossed the tracks, entered the hotel, evaded security, and were now gazing longingly at the hotel buffet.

“Felton heard one of the workers say that he had called security to get those kids out of here,” Bishop Skeete said. “Felton rushed over to the kids immediately and said to the kids, ‘Would you like to have a tour?’ Security arrived and Felton said to them, ‘They’re okay; they’re with me.’

“That was Felton,” Bishop Skeete said. “That’s how he served God and neighbor: with holy boldness.”

Even toward the end, Bishop Skeete said, Bishop May was worried that the people called Methodist would lose their “mission spirit.”

“Our brother Felton would challenge the church to look beyond its fears,” Bishop Skeete said. “But we live in a time when the church is facing serious challenges on the right and on the left. ... While we are busy in degenerative navel-gazing, we maintain our broken structures. Politically, in the U.S., we hear much about making America great again. For some of us, it means making America selfish and white again.”

Bishop Skeete said that “Felton would remind us that we need to ‘look up, church.’” Instead of closing churches in poor neighborhoods, Bishop Skeete said, we know that there is a way forward, and



**Bishop Herbert Skeete, center, preaches the eulogy at the Celebration of Life service for Bishop May. Bishops Bruce Ough (left) and Sandra Steiner-Ball look on.**

that way requires holy boldness.

Bishop John Schol, who served the Baltimore-Washington Conference from 2004 to 2012, following the retirement of Bishop May, actually began working with Bishop May during the Communities of Shalom work in the early 90s.

During their time together, more than 2,000 people were trained in the Communities of Shalom ministry, Bishop Schol said.

Bishop Marcus Matthews, who served on Bishop May’s Cabinet in the BWC before being elected to the episcopacy himself in 2004, first met Bishop May in the early 1970s, he said.

“When I first met him,” he said, “I saw a man of boldness, a man who was

committed to the church and anchored in the faith. A lot that I’ve learned about ministry, I’ve learned from him. Once a person meets someone like Felton Edwin May, one should never be the same because he pushed you to excellence. He was a special man.”

“Felton was a person who was never on vacation,” said Bishop Joseph Yaekel, who served the Baltimore-Washington Conference just prior to Bishop May’s arrival. “The things that were important to him occupied him at all times. You never wondered where Felton stood; he made sure it was expressed. We were blessed by him and he will be long missed.”

# Multicultural: It’s a ‘God-given vision’

From page 1

God,” he said. “It is the heart of God that God’s church should be a place of prayer for all people.”

To create this diversity-orientation requires openness, Leander said. “Intimacy is the key to this openness.” Openness also involves:

- being truly present with people at every meaningful moment;
- listening and hearing without judgement;
- having the courage to be led by the Holy Spirit; and
- taking risk.

“Real openness also demands that we stop acting as if tolerance is acceptable in the church,” said the Rev. Laura Easto, superintendent of the Baltimore Suburban District, who attended the Conference.

The Rev. Brenda Lewis, another attendee, recognizes this. She is the first African-American pastor to serve Cokesbury UMC in Abingdon. For Lewis, living amid diversity means intentionally creating genuine relationship. “If the Kingdom of God is not segregated, why on earth is the church?” she and others at the gathering asked.

Moving into true acceptance and reconciliation means recognizing that there are “cultures within cultures and diversity within diversity,” said attendee, the Rev. George Winkfield of Emmarts UMC in Woodlawn. It also means boldly trusting

God and taking risks.

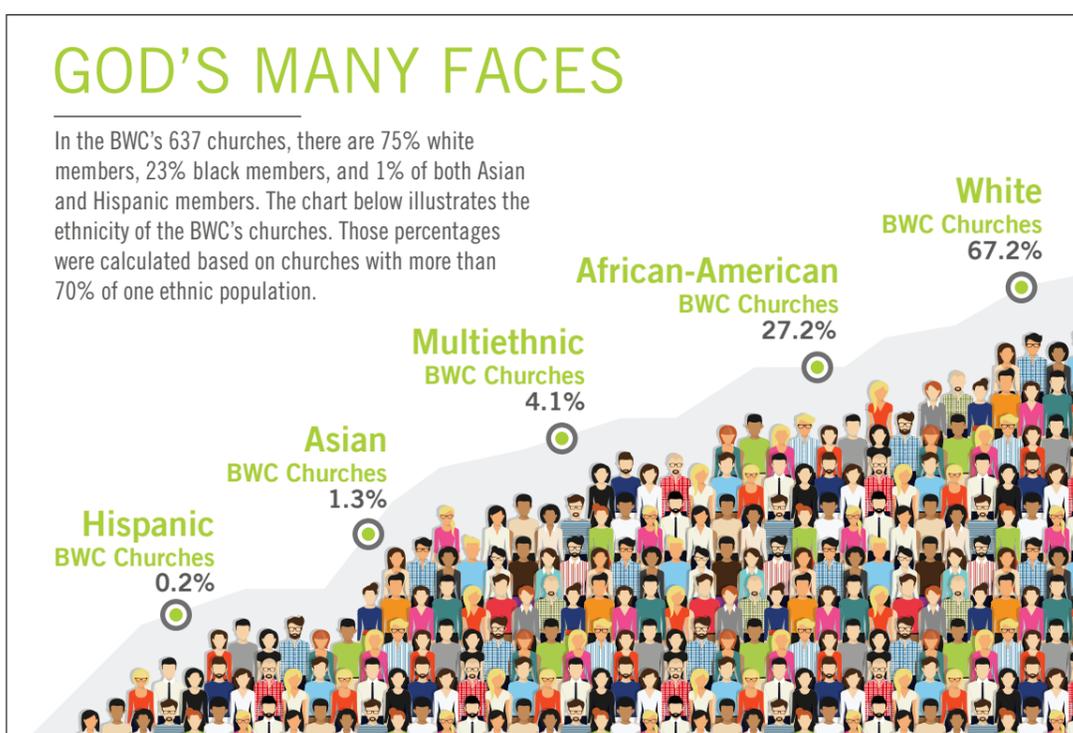
Asbury UMC in Washington, D.C., is an historic black church. Recently, it launched The Bridge, a worshipping community led by Pastor Matthew Wilke, who is white, to reach out to the changing community. He

provides a space for people to have their humanity. They have a right to say what they’re saying. And, the black church is a place where there is safety. You can’t strip away that safety now just because someone perceives it’s not needed anymore.”

Throughout the two-day conference, leaders from multiethnic churches offered ideas for embracing diversity. They included:

- Create a sense of urgency and have an intentional plan for becoming more cross cultural;
- Don’t mistake unity for sameness;
- Everywhere people look in your church they should see diversity – in the demographics of the leadership team, the worship style, the website and the outreach;
- The church should wade into community struggles;
- There is 100 percent chance you will offend people; move forward anyway;
- Set realistic goals and benchmarks;
- Make sure people are “doing life together,” not just worshipping in the same space;
- Model what you hope to create, encourage people’s hearts;
- Practice patience, persistence and perseverance;
- Frequently ask, “When you look within this church, whose image do you see?”
- Remember, diversity is more than just a good idea; it’s a God-given vision.

Those moving toward becoming diversity-oriented churches will soon discover what happens when “human resistance meetings divine persistence,” Leander said. “Let us listen. We all have a story of divine persistence living in us.”



also attended the Conference.

“Asbury decided they wanted to become more diverse, more inclusive to the neighborhood, many of whom are white,” Wilke said. “To live into diversity takes time and relationship building. ... Everyone in the room needs to humble themselves a bit.”

But Winkfield also offers a note of caution. “The Black Lives Matter movement

Living in this tension between homogeneous congregations and diversity-oriented churches, between servant leaders and transformational leaders, between attractional and missional styles of discipleship, and between creating unity while honoring great differences, will be a challenge.

However, it’s a challenge the church must address, Easto said.

# Ebenezer: Church draws on arts for growth

From page 1

reporter for ABC7/WJLA-TV.

But the two groups did not remain together long. In those early days, black Methodists were relegated to the balcony, said Ford, who went on to quote from a history of Capitol Hill UMC.

"The colored members formed a considerable part of the congregation in those days ... Their lusty and musical voices greatly swelled the volume of praise ... Sometimes, too, their swaying bodies and upturned faces made a weird accompaniment to the more decorous worship of the whites, and their leaping suggested the danger of a descent upon the heads of those who were on the lower floor."

"You see," Ford said, "they got scared some of y'all would get to shouting up there and fall down on their heads and kill one of them, so they moved us up here to our own church."

In 1838, 179 years ago, the congregation raised their Ebenezer as a small wooden church. It was the same year abolitionist Frederick Douglass escaped slavery in Baltimore by posing as a sailor and making his way to New York City.

There is no direct evidence that Ebenezer was a stop on the Underground Railroad, a network of safe places for those escaping slavery. However, Thomas Smallwood, who was one of the two men who created the first branch of the Underground Railroad, was a member of the congregation, Ford said.

After the start of the Civil War, between 1861 and 1863, the black population in the nation's capital increased by more than two-thirds. In 1864, the first public,

government-sponsored school for black children in Washington, D.C., was established and housed at Ebenezer, Ford said.

The church has erected three successive buildings on their current site. But even more important than the structures are the people Ebenezer UMC has lifted in ministry and service to God, said Cheryl J. Kelley, the church's lay leader.

Rising out of Ebenezer's pews were the Rev. Emma Burrell, the first ordained woman pastor in The Baltimore-Washington Conference. (In 1956 she was a pastor in the segregated Washington Conference.) The Rev. Mary Brown Oliver, the first African-American woman district superintendent in the Conference, and the second in the entire denomination, remembers sitting in the balcony of Ebenezer as a child and still attends the church today.

The Revs. John Warren and Kevin Smalls also came out of Ebenezer UMC, as did the Rev. Charles Y. Davis Jr., pastor of the Full Gospel Baptist Church in Cooksville, who preached at the Founder's Day worship service.

Davis got emotional about "coming home" to Ebenezer. He wept when his father, Charles Y. Davis, Sr., introduced him before the sermon. What it all comes down to, both Davis men said in their own ways, is "try Jesus."

While the church has had a bright and history-shaping past, in recent years it has fallen on difficult times. When Pastor Bresean Jenkins arrived last July, there were sometimes as few as a dozen or so worshippers on Sunday mornings.

However, Jenkins is intent on bringing the church back to life by empowering all who come through Ebenezer's doors to find the gifts God has given them and to bring them to life for the church and community.

So far, it's working. Talented jazz, Go-Go, and other genres of musicians enliven worship. On sunny days, the church doors have been open and passersby were drawn into the sanctuary.

An artist at heart (and an art-educator with the D.C. public school system during the week), Jenkins is a creative and energetic leader. On many days at the church, he intentionally wears mismatched socks as a subtle message to all he meets that no one "has it all together." Nor, he said, should they. Ebenezer is becoming a community for people to authentically come together to share their lives – as beautiful or messy as they might be.

One of the ways the church is

accomplishing this is focusing on the arts.

"The arts are our spark," said Jenkins. The congregation is using them as a means of engagement.

One of the first steps in that engagement is the NeoSoul Conference, scheduled for June 10. Drawing on nationally known performing artists, the conference will focus on dance, acting, music, puppetry, and spoken word and how these arts can energize churches in meaningful ways.

In ancient Greek theater, Jenkins noted, there used to be a place on stage called the "theologeion," or "place where god speaks." What's ancient is also new at Ebenezer when one claims the arts in new and fresh ways, Jenkins said.

Celebrating Founder's Day, the congregation celebrated its past, proudly claiming, "thus far the Lord has helped us," even as they look with hope to tomorrow and listen for God to speak.



Members of Ebenezer UMC gather at the altar for prayer on Founder's Day.

# Essex UMC opens new doors to ministry

BY MELISSA LAUBER  
UMConnection Staff

**A**T ESSEX UMC, there is an entire community that comes in through the "other doors" of the building. Making sure these people experience the love of God is one of the congregation's best strengths.

"This is almost like another congregation," said Pastor Mary E. Robinson, who serves Essex UMC. The church feeds them, provides Communion, shares prayer concerns, hands out devotional booklets and Bibles, and even offers ashes and blessings on Ash Wednesday. Plans are also underway for a summer Bible study prior to the meal.

The door they enter through leads to the Table of Grace, a weekly dinner for the community's hungry where approximately 200 guests sit down on Wednesday evenings to a meal prepared and served by more than a dozen church and other volunteers.

Tables of Grace has also extended opportunities to "Friends of the Table," which allows people to serve the guests by sorting clothes for a clothing bank and helping with set-up. There are now five friends, who themselves receive some of the outreach services.

Not all the guests are homeless. In Baltimore County, more than one in every 10 people live below the poverty line of a \$23,850 income for a family of four. One in eight families faces a constant struggle against hunger and nearly a quarter of households with children struggle to obtain enough food to provide regular, healthy meals for their families.

Table of Grace started in 2009 as an off-shoot of a food pantry, which still exists, giving away nonperishables on Tuesdays

and Thursdays to 10 to 15 families. But along the way, some of the clients asked for hot food.

"We just made a pot of chili and opened the doors," said Carol Wehner one of the



Community members prepare for the Table of Grace meal at Essex UMC.

Table of Grace coordinators. The first week 26 people showed up, then 46, then 60. "It became a God thing," she said.

"Dawn, Pat R., Pat, Bonnie and Sandy arrive on Wednesday mornings to set up and begin the meal preparations, others like Edith, Vickie, Jan, Ken, Marvin, Susan, Charles, Darlene, Ernie, Mary S., Gary and Jim show up to help serve, wash dishes and do the clean-up," Robinson said. "The Table of Grace is blessed to have students like Chaz stop by to assist after school. This gives students the opportunity to earn their student service hours."

Robinson is encouraged at how empowered the volunteers are.

"They serve as an act of faith," she said. They've created a ministry that offers 10,000 meals a year. There is not a lot of money,

The food comes from food banks, a small grant and donated funds.

"I don't see the people who come as homeless," Robinson said. "I see them as my congregation, and because I see them



as my congregation, I'm able to be their pastor."

Her pastoral concern is expressed in the way she jokes and shares deep concerns with the Table of Grace guests.

"They face a lot of emotional challenges," she said. "Many of these people are working class folks who are unemployed, disabled and veterans. They are searching for resources and don't know where to begin. That brings a lot of emotional challenges and questions about where is God?"

"Some of the guests have hit rock bottom and don't see a way out," she continued. "I want them to feel included. Even though they are without, they're a part of God's kingdom. They, too, are loved."

Robinson grew up in the inner city of Baltimore. At age 14, she would gather her

sister and some of the other neighborhood kids and walk to the after-school latchkey program at Christ Edmondson UMC. Robinson came to experience God's love through a "side door" ministry.

"Outreach ministries, such as afterschool programs, Table of Grace and clothing pantries, can have an everlasting impact on one's experience with God and spiritual formation," she said. "I think that it is very important to remember to also pastor the people who come through the 'other doors.'"

In the coming months, Robinson will be leading a steering committee of Baltimore Metro pastors in consultation with Rev. Stacey Cole Wilson and Baltimore County leaders to find ways for East Baltimore County United Methodist churches to work together to strengthen their ministry with homeless and near homeless people.

The Rev. Ed DeLong, superintendent of the Baltimore Metropolitan District, is excited about this strategic approach to addressing homelessness.

In a meeting with county leaders and the new steering committee, DeLong said that the number one issue during last fall's charge conferences related to homelessness and how the many ministries offered by local United Methodist congregations could be strengthened if churches worked together. He expressed optimism about these churches providing resources that could prepare people to move toward a more self-sufficient life.

At Essex UMC, Robinson has a vision of using the church's classroom space to offer GED, English as a Second Language, and computer classes to educate and empower the church's neighbors to go out and be productive. It will be another door by which people can enter the church.

# With reconciliation, cemetery returns home

By MARY KAY TOTTY & JOHNSIE COGMAN\*

**D**UMBARTON AND Mt. Zion United Methodist churches have a long history. In 1816, Mt. Zion UMC was formed when African American members (slave and free) left Dumbarton UMC (founded in 1772) to form their own congregation because of the discrimination and oppression African American members endured.

Mt. Zion UMC thus became the oldest African American congregation in Washington, D.C., celebrating its 200th Anniversary in October 2016.

Over the years, Mt. Zion UMC and Dumbarton UMC have sought reconciliation and worked to strengthen both their shared ministries and friendships with one another, yet there has been an unresolved matter between them: the ownership of the Mt. Zion Cemetery.

In the 1800s, Dumbarton leased the cemetery to Mt. Zion for a dollar for 99 years. That lease expired in the 1970s. As time drew near for the lease to expire, Dumbarton faced some significant financial challenges and was tempted to resolve those challenges by selling the cemetery to

commercial developers.

One Dumbartonian, Mike Beard, refused to go along with the unjust plan and, with obstinate conviction, argued against the idea of selling the cemetery to commercial developers and eventually, others came to agree with him that to do so would be a desecration. Since then, the cemetery has been designated a Historical Preservation Site and is off limits for sale or commercial development.

The next step was to transfer the deed, the ownership of the cemetery, from Dumbarton to Mt. Zion. This has been a long-held dream of Mt. Zion historian, Carter Bowman Jr., and Beard. Despite failing health, Bowman worked tirelessly until his death at age 92 in September 2014 to preserve the legacy of the cemetery.

The process to transfer the deed has taken longer and been more complex than anyone thought, however. The Revs. Mary Kay Totty of Dumbarton UMC and Johnsie Cogman of Mt. Zion made it their goal to get this task completed.

When Mt. Zion and Dumbarton gathered together for Sunday morning worship on March 5, the service included the symbolic handing over of the deed for



The Revs. Johnsie Cogman, left, and Mary Kay Totty lead worship together.

the Mt. Zion Cemetery. The congregations celebrated that the deed legally had been transferred from Dumbarton to Mt. Zion.

The ownership of the Mt. Zion Cemetery is now with Mt. Zion UMC where it rightly and justly belongs. Connie Wilkerson, one of Dumbarton's trustees and an attorney, shepherded the process in recent months.

On Feb. 9, Vernon Ricks, Chairperson of

Mt. Zion Trustees, and David Cook, then Chairperson of Dumbarton Trustees, met and signed all the paperwork for the deed transfer.

Both Dumbarton and Mt. Zion, rejoice that they have taken this important step in their shared journey of reconciliation.

*\*Totty is pastor of Dumbarton UMC, and Cogman pastors Mt. Zion UMC in Georgetown.*

# American University students serve in ASP mission

By JOEY HEATH\*

**J**UNE 23, 2016 began as just another normal rainy early summer day in Rainelle, WVa. Unfortunately, the day took a turn for the worse and led to devastating flooding. By the time the flood waters receded, 90 percent of the homes in the downtown area were no longer livable. As one trooper said, "it looked like a warzone."

The Appalachia Service Project (ASP) already had a presence in the community. Once they were able, they got right back to work, this time working on disaster relief rebuilding. To date they have built over a dozen new homes and renovate many more.

Enter college Spring Break 2017. Many students at American University

spend Spring Break taking a break from the intense pace of college studies and internships. Others spend their break doing something different: attending alternative spring break programs.

This is exactly what led the AU United Methodist-Protestant community to Rainelle and ASP. They were looking to do something different, to go out in the world and give back as the hands and feet of Christ. This meant spending the week working in a house without electricity or plumbing.

The work day started at 8:30 a.m. and lasted until 4:30 p.m. with a lunch break in the middle. When it snowed overnight on Monday night, they still went out to work Tuesday morning. When the temperature dropped in the teens, they used a contractor's heater to keep the inside of the

house warm enough to keep working. They placed some of the finishing touches on a house, putting insulation under it, putting in wall trim, and lots of painting.

They did have time for some fun as well. In the evenings there were programs, board games, and fellowship with each other and

the other college groups.

It was a long week, but deeply satisfying to look at the house at the end and see a space almost ready for the homeowner to move back in.

*\*Joey Heath is the United Methodist Campus pastor at American University.*



# Lenten journey calls community to prayer

By REV. JENNIFER KARSNER  
Pastor Asbury UMC in Arnold

**P**RAYER. IT'S SOMETHING anyone can do, yet almost no one feels like a master at prayer. Most Christians long for a deeper and more meaningful prayer life. What better way to take the next faithful step in our prayer life than by studying the prayer Jesus taught his disciples? During the season of Lent, Asbury UMC in Arnold is working through the Lord's prayer. Each week, we are immersing ourselves in one petition of the Lord's prayer through worship, sermons, small groups, and even indoor prayer stations.

But we decided that we didn't want to take this journey alone. We want to invite

the community to walk with us, without expecting the community to step inside the church building. We began asking ourselves, what would it look like to pray with the community rather than for the community? The answer

- outdoor prayer stations.

Our building is located on a main thoroughfare with lots of foot-traffic as people travel to school, the grocery store, the senior center, and a public transit bus. Each week, we are placing an interactive prayer station along the sidewalk where people can experience it without altering their daily path.

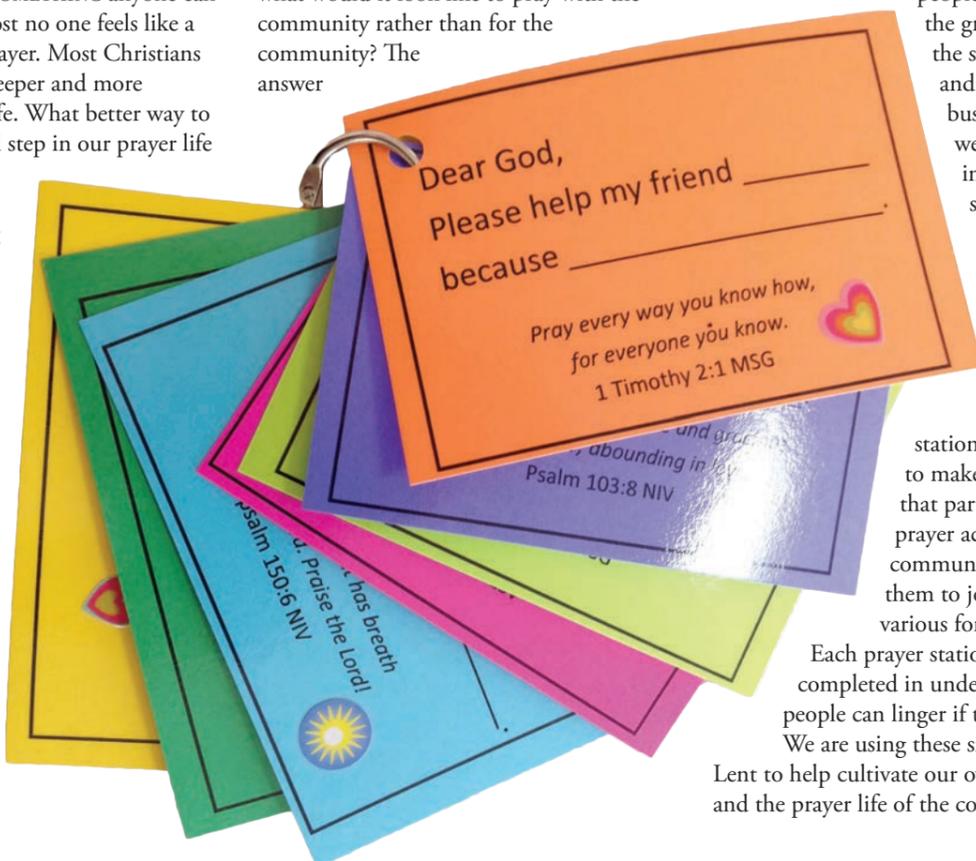
The prayer station is designed to make the lesson on that part of the Lord's prayer accessible to the community and invite them to join with us in various forms of prayer.

Each prayer station can be completed in under a minute, or people can linger if they so choose. We are using these six weeks of Lent to help cultivate our own prayer life and the prayer life of the community. We

started Lent by giving every family prayer prompt cards, a set of seven colorful cards that is the first half of a sentence and invites the participant to fill-in the rest. They are geared towards children but are also a great way to help adults learn how to craft their own prayers. Additionally, we are using modified versions of the outdoor prayer stations in our worship services. We have set-up an indoor prayer station in the lobby of our family life center that our preschool children visit during their class, and it's available for the outside groups that use our facilities.

Jesus's disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray." It's a joy to see that prayer still being answered today as preschoolers, families walking to school, Boy Scouts, churchgoers, Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous, bus seekers, grocery shoppers, and church by-passers pause long enough to be gathered around Jesus.

Most of the ideas for our prayer stations were adapted from the ideas of others. We are happy to share the resources we have put together. See the end of this story online (<http://www.bwcumc.org/news-and-views/an-experiment-in-prayer/>) for links to resources such as outside prayer stations, family life prayer stations, prayer starters and meal prayers.





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## MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Members of St. Luke's UMC and the community flocked to a Community Festival at the church.

### Church on the corner boldly proclaims God

BALTIMORE – Inspired by the Rev. Alfreda Wiggins' call to action, members of St. Luke's UMC in the Sandtown-Winchester area brought the community together. They organized an outreach event that morphed into a full-fledged community festival, said Frances Muldrow, the Community Liaison.

On Saturday, March 25, 126 church and community families registered and 200-plus from the nearby housing areas came from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., to access services such as legal aid, family services, substance abuse treatment, and information on bus schedule changes coming up. People signed up to participate in the Mayor's Spring Clean in April, and six block captains agreed to make their blocks "Clean and Green."

At the same time, a lot of entertainment was going on, especially for young people, including Face Painting, the City Fun Wagon, Fire Truck #10, and Police Officers

Severn and Randolph from the nearby Western District Police who were accessible the entire day.

They had hoped to have grant help, which didn't happen, Muldrow said, "But St. Luke dug down into her pockets to secure funding for a free food and clothing party."

"We touched people's souls at our outreach event," said the chairperson, Wanda Maull, "and (we) are reclaiming our community back for Christ."

"The blessings were indeed multiplied," Muldrow added.

### Ministry with our partners in Puerto Rico

FALLSTON – A team from Fallston UMC made its second trip to Puerto Rico Feb. 12-18 to help complete a building started in 2004, "the number one priority," said Bishop Hector Ortiz.

"The first time we came, the (host) congregation was a little excited but their

dream had died 13 years ago," said the Rev. Karin Walker. This time they worked alongside the Fallston visitors every day. Work included plumbing, windows and flooring and other projects.

The building sits high on a hill, where it will be used not only as a church, but also as a shelter from tsunami or hurricane, if the need arises, Walker said. The community, with the help of VIM teams, hopes to establish a school since several local schools have closed.

"It's a great set up for local mission teams that want to serve somewhere with an 'international' feel but accessible and affordable," Walker said. Passports are not needed and much of the population

Rev. Jennifer Fenner, with most coming from West Africa. The church has some 35 nationalities among its members and friends.

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling joined in the celebration. Normally, the church holds three services on Sunday, one in Spanish, but this Sunday, because of the bishop's schedule they combined as one big worship service and celebration. When it came time for the offering, she joined members and visitors dancing down the aisles to leave their tithes and offerings at the front of the sanctuary, a normal practice in two of the services, Fenner said.

With the "Voices of Southern Africa" choir singing songs in several languages,

but all in the same tongue of praising God, the worshippers heard Psalm 100 in five different African languages, read Luke 17:1-10 in two languages, received the benediction from District

Superintendent, the Rev. JW Park, in English and Korean.



Members of a mission team from Fallston UMC worked on this building in Puerto Rico.

speaks English. Anyone wishing to explore further, contact Walker at [Karin.walker@fallstonumc.org](mailto:Karin.walker@fallstonumc.org).

### Diversity and unity themes of worship

GAITHERSBURG – In one of the most diverse churches in the conference, members and friends of Epworth UMC came together Feb. 19 to celebrate their African congregants and culture.

"We have a growing African community in our congregation," said their pastor, the

### BRIEF

WASHINGTON - The Rev. F. Douglas Powe Jr. will become the new director of Wesley Theological Seminary's Lewis Center for Church Leadership on July 1. The Rev. Lovett H. Weems Jr., the center's founding director, is stepping down but will remain on staff as senior consultant.

# Young adults find renewed faith in Cuba

By Rev. Angela Flanagan\*



**O**N MARCH 3-12, four young adults from the Northeastern Jurisdiction traveled with two United Methodist Volunteers in Mission leaders on a journey to Cuba. The trip was open to both clergy and laity. As young adults in the American United



Emilee Hrtyski scrapes an iron window frame in Cuba.

Methodist church, our age tends to make us the exception to the rule. However, in Cuba we encountered a church with an average age of 25 to 32-years old.

Many churches in Cuba have a young adult worship service either weekly or monthly, but young adults' leadership is not confined to those age-specific ministries. Young adults are visible in every area of leadership — pastors, musicians, worship leaders, liturgical dance teams, and administrative positions in the bishop's office. "In the past 15 years, the Cuban Methodist church has grown 15 percent per year," said Aldo Gonzalez, the U.S. coordinator for UVMIM Cuba missions.

This tremendous, sustained growth has created challenges of its own that have been met with creative solutions. The need for leaders is growing faster than pastors

can be seminary trained, so an extensive apprenticeship process has been established.

When sensing a call to ministry, these primarily young adult candidates must first demonstrate the fruitfulness of their ministry. They begin as small group leaders who must demonstrate their effectiveness before moving up to missionaries and then assistant pastors. Candidates then serve as

pastors while attending seminary. Seminary is structured in two intensive, three-week terms per year for four years, allowing seminarians to serve churches over the entire island, which is 850 miles long, and commute twice a year to Habana.

Local seminary extensions in 34 locales throughout the island also allow for continued education for not only seminarians, but also laity. After completing

an extensive seven-month training to be baptized in the Cuban Methodist Church, these new members are immediately enrolled in additional training such as these local seminaries and begin to learn to preach, teach, and share the Gospel.

The young adult leadership, extensive (even methodical) nature of discipling efforts, and the sheer passion with which the Gospel is lived out by Cuban Methodists echoes back to our early Methodist roots — both the Wesley brothers' Holy Club in England as well as the Methodist camp meetings of the American frontier.

While on the surface Cuban Methodist worship more closely resembles Pentecostalism to our American eyes, a deeper look reveals its strong Wesleyan foundation.

The Cuban Methodist Church has demonstrated once again the elasticity of our Methodist heritage, living into their Wesleyan identity in a fully Cuban manifestation — complete with dancing, lots of dancing.

Experiencing the intense joy, passion, and hospitality of the Cuban Methodist Church has been a transformational experience for our UVMIM young adult team. We returned knowing that the vitality of the Cuban churches is not a formula that can simply be transplanted. However, we do return seeking to discern how the intense joy, passion, and hospitality — that come from Christ, not just Cuba — might be revived in our own contexts of ministry.

The goal of this mission was two-fold. As a typical UVMIM team, we built relationships with the local churches and worked on building housing for the Methodist Evangelical Seminary. However, this mission was unique in that each young adult participant was also being trained to be a UVMIM leader. The NEJ matched our funds to help make this a more accessible program for young adults. In return, we promised to lead a trip within 18 months of returning.

While the average age of UVMIM leaders is climbing, training young adults creates leaders who can continue to serve and lead throughout their entire lives. Our small team had only six people in it, but the reach of this team will multiply throughout the following decades as we lead our own teams to

UVMIM sites throughout the world.

The jurisdiction's UVMIM hopes to replicate this fruitful and sustainable model for expanding young adult leadership by offering similar opportunities in the future.

As UVMIM leaders, we are busy forming our own teams, ready to guide others into equally transformative mission journeys in which we all might serve, grow, learn, and form bonds across our Methodist Connection with brothers and sisters in Christ who have so very much to teach us about what it means to faithfully follow Jesus.

If you would like to learn more about my experience or UVMIM opportunities in Cuba, please feel free to reach out to me. I would be happy to meet with you or with a group in your local church.

If you know of young adults who would be interested in participating in a similar mission journey and leadership training next year, they are invited to reach out to Rev. Tom Lank, the UVMIM coordinator for the NEJ, at [coordinator@umvimnej.org](mailto:coordinator@umvimnej.org).

*\*The Rev. Angela Flanagan serves as the associate pastor of Calvary UMC in Mt. Airy, and also serves as the Central Maryland district representative on the BWC's Young Adult Council. She can be contacted at [angela.m.flanagan@gmail.com](mailto:angela.m.flanagan@gmail.com).*



Young adults dance at the Habana District women's conference.

Photos courtesy of Rev. Angela Flanagan

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### In response to immigration reform

Thank you UM Connection. I recently read Richard Mitchell's Immigration Thoughts published in the March 2017 issue. It is refreshing to read something written responsibly with wisdom and common sense regarding the temporary immigration ban.

When laws have been ignored and terrorism concerns are at all-time highs, it is not unreasonable to attempt to gain better understanding and control through, at least, temporary measures.

Who at some time has not, unfairly, had sanctions, controls or limits placed on them because they were part of or identified with a certain crowd? Often, life isn't fair but it's a part of life and we can learn from it. Tough love is important but it doesn't mean we aren't caring or loving.

It is time to put the so-called "politically correct" attitude to rest that to love someone we must accept, condone and sanction anything someone does or dismiss the odds associated with certain groups or organizations.

Yes, the United Methodist official theology may be to welcome the stranger and stand with the marginalized and oppressed. But that shouldn't mean that we must, out of Christian love, allow unrestricted entry to our borders — whether temporary or permanent — any more than it means we must leave the doors to our homes unlocked so that strangers may freely enter.

Thank you, Mr. Mitchell, for your insight and taking the effort to share it at a time when we all need to face the realities of today's world.

Robert Abel  
Linthicum Heights UMC

### We need gun legislation that works

I hereby humbly offer my rebuttal to the March article blaming guns for so-called "gun violence."

In order for society to combat "gun violence," it must concentrate on the root causes of violence itself instead of the easy-to-write-about and espouse, gun control. In the article, the author quotes statistics from "everytown research," a slanted and politically motivated organization. They like to provide stats in their arguments, but don't tell the whole truth.

For example, the 91 Americans supposedly killed every day (including children and teenagers) include and are mostly comprised of criminals and gangs. This is also why black men are more likely to be killed than whites (this is cited in the article).

These crimes are almost exclusively in large cities where gun control laws are the most stringent.

The article also criticizes the proposed national Concealed Carry Reciprocity legislation because of the straw man argument of other state's laws being lax. State legislation the author seeks to endorse is the Weapon Free College Campus bill. One need look no further than other shootings on campuses, in theaters, or other "gun free zones."

Why? Because a criminal is assured that he will be unhindered in these places because only law-abiding citizens obey laws. In other words, a shooter is safe to murder others in a venue where good guys with guns are not.

Simply put, laws allowing gun free zones are easy to pass, easy to tout as sponsored by a "politician who cares," but never work. The same is true for any type of gun control legislation. It's easy but never works.

John Cullom  
Westminster, Md.

### The connectal system at work

In the March UMConnection, I shared the story of Smithfield UMC supporting the education of a young man in Zimbabwe. A couple of things have happened already because of this article. Someone has contacted me and wants to sponsor one of the other three boys (Emmanuel) at university. He is sitting for his A Level exams in late October and if he does well this person will sponsor him at university for four years. This can only be through God's caring and loving hand. I am so happy.

I sent the link to the Connection (article) ([bwcumc.org/news-and-views/church-opens-new-horizons-for-one-mans-future/](http://bwcumc.org/news-and-views/church-opens-new-horizons-for-one-mans-future/)) to Albert and it has had an effect on him also. Here is the message he sent to me: "I'm pleased with the story. I'm crying because I have witnessed the glory of God. I love Smithville church because they are part of my family at large. I'm now coming from the University Library and I have gained motivation from the story I will keep on working very hard. Thank you for your unwavering support."

Have a blessed day,  
Dave Bonney

### UMCONNECTION LETTERS POLICY

The UMConnection welcomes letters to the editor. Letters must be original to the UMConnection and no longer than 250 words. We reserve the right to edit and/or reject all letters. Send to [ealsgaard@bwcumc.org](mailto:ealsgaard@bwcumc.org).

# Creative sharing sparks new ideas about church

BY MELISSA LAUBER  
UMConnection Staff



“IT ONLY TAKES a spark ...” goes the praise song. On March 11, more than 360 sparks were ignited as clergy and lay people from the Washington Region gathered at Leadership Days to ignite new ways of doing and being church designed to transform lives and create thriving communities.

The flames were lit in a series of seven Spark Talks, resembling TED talks, whose content spanned the spectrum of discipleship.

The talks were part of a day of continuing education, with workshops in the afternoon. Each region in the Baltimore-Washington Conference holds these Leadership Days to provide learning opportunities for church leaders.

Methodism’s founder John Wesley was already well into his ministry when he had an experience at Aldersgate and his heart was strangely warmed, noted Washington Region strategist Christie Latona, who prayed that hearts would catch fire that day.

“If you have a spark, you can pass it on. It gets passed from person to person. It gets passed when we talk with the love of Christ,” Latona said, “sowing the good news of the Gospel everywhere we go.”



## Smoke in the Youth Room

Sharon Milton, the Youth Ministries Director at First UMC in Hyattsville, was first to take the stage at Reservoir

High School. She was joined by 17 youth from the Washington Region, who enacted their frustrations with adults in their churches who are afraid of the chaos that might accompany new things and who prize tradition over experimentation.

Too often, Milton said, the church’s youth are like smoke detectors – when they initially sound off, people pay attention, but they quickly muffle and silence them to go about life as usual. Sometimes, people even go as far as disconnecting them, so that they won’t be bothered in the future.

“We can be vision killers and not even know it,” said Milton. “We need to let them sing the song as God has given it to them.”

The youth shared their dreams and offered the church a message: “Let the fire burn.” Let it blaze!

## Prayer is the Engine for Change

Don Floyd, is the retired CEO of 4-H. He’s traveled to more than 60 nations and spoken with an executive’s voice, but it’s the prayers he’s whispered to God that matter most to him.

An important part of Floyd’s faith walk



was as a founding member of Bridgeway Community Church in Columbia, which started with 20 blue chairs in a Howard County College meeting room. As one of the church’s five leaders, he remembers there were never agendas or votes. The leaders met, prayed to ask what God wanted, “then we made the decision on our knees,” he said.

Today, that congregations has 10,000 members at three services each week and will hold their Easter service at Merriweather Post Pavillion, a concert venue.

Floyd is now a member of Linden-Linthicum UMC in Clarksville, which recently had a prayer campaign that led to the church raising \$650,000 to retire substantial debts, and he experienced the power of prayer in his personal life, after his wife asked him for a divorce. Praying “on the armor of God,” heartfelt, Spirit-led prayer taught them both about forgiveness and his marriage turned the corner.

Always pray, Floyd said. “Always be fearless ambassadors for Jesus Christ, as he alone changes lives.”

## From Bias to Belonging: Change Yourself, Change the World

“Every child needs at least one adult who is irrationally crazy about him.” This sentiment inspired Dushaw Hockett to believe he could change the world.

Hockett, the executive director of Safe Places for the Advancement of Community and Equity in D.C., assists people in recognizing and addressing bias as a critical step in communities of Hope — healing, opportunity and possibility for everyone.

Implicit bias, he explained, gets in our way of seeing each other.

Implicit bias operates on a subconscious level, is contrary to our conscious beliefs about who we are, and is triggered in rapid and automatic associations. It filters how we see the world, often in ways we’re not aware of.

A significant amount of harm in situations involving racism and discrimination stem from implicit bias, but most of the tools designed to address the harm are explicit. This disconnect is something the church must consider if real change is to be made, Hockett said.

Information about implicit bias, and a test that can serve as a predictor of behavior is available at [thespacesproject.org](http://thespacesproject.org). To move from bias to belonging, “we need to do the internal change-work to make the external work possible,” Hockett said.

## ‘A Young Adult and a Sceptic Walk into a Church’

The Rev. Bonnie Scott’s Spark talk began

in a way that sounded like the start of a joke – but nothing could be more serious for churches today than reaching out to skeptics and young adults.

Being real — practicing authenticity — is the key, said Scott, pastor of Trinity UMC. “I don’t claim to have found the truth,” she said, “but I know it has found me.”

As a pastor, she shares that truth, putting aside the “pretty faith,” with its “thees” and “thous,” and speaks to people’s pains, confusion, fears and pride with honesty, humility, trust and openness.

Scott remembers as a new pastor being asked by a woman to do the funeral of that woman’s daughter and two-year-old granddaughter, who were murdered by the daughter’s abusive husband.

It felt like an impossible funeral homily to write. “What do you say in situations like that?” she asked.

But, standing at the intersection of life and death, she shared the story of Jesus raising his friend, Lazarus, from the dead. Scott realized she just needed to share her humanity, the idea that Jesus was human too, and that the mourners’ questioning had a place in Jesus’ arms.

“This was an unfair tragedy,” she told them, recounting how Jesus had wept at his friend’s death. “So there’s something very holy about your tears this morning.”

She also noted the domestic abuse that had been experienced. When Jesus raises Lazarus, he unbinds him,” Scott said. “Natalie was bound in the shackles of domestic abuse,” and while we grieve the tragedy, she’s been set free. “God said, ‘unbind her.’”

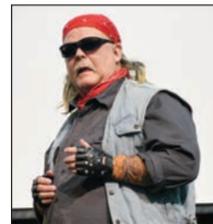
That language of humility and honesty is the native tongue of skeptics and young adults, said Scott.

One of her colleagues questioned if mentioning the abuse was “risky.”

But “this was the reality that was on everyone’s mind,” Scott said. “What kind of person would I be if I didn’t name that reality and wrap it up in resurrection?”

## Be the Bible

With arms full of tattoos, long hair



wrapped in a bandana, torn jeans, chains and a black leather biker’s vest, Rod Fry interrupted Leadership Days from his seat in the audience, “What’s all

this Jesus talk I hear,” he yelled.

“When I get off my motorcycle down the street, none of you want to talk about Jesus,” said Fry.

But, he confessed, he does praise God that somebody talked to him about Jesus. “Somebody took that risk,” he said, “I was on a path straight for hell.”

As he spoke, Fry subtly began a transformation. First, he peeled the tattoo sleeves from his arm, he replaced his clothes with an outfit of jacket and tie, and removed the blond wig and bandana, unveiling himself as the Central Maryland District Co-director of Lay Servant Ministries.

“What are you going to tell me about your Jesus,” Fry asked again. “Will you tell me now that I look like you?”

He encouraged the laity, especially, to take church outside of its four walls. “In the vein of the old circuit riders, we need to take a look out there,” he said.

Incarcerated and troubled youth, seniors in nursing homes, people in rehab centers, students in schools, and even those standing with us in line at the Walmart — all these people are thirsty for a word from Jesus and they won’t come into your church,” Fry said. “You can’t reap a harvest sitting in the barn.”



## Ignite Creative and Artistic Ministry: Dream BIG!

When he was younger, Bresean Jenkins was, he said, “on drugs – drug to church, drug to Sunday School...” All this dragging, he confessed, was his parents’ response to the fact that he loved Sesame Street and wanted to marry Miss Piggy.

“I’ve always been a little different,” said Jenkins, who pastors Ebenezer UMC in Washington. Church and his grandmother helped him to value the things that made him different. But his life changed forever when he saw the musical “Dream Girls.”

“I found my people,” he said.

Jenkins studied the performing arts and, when God called him to ministry, he brought his creative spirit along, recognizing that God had given him “dreams too big to be ignored.”

“The God you serve is an artist,” Jenkins said. However, he warned, the arts are not a trendy thing for churches to do as a gimmick. “They are methods of engagement.”

He offered those at the Leadership Days some instructional advice about doing arts ministries, including the absolute importance of thorough rehearsals, the need for all participants to be available and faithful, and a reliance on the Holy Spirit.

He evoked the story when God asked Moses, “What’s that in your hand, a stick or a staff?” Our Creator God has given you power, Jenkins told those present. Things that appear ordinary can turn into miracles. “It’s time to be gathering sticks and turning them into staffs.”



Explore MOSAICS. This devotional is now online to help prepare you for this year’s Annual Conference; produced by creative voices from throughout the BWC.  
[bwcumc.org/events/annual-conference/mosaics-2017-annual-conference-devotional/](http://bwcumc.org/events/annual-conference/mosaics-2017-annual-conference-devotional/)