



*The grass withers, the flower fades,
But the word of our God stands forever.
— Isaiah 40:8*

UMC *Connection*

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The Rev. Conrad Link, right, Dean of the Baltimore-Washington Cabinet, joins Bishop LaTrelle Easterling and the Rev. Joseph Daniels in celebrating the successful partnership that created the 2017 Pastors' School in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe Pastors' School broadens partnership

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff



WHEN THE REV. Gladman Kapfumvuti was a young pastor in Marange, Zimbabwe, he lived humbly, traveling a circuit, preaching the Word of God. "Little did I know there were diamonds, literally diamonds, in the dirt beneath my feet," he said. "I was walking on diamonds."

Last month, after a 20-year absence, Kapfumvuti, of Asbury UMC in Brandywine, returned to his homeland with a 30-member delegation from the Baltimore-Washington Conference for a Pastors' School in Zimbabwe, which he helped to launch two decades ago. He was moved by all The United Methodist Church has become, and all the possibilities

the school presents.

"There is great richness here," he said. "The church is sitting on diamonds and we don't know it."

More than 400 clergy attended the Pastors' School at Africa University in Old Mutare, July 17 – July 21. About 300 of them do not have seminary degrees, explained the Rev. Joseph Daniels, leader of the BWC's Zimbabwe Partnership. Many are young. Many also serve several-point circuits, constantly on-the-move, sometimes traveling by bicycle or on foot. They face unique challenges.

Daniels helped write the original covenant for the partnership, imagining a school that would provide training in practical theology and ministry best-

practices. Over the years, the school has evolved, with leaders in Zimbabwe taking a larger role in the planning and execution of the schools.

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For more on BWC's mission efforts in Zimbabwe, see the story on page 5.

BWC gets grant for Change Makers

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

TO "THINK OUTSIDE the box," you must first know the box is there. Members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference are starting a project for people who don't even know the box exists.

Called the Change Maker Project, the goal is to create a "sustainable ecosystem of Christian innovation with and for college-aged students and young adults (ages 18 to 30) that will increase the number of young clergy."

That, however, is not the only goal, according to Christie Latona, Director of Connectional Ministries for the Baltimore-Washington Conference. She said the Change Makers Project will create "fresh expressions of church," using mentoring, design thinking, cohorts and immersion experiences that will foster not just growth, but innovation. In short, it's connecting people who want to make a difference with each other, with God, and with resources.

"We talk about the mission of the church as making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," Latona said. "A change maker is someone who (has been) changed by a relationship with God, and out of that comes a desire to make a difference in the world."

Done in partnership with Wesley Theological Seminary, InspireDC, and young people's ministries,

See Change Makers, page 4



Christie Latona

Churches enable UM legacy in city

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff



ESTABLISHED 245 YEARS ago, Centennial Caroline Street UMC was the oldest African-American Church in the Baltimore-Washington Conference. But for United Methodists, who build their faith on resurrection, the closing of this 245-year-old congregation has opened up a legacy of new ministry in Baltimore.

In November 2016, a faithful remnant of members chose to close the church and began worshipping with St. Matthews-New Life UMC. The month of December was designated as a time of mourning, and the Rev. Andrew

Briscoe Jr. honored the accomplishments of this historic congregation.

The church was formed on June 22, 1772, the same day as Lovely Lane UMC, which is often called the Mother Church of Methodism. Centennial UMC formed as a black congregation, under the original name of Dallas Street Methodist Episcopal Church. It merged with the historic bi-racial Caroline Street UMC in 1985, under the leadership of the Rev. Mamie Williams.

As part of remembering, the 26 Centennial-Caroline members brought artifacts, like a baptismal font, Bible, and candlesticks from their sanctuary to place in their new church home. Since the new year, 23 of them have

See Legacy, page 4

... well said

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

By MANDY SAYERS
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

HERE'S A LITTLE cartoon picture in our study at home of a snake, looking stressed out and panicked, straight as an arrow, precariously "balanced" on the top of a cartoon rock. The caption is "Relax!"

If the snake were to relax, he could rest comfortably on the boulder, but he doesn't see or trust that it's there. I wonder how many of us white-knuckle our way through life, stressed out when we don't need to be, when there's a net of love and safety underneath us that we don't see or trust.

Our God encourages us with the assurance of God's presence: "Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you..." (Isa. 41:10).

Relaxation, like taking Sabbath time, is a countercultural spiritual discipline. My grandparents, who lived in Macon, Ga., and never had air conditioning, knew that in the heat of summer, you had to slow down. You had to put spaces between activities to rest and to cool off, to drink Tab soda and work the crossword puzzle. You didn't cook in the heat of the day. Time became a sort of cooperative activity with God, where you didn't fight the natural order – work in the cool of the morning or evening, and rest in the heat of the day.

Summer is a chance to relax — to let go of the control/death grip so many of us use to get through the day. What is God calling you to let go of? In what area of your life is God whispering, "Relax..."? For most of us, I suspect, we tend to work a little too hard, and think that so much depends on us, when in fact, God is God and we are not. Try relaxing and see if the world stops turning. Maybe God is wanting to bless and help and lead and use us and we're like that cartoon snake — all stressed and stretched out.

Maybe God is whispering, "Summer was MY idea first, you know. I want to fix it. I want to help you. First, though, you just need to relax!"



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

FIRST, I HAVE to get the clothes ready for the day. Then I have to make sure the dog is walked. What? We're out of poop bags. Gotta add that to the grocery list.

Okay. Time to feed the dog and get the boy off to school. What? Yes, I can pick up the dry cleaning. Wait, I have to get the oil changed in the car. Are the in-laws coming this weekend, or is that next weekend? Have to make sure we clean the "good" guest towels, straighten up the guest room, make sure we have snacks for Dad and that we can pass Mom's white glove inspection. Then I can get in the car to go to work. Alright, I guess I can get out of bed now and start the day.

For far too many of us, this is a perfect description of life. We start every day with a list that is a mile long, and seems to only get longer. We look at the list and begin to wonder how will it all get done. So we convince ourselves to get up and get at it, but then the next day, 24 hours have passed and the list has changed but it seems just as long. So we take another shot at getting it all done, so that tomorrow the list will at least be a little shorter.

Then the cycle repeats itself leaving us spent, depleted and stressed out.

If this is your life, I want to invite you to do something I had to convince myself to do: RELAX.

Yes, relax.

We all live in an over active, over scheduled, over stressed world and we have to make the choice to get off the treadmill and relax. Choosing to relax means that everything will not get done, and it also means that everything will not be perfect.

Guess what? That's okay. The world will not end if you slow down and relax, but you might end early if you don't.

So this summer, cross everything else off the list and choose some ME time so you can relax.

... well said

... well said

EVENTS

Quality of Life retreats

Quality of Life Retreats are a BWC ministry that reaches out to people living with HIV/AIDS. The next retreat is scheduled for Aug. 17-20 at Camp Manidokan. The ministry's 30th anniversary celebration begins Sept. 1. Learn more in their newsletter, at <http://www.bwcumc.org/ministries/quality-of-life-retreats/nce>.

Retirement seminar

Friday, Sept. 15, 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
BWC Mission Center, Fulton

The Board of Ordained Ministry is sponsoring a workshop for clergy and their spouses who are exploring the idea of retirement. The cost is \$30. Learn more and register at <http://www.bwcumc.org/event/978839-2017-09-15-at-one-ment-clergy-in-retirement>.

Be an Earthkeeper

Is God calling you to a vocation of caring for God's creation? Would you like to be one of 500 Earthkeepers working to create a more sustainable world? Training classes are forming in August and October. To learn more, contact Mike Koob at mikekoob@hotmail.com or 301-367-4388.

Connectional Table meets

Saturday, Oct. 14, 9 a.m. to noon
BWC Mission Center in Fulton

A planning meeting for Conference ministry leaders.

ROCK 2018

Friday, Jan.to Sunday, Jan. 28, 2018
Convention Center, Ocean City, Md.

A weekend retreat for Conference youth, featuring guest preacher Bishop LaTrelle Easterling. Learn more at www.bwcumc.org/rock.

Special Session of General Conference

February 23-26, 2019
St. Louis, Mo.

The United Methodist Council of Bishops has called a Special Session of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church to be held Feb. 23-26, 2019, in St. Louis, Mo. The purpose of the Special Session will be limited to receiving and acting on a report from the Council of Bishops based on the recommendations of the Commission on a Way Forward.

Web Highlights

Commission on the Way Forward: See the status report on the important work being done on behalf of the church at bwcumc.org/news-and-views/commission-on-a-way-forward-issues-status-report/

Make a commitment to end racism: Respond to the call to action at <http://tiny.cc/CovenantCard>

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

Modern day circuit riders travel on gas-fed iron horses

By ALISON BURDETT
UMConnection Staff

ON SUNDAY, JULY 16, motorcycle riders met at Wesley Chapel in Frederick for worship, followed by Maryland's first United Methodist Motorcycle Association (UMMA) "Steeple Chase."

The National UMMA, which lists 148 members in 18 states, was founded in 2012 by Eddie and Patty Gill, who delivered a message during the morning worship before the ride. As experienced Lay Speakers, they enjoy sharing their story of what God has done in their lives.

Patty has Multiple Sclerosis and doesn't get out much. Eddie, trying to find a way to get Patty out of the house, heard that horseback riding was good therapy for MS patients. However, after a scary weekend of horseback riding, Eddie was afraid Patty's poor sense of balance would cause her to fall and break her neck.

While driving home from the weekend on horseback, Eddie said to Patty, "Let's get a Hog." To which Patty replied, "You ain't gettin' me on no pig!"

The motorcycle was easier to get Patty on and she felt more secure. Eddie strapped Patty's walker on the back of their Ultra Classic and off they went.

Eddie planned a trip through Estes Park, Colo. On the second day over the Rocky Mountain Park, Eddie heard, "Put Me on the front of your bike, get a motor home, organize the Methodists and go a million miles for Me."

"You can't make that up," was a phrase repeated several times throughout their testimony.

Eddie placed an image of Jesus on the front of their bike, and they set out to ride a million miles for Christ. To date, the UMMA has ridden about 400,000 miles.

"We really want to be the 21st century circuit riders," Eddie said. In fact, the day before the Steeple Chase, the Gills joined in a ride to Strawbridge Shrine.

"It was so awesome to have the first

modern day circuit riders who ride a motorcycle, stand where the first circuit rider lived who rode on horse back," said Rod Fry, who leads the Maryland chapter of the UMMA.

The UMMA of Maryland was founded in 2016 and currently has about 10 members between the Frederick and Central Maryland Districts across five churches. It's growing every month.

The Thursday before the ride, Rod and Eddie met a man named Duane Johnson at a gas station who was curious about what two guys with motorcycles and a big painting of Jesus were up to. Johnson ended up attending the worship service on Sunday and joined the Steeple Chase ride on his own motorcycle.

"That's what it's all about," said Rod. "Meeting and ministering to people right where they are in life, even at a gas station."

This being their first Steeple Chase, they carefully selected their stops:

FaithPoint UMC

An intentional mobile church that has met in public schools, at community parks and recreation centers and at the Urbana Fire Station fields.

Wesley Chapel

Along with Trinity UMC and FaithPoint UMC, Wesley Chapel sponsored the beginning of the Maryland Chapter of UMMA.

Rocky Point Creamery

Ice cream ministers to the yummy part of bike clubs.

New Hope UMC, Brunswick

This church is located near a motorcycle club.

NHUMC's Pastor, the Rev. Katie Bishop,

is the official pastor for this organization, praying at opening activities and supporting them through prayer.



Eddie and Patty Gill, with their dog, Promise, join in Maryland's first UMMA "Steeple Chase" beginning outside of Wesley Chapel in Fredrick on July 16.

Camp Manidokan

A UMC youth camp in the summer and a retreat center the remainder of the year on the banks of the beautiful Potomac River.

Dunker Church

Located near the Antietam Battlefield, it played a large role in the Civil War.

Fairview Chapel, New Market

The ride concluded at this historic and beautiful stone church. It remains as it was in early America — no electricity and no heat. It also has no permanent pastor. Area pastors take turns leading Sunday worship every week at 7 p.m.

The rides are to introduce themselves to the community and find opportunities to serve. They have served meals to the homeless and have delivered items

and wrapped Christmas gifts to area food banks and churches, using their motorcycles for transportation.

If you are interested in joining UMMA, contact Rod Fry at circuitrider.rod Fry@gmail.com.



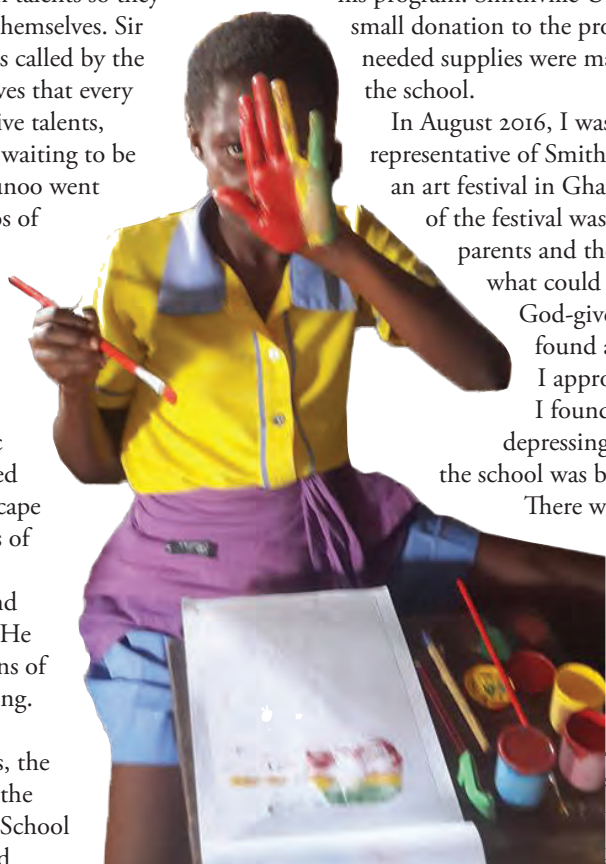
Photos by Alison Burdett

Smithville UMC sponsors creative ministry in Ghana

By DAVE BONNEY
Special to UMConnection

IN GHANA, A Christian artist by the name of Francis Nunoo had a vision of helping children find their God given talents so they could express themselves. Sir Nunoo, as he is called by the children, believes that every child has creative talents, given by God, waiting to be discovered. Nunoo went into the ghettos of Accra and set up boards covered with plain paper. With containers of colorful acrylic paints he started painting landscape scenes. Groups of street children gathered around him to watch. He soon had dozens of children painting.

On one of these occasions, the headmaster of the Egyir Primary School in Tema offered



Photos courtesy of Dave Bonney

Nunoo an unpaid position at the school to develop an art program. The Egyir School is in a very poor area and most of the families survive by fishing.

While on a mission trip to Ghana in 2015, I met Nunoo and was impressed with his program. Smithville UMC provided a small donation to the program and many needed supplies were made available to the school.

In August 2016, I was invited as a representative of Smithville to speak at an art festival in Ghana. The purpose

of the festival was to show the parents and the community

what could happen when

God-given talents were found and expressed. As I approached the school, I found the area very depressing. It looked as if

the school was built on a landfill.

There was debris and human waste everywhere. Once I reached the walled school and entered into the compound, the transformation was amazing. The yard was

clean and there were bright and vibrant colors everywhere, paintings and tapestries, tie-dyed fabrics and colorful woven baskets.

The students at this very poor school not only showed great excitement about art, but once they had found the spark of creativity that God had blessed them with, they were able to find new means to express themselves. The students also became more observant of the world around them and improved in all subjects at the school and raised the school pass rate.

Donations from Smithville provided a laptop, digital camera and funds to supply the art program for a year. This poorest of schools in the ghetto of Tema in Ghana became an oasis in a cultural and creative desert. A number of the schools visiting the event have now started arts and technology programs with the assistance of Nunoo.

This year, I was invited as a missionary from Smithville UMC to participate in a new program called Mastermind and Technology. The program has 37 students from five different schools at this time. Life coaching, mentoring, spirituality, and worship are important components. There is a major focus on the importance of reading. The program wants each child to find their purpose in life and, hopefully, what God's plan is for them. Also, the program teaches that if you find your purpose in life and do not use it to help others in some way, then your life is wasted.

In May, I visited four primary schools in Ghana and as a missionary from Smithville UMC was allowed to speak to a number of classrooms. I spoke about different ways to worship and to show appreciation for what God is doing for us. I also talked about the creative passions and skills that God has given each of us and how it is our responsibility to develop and share our talent.

On May 20, the event was held. The expected attendance was 200 to 300, but the actual attendance was closer to 500 parents and children. There were games and face painting and demonstrations of technological inventions and crafts. They saw beautiful art, woven baskets and other crafts, poetry recitations, dance performances and speakers praising the presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of these children. The dance crews performed very energetic dances, all choreographed to contemporary Christian music.

Smithville UMC supported the program with paint supplies and a donation of a slide projector. The number of children, both Muslim and Christian, attending Mastermind and Technology is increasing. Please pray that these art programs continue to help children find the gifts and talents provided by God and more importantly how they can use their individual talents to bring beauty to a chaotic world.

Legacy: St. Matthews-New Life creates vibrant future

From page 1

joined St. Matthew's-New Life.

St. Matthews-New Life was chosen as Centennial-Caroline's landing place, in part, because Briscoe had a relationship with them. As a student at Wesley Theological Seminary, he did his practice of ministry program at Centennial Caroline.

Briscoe and Conference leaders made sure the people's "futures were not being planned for them," he said, and that they were participants in shaping a living legacy of ministry.

"We didn't read them in as members," Briscoe said.

"We gave them the right hand of fellowship, creating a new litany

so that our body would welcome them in a way that was not belittling to them. We did not want to make them feel 'other.' We welcomed them as family."

Part of this welcome included grafting the leadership structures of the two churches together. Briscoe told those coming into St. Matthews-New Life, "You're not a new member. Don't sit on the side and figure out how to do things. Your voice counts. ... They're starting to embrace that," he said.

Some from Centennial-Caroline Street have told him, "We didn't know we were lacking so much until coming here and being a part of this vibrant life."

Part of that vibrancy, Briscoe and other church members said, stems from the fact that St. Matthews and New Life were both

churches that chose to give up their struggle with diminishing numbers of members to create something new.

In January, St. Matthews and New Life celebrated their anniversary.

Looking back, they admitted there is real pain in deconsecrating a building. They had to opt to not just think of the merger as adding to St. Matthews' membership. Church leaders realized both congregations

handle themselves differently."

In the hallway outside his office, a boy named Herman approaches Briscoe and asks, "Does the Bible really have the essence of everything?"

It's a random question, but Briscoe makes a note to have a deeper conversation with Herman when he finds time. "There's something to this," Briscoe said.

Young adults, children and youth, middle

age people and seniors are all present, in just about proportional numbers, as everyone finds their place at Centennial Caroline. For Anthony Howard, who graduated from high school

last spring,

church is a place to go "to get off the streets. I live in a bad neighborhood – Greenmount Avenue," he said. "There's violence, fighting, people arguing."

At the church, Howard works with the audio-visual and technological aspects of worship.

Briscoe is familiar with the church as a place of refuge. He grew up at Eastern UMC, which recently sold its building. There, in the mid 1990s, he experienced Bishop Felton May's Saving Stations ministry and learned about servant leadership from the Rev. Constance Smith.

That spirit of the Saving Stations, "where the church loved the hell out of Baltimore," is alive at St Matthews-New Life, where 43 young people are participating in a summer arts camp. Assisting with the camp, and

doing work around the church this summer are more than 50 youth who Baltimore City is paying as part of a summer jobs program.

The building is bursting at its seams — with the summer camp and between 120 and 140 in worship each Sunday.

The building has recently experienced an extensive renovation, updating the narthex and hallways, and completely redoing the sanctuary, which hadn't been touched since 1971.

The restoration sprung from a leak in the roof, explained Curtis Moore, a church trustee. It was an opportunity to bring the worship space to life and provide a flexible meeting space for church and community ministries.

The pews were removed and the sanctuary was made brighter and more beautiful. "We didn't have the money," Moore said. "God provided."

The church is continuing to grow, with ministries like Hotdog for a Handshake, which draws people into the church, and Boots on the Block, a prayer-walk ministry, which Moore participates in.

"It a wonderful feeling to give back some of what God has given me," he said.

Having outgrown their current facility, Briscoe and the Board of Trustees are considering what ministries might be done with the former Pikeside UMC building, which has 18 classrooms, three offices and a sanctuary that seats 500.

The building has been assessed at \$1.7 million, out of the range of some interested buyers. Briscoe envisions it as a community center and second worship site. The congregation at Centennial -Caroline is exploring how this building might be its own legacy of ministry.

Briscoe isn't certain what the future might hold, but possibilities keep coming, he said.

"We've got to be flexible and keep being honestly concerned about the community. That's what grows a church."



Members of St. Matthews-New Life UMC in Baltimore, now made up of members from three former churches, pass the peace during worship in their newly renovated sanctuary.

had to die so that something new and vibrant could be created in its place.

But that's not even the origin of the legacy of creating possibility and growth out of decline. New Life, an innovative African-American faith community, was created in 1996 from the closing of Parkside UMC, a predominantly white church that lost members as the demographics of Baltimore City changed.

"This is a model that only God can create," Briscoe said.

Denise Washington, a lay leader, attributes the vibrancy of a church choosing ministry over history and buildings to the fact that "the Word is being taught and preached." There is noon-day and evening Bible study, she said. "People's relationships with God change. They begin to think and

Change Makers: Finding new ways to do church

From page 1

the focus of the Change Makers Project is young adults exploring their call through innovation. Potential change makers, Latona said, could be those who want to apply design thinking for Gospel-driven social change, or others who love Jesus but who can't imagine inviting their friends or neighbors to current expressions of church.

"There are those young adults who say, 'There's gotta be a different way to do church,'" Latona said. "They may be potential change makers. It comes out of a sense of purpose; it comes out of the sense that 'I am being called to make a difference.'"

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry provided a \$302,350 grant for a period of 3 years for the project as part of their Young Clergy Initiative. Latona sees part of the Change Makers Project as an innovative way for people to explore their call while they're making a difference.

"That's a really different way of doing things," she said. "It's not just a program, it's this whole system and process of experience, learning and dialogue, but also actually doing something different in the world informed by those experiences and relationships."

If you or someone you know might be a candidate for the Change Makers Project, a series of three events, called "Taste and See," are being offered. The Taste and See events, open to all, are a way for people to get a

small experience of what it might look like to do ministry differently, Latona said. She described the Taste and See events as one part inspiration, one part application and one part immersion, designed to encourage and support people in taking innovative yet practical next steps so that they and their friends can start new communities with new people to do good with God.

The first Taste and See will be held at American University in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 23. Two other Taste and See events will be held in Baltimore and Frostburg early in 2018.

"It provides a way for people to get hands-on experience with these ideas that we will explore further in the Change Maker project," Latona said about Taste and See. "But also, it's available for people of all ages to take these concepts back to their local church and do ministry differently."

Latona urged United Methodists throughout the BWC who know young adults between the ages of 18 and 30, who they've seen as always trying to figure out what they could do next to make a difference as a follower of Jesus, to send them to Taste and See.

At the Taste and See events, participants will be encouraged to commit to a next step. Participating in the Change Makers Project is one of three options.

Latona said they are looking for roughly 30 young adults to be part of the initial Change Makers cohort. Each cohort will

be formed geographically, focusing on accountability and spiritual growth while also integrating the best thinking about Christian social innovation.

Cohort members will be invited to visit London, England, for a week-long immersive training experience in a part of the world with deep Methodist roots that has been experiencing a downturn in traditional Christian expressions for longer than we have in the U.S. As part of their learning about vision casting and fundraising, cohorts will raise half of their travel expenses through both traditional (i.e., church offerings) and newer (i.e., GoFundMe) means. The grant covers the other half.

A Missional Entrepreneurship week concludes the project in the summer of

For more information on Taste and See events coming near you, visit www.tasteandseedmv.com.

2019. Change Makers will work with coaches and potential investors to fine tune their ministry models and find potential resources and collaborators. At the end of the week, participants will "pitch" their project to "impact investors" who will have the opportunity to help fund the new venture with a goal of starting 10 Christian social innovation projects (a.k.a., faith communities) by Fall 2019.

Zimbabwe Mission offers thought-provoking paradoxes

By REV. TIM WARNER
Special to UMConnection



ZIMBABWE IS A place of paradox. It is a country that, while rich in natural resources, exhibits some of the most pronounced poverty most Americans have ever seen.

Four years ago, I was a part of the Baltimore-Washington Conference – Zimbabwe Episcopal Area Pastors’ School and had the opportunity to visit Gwese UMC in the Mutare District of the Zimbabwe East Annual Conference.

I found there a gracious people, my United Methodist sisters and brothers, who were trying (like many of us) to make a difference in their community in the name of Jesus. This was my kind of church!

They worshipped God with such great joy and intensity, yet they were situated in a community where there was no electricity or water, and the people had nearly nothing by American standards. We were there as a part of the Baltimore-Washington Conference’s strategic relationship as partners in ministry with the Zimbabwe Episcopal Area to join them in the spirit of “*chabadza*,” a Shona word meaning a partnership in which a passerby stops to help another person already at work.

They had already begun to build a sanctuary in which to worship, and the BWC team was there to put in some sweat equity and financial gifts to help finish the work.

Seeing their continuing need, and knowing our relative abundance, I immediately led Emory Grove UMC (which did not have a deep history in foreign mission work) into a partner-in-ministry relationship with them to help them drill a well. People here were excited that their sacrificial giving enabled the people at Gwese to have access to clean water without having to walk a mile down

to the river.

People at Gwese were excited to see how water helped them be even more relevant in the community, and that they had sisters and brothers 8,000 miles away who were willing to walk side-by-side with them. Since then, Emory Grove has partnered to help them build a parsonage for their young pastor and his family.

This year, at Bishop Easterling’s invitation, I joined the Pastors’ School team again. When I led a group of people in our delegation to visit some projects that were

they need help or assistance. The children stay in their own houses in their own communities. They are given a she-goat to bear young goats as a food source and as a way to provide income. Each child is also given a plot of land to farm in the garden, which they work for their sustenance.

Emory Grove’s latest gift to support the Orphan’s Trust is now helping the church build self-sufficient Christian leaders, rather than a permanent welfare class, through providing for school fees and uniforms.

Another of the churches that I serve, Mill

sisters and brothers together. While there was no ritual, it felt like what Communion should be.

We also saw more work that they have begun, and having met our sisters and brothers and heard from them how we might best partner with them, we will discern together how we can join them in that work.

Over oceans and thousands of miles, this is *chabadza* from church to church.

Aside from the many political and economic paradoxes we found, the spiritual

paradox is this: We are quick to approach the poverty of others who are enduring it through the grace of the God who sustains them, and we note their Christ-centered joy in the midst of the scarcity. “These people are amazing,” we say. “They have nothing, but they love God anyway. How can they have joy with so little?”

But, have we found them by the side of the road, having begun the work of praising God regardless of their circumstance; or, have they found us by the side of our road, having forgotten God in our relative prosperity? Are they helping us return to the God who deserves worship, honor and praise regardless of the circumstance?

Perhaps we have forgotten that the Kingdom of God

comes against poverty, compelling those of us who purport to be Kingdom-citizens to do something to relieve it wherever we see it, particularly when two-thirds of the world is so poor precisely because we have so much.

In this paradox, I am thankful that *chabadza* works to bless both partners in the work. I pray that we will receive what we need from our sisters and brothers who are rich in obedience to the will of God and zeal for the Lord, even though (and perhaps precisely because) they don’t have as many things.

**The Rev. Tim Warner is pastor of Emory Grove UMC and Mill Creek Parish.*



The Rev. Tim Warner talks with an orphan following her exams at the United Methodist Fairfield Children’s Home in Old Mutare.

ongoing and assess needs in other places in rural Mutare, I found a whole new Gwese.

The livestock were thriving, the pump is set up for irrigation, and the parsonage is complete. They had also begun the work of setting up a trust for the children who were orphaned because of HIV/AIDS, and, as part of it, had begun to set up a community garden for the orphans.

They were elated that I brought another gift from their partner church to help them expand their prophetic work with the orphans.

Instead of patting the orphan children on the head and telling them how unfortunate they are, they have chosen another model of care. Each child has someone from the congregation come to visit them as often as

Creek Parish UMC, out of an initiative begun by the Vacation Bible School a year ago, has worked with the District Superintendent of the Mutare District to partner with the West Zimunya Circuit of churches. We, too, have helped them drill a well that is used by three churches and a community.

One of Mill Creek’s members, Kim Berger, joined me as we visited to see the well. The church (pastor and people) and the community Head Man and neighbors greeted us with a celebration where we heard them tell us how important the well was and offer their sincere thanks for our partnership with them.

We pumped clean water from the ground and drank the fruit of our sacrifices for our

Mission u participants explore covenant, transformation

By LINDA WORTHINGTON
UMConnection Staff



NEARLY 30 WOMEN gathered in a side-room at the Pooks Hill Marriott Hotel July 28-30, all newcomers to Mission u, the former School of Christian Mission. The Rev. Andrea Middleton King, dean of this year’s gathering, and Deaconess Jane Grays met them to explain the ins and outs of the yearly event.



Colleen Catas, a direction of national UMW, speaks at Mission u.

They were just a few of the 200 people, mostly women, from throughout the Baltimore-Washington Conference who attended “to (learn) together for the transformation of the world,” the defining statement of Mission u.

The theme “We are One: Connected in Covenant,” was conceptualized in three study areas: Living as a Covenant Community; three separate classes on Climate Justice: Call to Hope and Action; and three separate groups to study Missionary Conferences in the United States.

Mission u is designed to bring many opportunities to attendees to grow in their discipleship through looking in depth at the topic areas and to grow spiritually through the plenary sessions on the theme.

The Rev. Neal Christie, Assistant General Secretary for Education and Leadership Formation at the General Board of Church and Society in Washington, D.C., led the sessions on covenant. He offered an in-depth understanding of the meaning of the traditional covenants throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and between God and humankind.

Covenant is both personal and public, he said. It involves a personal relationship with God and public vows, such as a wedding ring symbolizes. “The outcome is a changed relationship,” he said. Covenants are made between you and God and between you and neighbor, he said. At one point, the group was urged to write their own personal covenants. “If you were to write a covenant between you and God, what would be in it?” he asked.

The study on Missionary Conferences looked at the three conferences that fit the description: Alaska, Oklahoma, and Red Bird in Kentucky. Each seeks to meet the needs of a specific people in the region: native or indigenous Inuit and others in Alaska; Native Americans in Oklahoma; and the Appalachian population in Kentucky. In each case, missionaries began the initiative with the people because “they wanted the culture to know about Christ,” said the Rev. Wendy van Vliet who serves Davidsonville UMC.

Being a missionary has changed since those early days in the 19th or 20th centuries, she said. Today the operative word is to be in mission “with,” not “to” or “for.”

While the adults were meeting in plenaries and classes, 18 youth from the conference were holding their own Mission u in another part of the hotel. Their dean, the Rev. Alexis Brown, campus minister at Howard University, was in South Korea on a mission/study tour, and assistant dean, the Rev. Matthew Tate, pastor of Emmanuel UMC in Huntingtown, took the reins.

The main topic was “We are Called Out: Project to deal with self-esteem and bullying.” Martina Martin, a Provisional Deacon, serving at Lincoln Park UMC on Capitol Hill, led the plenaries. Martin, a full-time psychotherapist at Whitman-Walker Health, said that art and art therapy are her passion. She led the youth to discover new ways to deal with their “God-identity” through art therapy.

Several focus groups were held, optional programs of both substance and fun. These informal groups heard from panels and experts in the field. One on mass incarceration explored reentry issues, the conditions in prisons, especially women’s prisons, and women’s needs. At least two carloads of personal items were collected from the churches to deliver to the women’s prison.

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MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Three winners of the Strawhat Decoration Contest show off their prizes for creating the most beautiful, the most creative and the funniest hats at QLR.

First all-women’s QLR held

WASHINGTON, D.C. – “We wanted them ... to know someone cared for them,” retired local pastor Nancy Green said of the women who attended the first all-women’s Quality of Life Retreat. She has planned many of the QLRs.

They were started 30 years ago by the Rev. Terri Rae Chattin; the first one, in 1987, was 12 gay men meeting at West River Camp and Retreat Center.

The 23 women attending this latest retreat varied in age from the 20s to the 60s, with 10 of them coming to a QLR for the first time. They learned from each other through small group discussions and from two featured medical professionals: QLR board member Ella Curry, an RN with 28 years in the field, who shared key-HIV legislation coming to Congress this year; and Dr. Mary Young, a retired infectious disease specialist and Professor of Medicine at Georgetown University, with 32 years of research and care of women. She stressed the importance

of taking their meds consistently.

The retreat was on the theme “You are Beautiful,” which was carried out everywhere, from the Communion service, to the table decorations, gift bags, straw hat competition, and in the handmade fleece blankets given by women of Linden-Linthicum UMC.

UMM told God expects more

FULTON – Twenty-six men from Annapolis, Baltimore-Metropolitan, Baltimore-Suburban, Central Maryland, Greater Washington and Washington East districts representing 15 UMCs attended the 12th National Gathering of United Methodist Men at St. Luke’s UMC in Indianapolis in early July. Among them were a millennial and two Generation X men, helped by full scholarships from three of their older brothers.

More than 600 men spent a day-and-a-half worshipping, praying and staffing the Upper Room Prayer Line, loading and

unloading 21,000 pounds of food for the community’s hungry, building wheelchair ramps, and assembling Personal Energy Transportation (PET) carts, hand-cranked vehicles that serve as power wheelchairs in developing countries.

“I was truly blessed that I was able to meet so many new friends with a love for men’s ministry, the exhibits gave me new resources to reach men in my community and church,” one participant said, and added, “(I’m) saddened that more men from my district and my church did not make this trip as they truly missed an opportunity to hear from other men how to reach out to all age groups uniting men’s ministry.”

School offers rewarding work

HAMPSTEAD – Shiloh UMC on the Shiloh-Patapsco Charge received an award from the Carroll County Public Schools in appreciation of the Community Outreach and Partnership they have with the Hampstead Elementary School and community. The awards ceremony was held at Best Western Conference Center in Westminster.

“We are very grateful for the opportunities to be of service in the schools, the communities and the world,” said Pastor Barbara M. Allen, who is an African-American woman serving two older white congregations.

Worship in the Park

WEST RIVER – The end of May, the congregations of Wards Memorial UMC of Owings and Corkran Memorial of Temple Hills, joined together at the West River Camp and Retreat Center for worship and fellowship. Pastor Lesley Newman-Sewell of

Corkran Memorial, preached on “I Got the Keys.” Everyone sang, read Scripture and prayed together.

The men of Ward’s Memorial greeted each arriving worshipper, youth and elders together, some with walkers or canes, some in strollers. They had the grill already fired up and smoking.

“The rain could not stop us from enjoying God’s creation,” one of them said. When it started, many stayed on and enjoyed each other in conversation and laughter. Many are already planning for next year’s gathering.



Rev. Solomon Lloyd, a military chaplain on extension ministry in the BWC, left, baptized 25 people in the Jordan River recently. He was on a port visit in Israel from the USS George H W Bush.

In sexuality debate, pastor asks: What Middle Am I In?

By GINGER GAINES-CIRELLI*

NEARLY 10 YEARS ago, at a dinner in New York City, I was stunned when someone at my table declared clearly that there is really no point in dialogue or relationship with those whose beliefs will not be conformed to your own.

I didn't accept such a claim then and, as a person formed in and by the Wesleyan way, I don't accept that claim now.

Even so, during the recent Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference Session, I learned some of my colleagues were confused to find my name listed among the individuals who recently initiated a movement described as part of the "Methodist middle." United Methodist News Service cited this movement as evidence that "The United Methodist Church has a 'vibrant' center that can keep the denomination strong despite the damaging debates around division" over the issue of the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals in the life and clergy of the United Methodist Church.

On more than one occasion, a colleague said to me, "What 'middle' are you in?"

My first response is, "I am in the middle of the tradition!" Engagement with Scripture through the Wesleyan, United Methodist tradition is the rich soil that nurtured my roots and supported my growth for the more than four decades of my life. It's where I live. It's not "mushy" nor does it force me to give up on siblings to my right or to my left. Rather, the Wesleyan way allows me — with all my convictions and conscience — to stay in mission and ministry with those who might prefer I just take my convictions and go.

I am in the middle of a tradition that affirms:

"The church is a community of all true believers under the Lordship of Christ."

"The church of Jesus Christ exists in and for the world, and its very dividedness is a hindrance to its mission in that world." (The Constitution of The United Methodist Church: Preamble, The Book of Discipline)

I am in the middle of a tradition that affirms:

"Grace pervades our understanding of Christian faith and life."

"Scriptural holiness entails more than personal piety; love of God is always

linked with love of neighbor, a passion for justice and renewal in the life of the world." (§102, Our Doctrinal Heritage: Distinctive Wesleyan Emphases, The Book of Discipline)

I am in the middle of a tradition that affirms:

"Christian truth... stands revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal and corporate experience, and confirmed by reason."

"God's eternal Word never has been, nor can be, exhaustively expressed in any single form of words."

"The crucial matter in religion is steadfast love for God and neighbor, empowered by the redeeming and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit." (§103, Our Doctrinal History, The Book of Discipline)

I am in the middle of a tradition that affirms:

"Our theological task is... critical in that we test various expressions of faith by asking: Are they true? Appropriate? Clear? Cogent? Credible? Are they based on love? Do they provide the Church and its members with a witness that is faithful to the gospel and reflected in our living heritage and that is authentic and convening in light of human experience and the present state of human knowledge?"

Our theological task is constructive in that every generation must appropriate creatively the wisdom of the past and seek God in their midst in order to think afresh about God, revelation, sin, redemption, worship, the church, freedom, justice, moral responsivity, and other significant theological concerns. Our summons is to understand and receive the gospel promises in our troubled and uncertain times." (§105, The Nature

of Our Theological Task, The Book of Discipline)

What I prefer to call the "centering" movement in The United Methodist Church is a middle where these central claims provide the ground upon which we stand, struggle, and strive for more perfect love to

fill and fuel our witness.

People who know or observe my ministry are aware that I believe LGBTQ+ persons are "wonderfully made" (Psalms 139:14) in God's image and are beloved children of God. I firmly believe that LGBTQ+ persons belong in the church at every level of leadership and bring unique gifts to the work of ministry. I believe that marriages between LGBTQ+ persons are the same high, holy calling as my own. Clearly, I am not "in the middle" or "on the fence" with regard to this struggle which is threatening to split The United Methodist Church.

Do I fear for the emotional, spiritual, and physical safety of LGBTQ+ persons in our church and society? Yes. Will I continue to advocate for LGBTQ+ inclusion in the life of the UMC? Yes. Do I wish that others would come to see in Scripture the primacy of loving, mutual, and just covenant relationships regardless of orientation or gender identity? Yes. Will I push back on any word or action that does harm to LGBTQ+ persons? Yes.

Am I zealous to remain in relationship with those who intensely disagree with me? Yes.

For the sake of justice for LGBTQ+ persons, some of my deeply respected colleagues would prefer separation from the seemingly intractable and deeply broken UMC system. I am sympathetic to that perspective. However, I am also privy to the extraordinary witness of LGBTQ+ persons in my congregation who love Jesus and love The United Methodist Church and are determined to stay in the struggle even as they are on the receiving end of so much indignity and injustice.

They strengthen my resolve to do what I have often called

"the harder thing" required of us by the gospel: to stay connected as one Body and try to offer the world an alternative vision to the polarizing and warring ways of the world. (cf. 1 Corinthians 12, John 17)

A dismembered body can't breathe, can't

see, can't move, can't reach out to touch and care for the wounds of others. A dismembered body can't speak words of love or justice. A dismembered body won't have the capacity to engage in the struggle against racism, poverty, addiction, unemployment, homelessness, xenophobia, and lack of adequate healthcare. A dismembered body can't walk, much less "run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith." (Hebrews 12:1-2)

The Body of Christ called The United Methodist Church is already weakened by cutting off the full participation of LGBTQ+ people. Further severing of the body through division, while tempting, would be the ultimate capitulation to a culture overwhelmingly characterized by "us" versus "them." For biblical, evangelical, pragmatic, and missional reasons — and inspired by my LGBTQ+ colleagues and friends — I will at least try to do "the harder thing." A broken world needs a whole body, even a body that has a long way to go toward perfection.

What middle am I in?

I am in the middle of the prophetic tradition, the Jesus tradition, the Wesleyan tradition, the United Methodist tradition. I am in the center of a tradition that believes the love and grace of God are big enough to hold and save us all. It's a strong, diverse, challenging place to stand. And I give thanks that there are so many across the connection who stand there too.

**The Rev. Ginger Gaines-Cirelli is the senior pastor of Foundry UMC in Washington, D.C. She participated in the gathering to "To Serve the Present Age," in May 2017 with 46 other United Methodists to explore the denomination's vibrant center and how the denomination can remain strong despite damaging debates around divisions. A second gathering is planned for this fall.*



Ginger Gaines-Cirelli

Courtesy of Ginger Gaines-Cirelli

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Zimbabwe: More than 400 pastors receive training

From page 1

Pastors from the BWC are invited to teach and share their expertise. This year, they led classes about the United Methodist Book of Discipline, stewardship, young adult ministries, church school, project management, and disciplined Bible study.

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, presiding bishop of the BWC, had high praise for the school, which is held every other year.

"The United Methodist Church is a world-wide community, and that global connection was tangibly evidenced through this Pastors' School," she said. "Our partnership enhances both conferences as we shared our best practices and expertise to enhance the scholarship of the whole."

Bishop Easterling also spoke candidly about the need for the world to support the work of Africa University, and the continent as a whole.

"The world arrives on Africa's shores and takes, and takes, and takes without regard for the devastating effect this has on the Motherland," she said. "The BWC is honored to join God's amazing work at AU and the Zimbabwe Episcopal Area. They are thriving in scholarship and discipleship respectively, and are bringing hope to everyone they touch."

Bishop Easterling had a unique experience during her first time on the continent. Because Bishop Eben Nihwatiwa, the episcopal leader of the Zimbabwe Area, had to be in Chicago for a meeting of the Commission on the Way Forward, she was asked to serve as presiding bishop of the Zimbabwe East and West annual conferences in his absence.

In this role, she made history as the first woman bishop of Zimbabwe. (She is also the first woman bishop of the Baltimore-Washington Conference.)

In a private, informal session, Easterling spoke to the conference's clergy women, urging them to consider to what ministries they are called, and, when they are certain, to let nothing stand in their way of living out God's plan for them.

Both Easterling and Daniels noted an economic undertone in much of the discussions among the clergy.

Recently, amidst a growing cash crisis, Zimbabwe officials issued a new currency called "bond notes," which are pegged to, but cannot be converted to, the U.S. dollar, and have no value outside of Zimbabwe.

In Harare, BWC Treasurer Paul Eichelberger had occasion to be out late one night and noted people queuing up at banks for the next morning. People are limited to taking just \$20 out of the bank each day, he was told.

The country is facing extreme economic challenges, explained the Rev. Phanuel Razo, who taught part of the stewardship session.



Sharon Milton, center, takes a selfie with some of the children from Fairfield Children's Home in Old Mutare, Zimbabwe.

"Unemployment is up to 90 percent, driven by a shrinking economy and hyperinflation," he said. Some pastors are not receiving salaries, or are being paid in-kind. Other pastors are forced to grow and sell vegetables or do other work to make ends meet.

Each church pays 55 percent of its income to the annual conferences' common pool, which ensures every pastor gets some compensation. For some smaller churches, this 55 percent totals only \$100 a month.

"The church's sustenance has been put to the test because people no longer have disposable income for tithes and offerings," Razo said.

Part of the teaching of the Pastors' School was to help churches develop the means, each within their own context, to "become beacons of hope and promise."

The Rev. Paul Mazumba has a "small church" of 150 members in the Zimbabwe West Annual Conference. He found many of the sessions "thought-provoking," he said. "They were very helpful to me. I especially appreciated that they put the material in our context."

Mazumba chairs the conference's Board of Discipleship and said he would also like to see more information provided about how to train the laity. He noted that the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference had led a Laity School at Africa University the week before.

"Shepherds don't create sheep; sheep create sheep," he said. "Indeed, the church is growing. But we need to grow more ministries at the local church level. We need to train the laity, too."

After each hour-long teaching session, the pastors broke into 10 groups for discussion and then reported back with a time of question and answer.

The conversation was lively and many of the pastors said the teaching spurred ideas they are looking forward to implementing in their churches. Others said they were "transformed" and moved by how "vivid" the preaching and teaching was.

When they weren't teaching, many of the BWC delegation members explored churches and ministries in the Mutare area.

Along the way they visited and

began to form relationships at Dora North, Gwese, Zimunya West, Muradzikwa, Hilltop and Nyahuni circuits, and the United Methodist Fairfield Children's Home.

They talked about the challenges of poverty and the possibilities that come with hope.

At those churches, said Sharon Milton, a laywoman from Emory UMC, "you see God like you've never seen God before."

In the evening debriefings, the BWC delegation discussed the day and explored how greater "paths to partnership" might be created.

Jorge Granados-De La Rosa, a church planter at the former Casa del Pueblo UMC in D.C., noted that the key to the partnership is founded on the concept of "ubuntu," an African belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity.

There's also, Granados noted, a Mayan concept — *inlakesh* — that means the same thing; also *namaste*, in the Indian culture, means "the divine in me honors the divine in you," and in the West Indies they say, "I

what Zimbabweans in their native language refer to as "*chabadza*," -- people in mutual relationship working alongside each other for mutual benefit.

"*Chabadza* is so prevalent in the school as we teach and learn together and so profound in the communities in which we share mission, that it's contagious, infectious, and leaves all of us filled with great joy, vigor and life transforming experiences each side shares with others when we return home," Daniels continued. "Pastors are getting theological education they simply would not receive. That's huge! And the work that several congregations have done in Zimbabwean communities, most recently Tim Warner's congregations in Gaithersburg, through establishing boreholes for water supplies, has transformed rural neighborhoods."

Daniels said that he hoped for more *chabadza* opportunities on this side of the ocean, particularly as it relates to congregational development in the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

"We have so much to learn from our Zimbabwean partners regarding authentic worship, new church starts, organizing and establishing new faith communities, growing churches and empowering laity for ministry," he said. "Theirs is a model we can learn from. I look forward to the expanding opportunities that the future will bring to all of us."

Daniels is delighted at the growth of the School, which is the fulfillment of a vision.

"History, and the origins of history are so important to me," he said. "We learn how and why certain things evolved and need to continue, and can trace the beginning of divine purposes and intents when we refuse to lose sight of history and origins. I was there at the beginning in August 1997 when Bishops Felton May and Christopher



Students at the Pastors' School discuss project management and opportunities for growing income under the poinsettia trees at Africa University.

am because we are."

This seemingly universal concept also points to the importance of United Methodists reaching out beyond themselves and recognizing the importance of the global church.

Daniels has played a significant role in leading the partnership over the past 20 years — through a variety of joys and challenges. He stresses the two-way nature of sharing and the absolute importance of meaningful relationships.

In Shona, the language of Zimbabwe, there is a word Daniels has taken to heart — *chabadza*. If you are working in a field and a neighbor walking down the road stops to help you with your crops, that's a *chabadza* moment. It involves work already underway and two people sharing the labor as they pass time together.

"This partnership is so critical to the people of the Zimbabwe Episcopal Area and the Baltimore-Washington Conference collectively," Daniels said. "The fact that we intentionally come together for learning at the Pastors' School and to do mission work every other year, and for VIM efforts throughout the course of a year, reflects our common commitment to

Jokomo, articulated a vision of what God could do if two episcopal areas separated by the ocean might dare to share their collective resources to make each other's lives, churches and communities better, through Pastors' schools and Communities of Shalom training and implementation.

"I was tasked by then Council Director, now retired, Bishop Marcus Matthews to work with him to write the vision and work with the team he established to pull it all together. I saw, witnessed and was an active participant in the movement of the Holy Spirit that solidified all of this in December 1997.

"It's truly a God thing. Everyone who has joined the effort... gets swept up into what the Holy Spirit is doing amongst us," Daniels said.

"Lives are changing, communities are being impacted, pastors and churches are strengthened. The Kingdom of God is being built. I want to continue being a part of that," he said. "My prayer is that through Bishop Easterling's leadership and vision, this partnership grows and flourishes to heights we've not seen nor could possibly comprehend."



Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, left, meets with Vice Chancellor Munashe Furusa, leader of Africa University.