



Nia Thomas, an artist from Van Buren UMC, paints a mural during the dedication and opening of the Under My Care House at the church. The former parsonage will now be used for women's housing. See story below.

Vacant parsonage becomes house of healing for women

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMCConnection Staff

EVERY SUNDAY MORNING for months, Pastor Lucinda Kent stopped in the breezeway between the parsonage and church at Van Buren UMC in Washington, D.C. Quietly, almost without notice, she painted one of the bricks on the empty house, reminding her of the vision she had for a building that had hit hard times: a family of raccoons had inhabited the attic and church members were afraid to enter the building; some turkey buzzards had set up shop; it sat empty for about 15 years; bamboo was threatening to take over the yard.

In mid-October, Kent stopped painting. Her vision had become reality.

At a ribbon-cutting Oct. 13, Kent was joined by Ward 4 Washington, D.C., Councilmember Brandon Todd, the Rev. Tony Love, assistant to the bishop, and church members as they unveiled the “Under My Care (UMC) House.” The UMC House will offer transitional housing to women and children ages 5 and younger who are coming from domestic violence situations.

The UMC House is a partnership that came together to birth an entrepreneurship ministry. A \$2,000 Peace with

See Van Buren, page 3

reCall Summit fights racism

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMCConnection Staff

WHEN FIGHTING RACISM, sexism, xenophobia, misogyny and other “isms,” United Methodists are at a distinct advantage. Because we are connected in Jesus Christ and work together as a connectional church, coming together across theological and political lines is part and parcel of what we do.

That was part of the hope and challenge offered by Jim Wallis, president and founder of Sojourners, and Marvin McMickle, president of Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School,

at the reCall Summit Oct. 26 and 27.

More than 100 United Methodists from throughout the Northeastern Jurisdiction were implored to move towards advocacy and action on these issues at the Summit, co-sponsored by the Baltimore-Washington Conference and the Multi-Ethnic Center for Ministry of the Northeastern Jurisdiction. This was the second such annual gathering. Two years ago, delegates at the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference pledged to work intentionally to “fight the scourge of racism” and unanimously approved a “Call

See reCall, page 3

Change Makers create new kind of church

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMCConnection Staff

IT’S CHURCH, BUT better than church. Or, it’s not church, but churchy. Or it’s church, only different. It’s church as church should, or could, be church.

Defining the BWC’s new Change Maker ministry, which lies at the intersection of organized religion and social innovation, can lead church people into verbal calisthenics. It can also lead them to encounters with fascinating new ministry.

In a nutshell, Change Makers is a unique ministry of the Baltimore-Washington Conference and Wesley Seminary, funded by a grant, for young adults interested in creating ministry that expands beyond the sanctuary and draws on the best of business, government, non-profits and church to create social change.

Based on experiences at Taste and See events around the conference, several people applied to participate in a 10-month project made possible by a Young Clergy Initiative grant from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. It started with an immersion experience focusing on innovation in London and San Antonio, Texas. From there, they’ve begun sharing ideas and experimenting.

“This is very experimental. But I’d rather live with failure than regret.”

— Ram Gonzalez

In May, they’ll take next steps to accelerate their social innovation and create a new expression of church. Along the way, mentors accompany the Change Makers in having vocational and theological conversations.

In San Antonio last month, five young adults from the BWC came together with leaders from London’s Matryoshka Haus, pioneers in Christian social innovation. The five had missed the main trip to London for a Learning Lab, and so this experience was created for them.

In a whirlwind week, they heard from entrepreneurs changing the culture in San Antonio, a city with immense personality and the nation’s largest disparity between its wealthiest and poorest people.

Chefs, farmers, business people, designers, artists, journalists, investors, a meditation teacher, tour guides, historians, social

See Change Makers, page 5

ON THE WEB:

Videos and other resources on General Conference 2019.

bwcumc.org/resources/umc-commission-on-a-way-forward/



By MANDY SAYERS
Lead Pastor, Glen Mar UMC, Ellicott City

ADVENT IS A season of expectation as we prepare for the birth of the Christ child (again) and the coming of Christ in fullness, as in “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.” It’s an unusual posture to be in, and an unusual season. We want to experience the Advent of our Lord anew and we want to cling to important traditions, and if we are old enough to have had losses, this season may bring up the “expectation” of a hard anniversary or a person that will be missing from our Christmas table.

This time of preparation is quite fraught for many of us. To sing “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” in 2018 may seem particularly urgent for some or even frustratingly pointless for others who cry, “O Lord, how long?”

Again, we light the Advent wreath. Again, we decorate our hearths and homes. In a sense, we think we know just what to expect. Another Thanksgiving with our dysfunctional family, another choral cantata, another Christmas Eve, another Auld Lang Syne.

Advent comes to us in all its unruly chaos with a different set of expectations in mind. Advent invites us to open our hearts and

lives, trusting God to do a new thing, looking for God to act in a way that defies our mundane expectations.

If we have an intentional Advent, with spiritual disciplines and preparations for the birth of Jesus rather than seeking the demise of our credit score, we just might see the God we did not expect, showing up around the edges, sanctifying the ordinary and making space for big and small miracles.

How will your church wait and prepare, not for the Advent We Expect, but the Advent God is Expecting? How can we turn the world’s expectations upside down this year? What would that look like for your neighbors, who may think they know just exactly what to expect, in a November election year, with the holidays around the corner like a test coming you didn’t study for?

When it comes to Jesus, it’s best to expect the unexpected. Like the last being first, and the first being last. Like sowing love instead of hate. Like being ready when the Holy Spirit blows apart our expectations in favor of God’s expectations.

Happy Advent. Expect the unexpected.

Ancient church mothers and fathers often greeted one another with the phrase, “Give me a word.” This greeting led to the sharing of insights and wisdom. Today we continue this tradition with this monthly column.

By DARYL WILLIAMS
Pastor, St. Paul UMC, Oxon Hill

I WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER March 18, 2016, fondly. It was on that date, sitting in a doctor’s office, that my wife and I were informed that she was indeed pregnant.

It took a moment for the gravity of those words to sink in. Before we went into that office we were just two happy newlyweds having a great time. We were all about dinners out, trips here and there, romantic dates and all the things the newly married do.

After that announcement, we were suddenly something quite different. We were now expecting.

It was a change of status that we were happy had happened, but the meaning of it all felt like a ton of bricks had been dropped on us. Suddenly everything was different because something new was coming. Not here yet, but certainly coming.

When you expect something, you have to begin to prepare for its arrival. For us that meant wholesale changes to the life that we were living; after all, we were expecting. So, the house had to be redesigned; babyproofing began; new furniture arrived on a regular basis; offices became nurseries and man caves

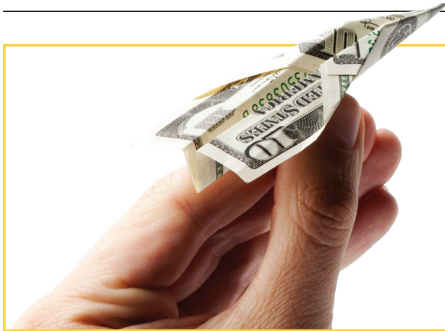
became play rooms. After all we were expecting.

The cute sports car that was great for date nights and romantic getaways had to find a new home and be replaced with a sensible family sedan; after all we were expecting. Maybe now was not the best time to take on big new undefined projects at work, or plan a fall vacation, or get rid of the life insurance policies; after all we were expecting.


Then, as we expected, but a couple weeks early, what we expected came to fruition in the form of a bouncing baby boy, and all of our preparation while we were expecting paid off.

Today, I invite you to prepare for what you expect. If you are expecting to get a spouse one day, start preparing now. If you expect a promotion on your job, start preparing now. If you expect a blessing from God, start preparing now.

To expect something is to know that it is on the way and patiently wait for its arrival. No matter what it is, no matter how long it takes, keep watching, keep knowing, keep expecting... and while you’re waiting, start preparing.



The symbol to the right appears with stories that show your mission-share dollars at work, making a difference in people’s lives. For more information about where your dollars go, visit: bwcumc.org/administration/finance/apportionment-giving/



EVENTS

Bishop’s Advent Day Apart
Nov. 13, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Epworth UMC, Gaithersburg

A time apart for clergy with guest preacher, the Rev. Kirk Byron Jones. Learn more at bwcumc.org/pre-adventdayapart

Conversation on a Way Forward
Nov. 28, 10 a.m to 3 p.m.
Gaithersburg UMC

Rev. Tom Salsgiver, Assistant to the Bishop in the Susquehanna Conference, and a member of the Commission on a Way Forward, will be the speaker. Bring your lunch or plan to eat at one of the nearby restaurants. Info: bwcumc.org/wayforwardconversation

Early Response Team Training
Certification: Dec. 1, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. — Benevola UMC
Re-Certification: Dec. 1, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. — Benevola UMC

The BWC’s Abundant Health Board is committed to organizing teams of skilled individuals to be ready to respond to any

form of disaster. bwcumc.org/ministries/abundant-health/disaster-mission/

ROCK 2019
Feb. 8-10, 2019
Convention Center, Ocean City, Md.

Registration is now open for ROCK 2019, a retreat for youth. The featured speaker this year will be Ben Glenn, the Chalk Guy. Salvador will provide the music and Egypt Speaks is the weekend’s spoken word artist. ROCK is designed as a God-encountering, life-changing, high-energy retreat focusing on revival for youth and adults. Registration costs increase Dec. 1. bwcumc.org/rock

Retracing the Steps of Freedom
April 6-11, 2019


This immersion experience will visit some of the most significant venues of the Civil Rights movement. Costs include motor coach to Birmingham, Ala., lodging, and immersion sites. bwcumc.org/stepsoffreedom

We strive for accuracy in the UMConnection.

In the October issue, a photo on page 1 is of Linda Flanagan, not the Rev. Angela Flanagan.

On page 8, the Discipleship Academy should have been called the Discipleship Agency in the headline.

We regret the errors.



Bishop LaTrelle Easterling
Melissa Lauber
Erik Alsgaard
Alison Burdett
Myca Jones
Linda Worthington

Resident Bishop
Director of Communications
Managing Editor
Multimedia Producer / Graphic Designer
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reCall: Challenging the church's part in divisive 'isms'

From page 1

to Action” resolution that called for the church to do more to fight discrimination, to confront racism and to affirm that all lives matter in God’s eyes. The reCall Summit is one piece of the response.

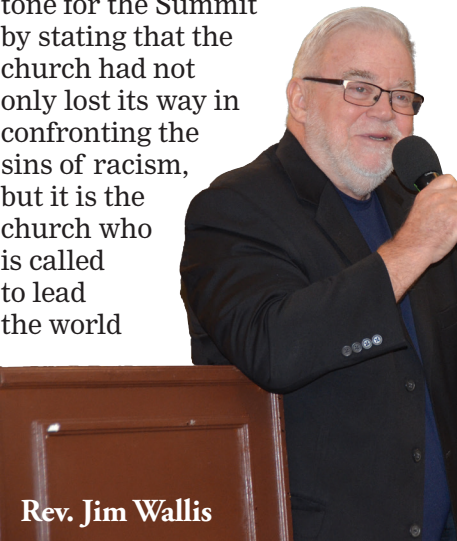
Wallis said that there are times when advocates fighting against racism want to quit; there are times when they get discouraged.

“Whether to give up or not is a privilege,” he said. “A lot of people don’t have that; they’re just trying to survive one day to the next.”

In his three talks on Oct. 27, Wallis spoke about hope, change, racial geography, and much more.

“People of faith are the ones who can stop trains,” Wallis said. “What are the trains you can stop? We have the people already who believe that we’re going to get there. What I’m talking about is acting to stop the trains.”

In her opening worship sermon, Bishop LaTrelle Easterling set the tone for the Summit by stating that the church had not only lost its way in confronting the sins of racism, but it is the church who is called to lead the world



Rev. Jim Wallis

forward. “There is no one race that is the standard,” she said. “There is no one race that the rest of our selves need to try and assimilate ourselves to. There is no ‘other’ race. All of us were created in the ‘Imago Dei,’ the Image of God.”

If we are to reclaim our “authentic voice for activism,” Bishop Easterling said, “and become the beloved community... this is our journey: until we can look at each other and not see Latino/Latinex, Native American, Korean, Black, African, Israeli, Palestinian... until we can look at each other and see nothing but Christ, we have fallen below the baptismal vows we took. Until we believe that all people have inherent worth and dignity, we will be mere wayfarers on the road.”

Time and again, participants at reCall were challenged by the speakers on issues dividing our country. McMickle, a Southern Baptist with deep roots in the local church and in advocacy, spoke during three sessions on how Jesus called his followers to be “witnesses.”

“Do you see what’s happening in our country?” he asked. “You know the saying: ‘If you see something, say something.’” It’s at this point, he said, that courage comes in. And it’s also at this point that the church falls short, especially the preachers.

“Why?” McMickle asked. “We have to ask: how much are we willing to suffer for the things we



Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, center, preaches at the opening worship of the reCall Summit.

say about the things we see?” That suffering results from *παρρησία*, the Greek word “*parresia*,” which means speaking truth to power or, as McMickle said, “bold speech without regard for the safety of the speaker.”

Taking it further, McMickle asked the preachers in the room about their sermons. “If every sermon is well received,” he asked, “what are you saying?”

McMickle spent one of his sessions expounding on where Christ’s followers are called to be witnesses.

“Jesus intentionally sent his disciples to places and people he knew they did not want to go,” McMickle said. “So, fix in your mind, if you will, from outside the front window of your church, who are the people and where are the places you would never ask your church members to go?”

And if we really believe that God created the heavens and the earth, as recorded in Genesis, McMickle said, then there are no places on earth where we shouldn’t also be God’s witnesses.

“God lays sovereignty to everything God made,” he said. “God has no favorite nation, no favorite race, no favorite nothing. You are not just patriots, you are witnesses to the global God who has the whole world in his hands.”

Wallis brought a similar message as McMickle. Noting that President Lincoln, years ago, appealed to “our better angels,” he said that recent events have shown just how close to the surface our demons are.

“Jack is out of the box,” Wallis said. “There’s a direct strategy of fear, led by Washington, trying to evoke fears, resentments and hatreds of the ‘other.’ The elephant in the room is, that by 2040-something, we’ll no longer be a white majority nation. We’ll be a majority of minorities. A lot of white folks have no idea how to deal with that.”

Wallis agreed with McMickle that it is long past time for preachers and pulpits to change the world, adding that pulpits don’t change the world unless they spark movements of ordinary citizens.

Van Buren: 'Our community will know we're not dead'

From page 1

Justice grant from the Baltimore-Washington Conference helped buy new appliances for the kitchen. A \$10,000 grant from Global Ministries furthered the work, while construction contractors pitched in with reduced-price work. Countless hours of volunteer work helped to bring the house up to code, including colorful painted stairwells, window treatments and art throughout. The church also partnered with another non-profit in the community to help screen potential residents.

Kent said that the first residents at the UMC House will arrive in November, each family staying between three and six months. The house is capable of handling between eight and 12 people. Each family will have its own bedroom and there’s a separate play room just for the children. A full kitchen, pantry, and dining room offer communal space, as well as a large living room.

“Every person who is displaced has different levels of need,” Kent said. “Because we won’t have full time counselor people in the house, we need people who are fairly independent with living and don’t have issues with substance abuse, or who have very high security types of situations, or children that have special needs that we’re not equipped for.”

The UMC House is a signal, Kent said, that the church wants to work

with its community. That’s why it was important, she said, to have Councilmember Todd present.

“If this church was full of people, it would be awesome,” Kent said. “However, I don’t think that that’s our best work. I think that in this day and age, we have to be relevant. People are evaluating churches by our work. I think they are less interested in what you might have to say on Sunday if they cannot see who you are Monday through Saturday.”

Julia Maxwell, a long-time member of Van Buren and one of the leaders behind UMC House, said that she was thrilled the parsonage was being returned to active ministry.

“I wouldn’t even come inside,” she said. “There were animals all over the place.” Maxwell added that the floors of the house needed to be cleaned and refinished; walls needed repairing and painting; everything was a mess.

But sitting on a couch in the House after the ribbon-cutting, Maxwell smiled. “I think this is wonderful,” she said. “Half of the people working here are not members of our church; they’re members of other churches. Our community will know that we’re not dead; we’re still alive.”

Kent is a certified candidate for ordained ministry on the Elder track, and currently enrolled at Wesley Theological Seminary. She also serves as Director of

Operations for National UMC in Washington. She had been seeking clarity around her call to ministry prior to coming to Van Buren. Amid struggles with her candidacy and course work, she received a phone call from the district superintendent on a Friday night. She was introduced at the church on Saturday. She was announced as the new pastor on Sunday.

“When I arrived the first day, that Saturday, to meet the community as their pastor, I saw the house and I was thinking, ‘Now I know why I’m here,’” said Kent. A licensed local pastor who is in her first appointment, Kent has a background in property development. “This is something I know how to do,” she said. “I can take land and do something with it. I’m a builder.”

In her “previous life,” as she

calls it, Kent served as the CFO of a “significant real estate developer and property management company” in Chevy Chase. Putting those skills from corporate management to work at Van Buren was only natural.

When she first walked through the parsonage, Kent said that church members were nervous both for her safety and what she might find. “They didn’t know who or what was living in there,” she said. “I can be fearless; I trust God a lot. But they wanted me to be a bit more level-headed about it.”

Kent sees the opening of the UMC House as a beginning, not an end. So, what’s next for Van Buren? Kent has a “small” vision: tiny homes, built in the spacious area behind the church.



The Rev. Tony Love, left, stands with Pastor Lucinda Kent inside the UMC House, the former parsonage at Van Buren UMC.

Expert explores vibrant youth ministry

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

THE DEFINITION OF youth ministry, according to Mark DeVries, is “one failure after another, with enthusiasm.” DeVries, the founder of Ministry Architects in Nashville, Tenn., offered that bit of truth Oct. 20 at Bethany UMC in Ellicott City, as children and youth ministry staff and volunteers came together for training.

Blending humor, biblical truths, and the voice of more than 28 years of experience as a youth pastor, DeVries addressed how to start and keep children’s and youth ministry sustainable and vibrant.

At the heart of it, DeVries said, is the Gospel message of God’s love shown through Jesus Christ. Getting that message to children is the task of this ministry.

Having DeVries present the training is part of an ongoing effort to create skilled servant workers in young people’s ministry for the Baltimore-Washington Conference, said Cheryl Cook, coordinator of Young People and Special Projects.

During the Young People’s Ministry focus groups, which were held in September, “one of the key take-aways... was a strong desire from local church staff members and volunteers for more training opportunities,” Cook said. “We know that children and youth workers often burn out, and the turnover can be really high. Building sustainable, long-term ministry is essential for every local church.”

That’s because, according to recent statistics, youth pastors average about three years in each job, and the Internet is filled with

horror stories of volunteer and staff burnout.

DeVries thinks he has an answer to this: laying a solid foundation using systems that work, time after time.

Offering 15 essential systems for ministry, DeVries focused on three during the workshop. These systems, he said, happen beneath the surface of your ministry and are not what people see on a day-by-day basis. “Like your indoor home plumbing, you only notice it

– the second-most essential system – invite the people in the data base to special events. The calendar system, DeVries said, is used to map out what your ministry is going to do over the next 12 months. “Not the ‘every week’ stuff,” he said, “but the big stuff.”

And when you invite children and youth to these events, invite them to serve alongside you. “Adolescents are hard-wired for heroism,” DeVries said. “They love

“You know you’re in a stuck ministry,” he said, “when the answer to your problems all start with the words, ‘we just...’ ‘We just need more money...’ ‘If we just had more kids...’”

The answer, he said, isn’t a quick fix but instead, a systematic approach. He encouraged patience, prayer, and more patience.

It’s critical, DeVries said, to attend to the “dance floor” of any ministry, but especially for children and youth. DeVries used a parable of a ballerina dancing at Carnegie Hall to illustrate his point.

The dancer is beautiful, flawless in her jump, DeVries said. She is poised to land when, suddenly, her foot pierces the dance floor. When that happens in youth ministry – when staff or volunteers suddenly crash and burn – the church often blames the dancer, not the floor.

“We know that we all have amazing dancers,” he said. “You need structures to support the floor.”

“Children’s and youth ministry are so critical,” DeVries said.

“You get to step into the gaps that happen between kids and their parents. No parent – no leader – can do it by themselves.”

One of the other great benefits of the training on Saturday, Cook said, was seeing the connectional church being connectional.

“There were two youth workers who ended up at the same table,” she said, “and they found out that they were not only in the same district, but their churches were in the same town only a few miles away from each other and they had never connected before. They shared contact info and began talking about ways they could partner and share resources.”



The Rev. Mark DeVries, an expert in sustainable youth ministry, presents a workshop at Bethany UMC in Ellicott City Oct. 20.

when it breaks,” he said.

The most important system is a data base. This doesn’t have to be high-tech and expensive, he said, adding that he’s seen effective data bases done on 3 by 5 index cards.

“We’re keeping up with real-life human beings,” he said. “Who are ours? Who’s baptized here? Whose parents are here? Make a list of who your kids are. Anyone you meet belongs in the data base.”

Then, utilizing a calendar system

to, and need to, serve.”

Relationships between adults and youth are essential, he said, because transformation happens one kid at a time. Thus, building a sustainable children’s and youth ministry is all about creating experiences where real relationships can happen.

In his work as a consultant, DeVries said that many times he is asked to help a church “un-stick” themselves in children’s and youth ministry.

Campus Ministry relies on Student Day gifts

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

UM Student Day is Nov. 25. On this Special Sunday, churches are asked to take up a Special Offering to support scholarships nationally, and to assist four area campus ministries. One of these ministries is at Frostburg University.

STARTING COLLEGE CAN be a stressful time in any young person’s life, but for a selection of students at Frostburg University, the fall of this year took on new challenges, which they were able to meet only with the assistance of the Campus Ministry there.

These students, explained the Rev. Cynthia Zirlott, are the ones aging out of foster care. She cannot share the numbers or names of these students. However, national statistics show that each year, more than 23,000 children in the United States age out of the foster care system; 20 percent of them are instantly homeless.

Only six percent of the children who age out of foster care attend institutions of high learning; only 50 percent of those will graduate with a degree.

These stark statistics make the students at Frostburg rare and prized, Zirlott said.

But when they arrived on campus

this fall, the checks that they would receive for work study didn’t start for a month. So they, and others, were forced to figure out how to get money to eat and for other expenses.

Zirlott has a student fund, which she tries to keep at \$300, and churches and individuals give her \$25 gift cards to share with the students.

“But this semester has been more urgent,” she said. “I had five students come to me this semester. They don’t have enough food. Some are eating only one meal a day. This is unusual, I rarely have more than one or two.”

Zirlott is depending on churches to help her assist the students, and so far, they have. But the need is always there.

“When you’re hungry, you

can’t make the best grades,” she said. “I’m having to take students to the doctors. They’re not feeding themselves. They’re getting sicker quicker. College campuses can be germ factories.”

Frostburg University, in western Maryland, has about 4,700 undergraduates; 89 percent are Maryland residents. They have a 44 percent minority undergraduate enrollment. As a state school, Frostburg has one of the lowest tuitions in the region.

Frostburg has a lot of students in poverty, Zirlott said. “Some students in my ministry grew up in in-and-out of homeless shelters. Social workers steer these students to Frostburg because their financial aid will go further.”

Zirlott and the Campus Ministry offer all the “normal things,” one would expect: Bible study groups, a dance ministry, chapel services on Sunday nights, service Saturdays, mission trips, leadership training and more. Last year, 147

students participated.

But it is often the students with pressing needs that most touch Zirlott’s heart.

“I’m not surprised by anything anymore,” she said. “I’ve been dealing with this for 11 years. It can be heartbreaking.”

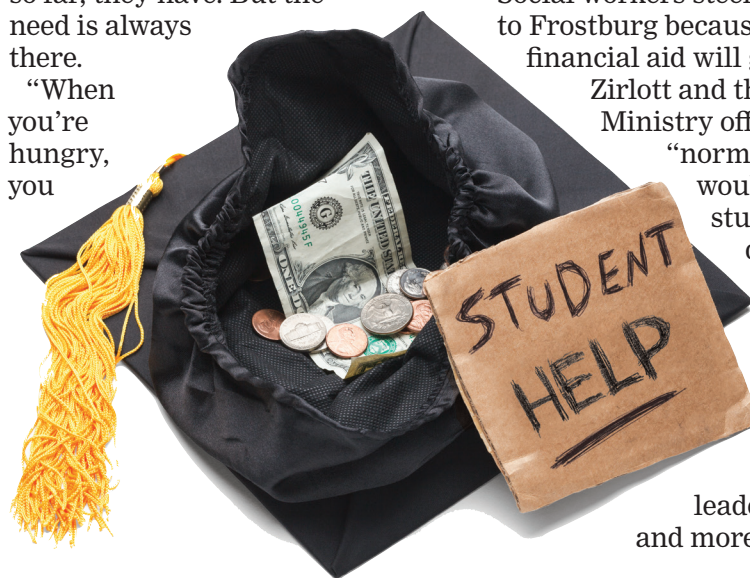
But, she said, she would never stop. “I was one of those students,” Zirlott said. “I’m a product of extreme poverty, too. I put myself through school, too. I kind of know where they’re coming from.”

She remembers learning to live on \$25 a week for food, spending just \$2 on a meal, and working four jobs to put herself through college. “I had to sacrifice. I had to choose between making good grades and making okay grades to work more hours,” she said.

Zirlott is hopeful local churches will remember these students who live so close to them and give to the student emergency fund, to campus ministries, or to the annual Student Day offering.

“People helped me along the way, too,” Zirlott said. “I want to help as many students as I can.”

For more information, contact unitedcampusministry@fsu.org. Send checks for the Student Day offering to: BWC Treasurer, 11711 E. Market Place, Fulton, MD 20759.



Change Makers: A new way of doing/being church

From page 1

activists and others shared how they are bending and breaking the boundaries between business, government, neighborhood groups, education and religion to create something new that blends profit, gift, purpose, community, faith and social action.

In the BWC group, ideas for missional entrepreneurship began to bubble up.

- The Rev. Carey James of Sharp Street Memorial UMC in Baltimore envisions a culinary program that includes job training in the restaurant and food industries and a cooking competition.
- Rachel Livingston, youth pastor at Towson UMC, is designing a Freedom School.
- Rachel Luna, director of Project Transformation in Washington, D.C., is expanding her creative reach for helping needy children in D.C. with literacy and providing leadership and internship opportunities for young adults.
- Mark Bacolod, who moved to Baltimore to live in intentional community, is exploring starting an incubator group for young adults that focuses on leadership and community development.
- Joseph Kitchen, an assistant principal in Prince George's County, is continuing to build on his already successful summer experience for youth at risk, from his home neighborhood in Fresno, California.

During the week, they were immersed in the design thinking process of empathize, define, ideate, prototype and test. But more importantly, they were encouraged to let their imaginations soar.

Too often in the church, people get too busy or too focused to take the time to imagine, said Shannon Hopkins, the founder of Matryoshka Haus.

The Learning Lab gave these change makers opportunities to dream bigger, exploring how current realities can better align with the Kingdom of God. With imagination, Hopkins pointed out, comes risk, experimentation, and creativity.

"Everything we do contains seeds of an alternative economic imagination – where money is a means to an end; where we expect more of people, not less; and where markets and enterprise are humanizing, not demoralizing," she said.

Hopkins encouraged the Change Makers to consider why people of faith aren't at the forefront of social innovation and transformation.

Since 2004, Matryoshka Haus has started 13 major projects. They will continue to work with the BWC to help creative people create ministries with impact that focus on spirituality, community, beauty, justice and social change.

Upon returning from San Antonio, the Change Makers

Change-makers gather
The church must rediscover its relevance, the Change Makers believe. It has the resources, it has the good ideas. It has the will and the way. What it is missing is imagination. And so, they offer opportunities for people to get out of their contexts and into their imaginations. ▼



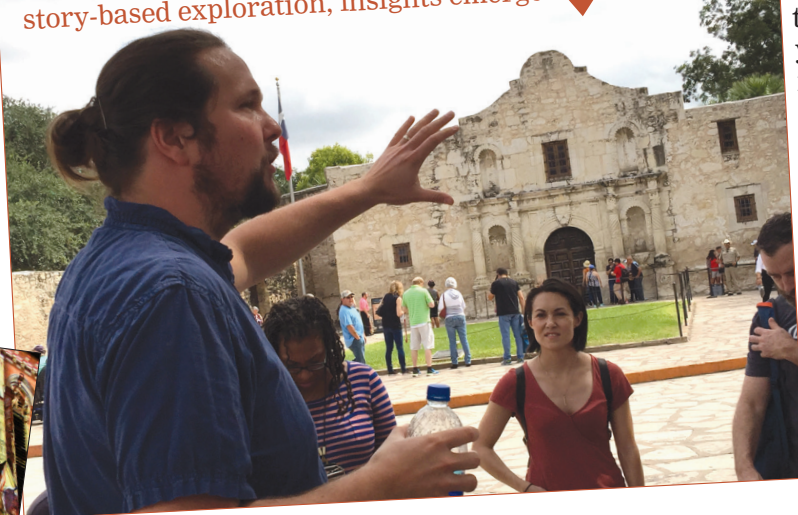
Church reflects history

After dark, we sat outside the church in a park and watched an artistic installation that used music and light to cast images onto the exterior of San Fernando church to tell the story of the city. ... It seemed an ideal metaphor — people's lives unfolding in the sweep of history, shaped by and changing the church with the passing of time. ▼



Remember the Alamo!

At the Alamo, one of America's iconic landmarks, Matt Valler shared his City Hack story-telling ministry. It was a remarkably simple idea: wander and wonder around a specific place, ask questions and delve into history, character and setting. What resonates, what causes dissonance, and how is that dissonance resolved? In that story-based exploration, insights emerge. ▼



New flavor of mission

We went on a taco hop of the city's best flavors. Ram Gonzalez shared how he uses his financial expertise as the CEO of a new investment company to assist people who face foreclosure. He believes if you can help, you should help, otherwise, you become part of the problem. "This is very experimental," he admits. "But I'd rather live with failure than regret." ◀



Spirit-sparked creation

Some people pursue art for art's sake, but Rex Hausmann creates at the urging of the Holy Spirit. "That Holy Spirit – it's everything," he said. But his creative spirit doesn't stop at the end of his paintbrush. Rex and his parents run Hausmann Millworks, a large factory space that's home to 47 studios rented by local artists. ▼



'Intrepreneurs' sow hope

Elizabeth Biedrzycki calls herself an "intrapreneur," serving with humility, building relationships, noticing where God's people are living in broken places and putting her heart to work there. She sees the border as two pieces of cloth, sewn together and now being pulled apart in ways that weaken the stitches, fray the edges and rip the material. She hopes to mend the world. ▼



have been meeting with regional cohort groups and mentors.

In these settings, they'll more sharply define the problems they want to address, explore the resources available to them, "ideate and iterate" by experimenting with plans and projects that make an impact, begin collaborations, identify roadblocks, and figure out next steps.

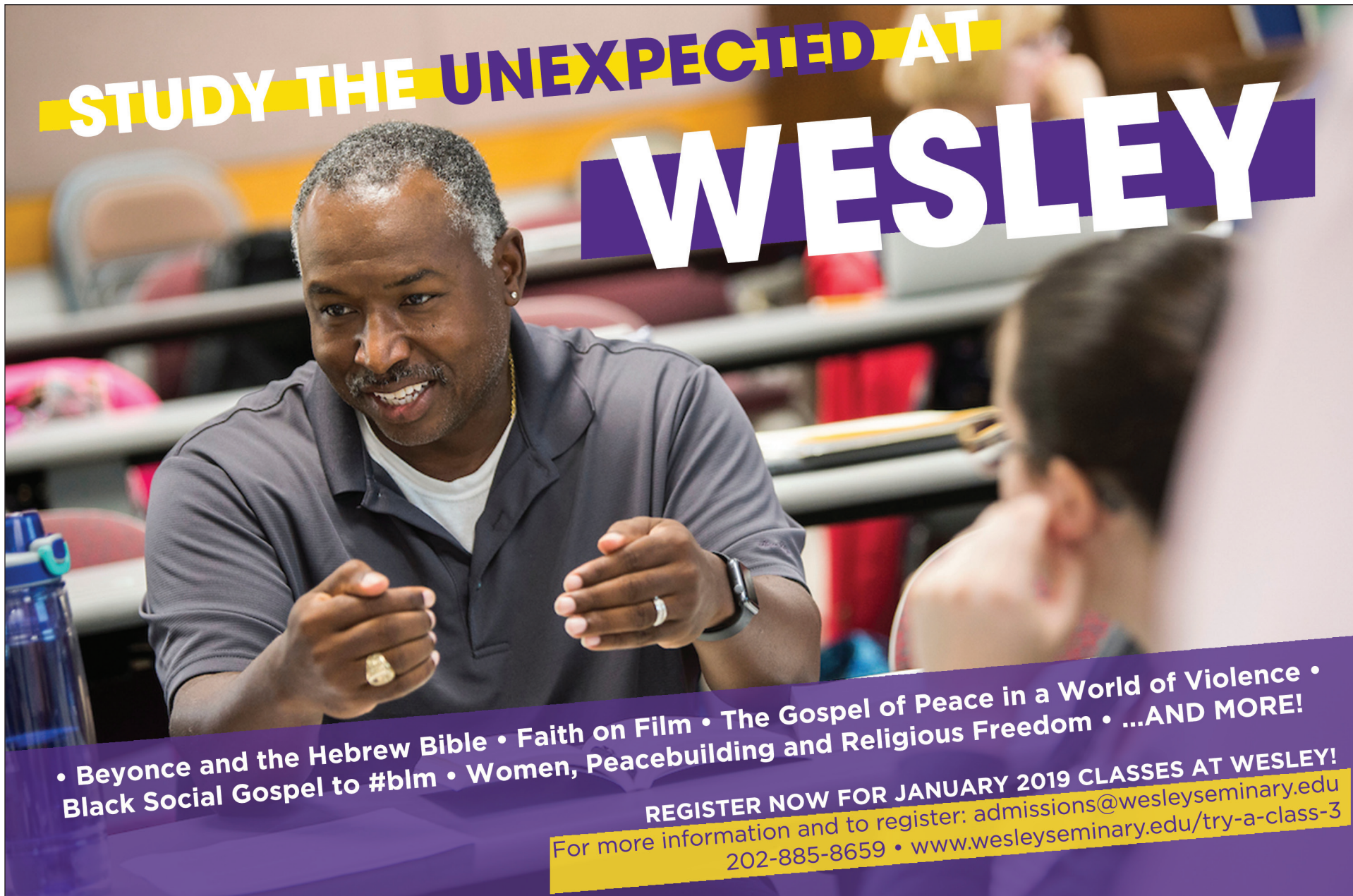
Next May, the Change Makers will participate in a Jumpstart session that moves them further along the path from ideas to action.

At the London Learning Lab earlier this year, the Change Makers returned inspired by the thought that, "You just might be God's answer to the question your community is asking." From San Antonio, they discovered that imagination unlocks doors, broadens horizons, opens eyes to new visions and gives God's people wings. It's church. And it's more.

Tastes of Faith

Gastronomy is the lore and love of food. Chef Josh Schwencke has a passion for food: how it heals, delights and comforts, enables people to transcend differences and ego and the stories told about and over food that define people and whole cultures. With the Gastronomy Company, he's using that passion to change the world, one plate at a time. ▼





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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Happy birthday, centenarian

RAWLINGS – Nellie Rexroad celebrated her 100th birthday at Dawson UMC in July. She's older than the current church, which was built in 1938. Her husband, Therman Rexroad, who died at 97 in 2015, helped dig the foundation with his team of horses and plow.

Nellie Rexroad has been active in the church, teaching Sunday school and serving as past president of the Ladies Group. The Rexroads also served together as MYF leaders.

They were both members of the "Old Dawson Church (i.e. before 1938). She first joined as a teen-ager, "a long time ago," said her daughter, Debra Rexroad. She still attends when she is able.



Nellie Rexroad

Audrey Cimino, executive director of the Community Foundation.

For Jordan, philanthropy is being involved with her school, her church and the county's NAACP organization.

Among her many activities, she has helped to raise money for youth mission trips for Strawbridge UMC and is the president of the Stand Up Club at her high school, which puts on the annual Unity Day and culture festival at Westminster High and provides a safe environment for students who have been bullied.

John Wesley UMC turns 205

BALTIMORE – John Wesley UMC in Baltimore is coming to the culmination of celebrating 205 years in ministry. Throughout 2018, the members have participated in various community service projects and fellowship, as well as intentional worship, prayer and fasting. On Oct. 20, District Superintendent Wanda Duckett spoke at an anniversary banquet held at the New Psalmist Baptist Church Hall.

The celebrations aren't over yet: Bishop LaTrelle Easterling is scheduled to preach at the 11 a.m. worship service Nov. 25.

'Boot Camp' for Deaf ministries

PASADENA – "It's important that churches be more accessible and empowering for Deaf, hard of hearing and Deafblind persons and their families," said the Rev. Leo Yates Jr., to those gathered at Magothy UMC Church of the Deaf for "Deaf Ministry: Boot Camp" Oct. 13.

The workshop included an introduction to sign language, empowering Deaf leadership and Deaf music ministry. Other topics of interest were implementing a hard of hearing ministry, a disability ministry, mission opportunities and best practices. The full day was indeed full of many resources and ideas for an inclusive ministry to the Deaf.

At the end of the day, participants prayed with each other and encouraged each other in their endeavors, both for new ministries and expanding already existing ministries to the Deaf and hard-of-hearing.

Shank enters Hall of Fame

HAVRE DE GRACE – Soon to grace a hallway of Havre de Grace H.S. will be four portraits of inductees to its Hall of Fame. One of those is Mitchell "Mitch" Shank, a member of Havre de Grace UMC.

The Hall of Fame inductees are recognized for their extraordinary accomplishments and providing role models for current students, staff and community.

Shank was selected for giving teenagers their first job at his River City Ice Jam, his promotion of tourism as director of the HdeG Decoy Museum and working with the Lock House Museum and Decoy Museum. History and decoy making have been a huge part of Shank family life. He is active with the local Chamber of Commerce, as well as the church and the Elementary PTA.

Learning faith from a dog

HAGERSTOWN – From "no pets allowed" to a dog-based devotional

may seem like a long leap, but for R. Eileen Reid, the wife of the Rev. Randy Reid, pastor of Emmanuel UMC, it's a new life. Eileen Reid recently self-published a devotional book, "Just Another Dog Devotional: 201 Devotions Inspired by Our Pups."

"My marriage had been pet-free for 28 years due to my allergies," she wrote. Then one night a daughter dropped a chocolate lab puppy on her bed stating that her apartment didn't allow pets and would you keep it until...

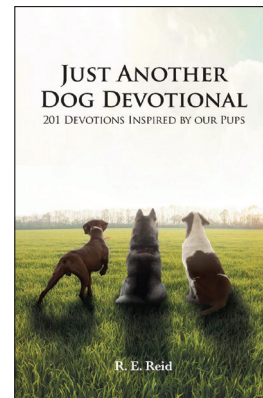
The puppy-sitting grew, soon another, then their son added a husky.

"Life as we had known it changed drastically," Reid said.

The experience has led her to believe that one seldom finds anyone or anything as faithful as a dog. "I've learned a lot," she says, "They have taught me love, obedience and faithfulness."

She's sharing the lessons she's learned through the devotional. "I believe we can become more like our Lord, Jesus Christ, by observing our loyal pets and best friends, the family dog."

The book is available through Amazon and may be ordered on her blog, justanotherdogdevotion.com. Ten percent of sales will be donated to organizations that help animals and 10 percent to Emmanuel UMC. "It is my prayer that every book will not just be a sale but a soul drawn closer to God."



A word from the bishop

Before It Is Too Late

Editor's note: Bishop Easterling shared this 'sacred poem' on Facebook on Oct. 27, the day of the Pittsburgh synagogue shootings.

I do not know exactly what lies ahead; how far we will have to travel on the road of unrest.

I cannot foretell the number of bombs that will have to explode or the lives that will have to be lost before...

Before we understand that we cannot kill each other into the future we think we have imagined.

You cannot hate enough to make yourself happy.

You cannot destroy enough to make yourself feel secure.

You cannot oppress enough to make yourself feel superior.

You cannot commit enough evil

to make yourself feel holy.

I do not know exactly what lies ahead; how far we will have to travel on the road of unrest.

I cannot foretell how many rights will have to be taken away, or how much progress will have to be reversed before...

Before we understand that we cannot persecute each other into the future we think we have imagined.

We cannot neglect each other enough to feel worthy.

We cannot starve each other enough to feel full.

We cannot silence one another enough to feel heard.

We cannot fragment each other enough to feel whole.

I do not know exactly what lies ahead; how far we will have to

travel on the road of unrest.

I cannot foretell how many babies' bodies will have to float on the sea of greed and vainglory before...

Before we understand that we cannot bully our way into the future we think we have imagined.

We cannot bury each other deep enough to feel alive.

We cannot rape each other enough to feel loved.

We cannot infect each other enough to feel well.

We cannot enslave one another enough to feel free.

Before it is too late may we understand that the call is coming from inside the house.

Before it is too late may we comprehend that the Stench

Rot
Brokenness
Emptiness
Insecurity
Woundedness
Disease
is from
within and not
without.
Erasing you
will not heal me
May we
understand
before it is too
late.
God, help us to understand
before it is too late. Amen.



Bishop LaTrelle Easterling

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

BWC WCA Board responds to bishop

RACE AND PEACE be unto you. Our Annual Conference is blessed to have Bishop Easterling as our leader. She is a person of fierce integrity and a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. We pray constantly for our bishop, her family and for her leadership among us.

At this critical time in the life of our UMC, we continue to be confused by the mixed messages coming from our Conference and denominational leadership. However, we write today to address some of the critical issues affecting our Church, and present to you our perspective of a grace-filled, hopeful future.

We are proud that our UMC recognizes women as equal partners in ministry and leadership. There are many places in Scripture where women's leadership of Israel and the church are held up as positive and a blessing. Examples of Deborah, Esther, Priscilla and Aquila all come to mind. In actuality, our church lost its historic focus of the elevation of women to leadership, and it was later recovered. The same can be said for chattel slavery. In fact, our Methodist ancestors were originally champions of the abolitionist cause, until pressure from worldly culture infiltrated the Church and changed it from the outside. It is this which we contend has happened with our divisions on human sexuality.

Let's trust God and each other enough to speak openly and honestly with one another so that while we may hurt, we will do no more harm.

The Baltimore Conference Wesleyan Covenant Association Board: Rev. Kevin Baker, Rev. Rudolph Bropleh, Rev. David Deans, Rev. Charles Harrell, Pastor Brian Berger, Debbie Deans, Johnny Hines, Jr., Michelle Baker, Matthew Sichel.

(See the full letter from the Wesley Covenant Association at: www.bwcumc.org/news-and-views/local-wesley-covenant-association-responds-to-bishop.)

VIEWPOINTS

How to love through resistance

BY GINGER GAINES-CIRELLI*

The language of “resistance” has a long history. I’m not a political theorist or activist; I’m a pastor-theologian and a follower of Jesus. Thus, the language of “resistance” for Christians evolves through prayer, conversation, and practice in a different way.



Sacred resistance is a stance, a way of being in the world, and an ongoing orientation to the world. As followers of Jesus, sacred resistance is at the heart of our *being*, not just our *doing*.

When we gather for the called General Conference in 2019, my deep prayer is that those like myself who are honored with the responsibility to speak and vote as delegates will come without defensive resistance toward other people, a resistance fueled by preconceived or hardened opinions of one another.

Instead, I hope we will arrive committed to “sacred resistance” toward the destructive energies that seek to terminate our communion and to harm those most vulnerable among us. I pray we will arrive energized and fueled by love of God and love of all our neighbors. I firmly believe this is possible — because with God all

things are possible! — and that this is the only way we’ll discern a creative way forward that is truly aligned with God’s vision.

If we truly try to follow Jesus, we’ll understand that God’s creative, mending, saving love is extended to the whole world and is particularly focused on the vulnerable and those experiencing pain or injustice. Even a cursory review of the Gospel accounts of Jesus’s life reveals that he spent most of his energy in the margins, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, confronting injustice, restoring life and dignity to those for whom these gifts had been denied.

There are innumerable persons around the world who suffer the indignities of poverty, violence, injustice, and prejudice. Thanks be to God that our denomination is in solidarity and service with so many people across the spectrum of human affliction.

Yet the UMC singles out LGBTQ persons — who daily face stigma and rejection — and labels these human beings “incompatible with Christian teaching.”

Among us are persons of deep and thoughtful faith who are unable to reconcile their reading of scripture with the claim that LGBTQ people are *just like them* except for sexual orientation or gender identity. There are amazing, faithful, Jesus-following LGBTQ leaders and participants across our church at every level. Many of these persons have great compassion for those who struggle with the scriptures, because they have done the same! There are LGBTQ persons called by God to serve in ordained ministry. There are children in our pews soaking up what they see, hear, and feel, and some of them are LGBTQ. And there are countless LGBTQ persons who left the church or will never enter our blessed

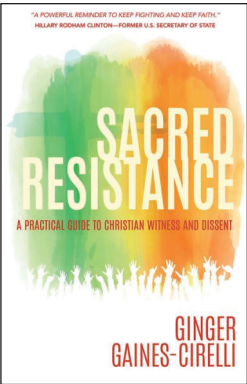
communion because they know they will not be received as God’s dearly loved children.

In his first letter to the Corinthian churches, Paul described life together: “Christ is just like the human body — a body is a unit and has many parts; and all the parts of the body are one body, even though there are many. . . . If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it” (1 Cor 12:12, 26 CEB). What affects one, affects all. This is one reason why Jesus said to “love your neighbor as yourself.”

To love our neighbors as ourselves will require that we see the other persons as human beings, not as walking stereotypes or abbreviations or “issues.” I can’t count the number of times a lesbian or gay friend has said, “I am not an ‘issue!’”

My earnest prayer for General Conference 2019 is that we will participate in God’s mending of the body of Christ, rather than choose to do further harm; that we will see one another as fellow human travelers on the way of Christ and love all our neighbors as ourselves. Even in this difficult moment, I am a person of deep hope. I resist because my hope is in God. And, thanks be to God, my resistance draws me near to evidences that hope is not in vain.

**Rev. Ginger Gaines-Cirelli is Senior Pastor at Foundry UMC in Washington, D.C. This article excerpted from Ministry Matters, Aug. 7, 2018. <https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/9171/how-to-love-through-resistance>*



Lovely Lane UMC brings art into sacred spaces

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

EVER SINCE HUMANS etched their story on caves more than 35,000 year ago, art and sacred space have been intertwined in human history. From its creation in 1884, Lovely Lane UMC in Baltimore has recognized this relationship. Recently, they moved to intentionally strengthen the link between art and sacred space by opening their building to the creation and exhibition of an installation by Melissa Webb.

Both art and religion are transcendent. “They open us up to something larger than ourselves,” said the Rev. Debbie Scott. Even the building the people of Lovely Lane worship in is an acknowledged treasure of architectural art.

Designed by the well-known architect Stanford White, Lovely Lane is patterned after churches in Ravenna, Italy. The bell tower, which has captured Scott’s imagination, echoes the campanile of the 12th century church of Santa Maria at the Abby of Pomposa near Ravenna. The stained-glass windows are by Tiffany.

Behind the sanctuary, is an



An art installation by Melissa Webb, "Proficiencies for Living in Ruin," adorns part of Lovely Lane UMC in Baltimore.

elaborate unused fellowship hall with columns, a balcony, and a pipe organ.

On Oct. 4, Webb, a textile artist, unveiled her large-scale, room-sized, participatory, performative, site-specific installation.

“Proficiencies for Living in Ruins” contains a gazebo and a landscape of hanging creations made of decorated Victorian lampshades.

Visitors enter the space, some even try on some of the hanging “plantaliers” as hats, and walk into a place of intricacies and imagination, romance and altered-realities. It is a place for dreams;

for gentle dancing and stretching one’s perceptions; it is a sacred space inside a sacred space, art living inside art.

An artist statement says the interactive environment “imagines a future where, in the face of deteriorating environmental and

societal stability, humankind and the natural world learn new ways to thrive in symbiosis. Viewers are encouraged to consider their bodies in relation to objects and people within the space — alternatively obscuring and revealing, isolating and conspiring.”

For the leadership of Lovely Lane, the collaboration with Webb and the Art in Sacred Spaces organization, which partners artists and churches, has revealed an opportunity to open their space to new people and ideas as they seek to become a more active member of their community.

The idea for the exhibition began a few years ago when Lena Leone, the church administrator, and Jackie Noller, the co-chair of the finance committee, learned about and then attended a two-day training on Art in Sacred Places.

This group, which was started in Philadelphia by the National Historic Trust and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, is now a

national initiative that creates partnerships between churches, synagogues and mosques and musicians, dancers, writers, sculptors, painters and others.

The arts and artists play an integral role in the neighborhoods around Lovely Lane, said the pair, who are interested in having the church become more of a hub in the community.

Melissa Webb was an early adopter, they said. She works as the exhibitions manager at School 33 Arts Center, empowering other artists to create their visions.

During the run of the show, three Baltimore-based artists, including an opera singer, will react to the installation through the presentation of new, site responsive sound and performance works. These performances, together with the traditional tours of the church are expected to draw close to 1,000 visitors to “Proficiencies for Living in Ruin.”

“Art can be another expression of our faith,” Scott said. “In an historic place like this, so much is so old. We’ve woven something new into this incredible history. It’s a bit like the Ezekiel story. To bring a piece like this to Lovely Lane breathes new life into these old bones.”

“Proficiencies for Living in Ruin” is open from noon to 4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sunday through Dec. 8. Tours are available by appointment. Contact Lena Leone at 410-889-2522 or lovelylane.bcs@gmail.com. For more information, visit <http://lovelylane.net> or www.melissawebbart.com/home.



Rev. Deb Scott, left, with Melissa Webb.

Shrine looks at how history illuminates today

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

THE CALLED SESSION of General Conference in February is raising many questions about the future of The United Methodist Church. Members of the Strawbridge Shrine Association are finding answers from history, and the year 1712, when Francis Asbury first confronted Robert Strawbridge.

Helen Kemp, the curator of Strawbridge Shrine in New Windsor, tells tourists and pilgrims everyday about this Irish farmer who is credited with bringing more than 1,000 souls to Christ. A preacher at heart, Robert Strawbridge is credited with many of Methodism’s firsts: class meeting in America; Methodist meeting house; first Methodist baptism; first Methodist Communion service; and converted the first American-born Methodist local preacher.

And all this, was done, it is noted at the shrine, while he remained a devout lay person.

At the Shrine Association’s annual meeting, the Rev. Douglas T. Tzan, a pastor, professor and historian; John Strawbridge, the lay leader of Lovely Lane UMC and a descendant of Robert Strawbridge; and Delores Martin,

the conference lay leader, explored how the legacy of this renegade of faith might shape the church today.

Tzan unveiled a case study on Robert Strawbridge, which will be part of new pilgrimage initiative being created by the BWC’s Archives and History committee.

The case study was written through the eyes and experience of Francis Asbury, who became Methodism’s first bishop. In it, Asbury knows that an unordained lay person is celebrating Communion and performing baptism, contrary to Christian practice, and it might split the church.

As Tzan continued to speak, the case study unpacked the two approaches to church, obedience and discipleship held by Asbury and Strawbridge, and in the end, the group was asked to discern how they, acting as Asbury, would move forward. In the discussion that followed, history came to life in a spirited way.

The church today needs to more boldly claim that spirit, said Robert Strawbridge, who pointed out that his ancestor was ministering in a time of political tension and divisiveness and the people of the colonies debated about rising up against the government.

“He knew the world was his parish, even when the bishop said,



Marian Gottee, the Tour Guide Coordinator at Strawbridge Shrine, plays the piano during the Shrine's annual meeting.

‘go back and stay in your place,’” John Strawbridge said. “He lit a fire that warms us today.”

Strawbridge left no sermons, letters or other written words. But his actions are a witness, John Strawbridge said. “We need to show a divided world that we’re not as different as we fear. We all have a holy spark within us.”

Martin echoed this call for the laity to claim their passion for ministry. “Our legacy should be

proclaiming Jesus and living out our faith in the world,” she said.

The Strawbridge Shrine is located at 2650 Strawbridge Lane in New Windsor. Learn more about the site, its history and how you can tour the site at www.strawbridgeshrine.org.

The Shrine will host a candle-light Advent service Dec. 9, from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m., at the historic Log Chapel. The Rev. Sarah Dorrance of Middletown UMC will preach.