



Children play "Twister" during the official opening of the Agape Center at John Wesley UMC in Baltimore. The new youth center fills the second floor of the church and offers an alternative to the streets.

## Hudson brings hope to B'more

By ERIK ALSGAARD  
UMConnection Staff

"How you doin', Pastorman?"

The Rev. Rodney Hudson is walking the streets in one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in Baltimore. A man waiting for a bus recognizes the pastor as he walks by. Hudson is wearing gym shorts, a white t-shirt, and flip-flops.

As he walks, drug dealers openly sell their deadly products on the street. A glassy eyed man with a thousand-yard stare wanders aimlessly down a sidewalk, almost stepping into the path of an oncoming car. Children clamor for attention from parents more interested in their smartphones.

But people recognize Hudson, pastor at Ames UMC in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood in northwest Baltimore. The site of the Freddie Gray riots four years ago, this area witnesses drug overdoses and shootings on an almost daily basis.

Yes, the CVS store is back in business after being burned down. Yes, the burned-out cars have been removed and the streets cleaned. But Baltimore remains in the nation's conscience.

That was evident last month when President Trump used social media to bash its Congressman, Elijah Cummings, one of his fiercest critics.

"What President Trump said (about Baltimore) was highly offensive, hateful and derogatory," Hudson said as he walked. "But for African Americans in this community, there's been no change. There was no change under President Clinton, no change under President Obama, and no change under President Trump."

Some of what the president said, Hudson said, "is absolutely true."

For example?

"Look around you," Hudson said, pointing at boarded-up homes, trash-littered sidewalks and alleys, and dirt and grime seemingly in endless supply. "What help is coming to poor people? We know middle-class people really took a big hit under Trump, but poor people's lives have always been this way."

Hudson has served at Ames UMC for 11 years. He recently moved into the neighborhood, into a row house just around the corner from the church. Drug deals happen right on his street. A woman living in an abandoned house across the street died from a drug overdose just days earlier. "Billions of dollars are spent,"

See Hudson, page 3

## New center serves city's children

By MELISSA LAUBER  
UMConnection Staff

"There's a war going on for the souls of our young people," said Brendon Scott, Baltimore City Council president. It's uncertain whether "the side of evil or of righteousness" will prevail. But the new Agape Center at John Wesley UMC will make a difference.

The Rev. Joan Carter-Rimbach intends for that difference to be a significant one.

"Our children are under attack," she said. "I'm tired of reading the obituaries of those who birthdays start with 2000 and end with 2019. People ask me why our church started this youth center. I say, 'why not?' We want to provide a safe space where children can come and be loved, a space to provide them an alternative to the streets."

As the church celebrates its 150th anniversary, members are very aware that the drugs, poverty and violence in the surrounding community are theirs to address. They are undaunted about being harbingers of hope. But they also know it takes much more than good intentions.

On July 20, members filled the pews for worship, celebrated, and then cut the ribbon on a youth

center that fills the second floor of the large city church.

This was the official opening. Earlier in the summer, 43 children began coming to the Agape Center on Tuesdays and Fridays.

According to Patrick Nemons, a consultant who helped create the youth center, "it's a place where children and youth can come during the summer, after school and on Saturdays to receive tutoring, help with homework, learn and develop skills in the computer lab, have a snack or meal in the center's Cornerstone Café, play board games such as chess, work puzzles, or Legos in the Quiet Room, read books in the Library Space, watch movies in the Theater Room, play video games in the Control Room, and ping-pong, air hockey and pool in the Got Game Room."

"I want our children to live, to grow, and to be a blessing to their families, community and city," Carter-Rimbach said. "Agape," in Greek, means love. "Let's make our love official and open our doors to the future."

Baltimore Councilman Bill Henry of District 4 applauded the church's efforts.

"We need to put more resources into taking care of our kids,"

See Agape, page 12

*Baltimore Proud*

SPECIAL SECTION:  
Baltimore Proud -  
life and ministry in  
Baltimore City

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BY MANDY SAYERS

LEAD Pastor, Glen Mar UMC, Ellicott City

**T**HE LANGUAGE OF “gift” is really different, isn’t it? I’m not very good at receiving gifts, actually. I worry that my expressions of gratitude are not going to be enough. And what if I don’t like the gift? I’m a terrible liar (thankfully), which actually works to keep me more virtuous than I might otherwise be inclined. Gifts, they worry me.

I’m more comfortable talking about “rights.” Rights that I deserve, or inalienable rights, that sort of thing. Gifts are different. Gifts, given by God, are not about deserving or earning. They are not merit badges or medals for meritorious past service. The focus, if we’re talking about gifts, goes from the recipient to the giver. Recipients of gifts can receive and be thankful or re-gift or throw the gift away. The gift focus is really all about the giver. What if it isn’t up to us to decide whether someone’s gifts are worthy (they are) or whether they are an essential part of the body of Christ (they are). What kind of life, what kind of church, would honor this generous divine Giver?

The gifts that Christ gives

seem to be given for the Giver’s purposes. They ensure that we don’t “look and act and speak the same.” (Ephesians 4:7). We seem to be called to use our gifts, all of them, to make the body of Christ work, to make disciples, to be about the work of ministry together. And Christ gives us all the gifts we need for the body to work together.

In the church, we would never say to lawmakers who happen to be women of color, “Send them back.” We know God needs every one of their precious gifts — and we are not about “sending back” God gifts. In the Church, we would never consider Baltimore a place to be written off. Some of God’s best work is done in Baltimore, by people of all ages, nations and races. In the Church, we can’t afford to exclude anyone — we need everybody — to do the work Christ calls us to do.

How dare we even try to be so loving and brave? How dare we knock down the walls that divide us in an age of Tweetable Division? What can I say?

It’s a gift.

*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.*

BY DARYL WILLIAMS

Pastor, St. Paul UMC, Oxon Hill

**I** LOVE GIVING GIFTS. It’s a good thing, too, because gifts, as described by Gary Chapman in his book “The 5 Love Languages” is my wife’s primary love language. The look on my wife’s face when I give her a gift, big or small, makes my heart melt every time.

But it wasn’t always that way. There was a time that I used to give my wife gifts willy nilly. I didn’t put a lot of thought into them. I just wanted to make sure that I gave her something. Until, one day, I gave her a gift and I didn’t get the look I was looking for. It wasn’t that she was ungrateful; it just wasn’t a gift that was her. Never wanting to see that look again, I took some time to think about what a gift really is.

What I discovered about gifts is that a good gift should be thoughtful, personal, and reflective. On one level, it really is the thought that counts. A thoughtful gift shows that you took the time to consider what the person you are giving the gifts to wants or needs. You took the time to consider their likes, dislikes, and preferences and thought through what you would give them.

On a deeper level, a good gift is personal. It is a gift that shows the person not just that you thought about them but that you went the extra mile to get something just for them. You got them a gift that would be peculiar to anyone else, but was perfect for them.

Finally, a good gift is reflective. No, I don’t mean it’s shiny, but it should reflect the heart and the character of the giver. A good gift allows the recipient to see the giver in the gift that is being given.

Friends, gifts are a great thing and giving them is wonderful, but you should also know that being a gift is absolutely amazing. You and I are God’s gifts to the world. God thought about what the world needed, and created us. We were put together on purpose, with a purpose, and were given to the world. We are God’s personal gift to others in that we are sent to be just what they need even when they don’t know they need it.

Finally, as gifts, we are reflections of God. When people see us, they see the image of God through us, day by day. So as you go through the world, know this: God gives great gifts and you are one of them. So, go forth and be a gift to the world.

## GIFTS

## EVENTS

### Discipleship Systems workshop

Sept. 6, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.  
BWC Mission Center, Fulton  
A workshop with Rev. Quincy D. Brown. \$35. Learn more and register at [www.bwcumc.org/3D-journey](http://www.bwcumc.org/3D-journey)

### Financial Leadership Academy

Sept. 30; 8 sessions,  
Eden Resort, Lancaster, Penn.  
Sponsored by the MidAtlantic Foundation. Contact Frank Robert at 410-309-3475 or visit [www.midatlanticfoundation.org](http://www.midatlanticfoundation.org). (See story, page 12.)

### Living Your Call Summit

Saturday, Oct. 5, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
BWC Mission Center, Fulton  
A time apart for exploration and learning for those experiencing a call to ministry and their mentors. [www.bwcumc.org/lycs Summit](http://www.bwcumc.org/lycs Summit)

### Border Immersion Trip

Oct. 11-14  
San Diego, Calif. & Tijuana, Mexico  
A journey of learning and transformation [www.bwcumc.org/borderimmersion2019](http://www.bwcumc.org/borderimmersion2019)

### reCall Summit

Oct. 17-18  
Explore privilege, power and poverty. It’s a soundtrack in three movements on Oct. 18 at Grace UMC in Baltimore and at a festival site in the city Oct. 19. For more information see ad on page 8 and visit [www.bwcumc.org/recall](http://www.bwcumc.org/recall)

### Ministry Hatchery

Nov. 11-14  
Maritime Conference Center,  
Linthicum Heights  
An incubator for new ministry ideas. [www.bwcumc.org/hatch](http://www.bwcumc.org/hatch)

### Bishop on the Districts

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling will meet with clergy from 2 to 4:30 p.m. and laity from 6:30 to 8 p.m. The schedule includes:

- **Cumberland-Hagerstown District** Sept. 17, Parkhead UMC, Big Pool
- **Greater Washington District** Sept. 26, First UMC, Hyattsville
- **Frederick District** Oct. 8, Trinity UMC, Frederick
- **Annapolis District** Oct. 10, Severna Park UMC
- **Washington East District - Oct.** 15, Journey of Faith UMC, Waldorf
- **Central Maryland District** Oct. 29, St. John UMC, Columbia
- **Baltimore Suburban District** Nov. 19, Reisterstown UMC
- **Baltimore Metropolitan District** Dec. 10, Trinity UMC, Catonsville

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FOR MORE EVENTS, VISIT: [BWCUMC.ORG/EVENTS](http://BWCUMC.ORG/EVENTS)

# Hudson: Relationships key to ministry in Sandtown

From page 1

Hudson said, “where is it for us? Not much of it is here. Look around. This is zombie land. What President Trump said was highly offensive, but some of it is true. This place is rat infested.”

Maybe the only good thing to come of this unwanted attention, Hudson said, is that it has again brought the focus of the world to the plight of Baltimore. He’s been receiving calls and messages from “all over,” he said, with people asking how they can help. “What he (Trump) said was bad, but he has re-shifted the world’s focus back on Baltimore.”

Hudson said that building and maintaining relationships is key to effective ministry in the neighborhood.

“In this area,” Hudson said, “if you’re going to make an impact, you gotta be on the ground because the people aren’t going to come to you based upon if you drive a nice car and you’re a pastor.”

Hudson is grateful for the support from the Baltimore-Washington Conference that helps pay his salary and benefits. The conference is also supplying a \$400,000 grant so that Ames UMC can buy the vacant lot across the street from the church and build a community center-type building. That building will include a day care, boxing studio, and more. Hudson said they hope to close on the deal in mid-August. “They have invested into Baltimore and into Sandtown,” he said.

Relationships also extend to drug dealers in the neighborhood. Hudson said that after thieves broke in and stole all the sound equipment in the church, it was Glen Mar UMC who bought new microphones, but the drug dealers tracked down the people who stole the speakers and got them back. The drug dealers have also provided money to help pay the church’s BGE bill, and to help send kids to ROCK.

“I know it’s dirty money,” Hudson said, “but I don’t judge them.”

As he walks, Hudson invites people to come to the church for it’s twice-weekly free food give away. Every Tuesday and Thursday, the church, working with partners, gives away hundreds of dollars-worth of food. On this Thursday evening, dozens of people lined up for basic food items including frozen chicken breasts, bread, and non-perishables. Monday through Friday, the church provides breakfast and lunch.

Last year, Hudson kept a running total of homicides in the city on his Facebook page. He stopped doing it this year, he said, because keeping track of the deaths became too depressing. “I’m keeping track of who’s alive, so we can make an impact on that.”

Hudson said that he finds hope in his ministry in many places.

“I see hope in people I first met as kids who have now graduated from high school and are going to college,” he said. “Trying to make it out of here. I see hope in the way that the church has been able to

impact their lives.”

He mentions Tammy, a woman who had seven small stepchildren who were on their way to becoming another statistic. “She turned her life around and is now serving as the chair of the church council. All of her children have graduated from high school, except two who are going to graduate. All of her children are in college or going to college. So, the hope is the impact that you make for the future generations.”

As Hudson completes his walk,

after greeting dozens of people and inviting them to pick up some food, it’s obvious that he not only loves serving in Baltimore, but he loves the people, too.

“I love the community, I love the people, and I love my church,” he said. “I love the Baltimore-Washington Conference because they gave me a chance. They’ve invested in this community, along with several partner churches. They deserve to see a return on their investment. That’s my goal.”

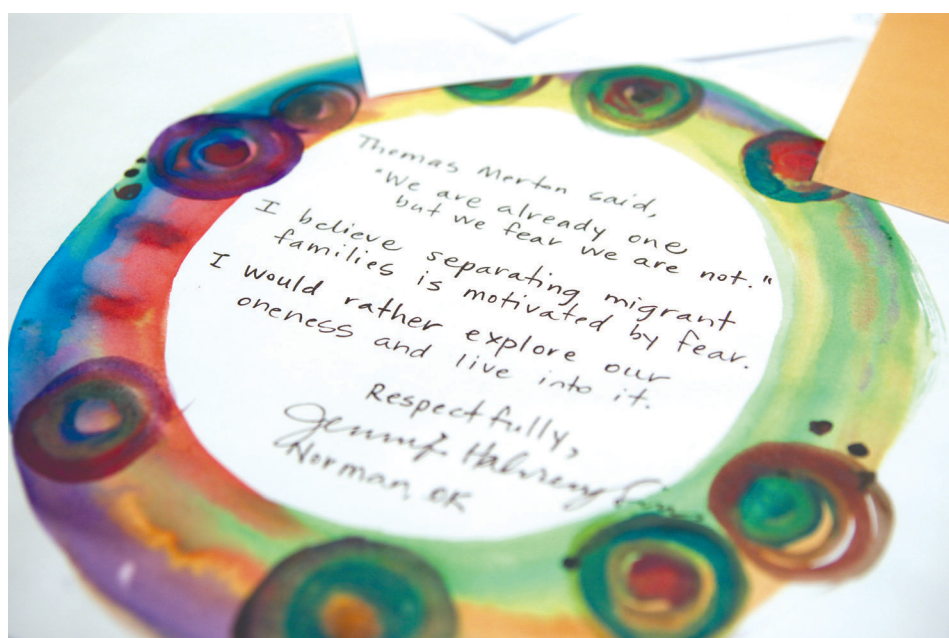
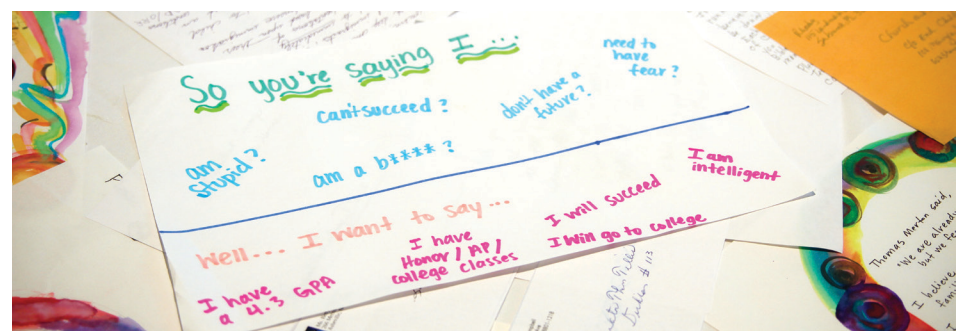
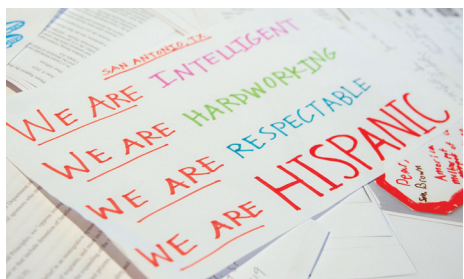
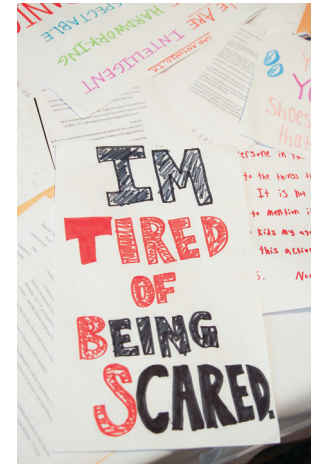


Rev. Rodney Hudson leads a peace march around Baltimore following the riots in 2015. Hudson serves Ames UMC in the Sandtown neighborhood.

# United Methodists deliver letters to Congress

United Methodists from 14 states sent in nearly 450 letters and drawings to end child detention and family separation. Bishop Easterling led a prayer over the letters and United Methodists from the Washington, D.C., area hand delivered those notes to Congress on July 25.

Read the full story from Church and Society: [www.umcjustice.org/news-and-stories/united-methodists-deliver-messages-to-congress-874](http://www.umcjustice.org/news-and-stories/united-methodists-deliver-messages-to-congress-874)



# North Carroll Cooperative Parish hosts 800 youth at camp

BY MELISSA RUDOLPH\*

**E**ARLY THAT MONDAY morning, a downpour looked ominous. The staff and volunteers gathered at Greenmount UMC had contingency plans in place if the more than 200 registered campers for sports camp would need to be indoors.

But the Rev. John Rudolph, who oversees the North Carroll Cooperative Parish's (NCCP) Youth and Kids Ministry, never lost hope that the weather would clear.

At 9:15, when the groups inside the sanctuary were organized into their teams to head outside, the rain stopped.

Preparing for the camps is a year-long endeavor for the team. This year, there were 800 children registered across the six weeks

of camp. More than 50 were on a waitlist, but available space and other resources forced caps on the free camps.

A week of sleep-away camp at Camp Harmison kicked off the season, then the parish moved into hosting Sports, Arts, S.T.E.M., Day Camp at Lion's Club Park, and Agri-science camp utilizing the talents and resources of volunteers from across the three church locations of the parish. They shared a common teaching theme of "It's Christmas Everyday," but the elements of the camp were particular to each of the flavors.

NCCP formed in 2011 when St. John's, Greenmount, and Grace United Methodist churches joined together. I like to say, "we're a cooperative parish that actually cooperates."

As the lead pastor, I see this as an opportunity for each of the churches to share the best of their resources to multiply the ways we can meet our community.

Each of the three locations were doing separate Vacation Bible Schools, so the first thing they did was cut down to one day option and one evening option using volunteers from all three churches based on their scheduling availability. They realized that what parents in the community were really looking for was day camp. So, while keeping the VBS style offerings, they added to the menu.

John Rudolph was a coach and supervised athletics and activities for a school system before he went into ordained ministry. He saw an opportunity to share the love of sports with kids in the community that didn't require the money and commitment of the travel team culture.

Spread across the parish were high school coaches and others who were active with sports on a local and even national level. John Piper, the Manchester Valley High boy's lacrosse coach, teamed up with his sister, Liz Piper, who is the Sunday School Superintendent at St. John's but works for U.S.A. Lacrosse and travels the country managing high level games in the sport, to spend the morning at Greenmount teaching fundamentals.

But our daughter pointed out that they were missing the kids who don't see themselves as athletes. She asked, "Why can't we

do an arts camp?"

So, the next year it expanded. In a parish with visual artists, photographers, musicians, dancers, floral designers, and actors, there were so many talents to gather. The volunteers were interspersed around the three locations, but the youth and kids team brought them all together in one place.

S.T.E.M. (science, technology, engineering, and math) became another addition, as they recognized that there were teachers and engineers and medical professionals in the parish who had knowledge to offer.

New this year, the traditional evening VBS was changed into an agri-science camp. The number of kids who have registered for that multiplied.

"Grace is in a farming community, and the members have so much knowledge to share with the kids," Rudolph said.

The camp went from 25 kids signed up for evening VBS last year to 114 registrations for agri-science. One of the church leader volunteers even planted a garden on a patch of ground in the parking lot so that it was a living laboratory for the week.

"It's a perfect combination of the gifts of our parish meeting the needs of the community," John Rudolph said. And he's hopeful that the forecast for the rest of the season will be even more cooperative.

*\*The Rev. Melissa Rudolph is senior pastor of the North Carroll Cooperative Parish.*



More than 800 children attended day camp offered this summer by the North Carroll Cooperative Parish, with the theme, "It's Christmas Everyday."

## Frostburg and other campuses address homelessness

BY MELISSA LAUBER  
UMConnection Staff

**T**HERE ARE STEREOTYPES about the lives of today's college students and there are stereotypes about the lives of homeless people. But new realities are shattering these as students on college campuses adjust to lives without shelter and scramble to find their next meal.

This summer at Frostburg University, United Methodist Chaplain Cynthia Zirlott put out a call for food to address the needs of six homeless students.

University officials had found the students a place to live and summer jobs, but they were suffering from food insecurity. "They were hungry," she said.

Churches around the conference responded with generosity, providing food for the students and helping to stock a food pantry on campus that United Campus Ministries helped open last year with a grant from AmeriCorps.

During the spring semester, the pantry served 290 students.

"We have had a great response of churches doing food drives or sending grocery gift cards," Zirlott said. "We had several moms make care packages for the students, which I delivered. One said that their roommates often get care packages from moms and they never got one until now. He seemed so excited to get one."

There are more homeless students at Frostburg during the academic year, but this summer, most of them found places to stay with their friends. The presence of these students on a college campus is not unique.

By some estimates, for example, there are 43 students who sleep in their cars or in area shelters at the University of Maryland.

Nationwide, recent financial aid statistics show, there are more than 68,000 students who claim to be homeless. People working with this issue say the problem is probably much worse. Colleges and students don't like to talk about homelessness. It's an issue that can get clouded by shame and fear, Zirlott said.

But a bed at night is not the only issue facing many students.

National surveys indicate that 36% of college students are food insecure and that, in 2018, 42% of students struggled to get adequate food. Nine percent said they had gone at least one day during the last month without eating because they lacked money.

At Frostburg, this problem is exacerbated because of the high number of students who enroll in the school right out of the foster care system, Zirlott said.

The university will not release statistics, but nationwide, more than 23,000 children age out of the foster care system each year; 20%

of them are instantly homeless.

Only six percent of those who age out of foster care attend college and only 50% of them graduate.

But it's not just the students who lived in foster care who are affected by poverty, Zirlott said. "We have people here whose last home was a homeless shelter."

For Zirlott, this is spiritual challenge. United Campus Ministries reaches out to the students with groceries card in first month of school, before their work-study job paychecks are issued.

"Lots of time, I end up being their main support," she said. "At one time, about a quarter of our students in Bible study were foster kids."

The confidentiality of these students is guarded. But, Zirlott said, many students in poverty end up not living in the dorms. The school's meal plan is so expensive, they sometime eat only one meal a day, she said. Zirlott is sure these students are distracted.

"They could perform much better if they had a full stomach," she

said. "But they're determined to get this education. They see it as a way out of their poverty. They see it as their best chance to have a different kind of life."

The United Campus Ministry also offers spiritual food, providing weekly Bible study and other spiritual growth opportunities.

"Some of the participants have been in out of homeless shelters all of their lives. Some of them are amazing witnesses to God's provision," Zirlott said. "They're not whiny. They're amazing people who have a deep spirituality, a deep dependence on God."

For many of the homeless students, there is a stigma associated with poverty. But area churches help Zirlott in addressing that by caring for the students' needs as they arise.

"My prayer," she said, "if for us to be able to encourage them and support them when they feel alone. They need to know that the people of God are with them. We will work with them so they can be dreaming, optimistic and hopeful."

### AN OVERVIEW OF THE SCOPE OF HOMELESSNESS:

- As of January 2018, Maryland had an estimated 7,144 experiencing homelessness on any given day; 267 were young adults, ages 18-24.
- West Virginia had an estimated 1,243 experiencing homelessness on any given day; 61 were young adults.
- The District of Columbia had an estimated 6,904 experiencing homelessness on any given day; 318 were young adults.

# Baltimore Proud

Following recent national criticism of Baltimore, United Methodists serving there took a moment to reflect on the city and its place in the Kingdom of God.

## Churches confront injustice & seek resurrection hope

BY WANDA DUCKETT\*

**G**ROWING UP IN Baltimore, I used to wonder what magic or happenstance enabled some neighborhoods to thrive while others floundered or deteriorated. It seemed to me that if the police could keep drugs out of some communities, then surely they could keep them out of mine.

As I rode the bus around the city with my friends, I would often see how abruptly blight would begin and end, sometimes at an intersection. Could it be that some people didn't want or deserve a nice, clean, safe place to live? Or was there something more intentional at work in these stark disparities that even a child could detect?

As an adult serving in the city, I now understand how everything from extreme and blatant injustice to the most subtle of micro-inequities impact minds, souls, and communities.

I understand that there is no magic around redlining, predatory economic practices, and the abandonment of neighborhoods due to race and class. It is not by happenstance that some people grow up with semi-conscious expectations that they will have access and opportunity, while others don't expect to live an abundant life, or any life at all past their teen or young adult years. So when we talk about Baltimore or any other place (be it urban or



rural) with high concentrations of crime, violence, poverty, addiction, and other social ills, we must ask the question that I grew up asking as a child: Why?

The undeniable answers are classism and racism. At their root is sin.

This sin takes the form of greed and pride that combine to exalt the value of selves like us over inclusive community.

This sin intentionally and strategically divides the poor from the poorer for fear that if oppressed people ever unite across false constructs of race and ethnocentric mindsets, then justice might actually roll down indiscriminately rather than being doled out selectively.

This sin, impacts the haves and the have nots in the economy of the Spirit where poverty, fear, and hopelessness do their darkest work on all of us. This sin is the idolatry that places lucre over love.

Jeremiah 29 reminds us that we all share a mutual peace or lack thereof, so we must pray for

the entirety of the city/world. Because we are one, there is no true thriving unless we all thrive, no matter what part of town or corridor of community or conference we call home. If there are places where no human wants to live, then the work of humanity — particularly those in leadership and power — is to seek the peace of those distressed areas and pray to the Lord for it, for in that peace we all find peace.

My adult mind has moved from asking “why” questions to asking “who” questions. Who puts the word out to young college grads and professionals across the nation that it's safe for them to migrate to Baltimore, the third most dangerous city in the country?

Who determines where open air drug markets will operate versus where policing is so tight that a person of color is pulled over for simply “looking suspicious”?

Who is at the border allowing just enough immigrants into the country to populate the farming, hotel, and construction industries

with cheap labor, but not enough with citizenship to elect their own officials and own those same hotels, farms, and construction companies?

Who is at the table when the decision is made to gentrify a community, demonize a people in the media, or incarcerate generations of black and brown people?

And perhaps more importantly, who will repair these breaches in humanity (Isaiah 58:12), breaches as old as humanity itself? I can hear my colleague Rev. Rodney Smothers saying, “Who will do this with me?”

I am so grateful to serve under the leadership of a bishop who cares, understands, prays, and acts in the realm of prophetic social justice. I am tremendously blessed to serve among skilled laity and clergy across this annual conference who are willing to engage in courageous conversation, difficult dialogue, and transformative tension that lead to healing and unity. And I am privileged beyond measure to be called to the Baltimore Metropolitan District among people with whom I share a passion for the city.

They are the “who” amidst the many “why” questions we face in this present age. Read what some of them have to say about serving in Baltimore under the banner of resurrection and the theme, “We're in This for LIFE!”

*\*The Rev. Wanda Duckett is superintendent of the Baltimore Metropolitan District.*

## We asked: 'What do you love about Baltimore?'

*On the national stage, President Trump recently criticized Baltimore, saying that no one wants to live there. So, we asked some of city's pastors, “What do you love about serving in Baltimore?” They responded.*

This city is quiet and very loud. It is raucous, lively, yet serene. It is beautiful and very ugly. It is a community of communities. It makes you love the people and the history but hate the violence that threatens to consume it. It makes your heart race as the orange and purple teams race to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat or groan as defeat overtakes sure victory. It is Baltimore, and I love it.

I am the pastor of a multicultural, multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-economic congregation in the heart of Baltimore city: St. Johns Baltimore. I am also the CEO of the Adullum Community Healthcare Center, a mobile primary care and behavioral healthcare provider whose primary residence is in St. Johns.

In the past six years, I have seen people sleeping on the church porch, weddings, funerals, baptisms and celebrations of life and death. We have had break-ins, gunshot sounds, robberies, festivals, symphonies, plays, carnivals and the ever-present construction. We have fed hundreds, clothed hundreds more, laughed, cried, screamed and shouted. No day is ever the same.

Yet with all the dichotomies, this represents Baltimore. We never give up even when it looks like we should. We scream and shout yet laugh just as quickly. There never seems to be a time

to stop because there is always something else to do. This call to the city is a God inspired walk that takes courage and strength, but more importantly takes the leading of the Holy Spirit that inspires change. God is not finished with Baltimore because the ground is fertile, and the people are hungry.

The vermin who walk the street do not in any way determine the character of Baltimore no more than one's bank account does. It is the Lord of the city who has placed us in the national lime light and we shine if one cares to look deeply enough.

**Rev. Irance Reddix**  
St. John's UMC

Baltimore is more than the home of Baltimore Ravens and the Baltimore Orioles.

Baltimore is a life jacket to those who find

it difficult to swim. For some, Charm City is a parachute, as many take a leap of faith to glide through the city to see the many opportunities with which God graced the city.

My hometown is a lifesaver in the midst of lifeless circumstances.

The city of Baltimore saved my life and invested in me and it is a privilege to serve as a mini lifejacket to others taking a leap of faith to glide through the city's unlimited opportunities.

At Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial UMC, we are committed to ensuring that the only infestation that our community is infested with is opportunity. This is why MLK Jr. Memorial is in the process of partnering with Dickey Hill

Elementary Middle to develop a Kid's Nite Inn after school program, a similar program that

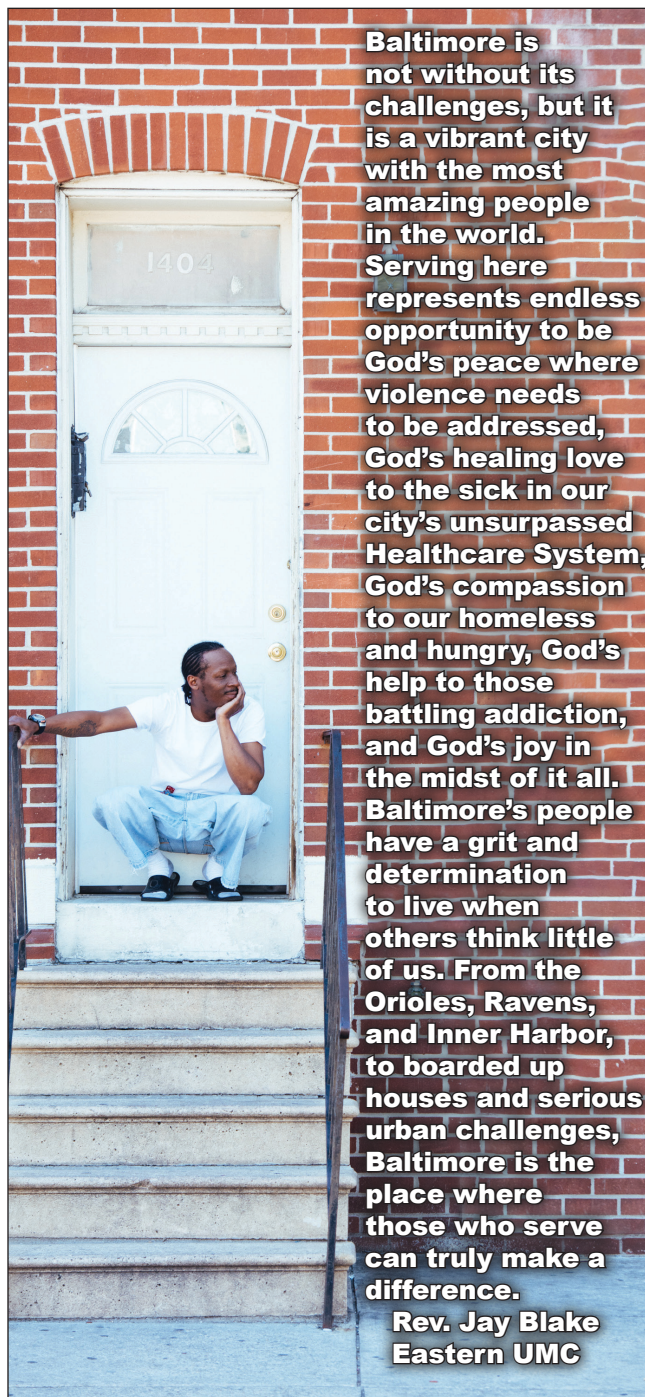
**I love the opportunity to work alongside creative, passionate and genuine individuals from diverse backgrounds. I have come to admire and appreciate the rich history of Baltimore City and the vibrant neighborhoods that make this city great. I am also grateful for the many opportunities to engage in social justice initiatives and it is always wonderful to meet new friends and neighbors as we work side by side to assist God's people to live their best lives. I am blessed and honored to be a Baltimore City pastor and I continue to pray for the health and welfare of this great city.**  
**Rev. Jessica S. Hayden, Pastor**  
**Old Otterbein UMC**

# Baltimore Proud:

Eastern UMC once had that saved many youth from unforeseen dilemmas.

The President of the United States of America is correct: Baltimore is infested, but 45 is wrong with what the city is infested with. We are infested with the spirit of renowned small businesses. We are infested with an entrepreneurial spirit. Baltimore is infested with multi-million-dollar ideas. As a 28-year-old pastor, I am committed to ensuring that the church continues to infest its community with God's good will! I love serving in my city, Baltimore!

**Pastor Michael Anthony Carrington, Jr.**  
Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial UMC



**Baltimore is not without its challenges, but it is a vibrant city with the most amazing people in the world. Serving here represents endless opportunity to be God's peace where violence needs to be addressed, God's healing love to the sick in our city's unsurpassed Healthcare System, God's compassion to our homeless and hungry, God's help to those battling addiction, and God's joy in the midst of it all. Baltimore's people have a grit and determination to live when others think little of us. From the Orioles, Ravens, and Inner Harbor, to boarded up houses and serious urban challenges, Baltimore is the place where those who serve can truly make a difference.**

**Rev. Jay Blake**  
Eastern UMC

I serve in Deaf Ministry in the Baltimore-Washington Conference. Our conference is one of few that do ministry with such a unique population. I primarily work in Baltimore City. I grew up in the Baltimore Suburbs, so initially I was nervous about spending so much time in the city; I've heard such challenging things! Imagine my surprise to find that God lives in my city.

Longtime city dwellers will help me navigate the city, show me its beauty, and invite me in to its culture. I have watched the 4th of July fireworks over the harbor with an older Deaf man I ran into accidentally. I have wandered around Highlandtown looking for delicious food from different cultures with care providers needing a lunch break. I have seen the Artscape artists take trash off the streets to turn it into something beautiful and compelling. I have seen people who are overlooked and forgotten master the bus system and teach others how to use it. I have seen American Sign Language interpreters quickly pick up different signed

Baltimore dialects in order to communicate quickly in hospital emergency rooms.

I have church members who don't want to ever move out of the Inner Harbor HUD housing. Together we navigate SSA, SSI, Medicare, Medicaid, HUD, Section 8, DDA, MTA Mobility — all acronyms our Baltimore is deeply familiar with. These are all acronyms that help make life beautiful here.

Serving in Baltimore means I can see the beauty in resilience. I can see the beauty that comes with street murals showing the community and positive values, adults mentoring children that aren't their own, community gardens that feed anyone hungry, international communities learning to communicate with each other, and people who are passionate about service.

Sure, Baltimore has its problems. But Baltimoreans always rise to the challenge and have created beautiful resilience in the process. This is a place God lives and I am grateful to be here to experience it.

**Rev. Emily Hart (Smiley)**  
Associate Pastor of Deaf Ministry

I grew up in Harford County and only ever went to Baltimore for field trips or cultural attractions. When I was appointed to Baltimore City seven years ago, I began to get nervous. How would I relate to folks? How would I serve in a context that was foreign to me? And then I remembered something a wise person told me before starting my first appointment: "love the people."

Love the people. And indeed, I have grown to love not only the people in my congregation, but in my neighborhood, and the City as a whole.

I love the neighborhood structure of the city. I love the diversity of Baltimore. Racially, socioeconomically, and yes, even politically. We struggle with our racial issues, but they are out there in the open. We don't hide our divide. We don't push it under the metaphorical rug. We keep it front and center as we struggle and strain together to learn, to grow, and to overcome.

As a white person serving in a diverse context, I have had to learn about cultural identity in a new way. I have had to change my language, my ideas, and yes, even my preconceived notions ingrained in me from childhood and where I was raised in order to be an effective pastor and citizen of this great city.

The people are real. And they have shown me and taught me how to move beyond where I was to become radically inclusive. As part of a mixed-race family, I also love that my family looks "normal" here, and no one bats an eye that we are brown and white and mixed all living and loving together.

I love how safe I feel in Baltimore. In part, this is because of its nickname, "Small-timore," because everyone seems to know everyone else. I can't go anywhere in the City without running into someone I know.

Having served for four years as a police chaplain for the Baltimore City Police Department, Northern District, I am also able to relate to and partner with our first responders.

I love the culture of the city. The sports, the music, the theatre all help to round out the attraction the City has for me and for many others. We have the oldest public library system in the nation. We have the first postal service, the oldest Evangelical United Brethren Church, the birthplace of both Methodism and Catholicism in America, home of the "Star Spangled Banner" and so much more. Our history is broad and beautiful.

We have a lot of work to do to keep growing and improving this great American City for all who live, work, worship, and play here. But I am proud to call it home, and vow to continue to do my part to help improve it.

**Rev. Bonnie McCubbin**  
Good Shepherd UMC

I love serving in Baltimore because it is a city that has great diversity, world class hospitals, and many places to both relax and be educated. I was born and raised in Baltimore City. I am a product of the Baltimore City Public School system. I choose to raise my family in the same neighborhood I grew up in. I have travelled the world and retired after honorably serving my country.

Through this experience, I have had the opportunity to live in many different parts of the world, different cities and many cultures. However, at the completion of my service to my country, my wife and I came home to Baltimore to both raise our family and serve our community. I have served as a pastor, PTA President of a Blue-Ribbon School (Baltimore City College High School) and helped to raise a new generation of leaders through The United Methodist Church. My family and I enjoy serving in Baltimore and consider it an honor to serve Jesus Christ in this great city.

**Pastor Melvin T. Bond, Sr.**  
Mt. Olivet UMC

What stirs me about serving in Baltimore is the love and the people who surround you. I have been a life-long citizen of Baltimore and even when I left Baltimore to go into the Army, Baltimore was screaming my name.

I had missed the talent that you see at the Inner Harbor at places like the Fudgery and the

**In 1994, I was invited to my first summer cookout in Baltimore. I was expecting the same menu that I was accustomed to in Alabama — barbecue chicken, ribs, hamburgers, hotdogs — but to my surprise, the menu only included Maryland Blue Crabs and corn. I received an education that day in Baltimore culture. I love the culture of Baltimore and believe that is what makes her "The Greatest City in America"!**

**Like the Prophet Jeremiah, I have a renewed vision of Baltimore. I trust in a God who produces rivers in deserts and makes dry bones live again. I am committed to rebuilding this "Great City" by serving through justice, mercy, innovation and collaboration.**

**My soul stirs when I see lives being transformed where hopelessness once reigned; when children learn to read at or above grade level; when high school students participate in our life skills program that equips them to interview and write resumes; when we redevelop property into 30 apartments to house young adults aging out of foster care; and when we feed the hungry, cloth the naked and visit the incarcerated.**

**As E. Stanley Jones once said, "An individual gospel without a social gospel is a soul without a body, and a social gospel without an individual gospel is a body without a soul. One is a ghost and the other is a corpse." My commitment to ministry among the poor in Baltimore is wed with a commitment of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to make disciples, who make a difference!**

**Rev. Cary James, Jr.**  
Sharp Street Memorial UMC

# A tale of two cities

Open Square. I missed the potential stars on the corners rapping about Baltimore life and trying to put music on the map, “Eastside style.” I missed the diversity and culture of my friends from high school. I also missed my home church, Eastern UMC, because that community gave me such a grounding and spiritual foundation in Christ, and I took it to places like El Salvador, South Korea, Japan, Germany and Oklahoma.

Baltimore is in my soul and it causes me to appreciate the people and to be able to serve the people with love like they have loved me. I absolutely celebrate with the people of Baltimore despite any negative connotation from people that have not really experienced Baltimore in its full glory.

Baltimore is one of the most historic, most authentic places of versatility on God’s Earth. It is a place of deep community roots and most importantly, it is a place primed for change. I am glad to be a proud Baltimorean!

**Rev. Isaiah Redd, Sr.**  
**Emmarts UMC**

So, I was asked what I love about serving in Baltimore, and I honestly love a challenge. I recently was having a conversation about the challenges in Baltimore City during my licensing at our local pastor school. The subject of serving in another context came up. Though I was certainly honored to have been offered an opportunity, I had to decline the offer. My heart belongs to the city and this also includes its current challenges.

It’s easy to get complacent when things are going great, but having challenges such as homelessness, crime, addiction, and mental illness keeps hands to plow because there’s always something to do. The Lord has blessed us at Salem UMC to be able to make blessing bags for the less fortunate. It is the needs of God’s people that stir my soul and I am blessed to be used by God, to follow Christ, and serve the city of Baltimore.

There is plenty to celebrate about the people of Baltimore: their tenacity, their strength, their pride in their hometown, and those that still believe that it takes a village to raise a child. I celebrate those who refuse to abandon and refuse to verbally bash Baltimore City. “Let everything you do, be done in love.”

**Pastor Andrew R. Shropshire,**  
**Salem UMC of Hebbville**

Baltimore is a city rich in history. It was fertile soil for religious freedom. At the end of the 19th Century, it was one of the richest cities on the eastern seaboard due to its deep port and railroad access. It was and is a city of immigrants, whose neighborhoods like Little Italy still hold culture and tradition of foreign lands that have blended to make the diversity we celebrate today.

Baltimore has a strong academic and medical community, with Johns Hopkins being a major player. Yes, the city took a big slide with the riots of the late 60s and is still working to recover. The redevelopment of the harbor/waterfront has been modeled by other major cities as a mecca for tourists. We have extremely devoted fans to our sports teams, in the best of times and the worst of times.

Baltimore is the home of American Methodism. It is daunting to serve as the pastor of Lovely Lane UMC. The history of this congregation rests on the shoulders of so many. But it is not enough to rest on these laurels. The current congregation wants to share our under used space and develop the Lovely Lane Art and Neighborhood Center to be responsive to the needs of our changing neighborhood. If our churches can open our doors to help our communities live into a vision of God’s beloved community, we can make a difference here and now for our kids and their kids.

**Rev. Deb Scott**  
**Lovely Lane UMC**

**I have been serving in Baltimore for eight years. The church I serve is proud to be here. I walk my children to their city public schools most days, along with many other energetic, justice minded, dedicated persons who work to make the city work. I love Baltimore’s distinctive neighborhoods, its eclectic arts scene, its intrinsic beauty and its resiliency. More recently, I have witnessed and participated in spaces where the persistent struggles of the city — poverty, racial inequality, housing, or governing — are named with honesty and vulnerability, in ways that make me hopeful for the city’s future**

**Rev. Dr. Amy McCullough**  
**Senior pastor, Grace UMC**

I find Baltimore to be wonderfully diverse and real. Some of our folks live in the immediacy of day-to-day and seek the help, comfort and challenge that comes from being a part of a church. Others are looking for a faith community to call home.

In Baltimore, we address questions of meaning and purpose along with continually finding ways to make faith, hope and love tangible.

I am grateful for our congregation who naturally conveys radical hospitality with all people. Mount Vernon Place offers a healing connection with the living God as we address real issues and problems. In some ways, the church is the mission and the mission is the church. There is a refreshing honesty, mutual acceptance and respect in our relationships. I love serving with our amazing congregation as we find ways to reach out with compassion and love in Baltimore.

**Rev. Rod Miller**  
**Mt. Vernon Place UMC**

I love serving in Baltimore because it is a city that knows itself. We do not lie about our problems, we know there is racial tension, urban blight, crime, and corruption. We do not push them under the rug or act like they don’t exist. We live it and we fight it.

That honesty with who we are and where we are lifts my soul. Our society is filled with rose-tinted viewpoints and lies about our identity, but not here. Here we are God’s children, warts and all, working to lift up the marginalized and the lost.

The people of Baltimore push forward, without any help if they have to, because they know we have something worth fighting for: a home in Charm City... and the crabs... we do love those blue crabs.

**Pastor Dane Wood**  
**Associate Pastor, Grace UMC**

When asked what I love about serving in Baltimore, my spirit reveals images — like photographs. I see the deer that was in my neighbor’s back yard, the planting that was done as a part of our Earth Day celebration, the choir at Christmas and the baby that was baptized. I see wildlife and new life finding a place in my community, being welcomed and embraced. I see the church spreading life, singing into others, and planting new beginnings.

**Rev. Dellyne Hinton**  
**Gwynn Oak UMC**

I would say that in a nutshell, Baltimore is a wonderfully diverse city, filled with culture and character in its diverse people and neighborhoods. As the founding city of Methodism and Catholicism in America, it has a rich religious history that continues to impact the life of the city and the world.

Having pastored two congregations in Baltimore (historic Sharp Street Memorial and Epworth Chapel), served as district superintendent in Baltimore for eight years, served as executive director of Hope for the City, and taught at Goucher College and St. Mary’s Seminary and

University for a combined 21 years, I have met and been privileged to teach, pastor, work with and meet hundreds (probably thousands) of brilliant, resilient, hard-working religious and community leaders who have and continue to impact their communities for the better and change lives.

**Rev. C. Anthony Hunt**  
**Epworth Chapel UMC**

Baltimore is a city of communities where each block has its distinct personality, culture, and rules. Serving and living in Baltimore offers the unique opportunity to build community and relationship with people who are diverse economically, socially and racially. Diversity isn’t just about gender or race, but it is also about background, socio-economic status, and religion.

The truth is that diversity in Baltimore can be perceived as a strength and/or as a weakness depending on relationships and who has perceived power both in government and on the block. The police and city government may have the authority, and political power, but there are times when the corners can determine who lives or dies no matter one’s socio-economic status or rank in the city.

My soul is stirred by the influence that authentic faith leadership can inspire both in city hall and on the corners to spark change one person at a time. I celebrate the charged environment. The charged environment is such that imaginative creativity is just one of the incentives employed to cope with the challenging realities of life in this charmed city.

The environment itself inspires potential and has birthed world-renowned surgeons, scientists, community activists, faith leaders, artists, and the list goes on.

Frederick Douglass said it so profoundly: "Where there is no struggle, there is no progress."

Celebrating the people of Baltimore is also an acknowledgement that Baltimoreans, like so many others raised in cities across America, are survivors of a multiplicity of struggles. We will survive.

**Rev. Rodney Hudson**  
**Ames UMC**



# Baltimore Proud

## A view from the west: 'We are all Baltimore'

BY FRANKIE REVEL\*

**T**OURISM BROCHURES FOR Western Maryland showcase beautiful mountains, lake and ski resorts, and state parks. While we do have all these things in the Western Region, the brochures fail to show the harsh realities of life here. Not all is as it seems.

Considered to be “small urban” by the US Census Bureau, we in the Western Region deal with many of the same issues as our brothers and sisters in larger urban centers — crime, poverty, and wealth inequality.

Not long ago, my family and I moved into what is widely regarded as one of the most desirable neighborhoods in Allegany County. The week that we moved in, we were greeted by a Maryland State Police helicopter searching for a neighbor who had escaped house arrest. Just

last week, I was alerted that a series of burglaries had occurred in my neighborhood. Cumberland boasts the highest burglary rate in the state of Maryland, so I am not surprised.

Allegany County is the poorest county in Maryland and not surprisingly is home to the poorest community in Maryland, South Cumberland.

The majority of families in Allegany County live on less than \$35,000 per year, and some individuals in Cumberland live on less than \$9,000. A natural consequence of this poverty is food insecurity, especially among youth. Our food pantry serves thousands of individuals a year and Emmanuel UMC's summer food program serves hundreds of kids per week.

Finally, we are not strangers to housing blight, prompting one lawmaker to refer to Cumberland as “Little Detroit.”

It is incomprehensible and

inexcusable that a sitting president would speak so disparagingly against a US city. Unfortunately, his rhetoric is not new.

In 1981, then Maryland governor William Donald Schaffer (D) referred to the Eastern shore as a “s\*\*\*thouse.” (<https://www.baltimoresun.com/features/retro-baltimore/bs-trump-remark-schaefer-eastern-shore-20180112-story.html>)

Much like our larger urban counterparts, we in the Western Region are used to not being taken seriously; we are no strangers to disparaging language with racial undertones like “deplorable,” “lazy,” and “white trash.”

But also, much like our urban counterparts, our context provides us the unique opportunity to “get down in the mud and the blood and the beer” as the great Johnny Cash remarked in one of his hit songs. That is, to meet people at their point of need and to speak life to them.

In this sense, we are all Baltimore. Life in Western Maryland, Baltimore, and other marginalized communities, is as rich and meaningful as life in the suburbs and wealthier areas, despite our regions' problems. We stand in solidarity with all of our brothers and sisters who are misunderstood, mischaracterized, mistreated, and overlooked by those in authority who have been duly elected to serve us.

\*Rev. Frankie Revel is pastor of LaVale UMC in LaVale.



## What's next for you and for Baltimore?

BY WANDA DUCKETT\*

**W**E'VE SCRATCHED THE surface on some “why” questions; we've heard some “who” testimonies. Now “what;” what can we do?

First and foremost, we can pray. Prayer is not a cop-out but a powerful action that gets to the root of sin. Prayer changes things and prayer changes us.

Secondly we can vote. No matter where we live or serve, vote for leaders with agendas that align with the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is not a partisan strategy, but a Christian responsibility that puts feet on our mission to transform the world.

Thirdly we can listen and learn. Pay attention and listen with spiritual ears. Ask God for spiritual eyes to see beyond symptoms to solutions. Listen deeply to those unlike yourself. There is truth in everyone's truth, even if it is the truth of the pain, fear, and filter through which they've been indoctrinated to see the world.

Fourth, we can connect. Resist the temptation to operate in silos when God has called us to community. There is power in partnership. As United Methodists, our connection is a gift. I believe this is why evil works so hard at splintering and re-splintering the Church under the guise of reformation. We must work together across every line of division to reflect and bring the Kin-dom to all God's kin.

Let us be clear. Connection, especially as it pertains to ministry in Baltimore, is not ministry to Baltimore. It is ministry with Baltimore. It is relational, and mutually missional. There is much

that we can do together and much that we can learn from each other.

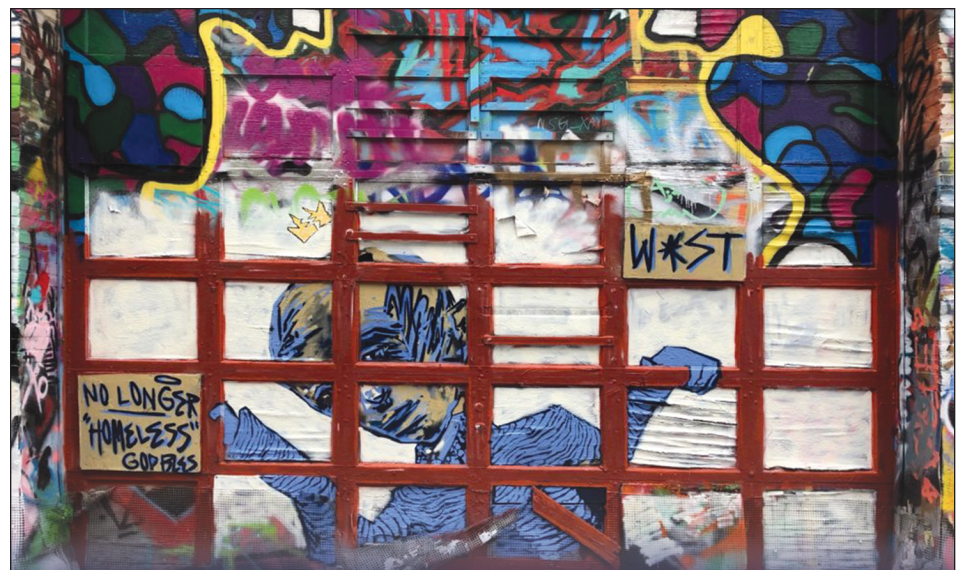
The temptation is to come (or not come) to the city and assume that we have all the answers. To be connected means to respect who and what we don't know. To be mutually missional means to engage in joint ministry rather than study the city and its people as subjects.

I offer the model of Glen Mar UMC and its ministry with churches in Baltimore. When I arrived at the former Monroe Street UMC in 2006, Pastor Jean Weller had in place many shared ministry initiatives led by Van Beal, an awesome lay disciple at Glen Mar.

This relationship outlived Jean's time at Monroe Street, my time at Monroe Street, my successor, Nathaniel Green's time at Monroe Street, and even Monroe Street itself. Now the partnership is with Ames Memorial UMC and it continues to be a blessing to both congregations and communities. And while ministry in Sandtown and Baltimore is essential, there are many places across our conference where this model is needed. There are no rock stars except Jesus, no ground zeros except Calvary, no power except the power of resurrection.

Lastly, we can love. Perfect love casts out fear and all of its effects. (1 John 4:18) Love keeps us agile, proximate, engaged and resilient. Love is what gets us up in the morning to fight, act, and serve another day. Join us in the work of spreading abundant life in Baltimore and everywhere. Stay tuned for more as we look forward to the reCall summit Oct. 18-19.

\*The Rev. Wanda Duckett is superintendent of the Baltimore Metropolitan District.



**EXPERIENCE PRIVILEGE, POWER AND POVERTY:  
A SOUNDTRACK IN THREE MOVEMENTS  
OCTOBER 18-19 [BWCUMC.ORG/RECALL](http://BWCUMC.ORG/RECALL)**

re·CALL )))

summit 3.0  
privilege. power. poverty.  
a soundtrack in three movements

### MOVEMENT #1

**INTRO**  
Fri., Oct. 18  
1 - 5 p.m.  
Grace UMC  
Baltimore

### MOVEMENT #2

**CHORUS**  
Fri., Oct. 18  
5 - 9 p.m.  
Grace UMC  
Baltimore

### MOVEMENT #3

**BRIDGE**  
United to Love Baltimore  
#BMoreProud  
Sat., Oct. 19  
10 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
Downtown Baltimore

\$45 per person for movements 1 & 2

Suggested donation of \$20 for United to Love Baltimore  
Learn more and share what's on your justice playlist at

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



## “Blessed are the peacemakers...”

By THOMAS MCCARTHY\*

**W**ORKING IN PARTNERSHIP with the non-profit organization, Creating Friendships for Peace (“CFP”), the Baltimore-Washington Conference recently made a significant contribution to peace building in both the troubled island of Cyprus and in Israel/Palestine.

The first week of July, our West River Camp hosted 20 Muslim and 20 Christian teens from Cyprus.

Located in the Mediterranean Sea only 70 miles from Syria, Cyprus had a civil war in 1974 that killed thousands and divided the island in two as the result of a UN patrolled border. Christian Cypriots who lived in the north were forced to give up their homes, farms and businesses and move south. Muslim Cypriots in the south were forced to give up the same and move north. Approximately half of the population was made to be refugees.

Growing up, the teenagers of each side were taught how the terrible people on the other side started the war.

The 40 Cypriot teens were chosen for their leadership ability and potential of influencing their peers upon their return. Besides enjoying the camp’s outstanding recreational facilities between training sessions, the teens spent most of their time learning ways of cooperation and peacemaking.

After the camp, the teens, matched in pairs of one from each side of the conflict, and were sent

to five areas across the country to stay with host families for three weeks.

If the past 10 years of CFP’s experience repeats itself again this year, there the teens will completely dispel their prejudice and become the best of friends resolved to encourage and support each other in peacemaking work back home.

The two pair of Cypriot boys and two pair of Cypriot girls who stayed with host families in Maryland/DC met at the UMC Conference Mission Center on two different days for further training in Conflict Resolution and Conflict Transformation.

Those teens were joined on the second day at the UMC Conference Mission Center by a pair of boys and a pair of girls from Israel/Palestine who were beginning a separate CFP program.

The one week overlap of the two programs across the five sites in the US is intentional so that the Cypriot teens can give the Israeli and Palestinian teens reason for optimism.

The Cypriots shared how the 10 years of the program in Cyprus has been changing the attitude of the young adult and teenage generations and how the politicians have started to notice that change in their voters. The teens from Israel/Palestine also had their own specific peace training the following week at the UMC Conference Mission Center.

The program focuses on teenagers because they are usually

starting to think for themselves and often question the opinions of their elders. The new ideas and experiences teens encounter can shape life-long attitudes.

Most host families come from churches of various denominations.

David Ward and his wife, who are members of Glen Mar UMC in Ellicott City, hosted a pair of boys for three weeks in July, said, “After two careers spent watching international problems, my wife and I are pleased to have found in CFP a way to help make peace simply by getting to know a pair of pleasant teenagers and helping them get to know each other. The boys freely admitted to the prejudices they had before joining the program and welcomed the new view of the other side,” as well as the cross-border friendships they acquired as a result of the

program.

Ward further said that, “it was a great chance to spend time with bright, articulate, thoughtful young folks.” He encourages “anyone who’s even a little interested” to inquire about the possibility of hosting next July.

Those interested in learning more about CFP can go to [www.friendships4peace.org](http://www.friendships4peace.org)

Those interested in learning more about the possibility of hosting next July should contact the author at [tomm@friendships4peace.org](mailto:tomm@friendships4peace.org).

\*Thomas McCarthy, who is married to the Rev. Ann Laprade, the superintendent of the Baltimore Suburban District, is a 28-year volunteer with CFP and a predecessor program focused on teenage Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland.



Christian and Muslim youth from Cyprus overcome generations of distrust and learn about peace at West River Camp this summer.

# Follow God.

Live your passion for innovative ministry.

## Be a Wesley Community Engagement Fellow.

**Jaleesa Hall** (Master of Divinity, Class of 2019 - Urban Fellow) CEO & Founder, Raising A Village Foundation

“Wesley has given me incomparable opportunities to learn and experience the world of community engagement — cultivating my leadership skills, deepening my ability to be both compassionate and effective in ministry. These skills benefit Raising A Village Foundation, which encourages safe, healthy, and whole communities.”

**Lauren Bennett** (Master of Divinity, Class of 2019 - Urban Fellow)

“I was able to intentionally integrate theory and practice, taking creative risks through this program. With a team, I developed a deeply relational worship service integrating study, prayer, friendship, accountability, and generosity, set in museums and parks. Here, the intersections of art, poverty, justice, climate change and the ritual of communion weaved together. I graduate from Wesley excited for creating creative, collaborative ways of being church.”



Fellowships for 2020 are still available  
— please contact us to learn more.

[wesleyseminary.edu/fellows](http://wesleyseminary.edu/fellows)



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INSTITUTE: Celebrating Its 10<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary

# BWC churches receive grants to create 'shalom'

BY MELISSA LAUBER  
UMConnection Staff

*Each year in June, members of the Baltimore-Washington contribute to a denomination-wide Peace with Justice Sunday. The money is awarded to programs to advocate in communities and nations for God's shalom.*

*Half of the money collected stays within the Baltimore-Washington Conference and is given to area ministries. To learn more, visit, [www.bwcumc.org/ministries/advocacy-action/peace-with-justice](http://www.bwcumc.org/ministries/advocacy-action/peace-with-justice).*

*Grants are also given out at the national level. Learn more at <https://www.umcjustice.org/documents/57>*

*The next Peace with Justice Sunday will be celebrated June 7, 2020*

*This year's recipients include The Community Anti-violence Project at Hughes Memorial UMC in Washington; Loaves and Fishes at Mt. Olive UMC in Randallstown; Justice for Our Neighbors; Summer Arts Camp at the United Methodist Church of the Redeemer in Temple Hills; and the Empowerment and Discipleship Project between Emory Grove UMC in Gaithersburg, and La Gloria in El Salvador.*

## The Community Anti-violence Project Hughes Memorial UMC, Washington D.C.

Makiyah Wilson was 10 when she was murdered on July 15, 2018. A member of Hughes Memorial UMC's Community Anti-violence Project (C.A.P), Wilson "was killed when four hooded gunmen drove into her apartment complex and shot 70 rounds of ammunition with automatic assault weapons while she was outside playing in a courtyard located approximately 1,000 feet from our church," said the Rev. Paul Johnson.

The community is still processing emotions of fear, anger, and disillusionment, Johnson said. But it's all the more tragic given that "the death of Makiyah is just one occurrence in a long litany of violence in our community."

To help address that violence, Hughes UMC joined with Howard University School of Law to begin an after-school program to help at-risk children and youth who live in the community surrounding the church.

Started in 2005, C.A.P works with children in need, recognizing and working with the challenges they face to achieve academically.

The District of Columbia Public School system "has historically been defined by sometimes stark racial and class divides. Poverty, food insecurity, housing insecurity and rampant violence are just some of the factors that negatively impact the academic performance of the children who live near Hughes Memorial UMC," Johnson said. "It is unfair and unrealistic to expect impoverished children who are hungry, cold and scared to excel



in school."

The C.A.P. after-school program seeks to help the children who live around the church to dream big dreams and to achieve their dreams by preparing them holistically — physically, mentally, emotionally and intellectually.

Students participating in C.A.P. have shown

improved reading scores and other advancements. But Johnson is also convinced that "in our community there is no peace because there is no justice, and there is no justice because there is no peace." C.A.P. is committed to peace with justice.

The church is seeking partners to join them in this ministry.

## Loaves and Fishes Food Ministry Mt. Olive UMC, Randallstown

Loaves and Fishes at Mt. Olive UMC in Randallstown was actually started by women in the community who asked to use the church. In 2013, when the women had to drop out, 17 church members stepped up to ensure the ministry continued.

Today, approximately 20 volunteers serve a meal on the third Saturday of the month and provide a four-day a week food pantry. In a typical month, 90 meals are served and 110 bags of food are distributed with food that comes from the Maryland Food Bank.

The ministry is a uniquely intergenerational one. The youth play a vital role in helping pack the grocery bags and serving guests at the tables. Adults prepare the meals and sometimes even 80-year-old church members join in the ministry

in a variety of ways.

"I love that our lay people, especially our youth, see what it means to be a true servant of God," said Cynthia Taylor.

The area around the church is about 9% food secure, said Barbara Kirchhausen.

"Hunger is a basic need. We see children of all ages come to the Saturday meal. No one wants to see children hungry. ... We are called to feed God's sheep.

"At the end of every third Saturday, we are tired, but also blessed to be living God's word in this ministry," Kirchhausen said. "We mean to see Jesus in every face and to reflect his love in our own."



## Summer Arts Camp United Methodist Church of the Redeemer, Temple Hills

The Rev. Michael Parker is a trained vocalist. He often uses music, especially opera, to open up. "In art," he said, "one is free to simply be." He and his church members wanted to



give that gift to the children of the community.

Redeemer's Summer Art Camp, which runs from July 1 through Aug. 16, is done in partnership with the Leaders of Tomorrow Youth Center. The experience is designed to help children unleash their creative abilities through a variety of artistic expressions including drama, music, dance, visual arts and photography.

"We often see a connection between art and Peace with Justice," Parker said. "Our children are able to not just build bridges, but be bridges of hope and change in our community. At the same time, we are carving out safe space for children who live in extremely at-risk communities to have positive, safe, community building activities and receive nutritious meals throughout the summer, which is the peak time for juvenile-related offenses."

Parker and the leaders and the camp say they find joy in how the camp gives children the chance to



see life from different lenses.

"One of children," he said, "was extremely excited to embrace mosaic art, sharing with her mother

that she was excited about creating something big with such small pieces." An apt metaphor for Peace with Justice.

## DC-MD Justice for Our Neighbors Hughes United Methodist Church, Wheaton

Justice for Our Neighbors is a ministry supported by the Baltimore-Washington Conference that provides legal assistance to immigrants. Assisting these migrants is a matter of faith, said the Rev. Ken Hawes, director of the ministry's board.

"Asylum seekers, torture survivors, and our immigrant brothers and sisters fleeing violence in other countries are arriving at the U.S. border, where they legally request protection, only to be told, 'America is full,'" Hawes said. "They are then forced to wait in overcrowded, chaotic camps in Mexico, where U.S. attorneys cannot reach them to provide legal assistance and prepare them for their Credible Fear Interviews, an initial test that allows them to pursue asylum before a U.S.

immigration judge.

The Peace with Justice grant provided funds to Angela Edman, the lead attorney for Justice for our Neighbors in this region, to travel to the border to teach and to learn.

Edman is "a deeply committed person of faith, who is passionate about doing justice, especially on behalf of those who are oppressed, abused and mistreated. She has made it her life's work," said Hawes. Her expertise is in legal cases involving asylum and torture. At the border, one of the things she'll do is provide critical legal advice to those facing the Credible Fear interview.

"Peace with Justice," said Hawes, begins by recognizing the dignity of each human begins as one made in the image of God. "Our work at DC-MD Justice for Neighbors



demonstrates to the men, women and children we serve, that they

have worth and value and strives to bring shalom to their lives."

## Empowerment and Discipleship Project Emory Grove UMC, Gaithersburg, and La Gloria, El Salvador

The third largest population of El Salvadorans in the world is within the bounds of the Baltimore-Washington Conference. Much of this community lives in Montgomery County, so, the Rev. Tim Warner reasoned, "If we want to grow as God's church in Gaithersburg, we need to know what Jesus means in El Salvador."

To explore what ministries Emory Grove might support, he traveled with a group from the Baltimore-Washington Conference to El

Salvador, visiting La Gloria, near the town of Ahuahapan.

"It is a rural town," he said, "where women are single because gang violence and addiction take their men. Few women have the opportunity for educational and economic advancement to begin with, and those who have children live under the constant threat of gang influence on their children. It is a desolate place in every sense of the word."

The pastor at the church in La

Gloria is a single mother. She shared with Warner her own sacrificial story and how she developed the church from the ground up among single mothers.

"When God moves most powerfully through us, our narrative becomes Gods narrative in us," Warner said. "As she told her story of how they had scraped to get a new building up, complete with space for a commercial kitchen in which these women could learn to prepare food, to walk up the hundreds of stairs to generate income for themselves and their children, tears started coming to my eyes.

"I am the second son of a single mother, and by the grace of God alone, I have escaped a place and predicament not unlike La Gloria. Sometimes, in a moment like this, God steps out of eternity into our time. It was a moment of convicting connection, a clarion call from God about how to respond in a moment to the grace He has lavishly poured

out on me," he said.

Warner vowed to help provide the equipment for the commercial kitchen that would empower the women with training and employment opportunities. The Peace with Justice grant will assist with this.

"It is as true in El Salvador as it is in the U.S. that the best way to raise the stake of the unemployed is with a job," Warner said. "The women and children in La Gloria are so vulnerable because they are so powerless. Being powerless in a culture pervaded by machismo, gang violence, and poverty is tantamount to a multi-generational death sentence."

But bringing the Kingdom of God face-to-face with this systemic evil "is precisely what our baptismal vows commit us to," Warner said. "Incarnational ministry that yields God's shalom and wholeness, physical and spiritual, is what God requires of us."



# Agape: Church opens new future to community's kids

From page 1

he said. “We spend half-a-billion dollars on the police department, catching our kids after they’ve gone wrong. We spend nowhere near what we need to spend to help our kids grow up to be strong, functioning members of society. When government doesn’t do everything it should do, the church and community need to step up.”

Baltimore Comptroller Joan Pratt said the city will attempt to assist the Agape Center in its efforts and she even made a personal gift to the new program.

As the public went on an inaugural tour of the facility, they saw a video that featured the neighborhood children. “I am love,” was their refrain. Carter-Rimbach smiled, pleased that the message was getting through.

She is counting on outside help from other congregations and community groups to help with a lengthy wish list to make the Center all it might be. But with the ribbon cutting, the first step is complete.

“We’re leaning on God,” Nemons said, “to make it bigger and bigger.”



PHOTOS BY ALISON BURDET

## Changing stewardship, one leader at a time

BY ERIK ALSGAARD  
UMConnection Staff

**A**SK JUST ABOUT any United Methodist clergyperson, and they’ll tell you that they took seminary classes on the New and Old Testament, theology, preaching, leading worship, and things like that. What they most likely didn’t take is a class on how to lead change in a congregation; how to move it from point “A” to point “B,” especially when it comes to the area of stewardship.

The Mid-Atlantic Foundation seeks to change that aspect of ministry by offering the Financial Leadership Academy (FLA). The 18-month program takes a pastor, along with four key lay leaders, and trains them to move from good to great through stewardship.

The Foundation, with offices in Valley Forge, Penn., and at the BWC’s Mission Center in Fulton, is a “Faith Community Non-Profit Foundation Serving The United Methodist Church: Eastern Pennsylvania, Peninsula-Delaware, and the Baltimore-Washington Conferences,” according to its website.

The next FLA starts Sept. 30. Frank Robert, Associate Director for the Foundation who is based in Fulton, said pastors often learn new strategies and processes for stewardship, but then hit a wall when lay leadership won’t — or can’t — come on board.

“Pastors will learn their church culture, identify desired shifts in mindset, and lead cultural change with an action plan,” Robert said. “Pastors will select and lead a lay team in church-culture change, managing conflict, and providing spiritual leadership for finance best practices and generosity-development.”

But don’t take his word for it. Two recent graduates of the FLA

testify to its impact.

The Rev. Cary James serves at Sharp Street Memorial UMC in Baltimore. He, along with four lay leaders, graduated from the most recent Academy this past May. He said that the shift he’s seen is already making a difference.

“We were operating out of mindset of scarcity,” James said, describing the situation before going to the Academy. “We said we needed money for a leaking roof, for the boiler, for the BGE bill. We were never asking for mission and ministry.”

The greatest benefit of his team attending the Academy, he said, is that they all heard the same presentations, which fostered working together. Watching the team of leaders from his church shift from the scarcity mindset to determining where God is at work and meeting God there is one of the greatest joys of attending the FLA.

An example of this, James said, was a church member who came to him after the first of the FLA workshops. The member said that he didn’t think that giving money to the church was a good idea because it always went to pay bills, not to meet needs in the community.

This person, James said, noted that youth ministry had had a profound impact on him growing up in the church. “We have a lot of youth in our community but they’re not in our church,” the member said, and then asked what the church’s budget for youth ministry was. James replied: \$500.

And then, the pastor asked him if he wanted to help in this area.

“I saw this person’s eyes light up,” James said. “They said ‘yes.’ They said they believed that God was calling them to support youth ministry. They increased their giving because now they saw that their giving was going to mission

and ministry. It had a profound effect.”

The church used the money to buy 100 school uniforms for the nearby Furman L. Templeton Academy, an elementary school with a zero-tolerance policy regarding uniforms.

At the time, James said, the school had an attendance rate for K-2nd grade of 23% in a given nine-week period. This was partly due to children’s families who couldn’t afford uniforms.

After donating the uniforms and holding a pizza/ice cream party open only to students who had perfect attendance, James said that as school is ending this year, attendance is now at 92%.

“Our stewardship has increased, and our giving has increased,” James said, “in addition to our impact in the community. We’re not saying, ‘Thank you for paying the bills to keep the lights on.’ We’re showing them what their giving is doing in a tangible way for mission and ministry.”

“I graduated from seminary and I didn’t have a class on church finances,” James said. “For colleagues who are pastors, this will help you understand pockets of giving and the power of thank you letters and narrative budgets.”

Pastor Christine Kumar said it’s still a work in progress at her two congregations, Cowenton UMC in White Marsh, and Piney Grove UMC in Middle River. But the shift is happening, she said.

“What we learned in the Academy is generous giving and living means to give from our hearts; not to think that it’s a chore,” Kumar said.

In addition to herself, two people from each of her churches attend the FLA. Several good ideas came from the Academy, including one unique way to illustrate the importance of giving.

At Piney Grove one Sunday,

they did a skit, Kumar said. When people arrived for worship, the lights were turned off, there was no bulletin, and a person was vacuuming near the altar as people were seated. One person came in with a flashlight to help people find their seats.

“When you don’t give,” Kumar said, “there’s no bulletin, no lights, no ministry. It was an image of what it would be like if you don’t give generously.”

The FLA taught her and her leaders to talk about finances in a story fashion. Thus, both congregations are working on narrative budgets, she said, so that people can easily see where their money goes.

The main result from the FLA, Kumar said, was to light a fire in the churches and have them look in the financial mirror.

“What I’ve seen is that people are committed — really committed — to doing what they can,” she said. “Some of them can’t give of their money, but they give of their time, talents and service.”

The FLA, she said, is a good way to start thinking about promoting generous giving in your congregation.

“The 18 months may seem like a long time,” she said, “but it really isn’t. As you get engaged, you get inspired and motivated, and you really don’t think about the time you have to commitment. It gives you hope, especially when you don’t have it. It says, ‘There’s somebody out there to help you.’ It is well worth the investment and the time.”

For information on the next Financial Leadership Academy, visit <https://midatlanticfoundation.org/education/financial-leadership-academy/>