



PHOTOS BY TONY RICHARDS

UMConnection DAILY

235th Session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church • Transformed lives, transform lives • Saturday, June 1, 2019



ALICIA BURDETT

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, left, greets the Rev. Joey Heath-Mason immediately after she ordained him as a full Elder. Standing next to the bishop is Delores Martin, Conference Lay Leader; Rev. Gerry Green, Greater Washington DS; the Rev. Chip Aldridge, Wesley Theological Seminary; and the Rev. Mary Kay Totty, Dumbarton UMC.

Ordination makes history on many levels

By ERIK ALSGAARD

ONE OF THE high holy moments of any Annual Conference Session is the service of commissioning, reception and ordination. The 235th BWC Session was no different, but in many ways, totally different than any other in its storied past.

That's because, for the first time, two openly gay candidates were approved by the Clergy Executive Session: one for commissioning and one for ordination. Commissioned as a provisional Deacon was Tara Cressler "TC" Morrow. Ordained

as a full Elder was the Rev. Joey Heath-Mason. Both Morrow and Heath-Mason are married to people of the same gender.

It's also because, for perhaps the first time, a bishop commissioned her husband as a Provisional Elder. Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, resident bishop of the Pittsburgh Area, and a daughter of the BWC, returned home to commission her husband, Rafael Kimba Koikoi Jr.

It's also because, for perhaps the first time, an infant joined his parents in ordination. The Rev. Lemuel Dominguez was ordained

accompanied by his wife, the Rev. Bonnie McCubbin, and their son, 18-month old Abraham.

The United Methodist Church states that "self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church." The February 2019 Special Session of General Conference passed legislation to reinforce this stance, and to enhance penalties for clergy who conduct same-gender weddings, something also prohibited. Most of

See *Ordination*, page 2

BWC adopts 2020 budget by unanimous vote

BY ERIK ALSGAARD

BY UNANIMOUS VOICE vote, members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference approved the 2020 budget. Total income, spread between mission shares (apportionments) and other income, totals \$18,641,514. Total expenses equal income.

The benevolence factor remains the same for local churches, at 17.6 percent, while the collection rate will drop from 92 to 91 percent.

Phil Potter, chair of the BWC's Commission on Finance and Administration, said they have prepared a budget that is prudent and "based on solid benchmarks." In case "other events" take place, he said, a number of contingency



Phil Potter, left, and the Rev. Daryl Williams speak during the stewardship presentation Friday afternoon.

plans were developed. CFA, he said, can leverage about \$29 million over four years, he said, to adjust to any shortfall.

The good news from Pension and Health Benefits, shared by the Rev. Carey James, was that rates for HealthFlex – the BWC's health insurance benefit – will not increase for a third straight year.

Charlie Moore brought greetings from Africa University and thanked the BWC for its payment of 100 percent of its apportionments. Enrollment, he said, has increased 40 percent in the past four years, and they are 98.3 percent towards a financial campaign to raise \$50 million.

Ordination: 'Be servants, Love people,' bishop says

From page 1

the newly adopted Traditional Plan takes effect January 1, 2020.

It is the clergy session, acting on behalf of the Annual Conference, that approves – or "elects" – candidates to ordained and commissioned ministry. Paragraph 33 of the Book of Discipline states that the "annual conference is the basic body in the Church," and thus has certain rights. One of those rights is dealing with "all matters relating to the character and conference relations of its clergy members, and on the ordination of clergy..."

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, in her sermon, reminded the newly commissioned and those about to be ordained that they were not volunteers, but servants.

Volunteers, she said, decide when they'll show up, how they'll show up and for whom they'll show up. "You are servants of the living God," she said. "Lose yourself in the service of others."

Bishop Easterling commended the class for continuing to follow their call even after the

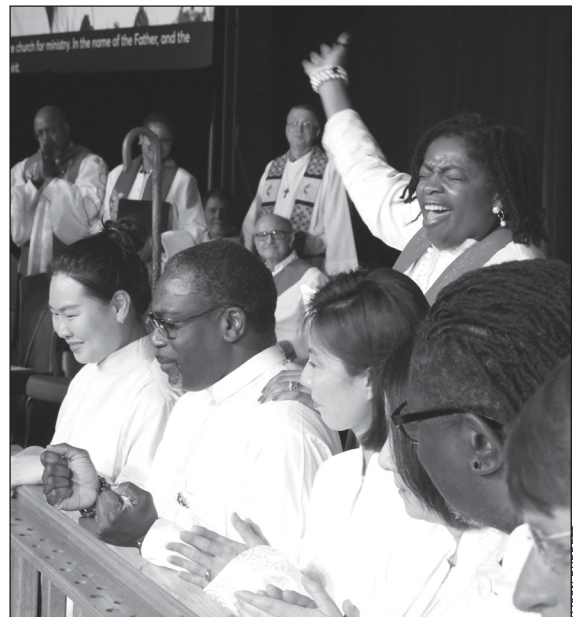
Special Session of General Conference earlier this year.

"You felt the tectonic shift and you have continued to say yes, anyhow," she said. "You are entering the ministry in a time in the church not seen in 150 years."

The bishop ended her sermon with the same charge she gave the graduating class at Wesley Theological Seminary: today marks the end of a season of your journey, she said, but your time of formation is not over.

"Love the people," she said. "Love the people."

Not all people in the BWC were happy with the bishop's decision to commission and ordain. Pastor Patricia Bittner, who serves the Flintstone Charge, said during a moment of personal privilege Friday afternoon that by commissioning two candidates "who we all know do not meet the requirements, we are openly and blatantly disregarding our current Book of Discipline guidelines. As our Bishop, representing



Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, right, commissions her husband, Rafael Kimba Koikoi Jr.

all the people in the Baltimore-Washington Conference, I feel that if they are commissioned and ordained this evening, you are sanctioning this disobedient action and possibly encouraging further disobedience to our Book of Discipline, thus creating more division among us."

Members vote to create an ‘unfolding story’

BY MELISSA LAUBER

IN A WHIRLWIND of legislative activity, members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference immersed themselves in holy conferencing Friday – voting on resolutions and delegates, and hearing from a number of ministry leaders.

During the legislative portion of the session, members unanimously approved a policy on sexual ethics, “Keeping our Sacred Trust.” The policy, which will be used in every local church across the conference, outlines procedures for reporting and responding to complaints of misconduct, offers guidelines for social media, dating between clergy and parishioners, and sets training requirements for ministry leaders.

An amendment to the policy mandates the establishment and deployment of a response team to address the needs of individuals



The Rev. Marlon Tilghman speaks on the floor of the Annual Conference Session.

and congregations involved in instances of sexual misconduct.

A copy of the policy and additional resources will be posted on the BWC website.

During the Board of Ordained Ministry report, the Rev. Bob Barnes went to the microphone to request a ruling of law from Bishop LaTrelle Easterling regarding the actions of the clergy session.

He sought a ruling of law as to

whether the process of block voting to approve a group of candidates for ordination or commissioning violated the Discipline; whether the vote to affirm the candidates was consistent with church law in that only two-thirds of the clergy voted to affirm the process of voting for all candidates as a block; and whether the two candidates were properly candidates for commissioning and ordination.

The bishop has 30 days to respond to the request.

In other action, conference members voted on a number of resolutions that included calling for a station to be set up on the annual conference floor for nursing mothers, and setting up attendance requirements for General and Jurisdictional Conference delegates (which will be sent to the Judicial Council for a declaratory decision to ensure it is in keeping with church law).

Seven resolutions, brought by the Revs. Deb Scott, Angela Flanagan and Baltimore-Washington Area Reconciling Ministries, promoted justice and inclusion for LGBTQIA+ people. They were “aspirational” in nature and were referred to conference agencies and offices for further study and possible action.

A resolution on affiliating with the Western Jurisdiction was replaced by a substitution by

Rev. Bryant Oskvig, which called for the BWC to create a mission for LGBTQIA+ people. This, too, was referred to the Discipleship Council.

The body also heard from James Cogman, a candidate for ministry, who spoke as an

ambassador for the Black College Fund that supports 11 historically black colleges and universities, which have an enrollment of nearly 16,000 students.

Cogman, who is a graduate of Claflin and Princeton Universities and a candidate for ministry, delivered an inspiring message, closing with the thought, “If humanity ever harnesses the power of love it will be the first time in a long time, that we will have discovered the heart of God.”

Scott Johnson, a member of the denomination’s Commission on the Way Forward from the Upper New York Annual Conference, also brought inspiring words, when he shared in the laity address his perspectives on the challenges facing the denomination.

“The Church has turned the proverbial page,” he said, “and our shared story is still being written.”

He asked the BWC members to think about what it means to be part of an ongoing story that moves in directions that they weren’t anticipating. But he also assured them that God, who is the author of your story, is indeed engaged with, in, through and around you.

“Make sure,” Johnson stressed, “that you are playing your part in the unfolding story of The United Methodist Church.”



Members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference cast a vote via electronic devices.

PHOTOS BY TONY RICHARDS

CONFERENCE AGENDA

SATURDAY, JUNE 1 - YOUNG PEOPLE'S MINISTRY DAY

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
7:15 a.m.	Breakfast	Harborside Ballroom
9 a.m.	Opening Experience BWC youth & Young Adult Ministries	Grand Ballroom
9:45 a.m.	Plenary by Mark DeVries Strategic Plan by interim Young People's Board	
11 a.m.	Learning Labs - locations throughout hotel	
Noon	Lunch Moral Courage Luncheon Bishop Minerva Carcaño, guest preacher	Harborside Ballroom Waterview C&D
2:00 p.m.	Young People's Ministry Awards Confirmation Celebration	Grand Ballroom

Engaging with poverty

BY ALISON BURDETT

IN A CONTINUATION from Thursday morning, the Rev. Marvin McMickle addressed poverty and economic injustice in a Bible study on Luke 16:19-22 Friday morning.

It's not about the issue of poverty versus prosperity; it's the proximity of one to another, he said. "Whether or not we end up in hell depends on the degree to which we have engaged with the poverty that impacts us."

McMickle laid out four things that can be done to address the issue of poverty.

1. Have a biblical vision of the future, imagine a future different from the ruling elite;
2. Allow your values to inform your behavior. From Micah 6:8, we know what is good: do justice, love kindness and be humbly obedient to God.
3. Use your voice to speak up and advocate for policies and practices on behalf of economic justice; be a voice for the voiceless.
4. Vote to elect people who will legislate for JUSTICE and not for JUST US.

Acknowledging the division that the denomination is experiencing over issues of human sexuality, McMickle called people's attention to Matthew 10:3-4.

Jesus began his ministry calling everyday, amiable fishermen, a "Galilean mafia," McMickle said. But then he tossed in Matthew the tax collector, and Simon the Zealot.

Zealots, he explained, hated tax collectors. The pair were natural enemies, but both followed Jesus and were able to co-exist in the same circle. "I can't think of any two unlikely people to be near Jesus," he said.

"Some of you may be Matthew the tax collector. Some of you might be Simon the Zealot," McMickle said.

Learn from your predecessors, he said. The one thing you have in common is that Christ called you to "come and follow me."

DELEGATES ELECTED

General Conference Delegates

CLERGY:

Ianther Mills
Joe Daniels
Ginger Gaines-Cirelli
C. Anthony Hunt
Giovanni Arroyo
Sarah Schlieckert

LAITY:

Cynthia Taylor
Megan Blizzard
Melissa Lauber
Ken Ow
Sarah Ford
Daniel Colbert

Jurisdictional Conference Delegates

CLERGY:

Stacey Cole-Wilson
J.W. Park
Conrad Link
Leo Yates
Kirkland Reynolds
Bryant Oskvig

LAITY:

Chris Schlieckert
Christie Latona
Tracy Collins
Sharon Milton
Nathan Jones
Chet Jechura

ALTERNATES

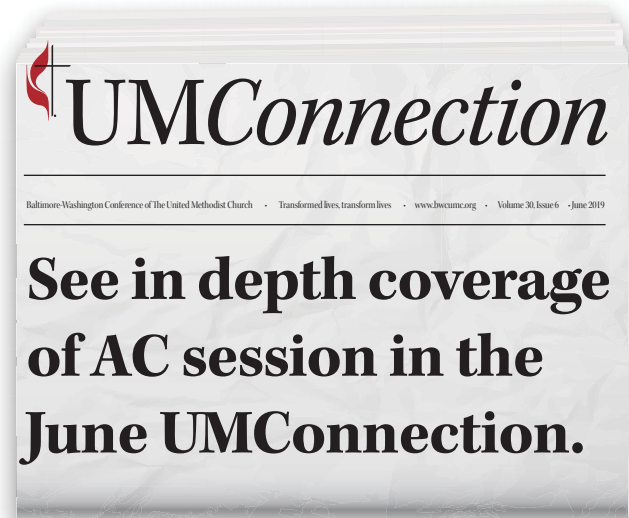
CLERGY:

Edgardo Rivera
Malcolm Frazier
Laura Norvell
Melissa Rudolph

LAITY:

Mittie Quinn
Charlie Moore
Lutebula Danny Pembamoto
Heather Kraus

Coverage of last night's plenary session will be online and in the June UMConnection.



Seeds of Security

Tonight's offering during ordination raised \$10,189 to aid in prevention of Domestic Violence/Intimate Partner Violence through the BWC's Seeds of Security Ministry.