

*“There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity
under the heavens.”
— Ecclesiastes 3:1*

UMC *Connection*

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Delila Moravitz, left, helps her 8-year old granddaughter, Celeste Martin, in making a flood bucket Sept. 3 at Emmanuel UMC in Laurel. Throughout the BWC, United Methodists are responding to natural disasters across the country.

Churches gather supplies after storms

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff



CHURCHES THROUGHOUT THE Baltimore-Washington Conference are responding to the flooding in Texas after Hurricane Harvey in significant and tangible ways, even as they keep a watchful eye on Hurricanes Irma and Jose.

From flooded buildings to pastors and other staff forced to flee their homes, United Methodist churches in south Texas grappled with Harvey after it dumped record amounts of rain. As of Sept. 7, 70 deaths were being attributed to the storm, with fears that that number would grow as response efforts continue.

United Methodist churches from San Antonio to Galveston opened as shelters after the storm, and response and relief efforts started almost immediately. Churches throughout the connection are pitching in to help.

The Rev. Stacey Cole Wilson, BWC staff person for disaster response, encourages churches to contribute to UMCOR, the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

“One-hundred percent of all donations made to UMCOR go directly to alleviating suffering around the world,” she said. It is too early, she added, for work teams

to go to Texas.

However, congregations are invited to make flood buckets and other requested items and drop them off to one of three hubs: Liberty Grove UMC in Burtonsville; St. Matthews UMC in Bowie; and Bentley Springs UMC in Parkton. One example of United Methodists helping out was at Emmanuel UMC in Laurel on Sept. 3. Members took time between morning worship services to put together flood buckets.

Taking over a chunk of the Fellowship Hall, workers placed items in each bright orange bucket that had been carefully counted and laid out by youth of the church. In less than 10 minutes, they were done.

The church’s lead pastor, the Rev. Stephanie Vader, said the church likes to respond fast to disasters.

“When the call went out on UMCOR looking to replenish flood buckets, we like to turn on a dime here at Emmanuel,” she said. “We put the word out through SignUpGenius, and people brought everything in.”

SignUpGenius, Vader said, is a free online app that emails people with requests and reminders.

“We like to respond fast,” she said, “when people’s minds are still focused on Harvey and they’re ready to be generous.”

Eight-year old Celeste Martin was placing items in a bucket that was being held by her grandmother, Delila Moravitz. They, too, just wanted to help, and it was Martin’s first time doing anything like this.

“I wanted Celeste to help out,” Moravitz said, and to have the experience of helping others.

Martin has seen some of the images of the flooding on TV. Her response to all that: “It’s like, wow.”

Donna Meoli, the Director of Spiritual Formation and Youth Ministry at Emmanuel, was supervising the assembly. At the church’s most recent staff meeting, she said, they decided to put together flood buckets. On Thursday, Aug. 31, the word went out.

“We are very fortunate at Emmanuel and in Howard County,” Meoli said. “This is one way to make sure that we are helping people who are less fortunate than us.”

Meoli said building flood buckets isn’t hard. UMCOR makes it easy, she said, by providing the list of needed items on their website, along with an instructional video. (To donate money directly to UMCOR, visit <http://www.umcor.org/Search-for-Projects/Projects/901670>)

“Everyone should try and make some (flood buckets),” Meoli said. “Because if they’re not used for Hurricane Harvey, they’ll be used somewhere else that needs help.”

Frederick UMs gather to share God in the neighborhood

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

ON A COOL (by August standards), comfortable night, hundreds of people from Frederick and surrounding communities gathered Aug. 25 for a first-ever “United Methodist Day at Baker Park.”

The culmination of months of planning and years of dreaming, the seven United Methodist churches in Frederick came together with the theme, “God is in the Neighborhood.”

“This is the fruit of meetings with pastors throughout the city,” said the Rev. Edgardo Rivera, superintendent of

the Frederick District. “We wanted to make a statement to the community that we’re alive and well and doing meaningful service in the community.”

Musical groups, including a brass band, a gospel choir, a praise band, and other choirs, took the stage at the Baker Park bandshell, offering a wide diversity of worship styles. Testimonies were offered of the saving love of Jesus Christ, and prayers were lifted for the nation, the world and the community.

The Rev. Jenny Smith, pastor



Rev. Jenny Smith

of Mt. Carmel, New Market and Fairview UMCs, was one of the key organizers of the event, Rivera said. She also served as the emcee for the evening.

“The first time you do anything is a challenge,” she said. “But all the pastors and music directors came together to work beautifully.”

Smith said she was thrilled with the turnout, which included many people out for an evening stroll or walking their dog through the busy park.

“We’re not together often enough,” Smith said. “It’s just wonderful to come together and get to know each other.”

One of the messages the event wanted to send, Smith said, is that United Methodists are, in fact, united in the

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By MANDY SAYERS
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

WHAT DO YOU do when you’ve tried everything to fix something on your TV or computer? You’ve tried to find the scrollbar or launch the app... or the electronic guide says your box has crashed on your TV? What do you do when there’s a false start on the play or a runner comes out of the blocks too early?

You do a restart.
You do the three-finger (control-alt-delete) salute to your computer, you power off and back on, you have a do-over. You restart.

September is the month of back-to-school and back-to-church and back-to-meetings. Many of us are excited at the resumption of routines but maybe a part of us is also dreading it a little. It seems like every fall weekend we have some event or other, some ministry opportunity, at our church or in our community. What if you’re running on empty coming into the start of this busy season? What if we could restart?

The Holy Spirit, the outer force field of God’s action, is always doing something new — busting down walls, making dry bones live, making perfectly respectable seasoned saints see visions and young upstarts dream dreams. What in your church is in need of a restart? What in your church is in need of a do-over? What in your church needs NOT to happen again? What needs new life and what needs to die and stay dead?

Perhaps September can be the month of listening before talking, in the name of a holy “restart.” Maybe this is the month of “I’m sorry, can we start over?” in the midst of some rocky relationships. We are, after all, called to forgive 70 x 7 times and be ministers of reconciliation. If anyone is ready to offer a restart, it ought to be followers of Jesus. If anyone is humble enough to say, “I was wrong. Can we begin again?” it really should be folks who know what it is to be on the receiving end of Jesus’ love.

Maybe September isn’t just a resumption of endless activity. Maybe it’s a chance for a restart.



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

AS A CHILD of the 80s, I have seen the movie Top Gun no fewer than 150 times. I know all of the lines, can tell you the action scene by scene and, with enough friends, can completely recreate the volleyball game.

Yes, there was a time that I was firmly convinced that I was going to be Pete “Maverick” Mitchell, and that my best friend would enlist with me and be my “Goose,” without the tragic ending. It is because of the movie Top Gun that I fancy myself a great aviator, am working on a pilot’s license and am not afraid to fly.

You see, in watching Top Gun I learned an interesting lesson: planes can fly without the engines on. There is this scene when, during an aerial exercise, Maverick flies through the exhaust of another plane temporally causing the engines on his plane to “flame out.” In short, the engines were off, yet the plane was still in the air.

To me this was fascinating because, until then, I always assumed that when a plane’s engines went out, the plane immediately fell out of the sky. Remember, I was only 9-years old at the time. So Maverick, seeing the issue, immediately says, “Restarting the engines.”

There are times in life that our engines will go out. We may run into an unexpected circumstance, we may run into trouble, or we may just need a rest so we shut the engines down and glide through the sky for a little while.

Just remember, you can’t get to your final destination by gliding; eventually you have to restart the engines.

As we leave the summer season, it is time to get back to the business of building God’s Kingdom.

I hope you got a lot of rest, and were able to glide for a little while, but to get where you planned to go at the beginning of the year, it is time to restart.

UMs speak out for immigrants to keep ‘the dream’ alive

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff



STANDING IN WITNESS outside the White House Sept. 5, people of faith protested the end of protection for more than 800,000 immigrants and vowed to increase advocacy for the “Dreamers” who were granted temporary legal status five years ago.

Since then, leaders in the Baltimore-Washington Conference and The United Methodist Church have raised their voices to encourage Congress to pass measures that allow these young adults, who were brought to the United States by their immigrant parents to live, work, and attend school in the United States.

Denominational leaders have designated Dec. 3, the first Sunday in Advent, as a special day of prayer and offering for migrants to be observed in local churches.

“Our scriptures and traditions teach us to care for the vulnerable and marginalized among us, which, by definition, includes children and immigrants,” said Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, resident bishop of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, speaking for the Interfaith Immigration Coalition at a press conference outside the White House Sept. 5.

“We are a nation founded upon principles of justice, fairness and equality,” the bishop continued. “Those principles also reflect our Christian values,” Bishop Easterling said.

“We cannot claim a foundation of justice, while espousing and implementing policies and practices that are the very antithesis of justice, mercy and righteousness.”

She acknowledged that people of faith have conflicting views on immigration. In fact, it was U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions – a United Methodist – who



Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, left, prepares to deliver remarks about justice and immigration at a rally in front of the White House Sept. 5.

announced the end of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, calling it “unconstitutional and an overreach of the executive branch.”

However, in recent days, the DREAM Act has created bipartisan efforts as Senators like Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) and Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) come together to support hundreds of young undocumented immigrants.

Within the Baltimore-Washington Conference, leaders are calling for conversation and prayer about immigration. A collection of resources has been published on the BWC website. (<http://www.bwccumc.org/ministries/advocacy/immigration-resources>).

This “really is an issue that tears at the fabric of who we are and who we say we are

as Americans,” Bishop Easterling said.

Emma Escobar, the BWC coordinator of Hispanic-Latino Ministries, has heard first-hand about the fear and uncertainty sweeping through the immigrant community.

“The decision from this administration to end DACA has been devastating to many in the United Methodist family,” she said. “This program helped a dear friend and leader within the UMC, Yuni Rueda, to have a normal life in the U.S. It helped her obtain a scholarship to go to college. Now, she feels a door is closing for many in the community and she is losing hope,” Escobar said.

“The question now is, how do we, as brothers and sisters, respond to this issue,” she asked. “Many of the DACA recipients

came to this country when they were children; this country is all they know.”

It is Escobar’s hope that United Methodists move beyond conversation to take actions that lead to change.

She urges all United Methodist brothers and sisters to engage in such prayerful actions as:

- Call and write to your state representatives and ask them to support the Dream ACT.
- Connect and build relationships with local immigrant organizations in the community and find how you can support their efforts.
- Invite a Dreamer/DACA holder to come and share their story with your congregation.
- Connect with the General Board of Church and Society to learn how you can become an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation.



“Justice and Dignity for Immigrants” reads a sign at the rally in D.C.

EVENTS

Disability Ministries on a Shoestring Budget

Saturday, Sept. 23, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.
Calvary UMC

131 W. Second St., Frederick

Sponsored by the BWC Commission on Disability Concerns. For more information, contact the Rev. Leo Yates, 443-535-5380.

BWC Historical Society

Saturday, Sept. 16, 9:45 a.m. to noon
Emory Grove Campground

102 Waugh Ave., Reisterstown

The Historical Society will hold its annual meeting at Emory Grove, which is celebrating its 150th anniversary as a Methodist camp meeting site. Rev. Emora Brannan, conference historian, will speak on “John Emory and the Camp Meeting Spirit.” Lunch will follow.

Connectional Table meets

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

A planning meeting for Conference ministry leaders.

Superintendent Installation for Ann LaPrade

Sunday, Oct. 15, 3 p.m.

Linden Heights UMC, Parkville

The Rev. Ann LaPrade will be installed as superintendent of the Baltimore Suburban District.

Superintendent Installation for Wanda Duckett

Sunday, Oct. 29, 3 p.m.
Epworth Chapel, Baltimore

The Rev. Wanda Duckett will be installed as superintendent of the Baltimore Metropolitan District.

PreRetirement Seminar

Thursday, Oct. 19

9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

BWC Mission Center in Fulton

For clergy interested in learning more about retirement. \$20. For more information, contact Karen Conroy at kconroy@bwccumc.org, or 410-309-3430.

ReCall Summit

Oct. 29-30

BWI Marriott Hotel

A conversation on race and multicultural living that will help you reimagine, redefine, reposition and respond. \$99. Learn more and register at www.bwccumc.org/event/1002140-2017-10-21-the-recall-summit. (See ad on page 6.)

ROCK 2018

Friday, Jan. 26 to Sunday, Jan. 28, 2018

Convention Center, Ocean City, Md.

A weekend retreat for Conference youth, featuring guest preacher Bishop LaTrelle Easterling. www.bwccumc.org/rock.

Web Highlights

‘Therefore’ Bible Study: From the 2017 Annual Conference Session.

www.bwccumc.org/resources/therefore-bible-study/

Future of the 21st Century Church: Every local church can

become healthier and reach more people for Jesus Christ. Come hear how with experienced church planter, Rev. Olu Brown.

Friday October 27 in Fulton: <http://tiny.cc/21stC-Church-Fulton>

Saturday October 28 in Frederick: <http://tiny.cc/21stC-Church-Frederick>



Bishop LaTrelle Easterling
Melissa Lauber
Erik Alsgaard
Alison Burdett
Kat Bowling
Kayla Spears
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city. She cited several recent articles in a local newspaper about how divided United Methodists are. “Part of tonight is letting the city see that Methodists are united in so many things, in our love of God and our love of each other,” she said.

“The idea is to show to the community that we have contributed, and will continue to contribute, to the community,” said the Rev. Eliezer Valentín-Castañón, pastor of Trinity UMC. “We’re just calling attention to the fact that the Methodist church is present in Frederick and that we have a lot to give.”

The outreach effort, Valentín-Castañón said, was not solely designed to get people to come to church, and that invitation was

clearly in evidence. The purpose of the evening was to have people get a sense of what the church is and what it’s doing, he added.

“The church is more than just sitting in some place on a Sunday morning,” he said. “The church is a whole lot more, and this is an experience that shows that.”

One expression of “church” being “more” was seen with Pastor Gary Hicks, who invited a participant of his faith community, John, onstage to share his testimony of how God delivered him from addictions to drugs and alcohol. Hicks, pastor of Outreach at Brook Hill UMC, gathers a group of people together for worship every Saturday morning at the Blue Side Tavern in Frederick. Those who attend are from the area, but most are homeless or transitional



Pastor Gary Hicks, far left, shares a word of prayer with people from his ‘church’ before going on stage to offer a time of witness and testimony.



The Rev. Eliezer Valentín-Castañón, in blue shirt behind the cross, leads a prayer with the Rev. Jenny Smith (red shirt) at the community event.

people, many with mental health issues.

In the first year of that ministry, in 2015, Hicks said they had 241 different people come through the doors.

Hicks said he had been looking for a place for a ministry outreach to this underserved population for years. He had been looking at the Blue Side because of its strategic location near the all-weather shelter, near the rescue mission, and near the Community Action Agency. One day, he just walked in to the tavern and talked to the owner about his vision. They meet in a back room before the bar opens, with tables and chairs and a cigar box disguised as an offering plate.

If the churches in Frederick do this type of event again, Smith said, they may do it a little later in the fall. One reason: many church choristers are still on summer vacation and it’s hard to rehearse.

At a time when there seems to be so much division in our country, Rivera said,

it was great to see a community come together to worship and praise God. “Our hope is that this (kind of event) is just the beginning,” Rivera said.



Diane Stinson, left, and Barbara Parrish from Jackson Chapel UMC, greet visitors at their tent.



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

Summit provides a canvas for Leadership

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

Finding the right shades and perspectives to forge a portrait of a leader is an art.

But sometimes leadership begins with just an invitation. On Aug. 9 and 10, several people in the Baltimore-Washington Conference responded to an invitation to discover “why in the world we are here in the world,” and how to shape the church as fighters, uniters and champions of change.

They attended the Global Leadership Summit, an event simulcast to more than 400,000 people in churches throughout the world from Willow Creek UMC in Chicago, a nondenominational church with 26,000 members. The two-day event featured some of the most well-known innovators in corporate America and preachers who have proven their abilities to call on faith to transform culture.

“Can I come right out and say it? It’s time for church leaders to really lead,” said Bill Hybels, the senior pastor of Willow Creek, who hosted the Summit. “I believe that the great tragedy of the church in our time has been its failure to recognize the importance of the spiritual gift of leadership.

“The stakes of leadership are sky-high, the world is demanding a better brand of leadership,” he continued. “Leaders should never apologize for the strength of feeling that accompanies their God-given visions. God designed leaders to experience their longing, their desire, and their drive deeply, and to express it fully. And when they do, they energize others.”

portrait of a leader

Being catalysts for meaningful transformation was one of the common threads lifted up among the speakers, including Bryan Stevenson, the author of “Just Mercy” and the founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative in Alabama.

Stevenson, who has dedicated his career to helping the poor, the incarcerated, and the condemned, shared how he argued before the Supreme Court, winning a ruling that declared mandatory life-without-parole sentences for all children 17 or younger are unconstitutional. He and his staff have also won reversals, relief or release for more than 115 wrongly condemned prisoners on death row.

Stevenson shared his struggles working in this country, which has the highest rates of incarceration in the world. The United States has 5 percent of the world’s population, but 25 percent of its prisoners, he said. This mass incarceration has had devastating consequences for people of color: one in

three black boys, and one in six Latino boys, is projected to go to jail or prison in his lifetime.

In his work for justice, Stevenson defined four principles that help enable leaders to change the world.

1. Leaders must get proximate to the people they’re serving. You can’t be an effective leader from a distance, he said.
2. Leaders must change the narratives that sustain the problems they need to address. For example, Stevenson said, we tend to share the common story that drug addicts are criminals. We could have used the health care system to address addiction, he said, but a narrative of fear and anger was created and so we use the criminal justice system.
3. Effective leaders must stay hopeful.
4. Leaders must be willing to do uncomfortable things. Physically and psychologically, people are programmed to do what is comfortable, Stevenson said. Change happens when great leaders are willing to put themselves in uncomfortable places, be a witness, and do uncomfortable things.

shades of leadership

While essential, the spiritual gift of leadership is often hard-won, said Angela Duckworth, the author of “Grit,” a New York Times best seller, who has used quantitative research to discover why some people excel more than others.

The answer, she discovered, is the idea of “grit,” a unique trait that combines “the power of passion and perseverance in the pursuit of long-term goals.”

Many people have an innate sense of grit that often means more to achievement than talent. Duckworth offers a Grit Scale test on her website. But for those who wish to nurture their “grittiness,” she recommends setting a goal that stretches you; then diving into vast amounts of deliberate practice, working hard at one small thing while seeking feedback and reflection; and embracing challenge, believing in and pursuing growth.

While leaders with grit persevere, immersing oneself in the pursuit of excellence may have too high a cost for many people, said Juliet Funt, the CEO of Whitespace at Work, who also spoke at the Global Leadership Summit. Workplace overload and reactive busyness are taking their toll on productivity and people’s health and wellbeing, said Funt. She prescribes “whites space” (a term denoting the unprinted

area of a piece of printing), or taking a strategic pause, to allow workers to recuperate, recharge and intentionally take a moment for introspection and creativity.

While taking this pause seems logical, people tend to be driven into “the tyranny of the urgent” by being overdriven, being a perfectionist, information overload, and being frenzied to accomplish many tasks. To defeat these “thieves of white space,” she recommends asking the questions:

1. Is there anything I can let go of?
2. Where is good enough good enough?
3. What do I truly need to know?
4. What deserves my attention?

Adopting this “reductive mind-set,” Funt said, strips away some of the unnecessary stress and busy-ness and provides more intentional possibilities for creativity and introspection.

Throughout the Summit, speakers provided insights into helping people achieve at work, in ministry and throughout their lives. For too many leaders, there is a gap between what they believe and how they act, said Laszlo Bock, the former senior vice president of Google’s People Operations, who is often credited with making Google one of the premiere workplaces in the nation.

The role of the leader is to help to give their employees a sense of meaning in their work, Bock said.

Research indicates that one-third of American workers see their work as not having much meaning and being “just a job.” But research also indicates that meaning matters, to productivity, profits and people’s sense of wellbeing.

Bock recommends leaders apply three principles to help bring meaning to work: “finding a compelling mission, being transparent, and giving their people a voice.”

Within those three principles, leaders should remember that “the only thing that drives performance in organizations is having a goal and making sure other people know that goal.”

He recommends trusting employees, giving your people more freedom than you’re comfortable with, and asking people what they think. “The experience of work should be meaningful,” Bock said. “Treat your people right and they will do great things.”

For those in the church, leadership often means asking deep questions and being willing to take risks in the spirit of innovation.

creating unique art

At North Point Community Church, one of the largest churches in the country, they recently sat back after 20 years and did an “autopsy” on their success. One of the things they found, said the Rev. Andy Stanley, is that part of their success was having a “uniquely better product.”

Twenty years ago, North Point broke with the prevailing model of church and created an engaging church experience for the whole family, especially men, Stanley said. “It’s not that North Point was the best, they had something unique to offer,” he said.

But just being different wasn’t just enough. “You can be uniquely bad,” said Stanley. Unique becomes better when you do what you’re supposed to do, but do it better than the competition. “‘Make it better’ is one of our staff values.”

Uniquely better often arises when someone is trying to solve a problem. Multi-site churches started out as a response to the problem of overcrowding. They became something uniquely better, Stanley said, and today, it’s grown into a church-growth strategy.

Creating the uniquely better is almost impossible, he said, but leaders can enable their churches to recognize the uniquely better and make it their own. This is easier, if one follows a few simple steps:

1. Be a student, not a critic. We naturally criticize things we don’t understand or can’t control. We must stop that, Stanley said. “The moment you criticize, you stop learning.”
2. Keep your eyes and your mind wide-open. Listen to outsiders, they’re not bound by our assumptions. Closed-minded leaders close minds.
3. Replace “how,” with “wow!” The moment someone says how, and begins to demand specifics about execution, all the creativity vanishes. “Let’s be people of wow, rather than how,” Stanley said.
4. Ask the uniquely better questions: Is this unique? What would make it unique? Is it better? Is it better ... really?

One of the important things is to dream, and good leaders encourage their people to dream, too, Stanley stressed. “Keep your eyes, mind, heart and hands wide open.”

color me fearless

Throughout the Summit, which broadcast live from Willow Creek and simulcast to 625 sites around the world, participants learned from several other speakers including Cheryl Sandburg, Chief Operating Officer at Facebook; Marcus Lemonis, the star of The Profit television show and CEO of Camping World and Good Sam; Comedian Michael Jr.; Business Creativity Expert Frederick Härén; Marcus Buckingham, best-selling author and founder of the Marcus Buckingham Group; and Immaculée Ilibagiza, a survivor of the genocide in Rwanda and advocate for peace and forgiveness.

The event closed with a challenge by Gary Haugen, founder and CEO of the International Justice Mission, an organization that uses the law to protect the poor from human trafficking and violence in the developing world.

“Nothing undermines a leader like fear,” Haugen said. “Fear is the silent destroyer of dreams.” Jesus commanded his disciples to “fear not,” more than any other instruction he shared.

“Fear is the destroyer of the love that inspires the dream. It replaces that love with a preoccupation with self,” he said.

Haugen offered a few suggestions to encourage bravery:

1. You must relentlessly inventory your own fears. Ask, “In this situation, what am I really afraid of?”
2. Switch from playing defense to playing offense. No great dream has ever been built on the fear of what might go wrong.
3. Successful leaders forge a community of courage around them. Lone rangers do not make great dreams come true, ever. Courage, like fear, is contagious.

Some of the best leaders are able to “open their hearts and minds to the spirit of God and see what’s next,” Hybels concluded. It’s a question waiting to be asked.

Leading outside the lines

Leaders today are facing increasing challenges leading their organizations in an era of divisiveness and disrespect. In the U.S., said Bill Hybels at the Global Leadership Summit, 25 percent of employees experience disrespect at work at least once a week. “We have a civility problem that’s getting worse not better,” he said. “We’re near a crisis point.”

To address this crisis, Hypes suggested that religious leaders need to speak out more forcefully, proclaiming “every human is made in the image of the Most High God and has intrinsic dignity.” This is not about tolerance,” he said. “We don’t get to choose who we respect.”

Hybels pointed to Randall Stephenson, the CEO of ATT, who recently said: “Tolerance is for cowards. Being tolerant requires nothing from you but to be quiet and to not make waves, holding tightly to your views and judgments without being challenged. Do not tolerate each other. Work hard, move into uncomfortable territory and understand each other.”

To move beyond tolerance, Hybels recommends every church leader ask: “What kind of organization do you want to be a leader of,” and then provide clarity by providing a written Civility Code that includes the following:

1. Leaders must set the example on how to differ with others without demonizing them.
2. Leaders must set the example of how to have spirited conversations without drawing blood.
3. Leaders must not interrupt others who are talking and must not dominate the conversation.
4. Leaders must set the example of limiting their volume levels and refusing to use incendiary or belittling words that guarantee to derail a discussion.
5. Leaders must set the example of being courteous in word and deed to everyone at every level.
6. Leaders must never stereotype.
7. Leaders must apologize immediately when they are wrong, instead of denying or doubling down.
8. Leaders must form opinions carefully and stay open minded if better information comes along.
9. Leaders must set the example of showing up when they say they are going to show up and doing what they say they are going to do.
10. Leaders must set “Rules of Respect” for everyone in the organization and enforce them relentlessly.

creative leadership challenges

From the Global Leadership Summit:

1. Spend 15 minutes each morning, read and reflect on your life, your leadership, your character, faith and family. Are you getting better or busier?
2. Make this the year of the grander vision. At a certain point, mere financial or numerical success should bore you. You were created by a complex God. Be a change-maker in this world. What life are you waiting for?
3. Measure the health of the culture of your organization. The culture will only be as healthy as the top leader wants it to be.
4. Do you have a personal betterment plan for your leadership in the coming year? How will you grow as a leader? Take responsibility for growing as a leader.
5. Are you leading on the home front as well as you are at work? Devote time to the people and things that matter most to you.



RACISM

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For racial justice and multicultural living
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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Ames UMC receives help recovering from robbery

BALTIMORE – In early August, someone broke into Ames UMC and stole all its equipment, including keyboard tables, speakers and microphones. What was the church to do?

The neighboring Simmons Memorial Baptist Church came to the rescue, said the Rev. Rodney Hudson, who has pastored the church since 2008. It was a temporary loan, and some of the Baptist church members helped fix Ames' old system, providing some sound after they had to return the loaned equipment.

Then an email came from the Rev. Matt Poole, asking how Glen Mar UMC could help. Hudson responded they needed four microphones for the time being.

"When I arrived to retrieve the mics, I was in awe," Hudson said. "Glen Mar and Pastor Matt (gave us) five of the best microphones on the market."

"Thank you, Glen Mar and Pastor Matt for your leadership, partnership and compassion," Hudson said on behalf of his congregation. "We will be good stewards of these microphones so that more people can know Christ."

Three Harford County churches, one youth group

FOREST HILL – It's not unusual for youth groups to do summer mission trips. But this one was different. Three Harford County congregations have combined their youth groups since 2014 in a joint program that meets every week. Ayres Chapel and Jarrettsville, on one charge, and Centre UMCs are now one youth group.

When the youth of the three churches became one, they made a trip to BWC's

2016 ROCK retreat, which helped cement the new bond, said the Rev. Mark Gorman of Centre. The youth leaders began discussion for a mission trip, the first any of the churches could remember.

Fundraisers were held that brought together members from each congregation; one was a cake auction that raised \$3,000 in about two hours.

Together they decided on a Philadelphia mission, helping these rural youth to connect to a community very different from their own. There, they assisted at a summer camp, cleaned up a street corner, served ice cream to assisted living residents and stocked the shelves in a rescue mission.

"The youth have been trailblazers for their congregations," Gorman said. "Without their love for each other and their passion for Jesus Christ, there would have been no mission trip this summer. They have shown their home congregations a path to a future that is in God's hands."

Putting 'unity' into community

CREPSATOWN – More than 500 people from the community attended Cresaptown UMC's Block Party Aug. 26. The event, partly held under a large white tent loaned by the Baltimore-Washington Conference, helped to make the community aware of the many ministries the church offers, as well as services from 19 community organizations. These included the local firefighters (with a firetruck) and police, Frostburg Campus Ministries, drug-addiction agencies, food and health services, prison ministry, and Habitat for Humanity.

"To experience the joy of the Lord and to be able to help put 'unity' back in the community was truly amazing," said the Rev. Hal Atkins. And, he added, "people are asking us to make this an annual event."



More than 500 people attended the Cresaptown UMC's Block Party on Aug. 26. The five-hour event had something for everyone in the community.

D.C. pastor publishes "New Day in the City"

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Rev. Donna Claycomb-Sokol, pastor of Mt. Vernon Place UMC, recently published "New Day in the City" (Abingdon Press, 2017) with co-author L. Roger Owens.

The authors emphasize that reaching new people takes more than just asking if they prefer a traditional or contemporary service.

"The belief that adding a service of a different style is the silver bullet to reverse decline shows a deep misunderstanding of worship," Claycomb Sokol said. "The purpose of worship is not to give people ignorant of the faith their first introduction to Christianity. Rather, worship aims to orient our lives – all that we are and do – in the direction of the God in whom we live and move and have our being."

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ACHIEVE YOUR CHURCH'S GOALS OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS

VIEWPOINTS

Ministers march builds on MLK's dream of justice

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

I'M MARCHING BECAUSE we who are representatives of the Body of Christ... are out here to show that we're concerned about issues of justice and morality, and that we're not going anywhere."

That's the Rev. Steve Tillett, pastor at Asbury-Broadneck UMC in Annapolis, who, along with dozens of other clergy from the Baltimore-Washington Conference, attended the Ministers March for Justice Aug. 28.

"We're going to stand shoulder-to-shoulder: Jews, Muslims, Christians, agnostics... we're going to press for justice and we're not going to stop," he said.

The march, sponsored by the Rev. Al Sharpton-founded National Action Network, was designed to send the message that recent activities of the Department of Justice and the current administration are undermining the country's democracy, organizers said. The march was expected to draw 1,000 faith leaders, but according to Sharpton, more than 3,000 clergy registered at the event.

"We wanted to say that this nation is in moral trouble," Sharpton told the crowd before the march. "It's immoral to take health care away from your momma because you don't like Obama. It's immoral to take away voting rights."

The march, which occurred on the 54th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "March on Washington" and his famous "I have a dream" speech, wound its way through the streets of Washington, ending at the Justice Department. Sharpton was joined by Martin Luther King III at the head of the march, along with faith leaders from several different traditions.


"We wanted to show us all together," Sharpton said. "We wanted to show the diversity of the ministry. If we can't get together, then how can your congregants get together?"

The Rev. Diane Dixon-Proctor, a retired Elder and the Peace and Justice Coordinator for the BWC, attended the 1963 March on Washington as a teenager. She grew up in New York City at the Abyssinian Baptist Church where the Rev. Adam Clayton Powell was the pastor.

"He was always giving the young people

advice to keep going with the struggle," she said. Fifty-four years after the King march, she returned to make the statement that justice does not stop.

"As a clergy, today has a different focus," Dixon-Proctor said. "We as the church, we have to be about more than Sunday morning. In The United Methodist Church, it's been a push to get outside those walls. This push lets us know now, more than ever, how much more work we need to do. If we don't continue to stand up, we're



Rev. Diane Dixon-Proctor

going to fall down."

"I feel that Martin Luther King is looking down on the world, and looking at what we're doing to continue to keep justice moving and alive," Dixon-Proctor said.

Putting her prayers in action, the Rev. Donna Claycomb-Sokol, pastor at Mt. Vernon Place UMC in Washington, marched down Constitution Avenue.

"Sometimes it feels like we're paralyzed, not knowing what to do right now," she said, "and what does it mean to resist evil, injustice and oppression."

As the pastor of a church just blocks from the White House, Claycomb-Sokol addresses current social issues by focusing



The Revs. Donna Claycomb-Sokol, left, and Monica Raines walk together during the Ministers March for Justice on Aug. 28.

on one thing: Jesus Christ.

"We try to preach Jesus and preach the good news," she said. "We try to keep talking about what does Jesus say. We can stand on the side of partisan politics, but the most important thing is for us to know, 'What does the Gospel say; what does Jesus stand for?'"

The Rev. Joan Carter-Rimbach made the journey to DC from Baltimore and her new appointment at John Wesley UMC. She came to the march to bear witness to King's dream "that is still something that we dream



From left to right: The Revs. Alisa Wailoo Lasiter, Joan Carter-Rimbach, Jalene Chase-Sands, and Twanda Prioleau wait for the Ministers March for Justice to begin. More than 3,000 clergy registered for the event.

Church should be a sanctuary for difficult conversations

By KRISTOPHER NORRIS & MIKE MCCURRY
Special to UMConnection

THIS WAS SOME summer of discontent. We witnessed many divisions in our politics and culture spilling into the streets in marches and protests, and most vividly in the violence in Charlottesville. We see in data increasing evidence that our polarization as a society is growing wider; the cleavages in our public discourse becoming deeper.

When large segments of our country view those who disagree as "enemies" and when our social networks consist only of those with whom we already agree, there is little basis for the kind of spirited dialogue that can build consensus and make progress on the difficult issues before us. Questions abound about the federal budget deficit, immigration reform, climate change, criminal justice reform, and the role of the US in the world; yet they linger unattended when there is no "safe sanctuary" for honest debate.

We firmly believe the church must be a destination for these conversations. We

know that many pastors and lay leaders would prefer to keep politics out of the church. After all, we believe in "separation of church and state," right? While the Constitution ensures no establishment of religion, we know that our history is replete with examples of faith leaders taking important and impressive roles in leading towards positive change.

Now is a time such as this. While most congregations have become homogenous echo chambers for our political proclivities, church leaders might begin by raising these difficult issues for discussion, and then seeking opportunities to dialogue with other congregations composed of those with different ethnicities, economic statuses, and political preferences.

Why not provoke real discussion, with an openness to having our minds changed by the Spirit through these encounters? We might just discover common ground, and seek ways to organize together for real change to our policies. Gently guiding these debates does not come naturally to church leaders. We know that there are skills, techniques, and best practices that can shape a more loving dialogue. At Wesley

Theological Seminary, we are committed to that kind of teaching; for those seeking ordained ministry but also for those bound for ministries active in the public square, advocating for economic and social justice.

We do this through our National Capital Semester for Seminarians (NCSS), which brings students from seminaries around the country to Washington for an academic immersion in "public theology." Students learn from leaders of faith-based organizations, elected officials, and government workers who consider their faith to be an integral part of their work. We are non-partisan in our approach so students are exposed to multiple views. And while we are passionately Christian, we are also compassionately multi-faith at a time when we need better understanding of how different faith traditions shape policy and the world in which we live.

We also do this through courses that touch on specific issues, such as religious freedom or religion and the American presidency. One example this semester is a new course on "Church, Politics, and Race in a Polarized Society." While issues of racism have emerged at the forefront of

our national consciousness, this class will examine the ways racism is deeply woven with our politics, theology, and church history, as well as explore ways churches might bridge these divides and work for a common good.

Wesley Seminary is committed to making a difference here in Washington. That is our calling as an institution of theological education in the capital of this nation, but it is also something we have come to understand as critical if the church is going to shape our national political discourse in faithful, just, and merciful ways.

Rev. Dr. Kristopher Norris and Mr. Mike McCurry are co-directors of the National Capital Semester for Seminarians and teach as part of the Center for Public Theology at Wesley Theological Seminary. McCurry is also former White House Press Secretary to President Bill Clinton and was a delegate to the 2004 and 2008 General Conferences of the UMC from the Baltimore-Washington Conference. More information is available at wesleyseminary.edu.

After 30 years, Thornton bids farewell to camping ministry

By ALISON BURDETT
UMConnection Staff



ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 5, the 30-year ministry of Andy Thornton was celebrated at West River Center. Friends and family of Thornton flooded the Camping and Retreat Center, along with current and former staff members who worked with him, to show their support and appreciation.

Guests enjoyed a display of photos, making their own “happy trails” mix, writing and/or video recording well-wishes to Thornton, and outdoor activities. Thornton’s catch phrase was evident in every aspect of the day: “It just doesn’t get any better than this.”

A Celebration Program was held featuring guest speakers from Thornton’s past and present. The Rev. Ed DeLong began the program with words of welcome followed by a prayer offered by Christie Latona.

The guest speakers shared stories from the 80s, 90s, 2000s and 2010s. Boy Scout Troop 853 recognized the work of Eagle

Scout Andy Thornton and presented him with memorabilia and an American Flag. Other gifts offered included a Superman coffee mug from Ray Jenkins, a quilt featuring the nautical flag alphabet from the Baltimore Heritage Quilters, and a painting, commissioned by Thornton’s kids, of West River Camp.

One special gift, presented by Chris Warrington, was a chair Thornton used while serving at Red Bird Mission more than 30 years ago that followed him to West River. Now it gets to follow him into retirement.

Many in attendance stood in acknowledgement of the effect Thornton had on their lives, whether that be meeting their current spouse while working with him through the camps, growing in their faith to become pastors or teachers, or fulfilling their ministry talents in the secular world. As most in the room were standing, Andy was told to look around: “This is your legacy.”

Thornton took to the podium to share a word of response after the presentations and in true Andy Thornton style, spent the entire time tearfully thanking others.



Frostburg UMC wins One Matters award for discipleship

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

NOT TOO LONG ago, the pastor serving Frostburg UMC – the western-most appointment in the Baltimore-Washington Conference – worked part-time. Today, the church has a full-time pastor and a thriving ministry to and with its community, thanks to the outstanding efforts of Pastor Jen Webber, the church’s previous pastor, and the church’s current pastor, the Rev. Kyle Durbin.

When Webber started at the church six years ago, she was part-time. She grew the church to the capacity where she could serve full time. She left the church and moved to Texas in 2016.

“What I hear all the time,” Durbin said, “was that our church ‘didn’t used to be this welcoming.’ That change is credited to Pastor Jen. She made it a lot more about families and grew the ministries.”

What Durbin has done – and is doing – is to grow on the foundation that Webber established, he said. The youth program has grown significantly in the past year; outreach to a nearby elementary school is growing; meal baskets are given out during the holidays; and an alternative Sunday morning service was started by Webber that continues to expand, are just some of the proof that a church can turn it around, and fast.

That change was recognized this past May during the 2017 Annual Conference Session in Washington, D.C., when Frostburg UMC received the “One Matters” award from Discipleship Ministries in Nashville, Tenn. In 2016, the entire Cumberland-Hagerstown District won the award.

The “One Matters” award was created in 2015 to recognize churches that move from zero baptisms or professions of faith, to one (or more). Recipients receive \$1,000 for future discipleship ministry and a plaque.

“Each ‘I’ in those categories represents a transformed life – a life that matters to God, and a life that should matter to us,” said Jeff Campbell, Director of Annual Conference Relationships at Discipleship Ministries.

More than 70 percent of United Methodist congregations in the United States did not baptize anyone age 13 or older in 2013, according to Discipleship Ministries, quoting statistics from the General Council on Finance and

Durbin, who started his second year in the appointment July 1, recently launched a theater ministry with the church and community. He has been active in theater for years, and has done theater ministry for more than 10 years.

“My focus is on giving opportunities to anyone, regardless of experience, talent or age,” Durbin said. “I would take the child who a normal theater might cast as ‘tree #4,’ and make them the star of the show because I see potential. If someone is passionate

churches each takes a week to fill the boxes and we spread them throughout the western part of Maryland.”

The mantra of the church, he said, is “Making disciples who make a difference.” “That’s what we try to do here,” he said.

Camp Hope, another outreach of the church, was started 40-years ago by the church. In those days, the church hosted volunteer workers who helped to fix homes in the area. Today, groups of people from around the East Coast come to Frostburg and stay at the university as a “home base” as they do their work. Frostburg UMC members host daily breakfasts and several evening services each week, as well as providing its own work team during on the camp’s four weeks in July.

“X-Kids,” is another example of being connected to the community, said Sue Morgan, the church’s lay member to Annual Conference and chair of Small Groups. This after-school program meets at a nearby elementary school, she said. Every Wednesday, for 10 weeks in the Fall and in the Spring, church members conduct a 90-minute program in the school right after the school day finishes. The church provides meals, Durbin sings songs and does a Bible lesson, and there are arts and crafts and other activities. About 100 children per week participate.

Quilting is another important ministry at the church. Every Friday, about a dozen of the women at the church come together to make prayer quilts. Every Sunday, during worship, the congregation ties knots in the quilts and prays over them. The quilts are then given away to people who are sick, home-bound or in the hospital.

Carol Cleveland, a church member for 57 years, is the chief quilter, and she said they have made more than 600 quilts in the past four years, and they now average about 7 or 8 quilts per week.



Tish Cooper, left, presides over Communion with the Rev. Kyle Durbin at Frostburg UMC Aug. 6.

Administration, and 55 percent did not baptize anyone age 12 and under. In addition, 50 percent of local churches did not have any professions of faith that year.

That used to be true in Frostburg, but no more.

“The exciting thing about Frostburg is that it is such a cross section of American culture,” said Durbin. “That’s because of the university here.” That diversity, he said, includes race, economic status, demographics, political views, education levels and more. The town ends up looking like a mirror for the country as a whole.

about something, I’m going to give them an opportunity to explore it.”

Theater ministry is connecting the church to the community, Durbin said, adding that several people have either joined the church or attend worship after first connecting through this ministry.

Frostburg UMC is also connected to the community in other ways. Tony Crosby, the church’s chair of outreach, said the summer lunch box program excites him the most.

“We make about 200 sandwiches a day,” he said. “We know that the kids are out of school and so seven or eight or nine