Beacon Center shines hope on D.C. community

Washington, D.C., Mayor Muriel Bowser (behind the red bow) stands with Bishop LaTrelle Easterling and the Rev. Joe Daniels, to her right, and Hazel Broadnax (to her left) at the ribbon cutting ceremony of The Beacon Center March 13.

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

The Rev. Joe Daniels, the lead pastor of Emory UMC in Washington, D.C., stood at the podium in his church's sanctuary. “Good morning, everyone!” he said. He was greeted with a one-minute standing ovation.

That’s because this morning — March 13, 2019 — was no ordinary morning for him, leaders and members of his church. This morning was the ribbon cutting ceremony and celebration of The Beacon Center, a years-long vision come to life.

Emory UMC and its nonprofit entity, the Emory Beacon of Light, Inc., in partnership with The Community Builders, Inc. — a nonprofit developer of affordable and mixed-income residential and mixed-use developments — officially opened The Beacon Center with speeches and a formal ribbon cutting ceremony for the 99-unit affordable rental housing, commercial and congregational development project.

After $56 million and many years, tears and fears, the vision had become reality. It left Daniels wiping his eyes and his brow.

“This is the day that the Lord has made,” he proclaimed after dabbing his face with a handkerchief. “It’s a beautiful day for a ribbon cutting!”

It was also a day nurtured in persistence, patience and prayer “in a world too consumed with wealth, power and privilege,” and too often bereft of concern for those looking for a hand up, not a hand out,” said Bishop LaTrelle Easterling in a speech before the ribbon cutting.

The Beacon Center is a direct response, Daniels said, to the growing need for affordable housing in Washington, particularly for individuals and families living below the average median income of the city. The overall median household income in DC stood at $75,506 in 2016, according to Census data. However, when adjusted by race, white household median income stood at $112,369, while black household median income stood at $57,891, or about 31 percent of white household median income. As a result, many black families are priced out of the DC market for homes or apartments.

This crisis did not go unnoticed by Daniels and the members of Emory UMC. More than 10 years ago, Daniels presented his vision of building affordable housing in the church’s community. As a result, on Oct. 7, 2016, the first shovel turned dirt for the Beacon Center.

Supported by a variety of funders including the United Methodist Development Fund, DC Housing Finance Agency, DC Department of Housing and Community Development, Redstone Equity Partners, Chase, Wells Fargo, The Community Builders and the Neighborhood Reinvestment Fund, the project also includes community spaces, a restaurant/café featuring a menu that helps address food deserts, and other social enterprises.

“Hope is what has caused us to gather here this morning,” said Bishop Easterling. “We follow a Christ who himself had to be a Christ who himself had to be...”

Bishop Felipe Ruiz-Aguilar

The bishop restated her belief that all people are equal in the sight of God, and all people are of “deep sacred worth,” she said.

That basic understanding lies at the root of understanding immigration from a Christian perspective, she said.

“Those who are looking for a better way of life,” the bishop said, “those who are looking for safety for their family ... often get looked upon with disdain and without welcome. That’s a crisis of conscience and of the heart and understanding our baptismal vow.”

Philip Wingeier-Ray, Dean at Wesley Theological Seminary, who has served as a missionary in several countries, outlined...
I spent a few days last week with my folks in Florida. Time with my mother is always good for my soul, and when I fly down to see her, it’s a sign I’ve been under some stress and I’m in need of some TLC (thanks, General Conference!). When the writer of Ephesians calls us to pour ourselves out for others, I’m reminded of Jesus who “emptied himself, taking the form of a servant” (Phil. 2: 7). I’m reminded of the woman who poured out expensive perfume to anoint Jesus, a pouring out of love. Nonetheless, it seems to me that that kind of love is hard to “pay back.” It can only be paid forward: “poured out” for others. In the name of Christ, Church, let us pour out for others.

By Mandy Sayers
Lead Pastor, Glen Mar UMC, Ellicott City

Native American Ministries Sunday
Sunday, May 5
This Special Sunday with offering funds urban ministries with Native Americans, scholarships for Native Americans attending seminary, and Native American ministries. Learn more at www.umcgiving.org/ministry-articles/native-american-ministries-sunday.

Pre-Conference Briefings
Saturday, May 18
Morning session, at Jackson Chapel UMC, 5699 Ballenger Creek Pike in Frederick, 9:30 a.m. to noon. Afternoon session, at St. Johns United Church at the Wilde Lake Interfaith Center, 10431 Twin Rivers Road in Columbia, 2 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference Session
May 29 - June 1
Marriott Waterfront Hotel, Baltimore
Learn more about this session at www.bwccampsandretreats.com/annual-conference. The deadline for submitting resolutions is May 1.

Peace with Justice grant deadline
April 30
Learn more about how you can receive funding for your ministry at www.bwccamps.org/ministries/advocacy-action/peace-with-justice. Peace with Justice Sunday will be observed June 16.

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For more events, visit: bwccamps.org/events

Emotional, physical and spiritual healing is available today. It’s a sign you are running on empty. It’s a sign you need to pour out and let others know that you are empty yet still pouring. By doing this, you allow others to pour out for you too.

By Daryl Williams
Pastor, St. Paul UMC, Oxon Hill

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. This year, the “WORD” will be taken from Ephesians 4:1-16.

I"FE YOU ARE OVER 10 YEARS OLD, YOU HAVE LIVED LONG ENOUGH TO know what it feels like when you’re running on empty. That feeling that there is always something else to do, something more to give, someone else in need of something from you and you don’t feel like you have anything left. It is in those moments that we want to hang up a sign that says feel like we are running on empty, inevitably someone else shows up needing us to pour out some more. We tell ourselves we will not do it again—we have nothing left to pour out—and yet we find ourselves empty yet still pouring. We find ourselves digging a little deeper, finding a little more and continuing to pour out for others.

The strange thing about the economy of God is that when you pour out for others, God pours more into you. Sometimes we forget that what God pours into us isn’t for storage; it is meant to be poured out to others with the promise that there is more to come. Next time you feel like you are running on empty, remember there is always more supply. God will always give us what we need so that we can pour out into others. You see, God’s love is endless, so God always has enough to pour a little more into us. Since freely we have received, freely we should continue to give.

So take heart: you’re not running on empty; there is more supply on the way so that you will always have enough to continue to pour out some more love.

POURED OUT IN LOVE

“Next Window Please!” so that we can take a break and let someone else pour out while we take a break. Unfortunately, we all know that there is no such sign, and nowhere else to send people, so we have to get up and pour out into someone else again.

The funny thing is, when we are with her, I can sit deeply in the chair and truly relax. I don’t have to be particularly brilliant or together, and I can just be myself. She brings me ice water I don’t even have to ask for, because she knows I don’t hydrate enough. She cooks healthy and delicious food. (What is it about food made for us by people who love us? It is more delicious than all the drive-thru fast food in the universe.) She and I go for walks, and swim laps, and sit in the Florida sun, solving all the problems of our lives while applying sunscreen religiously and reading novels. She truly knows me and listens deeply and validates the “Jesus” in me. Mother has always shown me the love of Christ, the epitome of “pouring out” in love.

It’s axiomatic, I guess, that to “pour out” you have to have something inside to give, and we know that the love of God is poured into our hearts even before we know how to accept that love. We engage in a spiritual life with God so that we can give that which we have received. To love well, it helps to have been loved first.

By that standard, between God and Mama, I should be way closer to “perfection in love.” Nonetheless, it seems to me that that kind of love is hard to “pay back.” It can only be paid forward: “poured out” for others. In the name of Christ, Church, let us pour ourselves out in love.

821 million people in the world don’t get the food they need to live a healthy life

ONE IN NINE people goes to bed hungry each night

JOIN THE BWC FOR A PACKING EVENT in the movement to end hunger by the year 2030. UMConnection is the newspaper of the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church, whose vision is to become fully alive in Christ and make a difference in a diverse and ever-changing world.

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Beacon: A vision comes to reality to help hurting souls

April 2019 Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church

UMConnection

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culinary arts training program, an indoor/outdoor jazz café, and other amenities that position it to be a community hub for culture, entertainment, jobs and other entrepreneurial ventures. The vision, however, is more than 10 years old. In his speech, Daniels traced it back to the early 1990s and the grandmother of Elizabeth Proctor Thomas, a free black woman who owned 11 acres of land on what is now the location of the Beacon Center and Fort Stevens, next door.

She, too, provided housing, taking care of free black people and runaway slaves. Union forces eventually took the land in 1861 at the start of the Civil War, placing Thomas’ belongings under a tree when government leaders realized the city had no northern defenses following the Union defeat at Manassas.

“We are here,” Daniels said, “because of the vision that was cast with her some 200-plus years ago that, at that time, also included worship space for four Methodist churches that still serve in the District of Columbia, each of which finds its origins on this hill, in this place where we are right now.”

That vision was captured, Daniels said, when he was a 34-year old “skinny preacher” standing at a dry cleaner across Georgia Ave. from the church in 1994.

“I was waiting for my shirts to get cleaned,” he said, “but praying that (the church’s) side of the street could one day be cleaned up from homelessness, heroin distribution, drug trafficking, drunkenness, prostitution and the residence of broken souls.”

Daniels extended that vision to his congregation and found people hungry to see hurting lives redeemed and housed affordably.

“I’m just grateful,” said Daniels after the ceremony. “I’m just grateful for the people of Emory, the people of this community, for all of our partners, and for the mayor, who has been so supportive.”

Daniels said that the day was not just the culmination and celebration of what’s been done, but a commencement; a beginning. His vision, in other words, is not yet done.

“The Lord has opened up another door for us,” he said. “We need to replicate this model here in the city, and replicate it in the region, nationally and even internationally. Churches have a collective power to bring about significant change in community and we have to understand that salvation is more than just Sunday mornings. The need is 24/7.”

The ministry of Emory UMC, Bishop Easterling said, showed that it would not fall prey to the “not in my backyard” mentality of many other communities.

“This is a day that stands as a primer on discipleship, leadership and partnership,” said the bishop. “This triad of faith transformed the aspirational into the practical and creates a new kind of church which offers blessings for all.”

The bishop also noted that it is ministry like Emory UMC that must be the hallmark of United Methodism, rather than headlines generated by a General Conference.

“I know...what is being said about The United Methodist Church,” the bishop said. “This is the heart of The United Methodist Church; this is our Wesleyan heritage, and this is our Wesleyan legacy.”

Immigration: What is a faithful response for UMUs?

From page 1

a biblical understanding of immigration using various texts from Genesis 15:1 through a, it’s good to note that there is a lot of movement in the Bible and that God is constantly seen at work through migration to bless people.

It all began in Genesis 1:26-27, when the image of God was placed in each person. After that came what is commonly called “The Fall,” or the original sin of Adam and Eve. That resulted, he said, in “the first deportation” when the couple were thrust out of the Garden of Eden.

After the Genesis 11:1-9 story of the Tower of Babel, Wingeire-Rayo noted the scattering of the people by God (vB) along with the creation of new languages.

“There is beauty in this scattering of languages and cultures, in this diversity,” he said.

Noting the story of Abram and the promise of God to make his descendants as numerous as the stars, Wingeire-Rayo said that Abram had to travel to fulfill the covenant with God.

“He had to leave his homeland of Ur and pick up his wife and all of his flock, and he had to travel to the land that God had promised,” he said. “Here you have this connection of being called by God and migration.”

Bishop Felipe Ruiz-Aguilar of the Northwest Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Mexico brought his first-hand experience of dealing with migrants trying to cross from Mexico to the United States. Speaking through an interpreter, Bishop Ruiz-Aguilar talked of the heartbreak he has witnessed at some of the shelters in Tijuana, Mexico, but that God has called him — and us — to be part of the solution.

“The Bible asks the question,” he said, “will you love the migrant? Will your heart be warmed with the desire to love them?”

Members of the Methodist Church of Mexico are providing food and shelter with help from nearly $135,000 in grants provided by the United Methodist Committee on Relief, according to a December article from United Methodist News Service. A grant for $28,243 will be used to open a fully equipped kitchen that will serve three meals a day to 200 people in Tijuana. Annually, the kitchen will feed 219,000 meals, said Jack Amick, director of Sustainable Development with UMCR.

“Our citizenship is in heaven,” said Bishop Ruiz-Aguilar: “In good Wesleyan tradition, we have to practice social holiness alongside personal piety.”

Some of the legal aspects of immigration were presented by Sarah Selim Milad, Immigration Staff Attorney with Just Neighbors, part of the Justice for Our Neighbors network. She stated the obvious: working in this area right now is challenging.

“The most difficult part, she said, is keeping up with changing policies and regulations and what that means for their clients. All of their clients, she said, are eligible for immigration status.

Selim Milad offered definitions of refugee and asylee, words that are often used interchangeably. A refugee, she said, “is a person who is outside of their country of origin... but not in the United States.” Asylees, she said, are the same as refugees but they are inside the United States.

The US has historically resettled more refugees than all other countries in the world combined, though in recent years, its intake has slowed, the Guardian News recently reported. In 2016, it took in 85,000 refugees. That same year, President Barack Obama committed to resettling 110,000 refugees in the 2017 fiscal year, a 57 percent increase from 2015 numbers.

Later in 2017, however, President Donald Trump slashed the cap to 45,000. In 2019, that cap number is 30,000 and Selim Milad expects only a fraction of that will be resettled.
New campus initiative works with, not for, students

By Melissa Lauber
UMConnection Staff

There was a time when campus ministry consisted of pizza, frisbee, deep questions and good music. But over the years, ministry to college students has grown more nuanced and complex. And today, at the University of Maryland, a new model of campus ministry is being born — campus ministry, with, rather than for, students; ministry that calls forth disciples and leaders in a way that draws on the gifts of the students themselves. Plans are underway for a July 1 start to pilot this innovative model.

“In place of a single, full-time campus ministry, there’s a four-person ‘Ministry Hub’ of students. We’re intentionally focused on young people’s ministries and the most effective way to engage this generation,” said Margaret Brown, a campus ministry leader at Howard University.

The first Ministry Hub model is for four students to be a rock that students can rely on as they navigate college life. The Hub model is the most appropriate approach to ministering to young people in this age, Brown said.

Leaders in the spiritual community need to know how to respond effectively and with compassion when people come in with gambling problems, said Brown. Haskins and the MCGP know, however, that fewer than 10 percent of individuals with gambling disorders ever seek help. To address this, a program was developed to educate people on the frontline of the effects of problem gambling: clergy and lay ministers.

“Leaders in the spiritual community need to know how to respond effectively and with compassion” when people come in with gambling problems, Haskins said, so that can offer support, links to treatment, and recovery options.

“Clergy and others are often brought in whenever problems exist,” Haskins said. “It’s important for faith leaders and lay leaders to be aware of problem gambling so they can offer support, links to treatment, and recovery options.”

Clergy can respond to problem gambling

By Erik Alsgaard
UMConnection Staff

Within the bounds of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, there are five casinos: four in Maryland and one in West Virginia (Charles Town). Casinos are not legal in Bermuda, but there’s an effort to change that soon.

Those casinos are in addition to the well-known horse tracks, numerous bingo halls, and thousands of locations where lottery tickets are bought and sold. As if that weren’t enough, a recent Supreme Court decision legalizing sports betting beyond Las Vegas means that Washington, D.C., will soon be home to new opportunities to place legal sports bets, some from the comfort of your own seat at a Wizards or Capitals game.

“We’re venturing into new territory with sports gaming,” said D.C. Council member Jack Evans last December. He wrote the bill, saying that lottery tickets are bought and sold legally in Bermuda, but there’s an “alluring notion of sports betting” to attract gamblers.

The IGCCB Clergy/Lay Ministers Certification is designed to provide basic knowledge about gambling addiction and treatment and recovery resources, according to the website, “to enhance the clergy person’s skills at recognizing compulsive gambling, and to provide information for the gambler’s family on dealing with their loved one’s addiction.”

The MCGP, an affiliate of the National Council on Problem Gambling, takes a neutral stance on the issue of gambling. Haskins said their advocacy and action is educating the public and lawmakers, providing support and ensuring that treatment dollars are available for those who need help.

West Virginia has an affiliate group, but Washington, D.C., does not, Haskins said.

To contact Dr. Deborah G. Haskins, email her at haskinds@trinitydc.edu

For resources and support materials from the Maryland Council on Problem Gambling: www.baltimorergambler.org

For resources and support materials from the National Council on Problem Gambling: www.ncpgambling.org

For resources and support materials from the West Virginia Council on Problem Gambling: www.wvcpg.org

For more information on the Maryland Council on Problem Gambling, visit the website, “to enhance the clergy person’s skills at recognizing compulsive gambling, and to provide information for the gambler’s family on dealing with their loved one’s addiction.”

For more information on the National Council on Problem Gambling, visit the website, “to enhance the clergy person’s skills at recognizing compulsive gambling, and to provide information for the gambler’s family on dealing with their loved one’s addiction.”

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Six clergy and six lay delegates to the 2020 General Conference will be elected at the 2019 Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference Session in May. In addition, six lay and six clergy delegates, plus alternates, will be elected to the 2020 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference.

The 2020 General Conference will be held May 5-15 in Minneapolis, Minn. The 2020 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference will be held July 13-17 in Baltimore.

General Conference is the church’s highest legislative body and the only group that can officially “speak” for The United Methodist Church. It’s main duty is to enact legislation “over all matters distinctively connectional” (2016 Book of Discipline, ¶16). Jurisdictional Conferences are where bishops are elected and boundaries of Annual Conferences are set, among other duties.

During the electronic balloting at Annual Conference, clergy vote only for clergy and laity vote only for laity. Per the 2016 United Methodist Book of Discipline (¶35), all clergy and full connection are eligible to be elected as delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conference. Lay candidates must be members of the Annual Conference, professing members of The United Methodist Church for at least two years preceding election, and have been active participants in the church for at least four years preceding election. Lay candidates must submit their nomination before April 1 to be considered for election; no nominations will be accepted from the floor of the Annual Conference Session.

Each nominee was asked to submit a short statement (no more than 150 words) about themselves and a photograph. Campaigning is otherwise prohibited. The nominees are listed in alphabetical order.

Please bring this insert with you to Annual Conference.
By God’s grace, I am a part of a dynamic revolutionary people called Methodists. We vary in ability, personhood, theology, hermeneutic, pedagogy, and body. We are called to love God and all people — to pursue justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God. We are imperfect yet going on to perfection. Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. And, in so doing, share the power and relevance of the Gospel. I have served our Church as a lay person, ordained Elder, pastor, district leader, mediator, community organizer, youth advocate, representative on several conference boards and agencies, and as the Executive Minister of Justice and Service. I am a wife, a mother, and a Baltimore native who has worked with people and organizations locally, globally and connectionally to bring about positive change. As your delegate, I will do the same.

Rev. Joseph Wayne Daniels, Jr.
Emory UMC, Washington, D.C.

Conference Agencies:
Chairperson, Zimbabwe Partnership; chair, Communities of Shalom

Other Organizations:
Co-chair, Washington Interfaith Network

I seek to represent the Baltimore-Washington Conference as a delegate at General Conference because as a bridge builder and barrier breaker, I believe my skills, experience, and love for people and the church can benefit our denomination in these uncertain times. Since 2004, I have been an active delegate to General Conference. I know the power dynamics and understand the politics of General Conference yet am always looking for the leading of the Holy Spirit guiding us to Truth. We need to find higher ground. We need to stop fighting each other and seek to find the spaces where God is leading our Church. As a 27-year pastor and former denominational staff person who has worked with diverse populations all my life, I know how to cross lines of difference and achieve unity in the midst of diversity. I would be honored and humbled to serve our church in 2020.

Rev. David J. Deans
Oakdale Emory UMC, Olney
Conference Agencies:
BWC Committee on Parish and Community Development; Baltimore Metro District Committee on Disaster Relief during Tropical Storm Isai; Baltimore Metro District Committee on Ordained Ministry

Other Organizations:
Executive Director of the Baltimore-Washington Conference Wesley Covenant Association

As a pastor in the BWC/UMC for 16 years, I have had the privilege to pastor both a small and a large church. I have also had the chance to plant a church in a fast-growing multicultural suburb and to do extensive ministry with the homeless in an urban setting. I’m currently developing a new men’s ministry, am a leader with Celebrate Recovery, and am leading a team of young adults through the Wesley Innovation Hub program. Through these distinct experiences, and the unique training I’ve received, I’ve learned a lot about disciple-making, launching new faith communities, reaching young adults and marginalized people, and church development across varied contexts. I believe I can be an asset at General Conference in helping us mark out a faithful course for the future that sees us making disciples who make disciples, birthing new innovative churches, and spreading scriptural holiness across the land.

Rev. C. Anthony Hunt
Epworth Chapel UMC, Baltimore
2010 – Jurisdictional Conference Alternate Delegate; 2008 – General and Jurisdictional Conference Delegate

Conference Agencies:
Board of Ordained Ministry (2000-2008, 2012-present); BWC Board Chair since 2008; Commission on Finance and Administration (2008-2012)

General Agencies:
Member of General Commission on Religion and Race (2008-2012), co-chair of the Strategic Planning Taskforce; member of the Inter-Ethnic Strategy Development Group (1998-2004); member of the Northeastern Jurisdictional Committee on Ministry (2016-present)

My vision continues to be for an inclusive church, which embraces the entirety of our Wesley heritage. As a fifth generation Methodist, I have appreciated and benefited from the diversity within the church. I’ve seen the church most evident in community where love and justice are most clearly operating. Through my ordination, I have been afforded the opportunity to serve in various capacities — as pastor in four appointments (urban, suburban and rural), as a denominational executive at the Northeastern Jurisdictional Multi-ethnic Ministry Center, as a military chaplain (U.S. Army), as a seminary teacher (Wesley and United Seminaries), as a district superintendent of two district ministries in the greater Baltimore area, and as chair of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. I believe that this breadth of experience would benefit the Conference delegation and General Conference as I could take a broad view of the important matters facing the Church.

Rev. Travis D. Knoll
Hunt Memorial UMC, Riderwood
Conference Agencies:
Chair, Board of Discipleship; Chair, District Committee on Ordained Ministry; member Board of Evangelism; member, Rules Committee

Other Organization:
Volunteer Chaplain, GBMC

I believe that diversity of not only gender, sex, ethnic and national origin, and orientation, but also diversity of thought matter. As a thoughtful and listening traditionalist Christian, I believe that I would faithfully represent that perspective of this significant minority portion of our church here at the BWC to the General or Jurisdictional Conference in ways that others elected may not.
Rev. Conrad O. Link
Superintendent, Cumberland-Hagerstown District
2012 General Conference delegate; 2008 first alternate to General Conference; 2009 Special Session General Conference delegate
Conference Agencies: Chair, Board of Ordained Ministry 2004-2008; Secretary, Board of Ordained Ministry 2000-2004; Member of the Board 1986-1996; Member BWC Board of Trustees 2008-2010; Cabinet Rep. to Board of Trustees 2012-2019; Board of Pensions 2012-2018
Other Organizations: Numerous Volunteer in Mission trips; Appalachia Service Projects; Summer Camp at Musikkul; Board member of the American Red Cross of Frederick County (10 years); President-VP-Secretary of the Religious Coalition for Emergency Human Needs; charter member of the Carroll Creek Rotary Club (member for 17 years)

The work to transform the UMC into a functioning, timely and effective mission vehicle for the proclamation of the Gospel in the 21st century is not yet complete. I would like to be part of the process that helps make the UMC into the church God intends it to be as “fully catholic, fully evangelical and fully reformed,” so that we can truly live into the invitation of being a place for all of God’s people with Open Hearts, Open Minds and Open Doors. While I appreciate our heritage, a fundamental element of that heritage was (and is) to meet people where they were, in the fields of our core city-bound cities, so that the Gospel could be heard, embraced, and accepted in context. To achieve a vibrant future, certain elements of our current structure and polity need to be made flexible and contemporary.

Rev. James Martin Miller
Grace UMC, Gaithersburg
Conference Agencies: Current Chair, Episcopal Committee; Board of Ordained Ministry; Moving Committee; District Committee on Ordained Ministry
It is my hope and prayer that by serving as an elected delegate of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, I can help the Church move beyond the most challenging times. I am willing to do the work necessary to be informed as possible as a delegate. I will be open-minded in considering and prayerfully discerning legislation. As a delegate, I would bring to the table over 30 years of pastoral ministry. Much of my experience has been in finding ways for congregations to work together in spiritual growth and in outreach to those in need. I believe there is power and guidance to be found in the work of Holy Conferencing. I humbly state that if elected as a delegate, I will contribute in a positive way to the work of the 2020 General Conference.

Rev. Ianther Mills
Asbury UMC, Washington, D.C.
Conference Agencies: Episcopalian Ordination (2000-2016); vice chair, Board of Ordained Ministry (2013-2016); member, Board of Ordained Ministry (2003-2005); Discipleship Council (2008-2013); Unified Funding Task Force (2008-2013); Instructor at Zimbabwe Bible College
General Church Agencies: Interim President, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (2001-2016); vice president, GBHEM (2011-2013); member, GBHEM (2008-2012); The World Methodist Council (2016 to present); GCFA Apportionment Task Force (2017-2018); Africa University Governance Committee (2015-2016)

Other Organizations: Leadership Greater Washington; Washington Interfaith Networks; Downtown Council of Congregations; Howard University Faith Partners
The United Methodist Church is at a critical place in its identity and direction as we are challenged with making disciples for the transformation of the world and the complex work of diversity and inclusion. As a former district superintendent, former GBHEM director, form delegate to General and Jurisdictional conferences, and one who has pastored churches of various sizes and contexts, including cross-racial, I have honed gifts of discernment, leadership, conflict transformation, and working with diverse people in the U.S. and globally. I bring those unique gifts to participating in shaping our witness to the world for 2020 and beyond. Further, I am deeply committed to living out our Wesleyan understanding of grace and the biblical values of the Grant Commandment, Great Commission and Great Mandate. I offer myself because I feel called to serve in this season. I would be honored to represent the Baltimore-Washington Conference as a delegate.

Rev. Jennifer Moore
Zion UMC, Lexington Park
Conference Committees: Annapolis and Washington East District Committees on Ordained Ministry; Washington East registrar for full membership; Commissioned Elder in the Washington East District; School of Ordained Ministry Instructor; Conference Board of Pension; currently on the Rules Committee; past BWC Hunger Coordinator; Conference Sessions Committee
Ordained a Deacon in 1998 and Elder in 2002, I have over 24 years pastoral experience as United Methodist clergy and have completed Engaged Youth Training at Arnet and Aumund Community College. My diverse training in the church, community and military has shaped me into a well-rounded pastor who is able to preach, teach, lead, plan, budget, inspire, delegate and work in any environment bearing good, productive fruit. I have a love for God and all humanity. I offer my gifts and graces to our Conference and as an ambassador of Jesus Christ during a pivotal time that requires grace, compassion and cooperation without compromise. If elected as a delegate to General Conference 2020, I will seek justice for all while honoring my own theological convictions. I am fair, believe in justice for all, support the one church model and would seek change within the confines of the Book of Discipline.

Rev. Laura Norvell
Ferndale UMC, Ferndale
Conference Agencies: BWC, Campus Ministry Task Force (2016); The Wesley @ UMID Board of Directors (2014-Present); Chair of The Wesley (2017-present); United to Love participant
I am a cradle Methodist whose DNA is Wesleyan and Methodist. I served as a senior administrator at Wesley for more than 10 years during a season of seismic shifts. I have seen the way God calls people, and I have been a part of the work that has to be done to shape the future of a denomination with and for young leaders. I have sat in churches we are called to make disciples and disciple others across major differences in formation. I have studied the future of global leadership, pursuing my D.Min. at Wesley House in Cambridge. My call is to bridge-building and specifically to bridge generations of difference as the tradition, structure and shifting global nature of our church is passed from builders to builders in a manner that is open and beyond. I would be honored to serve as delegate in this season.

Rev. Bryant M. Oskey
Chaplain, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.
Conference Agencies: Academic Committee; Worship Committee; Campus Ministry Task Force; Vice-President CFA
The United Methodist Church has come to a critical moment as an institution. This is a time when we have to thoughtfully consider our theology, our history, and our structure. With my educational background and my experiences, I think I have gifts to share in this moment for the good of the church. My particular work in intercultural ministry and ecumenical dialogue would be informative in my representation of our conference and the work of a delegate. My ministry has been informed by my understanding and expression of the covenant I made at my ordination to the permanent diaconate, and the congregations of the Conference. I offer myself as a delegate as an expression of that commitment. We have to chart a new path forward as a church to share the light of the Gospel in the face of the pressing darkness of this world.
The Christmas Conference ended “in great peace and unanimity.” Another General Conference was held in 1792 and every four years after.

In 1767, near Frederick, Md., Martin Boehm and Philip William Schlieckert, both from the German Brethren Church, organized the United Brethren Church. In 1968, this body united with the Methodist Episcopal Church, set a liturgy and sacraments, elected a dozen Elders, most of whom were young men, and consecrated Francis Asbury as a deacon, elder and bishop. During these three days, they also created the Book of Discipline to govern the body.

The first Discipline had 81 questions and answers and declared American Methodists would continue John Wesley’s mission to spread scriptural holiness throughout the land.

On a Friday morning, Dec. 24, 1784, about 60 of Methodism’s preachers gathered in Baltimore to start a church. During the next 10 days, at this first General Conference, they named the new organization the Methodist Episcopal Church, set a liturgy and sacraments, elected a dozen Elders, most of whom were young men, and consecrated Francis Asbury as a deacon, elder and bishop. During these three days, they also created the Book of Discipline to govern the body.

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Rev. Eliezer Valentín Castañón
Trinity UMC, Frederick
Conference Agencies: Board of Ordained Ministry, District Committee on Ordained Ministry (Central Maryland and Frederick district); Committee on Church and Society; Committee on Hispanic/Latino Ministry (chair 2008-2017); Advocacy and Action Ministry; New York Annual Conference to Ministers Program; conflict resolution team
General Church Agencies: From 1994-2005, staff at the General Board of Church and Society; from 2005-2014, Associate General Secretary at the General Commission of Religion and Race
Other Organizations: The National Council of Churches of Christ, NEJ Global Structure Task Force; chair of the Hispanic Staff Forum of the UMC; NACHT Board of Directors Under the New Community; founding member and vice-president of the “Sociedad Wesleyana”, MARCHA, the UMC National Hispanic caucus
I believe that serving as delegate to the GC is an honor of great responsibility. As a man of faith who has personally experienced living in the margins of society because of both my ethnic origin and socio-economic background, I believe that I can bring a different perspective to the conversation about who we are, and where we are going as God’s people. I have spent years working to bring harmony and connectivity everywhere I serve. Notwithstanding our present challenges, I believe that the unity of the Church is central to our identity as a people. God has called us to be a Kingdom that is not based on sameness but in unity for the proclamation of the Good News that Jesus proclaimed. I believe that as UM’s history of tensions and failures toward diversity, I hope to bring a different perspective to the conversation of these issues among individuals, churches, annual conferences, and across our denomination.

Rev. Leo Yates
As a Deacon, serve as a licensed therapist and a behavioral health specialist with the Division of Rehabilitation Services and Maghogy UMC of the Deaf
Conference Agencies: Commission on Disability Concerns (2013-2017); Seeds of Security committee (2017-present); Arrangements Committee for Annual Conference (2014-present)
General Church Agencies: Global Ministries’ Deaf and Hard of Hearing Ministries Committee (2006-present); Consultant on Deaf Ministry for Global Ministries (2016-present)
Other Organizations: Liaison member with United Methodist Congress of the Deaf, the national Disability Ministries Committee; BWARM; United Methodist Association of Ministers with Disabilities caucus; appointed by Maryland Governor Hogan to the Board of Trustees for the Maryland School for the Deaf
In my work as a deacon, I have compassion and frequently advocate for persons who are marginalized or underserved. For instance: persons with disabilities (disabling abilities), Deaf and hard of hearing persons, those who are blind and visually impaired, those with mobility issues, older adults, persons with mental health or substance use disorders, and others. These persons are often forgotten or neglected in many of our churches. If we do not have a disability yet, then we are temporarily able, as we will likely develop one as we age. As a current for me, I see my gifts/needs and those in the church. This virtual work needs a voice/vote at both General Conference and at the NEJ Conference. We need delegates committed to these. I hope to further advocate by raising awareness, and prayerfully, encourage sensitivity to these issues among individuals, churches, annual conferences, and across our denomination.

Rev. Timothy B. Warner
Mill Creek Parish UMC
Conference Agencies: Associate Council for Director for Community and Economic Development (1998-2005); frequent workshop leader for UMW and Leadership Days; currently serve on Camping and Retreat Ministries Vision Team; co-founder Greater Gaithersburg Youth Ministry
Other Organizations: Appalachian Service Project; Group Ministries Workcamp
Our church needs leaders who are relationally connected with others to discern a trajectory for the church that makes it a relevant community, leaves its members whole as people and disciples of Christ, and is grounded in a theology that is not dominated by the politics of power.

Michelle R. Baker
Oakdale Emory UMC, Olney
Local Church Committees: Worship, Finance Chair
I have been involved at the leadership level of the local church since 1999, as I am married to an ordained UMC pastor. I love our Wesleyan traditions and desire to help all of us stay true to our roots as we share the Gospel in new and exciting ways. I desire for our churches to be vibrant and alive as we engage all people in our varying cultures. As the leadership of our denomination meets, I want to have an impact on setting direction, culture and a paradigm that is inclusive, creating a church that is loving and inviting people and churches that we can. I want to help The United Methodist Church live out the Great Commission in a way that invites all to meet our Amazing God!

Megan Blizzard
Westminster UMC, Westminster
Local Church Committees: Lay leader; Certified Lay Speaker; chair of Staff-Pastor Relations and Nominations committee; member of Board of Trustees and Finance Committee; worship design committee; worship leader; and organized Bible studies and other small groups
Conference Committees: Conference Young Adult Council for three years, currently serving as chair. Westminster’s Youth Board; lay member to Annual Conference for eight years
Other Organizations: B-WARM steering committee; through my job, I work with agencies including Human Services Project and Youth Services Bureau to connect youth with housing, jobs, training, employment and other services
As I watched the livestreams of General Conference 2019, I struck me how few young adults I saw there. In fact, only 7 percent of the delegates were 35. Young people are vastly under-represented in our church, and as a young adult candidate for ministry, I seek to change that. I want to give us more of a voice and make our presence known. I was disheartened by the continuous voices I watched at General Conference and how little room was left for the movement of the Holy Spirit. As I prayed for our church I felt called to participate in General Conference because I feel our church needs people who respect and love one another as children of God, understand our church polity, bring diverse voices to the table, represent a younger generation of our church leadership, and, most importantly make room for God to guide us forward.

Reva Marie Wilson
Calvary UMC, Frederick
Conference Agencies: BWC Board of Church and Society (2012-2018); chair of Church and Society (2016-2018); Frederick District Hispanic Latino Advisory Board (2017); NEW Immigration Task Force (2017-present); BWC’s Climate Justice Team (2018-present); NEJ Call to Action Racial Justice (2017-present)
General Agencies: Employed by the General Board of Church and Society (2011-2013)
Other Organizations: Board of Second Street and Hope, which serves Frederick’s poor (2017-present); WV/MD CREDO Community; BWARM
I find great value in the diversity of the connectional church. I appreciate the variety of viewpoints that we each approach our faith with due to the varied contexts we come from. However, we also all share certain elements of our faith and values in common. The work of the General Conference is to find the best combination of what works in the context of the global church while still valuing the essence of United Methodism and who we are as a people—called Methodists. I believe that I have been called and have gifts which qualify me to be a part of the team which engages in this important work in 2020 with our siblings from around the globe.

Daniel Colbert
Silver Spring UMC, Silver Spring
Local Church Committees: 47th Exploratory Committee on church properties (2018-present); Foundry Parish Council Committee (2014-2015); founding member and chair of ad hoc lay committee on inclusion/welcoming (2011-2012); at the University of Virginia served on the Wesley Foundation mission trip planning committee (2007); at First UMC in Pensacola, Fla., Youth Group president (2004-2005)
As a young adult, I care deeply about the future of the UMC — a future I must embody the diversity and radical inclusivity of the kin-dom of God. I’ve been a member of the UMC for essentially my entire life, not only in the BWC but also in the Alabama-West Florida and North Georgia conferences. I want to raise my children in the same nurturing church environment I experienced. Young people who feel passionately that our church must become truly inclusive should be represented at General Conference. I feel called to be their voice. My profession as an attorney gives me an understanding of legislation that will help me be an effective delegate. I also believe my familiarity with diverse conferences will enable me to work with the other delegates to build a stronger future for all members of our denomination.

Tracy Collins
Foundry UMC, Washington, D.C.
Church Committees: Downtown UMC Connectional Table (2016-2017); Parish Ministries (2015-present); Personnel Committee (2016-present); Foundry Church Management Team (2014-present)
Other Organizations: Foundry Social Justice Ministry teams including Sandwich 1000; Saturday Morning Cooking Ministry, Concert for Life Planning Committee; LGBTQ Inclusion Advocacy Ministry Team, Board of Directors, The Center for Urban Change, Bethesda, MD.
The Baltimore-Washington Conference is a paragon of diversity and inclusion in The United Methodist Church, with few peers across our Connection. As a delegate from this venerable font of Wesleyan teaching in America, I feel called by the Creator of us all to the work of building bridges, mending the hurts, atoning for all oppression, seeking justice, and creating space for all Easter people to live into God’s loving and liberating peace! As a proud gay man of color, my life involves a continuing story of reflection, strategic involvement, faithful advocacy, and dedication of my prayers, presence, gifts and service to help make the laws and operational practices exercised on our jobs, in our communities, and in our churches, fair and just for everyone, regardless of race, gender, family, sexuality, and also the other factors that separate us from each other and from the love of God.

Amelia Duroska
North Bethesda UMC, Bethesda
Church Committees: Chair, Church Council (2016-2018); Board of Trustees, two terms, Sunday School teacher; alms deacon; participate in mission-related work
Other Organizations: MSI Recreation League Girls Soccer Coach for five seasons
I believe that I have a strong and achievable vision for our United Methodist Church: a vision that will attract new, committed members to our Faith, including attracting younger members and followers of Jesus Christ. All moral, social, and economic problems in our society can be addressed through our Wesleyan heritage and a living reality of our social justice principles. We must be bold in proclaiming our social justice truths, stated in language and structure that resonates in the minds and hearts of women, men, and young people today.
People are searching for joy, hope, and connection in our times: most self-help books borrow from Christian principles and thought. Influxing the love and hope of Jesus Christ could greatly reduce self-harms and suicide that are tragically on the rise.
Sarah Ford
Sharp Street Memorial UMC, Baltimore
Local Church Committees: Chair of Finance and Staff-Pastoral Relations committees; member of Board of Trustees
Conference Committees: Chair of Nominations Committee
Other Organizations: I serve with the Baltimore Metropolitan District Lay Servant team that represents our worship service at the Keystone Multi Care Facility. I teach with an ecclesiastical Bible study group in my neighborhood to persons under court order for substance abuse.

After much prayer, I feel God is calling me to continue what was started in 2016 and in St. Louis. I was a jurisdictional delegate and observed the hurt that transpired. I would like to be an agency for healing as well as bringing all of God’s United Methodist children together in the church. I will work diligently to ensure that I represent to the best of my ability.

John C. Hines Jr.
Mt. Zion UMC, Lothian
Church Committees: Church Council Chairperson; Lay Leader; Lay Member to Annual Conference
Other Organizations: As a life-long Methodist, I am sorry to see our Church suffering through these pangs of change. However, after 40 years of Holy Conferencing, our discussions over scriptural interpretation have not resolved our differences. Both Progressives and Traditionalists hold onto differing core, fundamental beliefs that are not compromisable and, thus, irreconcilable. It is my heartfelt desire to see the pain, anguish, and constant struggles come to an end. Therefore, I will support those actions of General/Jurisdictional Conference that will create new and separate expressions of Methodism, providing better opportunities for all of my brothers and sisters in Christ to worship and serve as they feel lead by our Heavenly Father. “For the Lord gives wisdom, from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.” Proverbs 2:6

Chet Jechura
Foundry UMC, Washington, D.C.
Other Organizations: Bread for the World – Communications Department
In 15 hours, over 15,000 young people, including myself, signed onto a statement of unity that was presented to the 2016 General Conference. The Holy Spirit inspired me to sign the statement and share it with my friends. It is the same Spirit that has now compelled me to consider as a delegate to the 2020 General Conference. I believe that when we as a church rise up to protect and stand for the love of God that knows no limits, mighty things can happen that we never dreamt were possible. Only 7 percent of the seated delegates to the 2019 General Conference were young people under the age of 35. Young people have a lot of ideas about the future of the church. Please prayerfully elect young people to represent the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference at the 2020 General Conference.

Heather H. Kraus
Severn Park UMC, Severna Park
Church Committees: Staff-Pastoral Relations Committee (2000-2002), chair of Church Council (2019-2021), member Church Council, Finance and Worship committees, Lay Member to Annual Conference (2002-2014, 2016-2018)
Conference Agencies: Annapolis District Superintendentcy (2017-present)
Other Organizations: I served as a mentor to women at Ordinance Road Detention Center through the Good News Prison Ministries program in 2010 through 2013. Led Disciples Bible Study classes and taught children’s Sunday School.

The United Methodist Church has loved me, nurtured me and made me a better person by guiding me in an ever-evolving relationship with God and God’s children. I treasure the UM values, which encourage reliance on Scripture along with intellect, tradition and experience to meet God, accept the grace of God and grow in faith. I pray that I can use my voice to protect and strengthen our church as a place where ALL of God’s children are welcome, just as they are, and where we can lovingly learn from one another, even when we disagree on interpretation of Scripture. I pray that I can contribute to our Church’s eventual full inclusion of all humans, in all the beautiful ways God has made them.

Christie Latona
Emory UMC, Washington, D.C.
Alternate delegate in 2016 and 2019
Church Committees: Church Council Chair, Lay Member to Annual Conference, Communications Chair, Experience Chair and small group leader; as youth sang in the choir and served as secretary and VP for UMYF
Conference Agencies: Director of Congregational Ministries; Grow Congregations Team
General Church Agencies: Executive Committee of Path 1’s Board (2008-2016)
Other Organizations: Northeastern Jurisdictional Vision Table (2016-present)
I am seeking to represent the BWC as a lay delegate because people asked me to do so and we are at a critical juncture in the life of the UMC. Over the past 6 years of serving with the BWC, I have grown to understand and love the breadth, diversity, strengths and struggles of leaders, churches and faith communities in each region. I bring with me a passion for the Gospel, compassion for all God’s people and 28 years of leadership and organizational development experience (including 15 years serving as a consultant for various Annual Conferences and General Church agencies). These relationships and insights about the gifts and complexity of our connectional system allow me to see the impact and implications of legislation on leaders and congregations. I believe in the Christ-centered mission, values and theology of grace of The United Methodist Church and will work to honor these as part of the BWC delegation.

Melissa Lauber
National UMC, Washington, D.C.
2012 General Conference Delegate; 2016 and 2017 General Conference Alternate
Conference Agencies: As the Conference Director of Communications, I serve on the Communication on Commission on Ministries, Sonship Council, Council on Finance and Administration, Sessions and Arrangements committees, Connectional Table and the Conference Executive Team
General Church Agencies: General Commission on Communications – 2 quadrennia; quadrenium as a member of the executive board
The United Methodist Church stands at a threshold. I would like to offer my 25 years of experience with the Baltimore-Washington Conference to help craft the identity of the church as it continues to unfold. As the Conference Director of Communications, I have the privilege of being a voice for the thousands of United Methodists both here and abroad. From these various roles, I have learned that the church is at its best when it rejects the tyranny of the “or” and embraces the possibilities of the “and.” We are a people of social action and vital piety. I would like to serve as a delegate to ensure that this is the story United Methodists will continue to tell about us. As the church stands on this edge of possibility, I offer my hope, wisdom and profound belief in grace as we move forward, grounded in the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

Sharon Milton
Emory Fellowship UMC, Washington, D.C.
Church Committees: Youth Director, Evangelism and Outreach Ministry, Worship Team, Returning Citizen Ministry, Christian Education, Mission team, Church Council, four times Lay Member to Annual Conference
Other Organizations: Several VIM trips, volunteered at various prisons, shelters and community center; Anti-Gun Violence task force of Greater Washington District, March for Our Life Rally
After prayer and discernment, I am seeking to represent the BWC because I believe I will be a great asset to the team and help make decisions in the best interest of all. I would like to be a united voice for my conference and learn more about The United Methodist Church in the process. I am able to commit, stay focused and complete the task. In a time when our denomination seems separated, I believe I can be a new voice at the table uniting us as one. I am able to have holy conferencing, listening and voicing my opinion and, if there is a disagreement, it will be done in love. I do believe God has equipped and is calling me to work with the team for the task and the great work to be done.

Charles E. Moore, Jr.
Community UMC, Crofton
2012 and 2016 General Conference Delegate
Church Committees: VIM Team Leader to Zimbabwe since 2010; Currently vice chair of Finance Committee; Previous Chair of Ad Council, Finance and Stewardship committees
Conference Agencies: Currently serving on Council of Finance and Administration (2012-present) and the CFA Budget Committee, and the Episcopal Conference Committee; previously served on several task forces relating to apportionments and the covenant relationship with The Board of Child Care, the Hope Fund Committee, the Imagine No Malaria Planning Committee, and the Love Offering Committee for Bishop Matthew’s retirement
General Church Agencies: Currently serving on the Board of Directors of Africa University (Chair of Finance Committee, and former President for 5 years) and the GCPA Board, and the GBHEM Investment Committee; previously served two terms on the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCPA) where I chaired the General Agency and Episcopal Matters Committee
Other Organizations: The Board of Trustees of McDaniell College (formerly Western Maryland College) since 1993
My passion for the United Methodist “ Connection” through “mission,” higher education and financial management has been evidenced by my extensive involvement in our church at all levels. Through these various roles, I have developed a deep understanding and appreciation for how our denomination funds its various ministries (including global mission). I am consistent in my focus on enabling our denomination to provide the leadership and financial resources for the local church to fulfill its mission to serve God, serve ourselves and serve others. I feel God has equipped me with these roles with compassion, integrity and accountability. I have been honored and humbled to serve as a Lay Delegate for the 2012 GC, the 2016 GC, and chair the Global Special Session. I welcome the opportunity to serve again in this important capacity.
**LUTEBULA DANNY PEMBAMOTO**  
Hiss UMC, Parkville  
Church Committees:  
Trutcher, Church Council, SPRC, Worship, Finance, Vacation Bible  
School and VIM team leader  

Over the years, I have attended multiple training sessions and I learned much about my church. I participated at different occasions on very important issues and decisions which have impacted my church, such as church leader elections and supporting new clergy and Conference staff. I dedicated the whole body of Christ to dedicate my time to my church: love for the Lord, and to continue to dedicate my time to serve the needs in my community in so many ways. Today, I express my interest in becoming a lay voting member for the next 2020 General Conference because I want to expand my ability to serve my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ at the local, regional, and local levels in the years ahead, on behalf of the BWC, where important decisions are made and actions are taken to change the course of the United Methodist Church. I would like to be part of this Body of Christ that will shape and define the future of our church.

**PHILIP H. POTTER**  
National UMC/Metropolitan Memorial UMC  
Church Committees:  
Chairman, Church Council, Finance Committee; Psaing/Worship Committee; Merge Task Force/Trustees; Chair, Foundation Board of Trustees  

Other Organizations:  
President of Palisades Village, a Washington non-profit that organizes volunteers and funds efforts to assist seniors to remain in their homes and live safely and maintain their social connections in their neighborhoods. The Special Session left our denomination polarized with dueling sets of beliefs and now risks schism. We cannot remain where we are. We must try to heal the pain and hurt caused for many of our members and not repeat it in 2020. During my career over 40 years as an attorney in Washington, I worked primarily on issues so contentious that they appeared to have no solution through the government process. Resolution was often found by acting as an honest broker, listening and discerning the core beliefs and goals of each of the stakeholders and opponents, then developing an approach with them that respected those beliefs. Methodists are charged to live like Jesus, and I believe that is our path forward on this. I believe we also need a financially viable resolution. I am retired and have ample time to be an informed and active delegate.

**MITTLE THEOBOLD QUINN**  
Dumbarton UMC, Georgetown  
2016 NEJ Alternate  
Church Committees:  
Currently co-chair of Worship Committee and de facto member of the Church Council; Past offices include chair of: Membership, Nominating, Education, Fellowship, Church Council, Staff Parish, and lay member to Annual Conference  

Other Organizations:  
Chair (formerly) and current member of BWC Commission on Communications; past – served on COSROW  

General Church Agencies:  
At large member of the Northeast Jurisdictional Committee on Mission (NEJM BOOM)  

Other Organizations:  
Member of Methodist Federation for Social Action, Past chair of Baltimore Washington Area Reconciling United Methodists (BWARM) and current Affirmation/Outreach coordinator of the United Methodist Church. As an ordained Methodist priest, I am a ‘cradle’ Methodist – and old enough to remember when we became The United Methodist Church. I have been a member to two different Annual Conferences (Upper New York and BWC) and am both proud and amazed by the work that our church does spreading the good news and seeking to create the kingdom of God on earth. I want to be part of our moving forward as the diverse and spirit-filled organization that we have been for the past 200 years. Our denomination is at a critical juncture in its history and there is much work needed to continue our biblical charge to go and make disciples for Jesus Christ. I believe that work requires that ALL of God’s children be welcome at the Table of Grace – and that NO ONE is “incompatible” at God’s Table.

**JENNIFER SHEPHEARD**  
Otterbein UMC, Hagerstown  
Church Committees:  
Church Council, Communications intern (summer 2018) Praise band, teach middle and high school Sunday School  

General Church Agencies:  
General Board of Global Ministries as a Global Justice Volunteer in Nicaragua in 2016 and Zambia in 2018  

Other Organizations:  
Attended the Young People’s Conference in 2018 through the Global Mission Fellow Program  

The United Methodist Church, like the current world, has become polarized, especially over many issues relating to people’s core beliefs. Although I have my own set of beliefs, my experiences both in the rural areas of the BWM and abroad allow me to have a unique perspective that allows for finding common ground and cooperatively working to find solutions that will benefit all people involved in The United Methodist Church. As a passionate young adult, I hope to not only represent the youth and young adults at General Conference but to be able to put the beliefs of the Cumberland-Hagerstown District and the Baltimore-Washington Conference into the context of the global United Methodist church.

**CHRIS SCHLIECKET**  
Calvary UMC, Waldorf  

Church Committees:  
I do not currently serve on any local church committees, but as a clergy spouse I am actively involved in a variety of aspects of the local church  

Conference Agencies:  
I am the Baltimore-Washington Conference’s Director of Retreat & Camping Ministries and the Director of The West River Center. I am a member of the BWC Call to Action Steering Committee  

Other Organizations:  
I have served as a local church youth leader, confirmation mentor, and on contemporary worship teams doing technology. I am Red Cross trainer and teaching lifeguarding and First Aid/CPR courses. I began Mission Mandokan which has worked with numerous service organizations and raised more than $22,000.  

As director of BWC Retreat & Camping Ministries and clergy spouse, I offer a unique perspective on the ministry of the church because I know the challenges of both leading a ministry and sitting in the pew. This gives me a depth of knowledge to help the UMC seize the opportunities before it and overcome obstacles which prevent us from fully living out God’s call. I was honored to serve as a delegate and alternate in 2012, 2016 and 2019. As father of two young daughters, I want to ensure the UMC is thriving and able to help all people develop their relationship with Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. It is important to me that all God’s children are valued and included as we seek to genuinely live in Christian community. It would be an honor to continue to serve the BWC as a delegate.

**KENNETH OW**  
North Bethesda UMC, Bethesda  
2016 General Conference Delegate  

Church Committees:  
Church Council, chair, SPRC chair, Trustees chair, Worship Committee chair  

Conference Agencies:  
Ex Office Member, Council on Finance and Administration; CFA Budget Committee. Ex Office Member, NEJ CFA; previously: Board of Global Ministries  

General Church Agencies:  
Board Member, General Council on Finance and Administration; Member, GCFA Committee on Legal Responsibilities and Corporate Governance  

Other Organizations:  

Our General Conference work from this quadrennium is far from finished, and much harm has been done. I feel uniquely qualified to continue through the next four years given my experience and knowledge acquired during the current four years. After the proceedings in St. Louis, we have a couple of choices — fight or flight. Stay and continue our work or leave the denomination. I choose to stay and fight! I long for the day when we no longer need to identify ourselves as Reconciling Congregations; that UMC is synonymous with Reconciled! As a parent and grandparent, I am acutely aware of how the denomination is losing youth and young adults to the category “NONE” under church affiliation. Our focus needs to grow beyond church in the towns to remain relevant. We need to be attentive to the ministerial needs of the last 21st century, 2030 and beyond.  

The 2020 General Conference is expected to finish the work of eight general church agencies, the Connectional Table itself and a contingency fund.  

A recent recommendation from the denomination’s Connectional Table slashed the four-year, 2021-2024 budget by 23 percent, to $361.6 million. The Discipline gives the Connectional Table responsibility for allocating general church giving among five apportioned funds: Ministerial Education Fund; the Black College Fund; the Africa University Fund; the Interdenominational Cooperation Fund; and the World Service Fund, which supports the work of eight general church agencies, the Connectional Table itself and a contingency fund.  

A revised version of the church’s Social Principles will be adopted in 2020. The General Board of Church and Society, based in Washington, D.C., has been working on this effort for two quadrennia. The work of the church because I know the challenges of both leading a ministry and sitting in the pew. This gives me a depth of knowledge to help the UMC seize the opportunities before it and overcome obstacles which prevent us from fully living out God’s call. I was honored to serve as a delegate and alternate in 2012, 2016 and 2019. As father of two young daughters, I want to ensure the UMC is thriving and able to help all people develop their relationship with Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. It is important to me that all God’s children are valued and included as we seek to genuinely live in Christian community. It would be an honor to continue to serve the BWC as a delegate.

**GENERAL CONFERENCE 2020: WHAT’S AT STAKE**

The 2020 General Conference almost certainly will debate human sexuality, especially after the actions of the 2019 Special Session. General Conference 2019 saw passage of the Traditional Plan, which retains the church’s policy that the practice of homosexuality is “incompatible with Christian teaching” and strengthens enforcement of bans on same-sex unions and ordination of “self-avowed practicing” gay clergy. Multiple conferences and congregations have stated their intentions to redact these Discipline-based prohibitions. Reports indicate that multiple groups, on both sides of the issue, are meeting to determine next steps; these plans are expected to be petitioned, and voted on, in 2020.  

The 2020 General Conference will also set mission and ministry priorities for the church for the next four years. This is perhaps most clearly seen in the budget. A recent recommendation from the denomination’s Connectional Table slashed the four-year, 2021-2024 budget by 23 percent, to $361.6 million. The Discipline gives the Connectional Table responsibility for allocating general church giving among five apportioned funds: Ministerial Education Fund, the Black College Fund, the Africa University Fund, the Interdenominational Cooperation Fund, and the World Service Fund, which supports the work of eight general church agencies, the Connectional Table itself and a contingency fund.  

A revised version of the church’s Social Principles will be adopted in 2020. The General Board of Church and Society, based in Washington, D.C., has been working on this effort for two quadrennia. The board’s goal was to make the revised Social Principles more succinct, more theologically grounded, and more globally relevant.  

This will also be the last U.S.-based General Conference for a while: the 2024 session is planned for Manila, the Philippines; and the 2028 General Conference is scheduled for Harare, Zimbabwe.  

At the 2020 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference, delegates elect new bishops. Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar is expected to retire after serving eight years in New England, and eight years in New Jersey.
Matthew “Matt” S. Sichel
Wesley UMC, Hampstead

Reserve Jurisdictional Conference
Delegate 2016 and Special Session in 2019

Church Committees:
Chair and Member at Large, Administrative Council; Member at Large, Outreach Committee; Church Historian, Sunday School Teacher; Member at Large, Building Committee; Certified Lay Servant since 2004

Other Organizations:
Eagle Scout

I consider it an honor, blessing and privilege to have served the BWC as a lay delegate in 2016 and 2019. I have learned to be a better listener, how to be more careful in constructing my opinions and views, and the value of trying to find common ground. The work before the General Conference is sacred. I would be a faithful delegate, committed to the work of finding God’s future for The United Methodist Church. Those who have worked with me know that while I openly share my opinions and convictions, I am committed to listening, learning and growing in my service for Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ rescued me, and my only goal in life is sharing his love and mercy with every person I know and meet. I pledge to make Christ the center of all the work I do as elected to the delegation.

Richard B. Wilson
John Wesley UMC, Hagerstown

2016 Alternate to Jurisdictional

Church Committees:
I am currently serving on Administrative Council and SPRC, serving as secretary on both bodies. Previously I have chaired Evangelism and have served on Missions, Leadership Development and Trustees

Conference Agencies:
I am currently serving on the Board of Ordained Ministries, serving as chair of the License to Preach School, and a member of the Residence in Ministry Committee. As the Cumberland/Hagerstown District Lay Lay, I sit on the Conference Connectional Table, the Board of Lay and Nominations. I also serve on the District Committee on Ministry and the District Lay Servant Committee

Other Organizations:
Board of REACH of Washington County, the Government Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Commerce and Co-President of the Maryland League of Women Voters

I am looking for ways to strengthen the church by focusing on what we hold in common. To do this I will employ my training and skills as a listener and consensus builder. This has been my role in my local church and in my professional career. At the same time, I am a passionate advocate for social justice. I know the Lord is not done with me, or with our church.

Cynthia Taylor
Mount Olive UMC, Randallstown
Delegate General Conference 2016 including 2019 Special Session

Church Committees:
Currently serve on Church Leadership Council, Youth Group Leader; UMW Charity Circle and Loaves and Fishes; served on Church and Society (chair); Discipleship Ministries (chair); VBS (chair); Sunday School teacher; Church Council; Service Ministries (chair); UMW (unit officer); Bible Study leader including Discipleship I and II

Conference Agencies:
Currently serving as Conference Secretary. Served as Church and District Linking Person; District Council on Ministries; Hope in the City; Chair of the Discipleship Council, Rules Committee (as Discipleship Council Chair and Conf. Secretary); Nominations, Sessions and Arrangements Committee (part of General Secretary duties); member of special budget committee on CPA; UMW Conference representative to the Appalachian Ministry Network.

General Church Agencies:
Resources Committee of General Board of Discipleship

Other Organizations:
Chair, Susaena Wesley House; Vice Chair, Night of Peace Family Shelter at Salem United Methodist Church; Chair, Baltimore County Department of Social Service Advisory Committee; Board member of Baltimore County Communities for the Homeless, Gail Scout Leader and Community Director

God equipped me with the ability to work with diverse people respectfully and effectively. In 2016, my first year as a delegate, I was on the Discipleship Legislative Committee. In subcommittee, I helped facilitate listening in a deeper way. I helped our group realize that while we were all United Methodists, we came from very different cultures and experiences and that “one size did not fit all” regarding changes to the Book of Discipline. A Native American Caucus observer asked me to present an item at plenary for the transformation of the world.

I would be a faithful delegate, committed to the work of finding God’s future for The United Methodist Church. Those who have worked with me know that while I openly share my opinions and convictions.

Greg Witte
Cedar Grove UMC, Deale

Church Committees:
Currently serving as Lay Leader and previously serving two terms on SPRC, including a term as chairperson.

Conference Agencies:
Conference, district, and local church United Methodist Men; from 2013 through 2018, was the Annapolis District UMM president

Other Organizations:
Volunteer leader of ISACA, a computer security membership association, which serves 140,000 professionals in 180 countries

I was raised as a Jehovah’s Witness but learned of true religion when my aunt snuck me into MYF events and UMC services. That mixed upbringing taught me never to be ashamed of the Gospel — I was speaking publicly about the Bible from the day I could talk. Ironically, that history taught me to test every word like a Berean, listening to all sides and seeking to discern God’s will. At work, I’ve served the U.S. government for 30 years, 15 at the State Department, gaining expertise in formal procedure and oral/written communications, with emphasis on diplomacy, and authorship that was commended by President Obama. As an observer at GC2019, I learned firsthand the importance of each vote. As one who feels led by the Holy Spirit, having come to love and serve every corner of the conference through UMM, I feel humbly called to serve in this important delegate capacity.

The Rev. Martin McMickle will open May 30 with a Bible Study at 8:30 a.m. The memorial service, celebrating the saints of the church who died during the previous year, will be held that evening from 7 to 9 p.m. The Rev. Ianther Mills of Asbury UMC will preach. Ordination will be held Friday evening, May 31, from 7 to 9 p.m. Bishop LaTrelle Easterling will preside.

The theme of the conference is “We are One: United to Love.” The foundational Scripture for the Conference continues to be Ephesians 4:1-16. Conference leaders and churches are encouraged to pray for the BWC, as it continues its ministry to inspire and equip faith communities to develop disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

For more information, visit bwcumc.org/events/annual-conference
Opioid epidemic calls for response from church

By Melissa Lauber
UMConnection Staff

“We may not be the best qualified to do this, but we are the ones who are here and have the responsibility of doing it. We can’t wait until the best one comes along. Right now, in this place, at this time, we are the best qualified ones to do it.” – Bishop Clifton Bivins, retired

N the Vietnam War, 58,259 Americans died. In 2017, more than 72,000 Americans died of opioid overdoses. “We are losing a Vietnam War every year,” said the Rev. Barry Ball, at the Baltimore-Washington Conference Opioid Townhall meeting March 9 at Harmony UMC in Baltimore, W.Va.

“And this number is small,” said Ball. “This is just the deaths. People are being removed from participating in society in many much larger numbers.”

Alarmed at the wide-spread epidemic of addiction to opioids sweeping the Baltimore-Washington Conference and the nation, Bishop LaTrelle Easterling called a townhall meeting to discuss the church’s response.

She intentionally set the meeting in the Western Region. In 2017, West Virginia had the highest rate of deaths due to drug overdose. She also chose Ball, an ordained Elder who works with the National Drug Enforcement Administration in Hagerstown, to lead the conversation and walk participants through some of the background of opioids, addiction, and his own experiences in ministries of recovery, hope and healing.

Ball began by explaining how, since ancient times, opioids have been collected from poppies; how when you take opium into the body, it becomes transformed in to morphine; and how the Bayer company made a better, less addictive painkiller when it created heroin. In recent years, he said, popular culture discovered fentanyl, a synthetic painkiller created in Belgium in the 1960s, reportedly 50 times more powerful than heroin.

While cocaine and meth get your heart going, opioids create a euphoric rush and then slow down the heart and respiratory system. An overdose causes people to stop breathing, “not a violent death,” Ball said. “You lay down and die in your sleep.”

He went on to explain the science behind the workings of neurotransmitters, and the many roads into addiction and the many roads out.

“The opposite of addiction is not sobriety,” Ball said. “The opposite of addiction is connection.”

And that, he believes, is where the church comes in.

“We can let people know they are known and loved,” he said. “If that’s not a field for the church to be in, I don’t know what is.”

Ball offered a number of words of advice for churches thinking to become involved in opioid addiction-related ministries.

• Start small.
• Anything the church can do to connect with someone is a start. Knowing someone’s name is a first step.
• One of the best places to go is your church court. Meet the judge and legal workers, they’re often desperate for help and for people to be mentors.
• Some of these people are dangerous. Don’t invite people you don’t know who are actively involved in drug use into your home. Meet at church or another location.
• Recognize this is not a United Methodist problem. The severity of the opioid epidemic is breaking down walls and silos as people feel compelled to work together.
• An empty parsonage can make a good recovery house.
• You don’t have to look outside your church to do this ministry. Start by having an open forum and letting people come and talk.

For Ball, one of the most meaningful ministries is working with drug-endangered children. Bodies, he said, are more than mere rent where agents kicked in the door of a house in Hagerstown. There were used needles all over the floors. Children were in the air through the door; they were met by a little girl. In that home, a dead man was found, who Ball believed was a drug user. At about 1:30 a.m., the girl and her brother were taken to a hotel and at 7 a.m. Ball picked the children up to take them to their next safe place.

Looking back, he berates himself for expecting them to perform normally and for not fully realizing their trauma.

“We don’t know the hell some of these drug-endangered children live through,” he said. “Their fight or flight reflex is on at all times. What if we went out of the sanctuary and into classrooms and more people stepped up?”

Churches, Ball warned, want a successful program within a year. But ministry takes time and requires a perspective that is hard to be set.

“Think of yourselves as missionaries in your own community,” he said. “Help birth one of these programs. Take baby steps to be the hand and feet of Christ. Take an initial step into making a concrete difference. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for.”

New pastor appointed at National UMC

By Erik Alsgaard
UMConnection Staff

National UMC, located across the street from American University in Washington, D.C., wasn’t always there. Originally situated at 4th and C Streets near the U.S. Capitol, the church was called Metropolitan Methodist Episcopal Church. It was created with support from General Conference and hundreds of Methodist Episcopal churches across the country.

Abraham Lincoln even helped, giving $10. President Grant and McKinley were regular attendees and pagers, Supreme Court judges and scoundrels have all made their way to the church since then.

The church moved to its present spot in the early 1930s, opening its gothic sanctuary on Feb. 7, 1932. The church became the reconciling congregation in 2004 and is today a merger of two congregations: Metropolitan Memorial and Wesley UMC.

It’s with this history in mind, then, that’s it’s fitting that the new pastor’s roots come from a part of the country outside the bounds of the Baltimore-Washington Conference and is someone you’ve heard and worked across a great portion of the US. The Rev. Doug Robinson-Johnson, an Elder from Massachussets, has been appointed by Bishop LaTrelle Easterling to serve National UMC effective July 1.

Robinson-Johnson currently serves the United Parish of Auburndale, located in Newton, Mass., just down the street from Boston College in the New England Conference. The church is a federation of United Methodist and United Church of Christ congregations. He’s served there since 2007.

Ordained as a Probationary Deacon in 1995 in Louisiana and an Elder in 1997 in the Northern Illinois Conference, Robinson-Johnson was actually born in California but moved at a young age to Louisiana.

“I’ve spent just about equal chunks of my life in Louisiana, Northern Illinois, and now the New England Conference,” Robinson-Johnson said in a phone interview.

He landed in Northern Illinois, he said, to attend Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in 1995. It was in those days, he said, that a key part of his ministry took shape through the ministry and person of the Rev. Greg Dell.

Dell served the LGBTQ community at Broadway UMC in Chicago. But he is better known as the first United Methodist pastor to be convicted of violating the 1996 abolition of performing same-gender weddings. Robinson-Johnson’s “very public” support of Dell’s ministry, he said, led to his appointment to serve the Parish of the Holy Covenant UMC in 1999, only a few blocks from Broadway.

“We served the same neighborhood,” he said, “for a significant gay, lesbian and transgender community, so our churches were at least one-third LGBTQ. This is what my ministry took root just as he was forced to surrender his.”

In 2004, Robinson-Johnson and his wife, the Rev. Erica Robinson-Johnson, were appointed co-pastors of Grace UMC of Lynn, Massachusetts. That church was created when four congregations merged into one in April 2004. Erica currently serves as the Director of Connectional Ministry and Assistant to the Bishop in the New England Conference.

“When I was called by Bishop Easterling, I think she recognized three things about me,” Robinson-Johnson said. The first was his rural, humble, southern background. The second was his ministry took root just as he was forced to surrender his.”

In my current and most previous appointment,” he said, “my faith communities were composed of young adults, college professors, high-caliber, deep academic backgrounds, astute theologically people. They had high expectations for the pastor coming in.”

The third thing, Robinson-Johnson noted, is his deep affection for academia. While he was in seminary, he was an associate at Alice Millar Chapel on the campus of Northwestern University. “I’ve always been interested in that kind of direct connection with the university, with academia,” he said. His son, Evan, is now a journalism student there.

Looking forward to his ministry at National, he knows that his formation — especially in ministry with LGBTQ people from early in his ministry — will be a key for what’s next. And for him, it’s personal.

Where he was in college at Centenary College of Louisiana, a United Methodist liberal arts school, a gay Baptist friend of his came out of the closet. “For him,” he said, “it was like coming out of the third week of school. Another friend and Robinson-Johnson intervened and saved his life. Things like that, he said, “happen to me all the time.”
Making a difference

Church helps rehab Habitat house
WESTMINSTER – Habitat for Humanity will soon start building a house five blocks from Westminster UMC, to which the church has contributed $11,430. The money was raised through contributions and the sale of Habitat Discount Cards, reported the Rev. Malcolm Stratathan. Members of the church’s missions committee and Stratathan presented the check March 5 to Stephanie Averett, Habitat Director of Development, and Bryan Lyburn, Habitat Executive Director.

“We’re excited to participate in the build to take place in April and May of this year,” Stratathan said. The money will be used to rehab the home, slated for a mother and her three children.

Intercultural competence topic of book
FULTON – BWC clergy member, the Rev. HiRho Y. Park, has recently published a book on cross-racial and cross-cultural ministry settings for the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

“Develop Intercultural Competence: How to Lead Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural Churches” (2018) is based on, as one excerpt said, “…pastors in cross-racial and cross-cultural ministry settings are called to serve God, our church members, our neighbors, and the world as well. The example and model of our ministry is Jesus, who is a wounded healer.” The book is available at Cokesbury and Amazon.

Church honored on MLK Day
JESSUP – Asbury UMC was honored with the “Living the Dream” award endorsed by the Howard County Office of Human Rights on Jan. 20, in commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The award is presented for outstanding achievements in the community. Asbury supports community service and unity among diverse ethnic groups, regardless of social, economic or religious background, said the church’s pastor, the Rev. Gay Green-Carden.

The theme for the MLK Day event was “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter,” that could “easily be the mantra for Asbury’s work,” said Lesa Lindsay, Lay Leader.

New Smothers book helps church get unstuck
FULTON – The church must get “unstuck” from its current context in order to address the context of younger generations, writes the Rev. Rodney Smothers in his new book, “Blank Slate: Write Your Own Rules for a 22nd-Century Church Movement.” Smothers, BWC’s Director of Leadership and Congregational Development, and his co-authors, his daughter, the Rev. Jasmine Smothers, lead pastor of First UMC in Atlanta, and the Rev. Lia McIntosh of the Missouri Conference, guide leaders to envision and design the future church.

“We are in serious danger of losing this next generation. … We need to do everything we can to keep them. Our future and their future is at stake.”

The book includes descriptions of each generational group in the U.S., an exploration of five innovative secular organizations, and a seven-step process for ministry to engage upcoming generations. Each chapter includes questions for reflection. It is a powerful planning tool for ministry teams.

It is available from Abingdon Press and on Amazon.

Church and school form partnership
COLUMBIA – St. John United Church signed a partnership agreement with Bryan Woods Elementary School (BWES) Feb. 6. It was signed by the Rev. Mary Ka Kanahan, Debbie Parker, Chair of the Church Council, and Eric Schoch, Clerk of the Council.

In the agreement that spells out responsibilities for both parties the church has agreed to participate in the first day of school welcome back procession, provide school supplies, conduct clothing drives for students with a need as well as “adopting” school families during the holidays, and volunteer for certain activities.

The new partnership is part of Howard County Public School System’s effort to enhance the educational experience of its students.

“The St. John United Church-BWES partnership signing was the highlight of my week!” Kanahan said.

Presentation of the Westminster UMC donation to Habitat for Humanity. Pictured, left to right: Sharon Row, Missions Committee Chair; Pastor Malcolm Stranathan; Stephanie Averett, Habitat Director of Development; Bryan Lyburn, Habitat Executive Director; Carole Roberts, Missions Committee.
What of the Resurrection?
An Easter Poem by Bishop LaTrelle Easterling

What of the Resurrection if the hungry remain without bread?
What of the Resurrection if the empty tomb simply becomes a tourist destination?

What of the Resurrection if the prisons of oppression yet overflow?
Justice rose with all power.
What of the Resurrection if the saved simply continue to navigate cities and souls without care of the cost?
Mercy rose with all power.

What of the Resurrection if the voiceless still cry out for justice against a cacophony of silent indifference?
Reconciliation rose with all power.
What of the Resurrection if wars continue to navage cities and souls without care of the cost?

What of the Resurrection if the marginalized are only pushed further onto the margins?
The Resurrection
What of the Resurrection if the homeless cannot find shelter even under the archway of a sanctuary?
Redeems

What of the Resurrection if the blood of the innocent still runs warm down hot streets?
Restores
What of the Resurrection if the saved simply continue to color within the lines drawn by the hands of the privileged and powerful?
Repairs

May we live the Resurrection!
Amen!

Youth workers gather to renew connections

BY CHRISTIE HOFFMAN*

Youth workers from across the Baltimore-Washington Conference gathered at Wesley Freedom UMC for a retreat and training March 22-24. The weekend offered a time to focus on "restoration," of both yourself and your faith. I personally cannot think of a more fitting message for a profession that requires a constant giving of yourself to the youth with whom you work.

Amazing things started to take shape over the weekend as many dedicated people came together to worship and learn how to make church a place for young people.

Youth leaders were enthusiastic to connect with others in the profession and have conversations about how to do youth ministry. Youth ministry is often an isolating field, where many youth workers feel disconnected and underprepared. Often, when someone steps into a youth ministry position, they are filling an existing hole and therefore have no one to orient them to the unique role of spiritually caring for young people.

With a wide range of different churches and districts represented, as well as an experienced leadership team, there was a wealth of experience to be shared this weekend to help others grow.

Saturday morning offered a chance to grow as the attendees broke up into Novice and Veteran groups to discuss strategies, address questions and problems they’re currently facing, and gain a sense of comradery and support. Nothing is more reassuring than hearing others’ trial-and-error stories, and there were certainly plenty to enjoy.

For me, the weekend offered an incredible balance of absolute silliness, spiritual restoration, and missional growth. Fun, quirky moments ensued when attendees were asked to shoot a Nerf-style bow and arrow or to participate in an intense match of Extreme Bingo. These ridiculous moments proved that even "the ones in charge" can enjoy a laugh as much as our youth.

Unexpected changes to the weekend, like an ill keynote speaker who couldn’t come, demonstrated the incredible flexibility that comes when serving in youth ministry. The event’s leadership team created seamless worship opportunities on the fly that offered important spiritual messages to let the Spirit sustain us through the roller coaster that comes when called to work with young people.

One of the most valuable takeaways from the weekend came in the form of the astounding training offered by those serving in youth ministry right in our own conference. Training workshops covered a variety of helpful topics including family supportive youth ministry, how spaces affect behavior, making disciples who disciple, passion to practice, and helping hurting kids. One unique opportunity was a hands-on chance to use art as a spiritual practice. Handed a terracotta pot and a hammer, the youth workers took to the theme of creating something new from the pieces and produced beautiful pieces of art together.

Leaving the weekend equipped with numerous pieces of helpful information and strategies, the most valuable are the resources shared. From prizes like a youth ministry go-bag to free book giveaways, and notes from workshop leaders, the most exciting thing added to my tool belt is the knowledge that you are never alone in youth ministry.

The BWC offers that amazing ability to be part of a connection greater than just your church. Connections were formed this weekend that will continue to offer support and opportunities for the youth leaders in our conference. Going forward, the community of youth workers that gathered this weekend are committed to fostering supportive connections, expanding our community, and developing new ways for us to grow as leaders of young people.

*Christie Hoffman is a member of Reisterstown UMC where she serves as the Youth and Young Adult Ministries Intern.
UMW celebrates its 150-year legacy

**By Linda Worthington**

**UMConnection Staff**

"Legacy" was the operative word of-the-day at the Baltimore-Washington Conference United Methodist Women gathered at the Mission Center March 25 to celebrate its 150-year anniversary. “We pray, study and march,” said Daisy Farmer, the conference UMW Legacy Liaison, as she welcomed over 60 enthusiastic women sitting at tables.

She outlined what we’ve done,” since the founding of the organization in 1869. Sending the first missionaries to India, studies on many topics including major ones on Cuba, Haiti and Israel-Palestine, holding and attending missionary conferences, dealing with issues of poverty, disabilities, clean energy and many others the audience shouted out. It was quickly clear that these dedicated women were involved in their local churches, their districts, the Annual Conference and the world.

Colleen Cates, the program moderator and a member of the national United Methodist Women Board of Directors, introduced Teresa Farmer to share her legacy story. Farmer, from Glen Burnie UMC, said that she joined because of her mother, a life-long member of the UMW and predecessor agency, the Women’s Society of Christian Service, who died last year at the age of 99.

“In the WSCS, women had a voice in the church,” Farmer said, as she mentioned various activities she remembered her mother doing and enlisting her help for as a child. Fundraisers to support missionaries was important, she said. “Women are the biggest asset in the church,” one of her mother’s friends told her.

“What is our legacy?” she asked, “What women’s girls are inspired by the UMW’s good works?” A table held a display of legacy artifacts with which the predecessor agencies, the WSCS and the Ladies Aid Society, along with the current UMW, have been involved. The items on display included a large blow-up of the first 1-cent stamp in 1840, the Pony Express, a 1913 automobile, and up to early 21st century.

The UMW has always been a supporter and promoter of the UMC Deaconesses, two of whom were introduced. Jerri Lee Bailey, a UMW member since before she was 30, now works with abused women. “I finally accepted the call to be a deaconess and the UMC helped me do it in the way over a period of years,” she said of her first rejection. “I had given God’s call on her life, then her mother found her.”

The UMW has helped many other missionaries who passed through and bought their fruit and “artesania” (art and craft work). The new highway bypasses the town and they have been in an economic slump ever since.

The other church is in a quiet border town right on the river between the two countries. Bishop Peña took us there to show us how easy some border crossings are: a hanging hammock rope bridge, with fencing on each side, over the river with no check points on either side.

Many Guatemalans cross here each day to work in one of the nearby factories, including to early 21st century.

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To learn more, visit www.bumc.org/ministries/united-methodist-women/