



A group from the BWC, led by Coordinator of Hispanic/Latino Ministries, Emma Escobar (front row, third from left), walks the border between the US and Mexico in October. Read reflections from the group on page 5.

**THREE NEW
SUPERINTENDENTS
INSTALLED: SEE PAGE 4**

With love and honor, we remember Linda Worthington

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

LINDA WORTHINGTON, WHO wrote more than 800 obituaries and several thousand news items for the Baltimore-Washington Conference during her career as a writer and editor, knew where berries could be gathered by the side of the road between Washington and Luray, Virginia; lived and worked in mission in Vietnam, Thailand, and Senegal; traveled to 35 countries; and belonged to a duck-pin bowling league, died Oct. 20.

That's the thing about obituaries. There's always a comma toward the end of the sentence in that first paragraph, and then the word "died." For some unfathomable reason, the *UMConnection* never imagined running Linda's obit. I still imagine seeing her face when I walk down the hallway.

In the past few years, one of Linda's primary jobs with us was writing the obituaries and memorials for the Journal. Linda tended to the souls of the Baltimore-Washington Conference clergy and their spouses. She listened to people's tears, collected their stories, and honored all the joy, pain and enthusiasms of their living by preserving their memories. And she did this, like she did everything, with touches of humility, grace and earnest devotion.

Since her death, so many people have lifted up what a conference "bedrock" and "institution" she was. Because, she was.



She began working in the BWC in 1998. She loved language. She yielded her red proof-reading pen with little mercy and some aplomb. She was a reader, a journal-writer and, on her commute in her VW bug, she was known to do the Word Scramble in the Washington Post.

Her heart beat for justice — justice for all people. She had strong convictions. In one of the cubicles she once worked in, she hung up pictures and cards featuring doves — for peace, and for the hope that kindness and mercy and *shalom* would prevail. She understood the point of righteous anger. She was a woman who took stands and a visionary who was willing, every once in a while, to break a lance for an ideal.

Every Christmas, she gave us jams and salsa she had canned. The little jars held so much love.

See Tribute, page 3

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

IF YOU LOOK at the masthead on page 2 (that's the box that lists who's who, our mailing address, etc.), you'll see a name printed there for the last time. "Linda Worthington – Communications Associate" is what it reads.

Linda died Oct. 20, and I can't believe I'm writing that.

Linda worked — either as a paid staffer or as a volunteer — for this publication for 21+ years. She served as a copy editor, proofreader, content provider, obituary writer, and constant critic of what I just did in this sentence. Namely, the serial (or Oxford) comma. When we were editing this publication, I would put in the serial comma; Linda would take it out. I would put it back in; Linda would take it out again. To avoid her wrath, I'd leave it out... most of the time.

If you go back through previous issues — or even look at this one closely — if you notice the usage of the serial comma, you'll now know who to blame.

When God created Linda, God took a look at the mold and not only threw it away, but stomped on it, mangled it and mutilated it before it was tossed. To say that Linda was a "tough ol' bird" is meant as a compliment. Nothing seemed to slow her down until the very end. She was an inveterate advocate of social justice, never letting go of her convictions

See Tribute, page 3

Bishop holds listening tours

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

MORE THAN 1,000 people gathered in district meetings this fall to be in conversation with Bishop LaTrelle Easterling about the state of the church and the future focus of the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

Bishop Easterling outlined six foci that will drive the efforts and resources of the Conference as it seeks to live out its vision that "Transformed Lives Transform Lives."

The foci include:

1. Deepening Discipleship;
2. Strengthening Next-Level Leaders;
3. Creating New Faith Expressions;
4. Generating Generosity;
5. Getting and Staying Healthy; and
6. Engaging Young People in Ministry.

The first priority, the bishop said, is deepening discipleship.

"How did you die today?" she asked, quoting theologian Cornell West. "What thoughts or behavior did you lay aside? How have you been broken open? What have we been taught that we need to disabuse ourselves of? How did we let go of some lesser

See Districts, page 6



BY MANDY SAYERS
LEAD Pastor, Glen Mar UMC, Ellicott City

I AM NOW THE proud parent of a college student and a junior in high school. In my mind, they are still in the second grade, but physically they have matured. They are not “grown up” fully but they have certainly grown.

When Paul calls us to “Grow up” into Christ, he’s not talking about physical growth. He’s talking about spiritual maturity, which is much harder to measure than a growth chart on a pediatrician’s wall.

You may not know how to “measure” it, but you know spiritual maturity when you see it. That person who prays for you when they say they’re going to; the person who listens deeply and responds with how God is present in your struggle.

And when churches go through spiritual growth spurts, it shows too: the times that the church gets over squabbles to come together for their community; the time when the church puts “the mission” ahead of “what I personally want right now.”

Part of “growing up into him who

is the head” (Jesus) means thinking of others first, serving one another, and having a teachable spirit.

All Saints’ Day reminded me of those saints for us who are “grown up” in the faith. What makes them saints for us is not their perfection, but rather their priorities, and their perseverance, their spiritual maturity. They remind us that it is entirely possible and even expected that we would “grow up” in our faith. They remind us that if they can do it, we can do it too. They remind us that whatever schisms or perils the church faces in our day, it has faced worse before, and endured.

That great cloud of witnesses cheers us on, and, I think, holds us accountable too.

“Come on,” they say to us, “you can do it.”

Run the race, keep the faith... grow up.

GROW UP

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 WANT TO be a firetruck.” That was the answer that my niece MacKenzie would give whenever she was asked what she wanted to be when she grew up. We all thought it was cute and just assumed that in her three-year-old mind, she equated being a firetruck and a firefighter as the same thing.

That was not the case. She actually wanted to be a firetruck.

I know this because one day I asked her why she wanted to be a firetruck. Her answer was amazing.

She said, “Firetrucks are bright, and red, and loud, and whenever they come by everyone has to get out of the way. I want to be a firetruck.”

And that was that. She had decided that she wanted to be a firetruck.

Sure, she figured out that she couldn’t be a firetruck when she grew up, but now at the age of 16, MacKenzie is living a firetruck-life. She has grown into being

an astounding young lady who is bright, makes a lot of noise in everything that she does, and she has become a leader who her peers get out of the way of and follow when she is coming because of what she brings to the table every day. I guess she really did grow up to be a firetruck.

Friends, all of us are in the continual process of growing up. Growing up is not the profession that you choose; rather it is growing into the person that God has intended for you to be.

Every day we should be growing up in faith, taking the risks, and believing God for the things that God is calling us to. We should be growing up in joy, finding and celebrating the positive in life day by day.

Finally, we should be growing up in love. Take the time to wrap your arms around and serve people near and far so that they feel and see the love of God.

No matter how grown you are, there is still time to grow up into who God wants you to be.

Who Are We?

A Journey from Head to Heart

It's not too late to join in the BWC's new Bible study, which is being hailed for its depth and the excellence of the conversations it's creating. These three, six-week studies explore who we are as a people of God, as United Methodists, and as the people of the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

bwcumc.org/whoarewe

EVENTS

Training Tuesdays

Via Zoom, 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Online traing (using Zoom) for church committee leaders:
Nov. 12 – Trustees
Nov. 19 – Finance
Nov. 26 – Church Council
Dec. 3 – Nominations Committee
Jan. 7 – Unified Board
To learn more and register, visit bwcumc.org/training-tuesdays

Clergy Advent Day Apart

Nov. 18, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Calvary UMC, Mt. Airy
Bishop LaTrelle Easterling invites all clergy to a pre-Advent day apart, a time of worship and learning. The presenter will be David A. Hooker, who teaches and works in the field of conflict transformation and peace building. The cost for the event, which includes lunch, is \$30 for retired clergy and \$45 for active clergy. Visit www.bwcumc.org/event/1371697-2019-11-18-bishops-pre-advent-day-apart/

Migration Sunday

Dec. 1
See the worship resource, developed by members of the BWC, at www.bwcumc.org/migrationsunday

Strawbrdige Shrine Advent Worship Service

Sunday, Dec. 8, 4:30 p.m.
Log Meeting House on campus of Strawbridge Shrine, New Winsdor
Rev. YuJung Hwang will preach at this candlelight service. Visit www.strawbridgeshrine.org.

ROCK Retreat

Feb. 7-9, 2020, Ocean City
This retreat for youth will feature keynote speaker B. Haley, and the music of Aaron Shust. Learn more at bwcumc.org/rock. Nominate a youth for the Moral Courage Award before Nov. 17. See the link on the ROCK page.

Connect Leadership Summit

Hold the dates: March 7, 2020, in the Baltimore & Washington regions, & March 14 in the Southern and Western regions.
Keynote speaker is Daniel Im.

November is a time of discernment for those who would be considered as candidates for the episcopacy. Anyone sensing a call to serve as a bishop in The United Methodist Church should send a 500-word statement to the Rev. Sarah Schlieckert, the BWC delegation secretary, at pastorsarahUMC@gmail.com.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE NOMINATION PROCESS IS AT BWCUMC.ORG/EPISCOPACY

BISHOPS WILL BE ELECTED AT THE NORTHEASTERN JURISDICTIONAL CONFERENCE, JULY 13-17, 2020, AT THE DELTA HOTEL IN HUNT VALLEY. VOLUNTEERS ARE BEING SOUGHT TO HELP THE BWC HOST THIS CONFERENCE. TO VOLUNTEER, CONTACT REV. PATRICIA ALLEN: PASTOR527@GMAIL.COM.

UMConnection

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

Resident Bishop
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Tribute: One-of-a-kind editor, friend, woman of faith

Lauber from page 1

One of her loves was Chevy Chase UMC. She believed the local church had the power to change the world. She believed every person should be trying their very best at whatever passions God placed in their hearts. She also believed strongly in the power of the laity, that they were the heartbeat of the church. She received a Masters degree from Wesley Seminary. Her dearest passion was her family, including her children: Kirby; Judy, who is married to John Ogram; Laurel, who is married to Greg Maxwell; and Melissa, who is married to Chris Kallfelz; her granddaughter, Ruth Johnson; a step granddaughter, Alicia, who is married to Matthew Bean; and three great grandchildren. They were her pride and joy. But she also collected people — people who stayed at her home while they studied in the area, people she worked with in the World Hunger Education Service and the International Voluntary Services Alumni Association and others she encountered. Even though I’ve never met them, I can tell you about Koichi in Tokyo and Pascal in France. For Linda,

sharing people’s stories provided opportunities to see God’s intentions being lived out in our midst. She shared many of these stories in the Making a Difference section of this newspaper, which included news briefs from area churches. Linda understood what really made a difference. I was so lucky to be able to work with her, to be her friend, and to have learned about resilience, hope, and heart-felt passion from her. She taught me not to be afraid to speak out. She gave many people a voice. In the 1930’s, in the decade she was born, some American women were called “broads” or “dames.” These were women who looked life square in the face and scowled at adversity. They had *panache*, didn’t let others define them and were authentically who God created them to be. Linda was a feminist, so I would never have called her a good, old-fashioned dame. But she was, in a way. A grand dame, with a grand heart, who made a difference in our church and in our lives. Linda Crandall Worthington died. Her obituary will continue to be written in the lives of those for whom she once wrote and all those who loved her.

Alsgaard from page 1

around full inclusion in the church, racial and economic justice, and the fact that Duckpin bowling was way better than Tenpin bowling. To say that Linda was one-of-a-kind is an over-simplification. Linda loved her family, her Lord, her church, and her life, usually in that order. She travelled extensively with family and friends, and always documented the trips — and the latest family news — in her annual newsletter, “The Worthington Wanderer.” That homemade newsletter always came out around New Year’s... but not January 1. That’s because it came out around the Vietnamese New Year which, as we all came to learn, is celebrated on the first day of the first month in the Lunar Calendar. I will forever remember the first time Linda drove her new VW Bug to work. Silver/gray in color, it was a sight to behold with Linda sitting in the driver’s seat, barely able to see over the dashboard, with a vase of plastic flowers nestled in the center console. I learned to look for that car in the parking lot, often wondering how she ever made it through the ice and snow on those days when most sane people would

have stayed home. But that was Linda. Dedication to the task knew practically no limits. She would finish editing a project and then come back and ask for more. She worked day and night during several Annual Conference Sessions, never missing a beat or an ill-placed semicolon or comma. In the end, what took Linda from this life to the next was an illness that attacked her heart. That doesn’t surprise me because Linda, for all her grumpy-curmudgeonly-gruff exterior, was a person with a huge heart. It was the biggest and easiest target for disease to attack. She never failed to give of herself to her family, her friends, or her co-workers. I will always treasure the jars of homemade mint jelly she made especially for me to enjoy on my Welsh lamb. Rest in peace, thou good and faithful servant. You were an inspiration, a pain-in-the-neck, and a joy to behold. And if I know you, you’re up there in heaven, editing the Holy Beacon (or whatever Heaven’s newspaper is called), and removing serial commas left, right, and center. Or is that “left, right and center”? You will be missed.

Strawbridge Shrine is an inspiration for lay revival

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

THE STRAWBRIDGE SHRINE in New Windsor, Md., is a Methodist treasure, a testament that faith can unfold over conversations by the kitchen sink and go on to shape an entire continent. The Shrine tells the story of one Methodist maverick, and his wife, who took authority, performed the denomination’s first baptism in America and created bands of people whose hearts beat enthusiastically as they created a way of being church on a new continent. The Shrine is a landmark to Methodist apostolic hope. But if it’s just revered as history, we’ve lost is meaning, said the Rev. Lou Piel, president of the Strawbridge Shrine Association. The Shrine exists for today’s children to illuminate their heritage, for spiritual seekers looking to discover how to boldly step out into faith, and for life-long United Methodists, hungry to be inspired and deepen their discipleship. “Our job is to lift up Robert Strawbridge’s story,” Piel said. “We refuse to relegate him to history.” “This is not just an historical place to visit. It’s a place to delve into the life of God’s work in the world,” said the Rev. Doug Tzan, the Shrine Association’s vice-president. “Robert and Elizabeth Strawbridge were ordinary and unimportant by the world’s stands. But their story reveals the truth of the Gospel. ... Thanks be to God who can do extraordinary things through ordinary us.” At the annual meeting of the Strawbridge Shrine Association at Stone Chapel Oct. 26, members reviewed the state of the 11 buildings on the shrine’s 33-acre site, which Piel referred to as “the

best kept secret in the Baltimore-Washington Conference.” They heard reports about mold remediation efforts; a new roof put on the John Evan’s House with funds from the Conference Trustees; the work with tour groups by the shrine’s curator, Helen Kemp; the 1,900 visitors to the shrine’s website; and the Candlelight Advent worship service Dec. 8 at the Log Meeting House. Bishop LaTrelle Easterling also addressed the members about the witness of Robert and Elizabeth Strawbridge and the ministry of the laity, who serve as “the backbone of the church,” illuminating what can happened when “the Word of God becomes like fire shut up in our bones. “We have turned what was meant to be a refueling station for people who spent themselves during the week living the Gospel message, into a tame Sunday service,” the bishop said. She encouraged the laity to change this. “You don’t need a certificate; you don’t need a bishop to tell you that you can tell the Gospel story. If you have the word of God like fire shut up in your bones, nobody will be able to sit you down or shut you up,” the bishop said. “Do you have a living room, or access to a living room? You can share the Word of God. Do you have an oak tree, or access to an oak tree? You don’t need anyone to give your permission to share the word of God. ... The redemption story needs to be lived and extolled every week by the priesthood of all believers.” Bishop Easterling shared that she, like other historians, senses the winds of an historic revival beginning to blow through the church. “I believe this revival belongs to the laity,” she said. “The future



Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, right, joins in a hymn with Strawbridge Shrine Curator Helen Kemp (in period costume) during the Shrine's annual meeting.

belongs to the laity. If the laity rise up and again claim the Word of God, like fire shut in their bones, there will be a reawakening for the people called Methodist.” The bishop said she resonates with those who suggest that the typical laity-clergy system practiced among most churches is detrimental to believers. In this system, she said, too often the professional class of people preaches and preaches while the majority of believers sit and listen. “We need active engagement,” the bishop proclaimed, “active participation, active going and running and telling, and doing of our lay persons. For no matter how good and uplifting the ordained clergy’s message might be, as long as the laity members are not active ministering and preaching Christ, we will lack growth. “And beloved,” she added, “don’t we have a story to tell the nations? All of God’s children can and should go and tell of the one who redeems, the one who restores, the one who heals, the one who loves without condition, the one who reconciles broken

lives and relationships, the one who forgives our deepest darkest sins and who blesses us beyond our comprehension, the one who transcends these intellectual bubbles that we have and takes hold of us in the innermost recesses of our hearts. We have a story to tell and I believe that the world needs to know.” For more information about Strawbridge Shrine, or to schedule a tour, visit www.strawbridgeshrine.org

QUESTIONS THAT
Illuminate

At the early Methodist band meetings, like those held during the time of Robert and Elizabeth Strawbridge, Bishop Easterling said, Methodist would weekly ask one another these five questions:

What sins have you committed?
What temptations have you met with?
Have you been delivered?
Do you have any questions?
Do you have any secrets?

Bishop installs three district superintendents

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

IN A SERIES of Sunday services this fall, Bishop LaTrelle Easterling installed three superintendents to serve as missional strategists and lead the Cumberland-Hagerstown, Annapolis and Washington East districts.

The Rev. John Wunderlich took the reins of the Cumberland-Hagerstown District Oct. 6 at Hancock UMC in Hancock.

Wunderlich preached about his hopes for United Methodists reclaiming their enthusiasm for the Word of God and their readiness to step out in faith to change the world.

He shared lessons that his grandfather shared with him, sitting years ago on the front porch, about the dangers of worshipping a God that's too small. He encouraged everyone to believe and proclaim the biblical promise that "God is able to accomplish exceedingly, abundantly, far more



Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, right, installs the Rev. Rebecca Iannicelli as the new superintendent of the Annapolis District Oct. 20.

than we can ask or imagine."

The Rev. Rebecca Iannicelli took over leadership of the Annapolis District Oct. 20 at St. Mark UMC in Hanover. She will also serve as Dean of the Cabinet.

She shared her own conversion story and how, at the age of 31, she experienced the life-redeeming love

and forgiveness of Jesus Christ one night, sitting in the kitchen table in the dark, and how God left these words on her heart: "Go and tell."

Iannicelli encouraged every local church to develop an intentional discipleship formation pathway that allows people to grow, to be shaped, and that enables their lives to be transformed as disciples of Jesus so that they can go out and transform the world.

"We are called to be the branches on the vine that is Jesus, where light and life and love flow into us," she said, "and then we go out to make God's kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven."

The Rev. Johnsie Cogman was celebrated as the superintendent of the Washington East District Oct. 27 at Westphalia UMC in Upper Marlboro.

She also shared her personal faith story and how God made a way for her across rivers of adversity through a challenging marriage, the

death of parents, breast cancer, and the deaths of two children.

She encouraged those present to get on four ships: relationship, leadership, stewardship and discipleship. With lessons learned in those four settings, we can be confident in the knowledge that God is going to be with us as we move forth.

"It's time for us to understand that the world needs us," Cogman said. "The United Methodist Church needs us, the Baltimore-Washington Conference needs us. We are needed. It's time for us to go; it's time for us to do. God is there with us."



The Rev. Johnsie Cogman prays during her installation service as the new superintendent of the Washington East district Oct. 27.



The Rev. John Wunderlich celebrates Communion during his installation service as the new superintendent of the Cumberland-Hagerstown District Oct. 6.

Falston UMC redefines church as it serves veterans

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

AT FALLSTON UMC, the lines that separate the inside and outside of church often become blurred, said the Rev. Karin Walker. The most recent instance of this surrounds the congregation's "1111 Project" to create blankets for veterans.

On Oct 18, members of the church gathered at the grand re-opening of Joanne's Fabric in Bel Air. The store wanted to partner with schools and community groups, who wanted to partner with the church, who wanted to partner with Upper Chesapeake Hospital Center — all of whom sought to honor veterans for their service. It was all mission and ministry — just spread out throughout Harford County.

The 1111 Project, inspired by Veterans Day on Nov. 11, is the brainchild of Lynne Heller, who wanted to make 1,111 blankets to give to veterans. The blankets, made of fleece, come in a wide variety of red-white-and-blue patterns and have tied fringe edges.

The church cuts and joins the blanket materials, making kits they send out to community groups to assemble.

Since March, close to 550 blankets have been distributed. She won't reach her original goal, but Heller is certain that it's not the numbers that matter. Those that make the blankets and those who tie them are moved by the process, she said. "We've gotten past the numbers."

Heller expects the project will extend beyond Veterans Day.

An average of about 30 blankets are handed out each week, Walker said. For those in the hospital, they're distributed in a special ceremony-like setting in which Pastor Allen Seigel, the chaplain at Upper Chesapeake Medical Center, dresses in his military uniform, says a prayer, and presents the blanket, holding it out, offering a salute and words of gratitude.

"When we provide veterans with these beautiful fleece blankets from the Fallston UMC Project 1111 Initiative, a look of joy and wonder radiates across their faces," Seigel said.

"These blankets warm the body and warm the hearts of our veterans."

So far, blankets have been made by several area churches, VFW and Lions clubs, Parent-Teacher Associations, the YMCA, Scout troops, school honor societies, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and many individuals.

Making the blankets



Lynne Heller, left, and Rev. Karin Walker display one of the blankets.

is easy, Heller explained. It essentially involves tying together fringe cut out from the edges.

At Joanne's, members of the church talked with shoppers passing by and a few stopped to tie some knots. "I just wanted to make a difference in the life of a vet, to thank them for their sacrifice and service," one woman said.

Even the church's new Pickle Ball group has made a few blankets.

The monthly Pickle Ball games — held at the church — are another form of community engagement.

Walker is becoming used to this kind of untraditional engagement. Recently, when she was picking up a prescription from a local pharmacy, the clerk handed her a pen that said Fallston UMC on the side. The pharmacist had picked a few up at a flu shot clinic at the church.

Walker just smiled and marveled as the church and community continue to engage one another in small and significant ways.

"It's a good thing," she said, "when you can't always tell where the church starts and ends."

To learn more about or participate in the 1111 Project, visit www.fallstonumc.org/1111-project.

A TEAM OF 24 people from the BWC traveled to the U.S. border with Mexico Oct. 11-14 to explore questions around immigration and how the answers intersect with their faith. The diversity of the group

was noteworthy. About half were youth or young adults, about half were people of color, many were lay people, several spoke Spanish, and some were immigrants themselves, offering unique insights into words like freedom and justice.

Along the way, they watched as families who had been torn apart met, fingertip-to-fingertip, through small holes in the Border Wall. They shared time with 200 immigrants living in a tent city inside a church in a Tijuana canyon.

They heard from ministry after ministry about how, when everything seemed ugly and impossible, people opened their hearts, and just said “yes” to offering love. With their yes, God opened up possibilities.

Finding hope on the Border Immersion Trip

The Rev. Kara Scroggins of Glenmont UMC shares the witness of Guillermo who served as a tour guide for the BWC delegation in Tijuana.

He runs a nonprofit out of a building that looks abandoned. The room he rents is a work in progress: the furniture is a mosaic of castoffs from other companies and organizations; yellow paint peels from the walls; two massive desks hold diapers, tiny socks, and school supplies.

In the middle of the room, though, on top of some old school lockers, is a potted plant, lush and green. Guillermo is the kind of person who can look at a room like this – an abandoned building, an abandoned chair, an abandoned population – and see possibility.

He is the kind of person who will care tenderly for a potted plant in the middle of the rubble, the

middle of the chaos. He can look at Tijuana, at this world, bleeding out, and somehow see a reason to hope.

He can, because he loves. I look at him, and I know. He loves so well. I can almost see the fire in him, fueling his relentless hope. He is like a lighthouse keeper, tending the flame, willing to endure however many sleepless nights it takes to bring the last boat safely ashore.

Guillermo stands at the border wall, Sunday after Sunday, handing out crumbs of bread to an uneven congregation of pilgrims and tourists, peddlers and seekers; handing out crumbs of bread because he believes this is how it happens. The love that fuels him is wound up, somehow, with this

broken loaf, this spilled cup, this story of a God who stopped at nothing to bring lost children home.

Guillermo will be here, counseling one traumatized man at a time, pulling one trafficked girl out of her hell at a time, fighting for one hungry child at a time, for as long as it takes. He will welcome others to join his efforts, but I look at him and I know this: that even if no one comes to volunteer, or if a few come and fall away after a short time, he will keep going.

That plant in the middle of an abandoned building in Tijuana will still be watered. The lighthouse will be fully lit. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not, does not, shall not, overcome it.



The Rev. Jennifer Karsner of Asbury Arnold UMC reflects on her experiences during a bi-national Communion service at the border.

Communion never felt so broken, so fractured and divided.

After a weekend filled with stories of refugees and migrants, the Baltimore-Washington Conference immersion group gathered with the local community to worship together, brothers and sisters in Christ. We sang and prayed, read Scripture, and were reminded of God’s faithfulness in every season of life, all with



a wall running down the middle of the worshipping community.

Friendship Park, situated half in San Diego, Calif., and half in Tijuana, Mexico, is supposed to be a place for families to gather and international friendships to be formed.

Now a large wall of metal beams runs along the international border in the middle of the park, ending a few yards into the Pacific Ocean.

The space between the beams offers glimpses of our neighbors and memories of when you could see and touch loved ones on the other side. That was before the United States installed thick metal mesh over the wall, leaving spaces just barely large enough to stick your pinkie through.

One side was painted with beautiful, vibrantly-colored murals. Laughing children played among food vendors and prayers in Spanish.

The other side was stark and desolate, with a beach continuously patrolled by Border Control Officers on horseback and the same prayers being offered in English.

For this body of Christ rent asunder by walls and policies, hardened hearts and paralyzing

fears, the bread and cup were lifted up, “The body of Christ broken for you. The blood of the new covenant poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.” “Estes es el cuerpo de Cristo y esta es su sangre. La Sangra es de la alianza nueve y eterna de Cristo.”

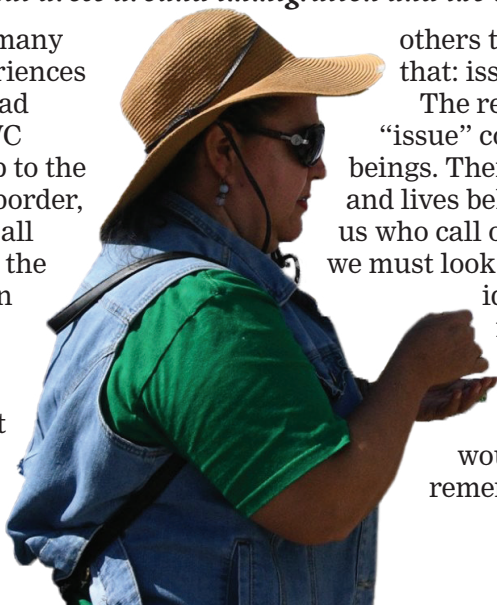
We rotated through the line, receiving little bread and juice reminders of our brokenness and Christ’s promise to make us whole.

We humans are good at dividing, deciding who is in and who is out. Where you were born, how you got here, the color of your skin, and who you love become the basis for whether or not you have a seat at the table, whether or not you are deemed good enough.

As we pray to be one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to the world, our subversive humble God is setting another place at the table, and another, and another. All the while whispering, “You are my beloved.”

The Rev. Christopher J. Dembeck of Halethorpe-Relay UMC reflects on the “issues” that arose around immigration and the church’s response.

There were many powerful experiences of God that I had during our BWC immersion trip to the U.S. southern border, but I believe it all boiled down to the core realization that we so often think of issues like immigration at our southern border, and



others that divide us as just that: issues.

The reality is that this “issue” concerns human beings. There are names, faces, and lives behind it. For those of us who call ourselves Christian, we must look past our secondary identities of nationality, political party, or anything else that

would divide us and remember that it is

actually Christ who is our King and that these who are trying to enter our country are our brothers and sisters.

It is Christ who dictates who each of us is, and it is through his cross that we are saved, being set free to love one another as he loved us. And so for those of us who take on the title of Christian, we must look past such divisive issues like immigration and see the faces of the people and recognize that they are like you and me: created in the image of God.

Rev. Chris Dembeck

Find Migration Sunday Resources and information at
bwcumc.org/migrationsunday

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Districts: Bishop outlines six priorities for the conference

From page 1

understanding?"

She encouraged every member of the Baltimore-Washington Conference to intentionally grow deeper in their faith.

One resource to assist with this, she said, is the new online Bible Study "Who Are We: A Journey from Head to Heart." This 18-week study, divided into three, six-week parts, explores who we are as a people of God, as United Methodists, and the people of the Baltimore-Washington Conference. (Learn more at www.bwcumc.org/resources/who-are-we.)

Despite struggles in the denomination, God is still calling United Methodists to mission and ministry, Easterling said. Strengthening next-level leaders and ensuring that "we learn well today to lead better tomorrow," is important.

To resource people for this goal, the Connect Leadership Summit, an inaugural event that replaces the former Leadership Days, will be held March 7 in the Baltimore and Washington regions and March 14 in the Southern and Western regions. Its aim is "inspiring and equipping churches to connect more people to Jesus," said the Rev. Rodney Smothers, director of leadership and congregational development.

Plans for a comprehensive Leadership Academy, for people identified by their district superintendents, will also be launched in 2020.

Growth in discipleship is also expected to come in the BWC's new ministry focus: New Faith Expressions. The purpose of these, explained the Rev. Bill Brown, director of New Faith Expressions, is "to bring the church Jesus loves closer to the people Jesus loves.

Brown asked those present to think about their churches and consider two questions: "Who are you not reaching because the only thing you offer is church as you know it?" And, "what are you willing to let go of in order to follow Jesus?"

New Faith Expressions, he said, will "equip and encourage change so change-makers can gather new people in new places."

Generating Generosity, strengthening revenue streams

and finding creative sources and partnerships for ministry is also a conference focus. The bishop encouraged all leaders to be tithing. "We're living beneath the dignity of leading God's people if we're not tithing," she said.

Strengthening the finances of the conference will enable new ministries, she said, such as a Pastor's Aid Fund, which can provide money for clergy in need.

"The pain and weight and burden some of our clergy our carrying in this season in United Methodism is affecting them to the point that they're ending up in the hospital. We want to be able

has given us."

Getting and staying healthy is also a missional priority for the conference. Denominational officials have shared that some of the highest rates of depression among clergy are in the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

"We need to take better care of ourselves," the bishop said.

Bishop Easterling also stressed the need to focus intentionally on people under the age of 35. "The faith that some of our youth and young adults already have is unbelievable," she said.

The conference is working on a comprehensive plan that will

2020."

It may take until 2024, the bishop admitted, but she is committed to having 100 percent vital, engaged churches in the conference.

For some churches that might mean creating a legacy and closing; for others, it may mean a vital merger.

"In some instances, we may need to prune to grow," the bishop said. "Discipleship is active."

Several people present at the gatherings raised questions about the denomination's future as it figures out how to address issues of homosexuality.

Bishop Easterling cautioned people to remain faithful.

"We don't need bad attitudes infecting us. We don't need poor practices, nor divisions," she said. "I don't want us to keep rehearsing where we don't agree. We can do mission and ministry across our division."

For those looking for a way to move forward in the face of worries related to General Conference 2020, the bishop advised:

- Seek out information and be informed, remembering always that it is God who is in control, not us;
- Understand that nothing moves quickly within the institution of The United Methodist Church;
- Have conversation, pray, be open to the movement of the Holy Spirit;
- Stay active in mission and ministry; and
- While we're doing these, and other things, continue to be the people of God called us to be.

At the district sessions, the bishop fielded more than 18 hours of questions that ranged from the scope of training for lay servants and certified lay ministers, to questions about Camp Joy, the important role deacons play in the church, the superintendents' role as missional strategists on their districts, best practices for community engagement, gentrification, the hermeneutics of suspicion, the necessity of prayer, the Trust Clause, and keeping sabbath.

Bishop Easterling will conclude her visits on the districts on Nov. 19 in Reisterstown and Dec. 10 in Catonsville.



Full-time Local Pastor Rob Pierson raises his hand to ask Bishop LaTrelle Easterling a question during a Q & A at Parkhead UMC in Big Pool.

to assist them; that's how we love each other; that's how we're in community with each other," the bishop said. "The healthier we are in mind, body and spirit, the more we're able to focus on mission and ministry. The more present we are, the better we can serve people. Additional revenue can undergird things like that. We want it to be a deep well."

On a related note, the bishop warned against "weaponizing stewardship" because of theological or polity differences with the denomination.

"We rob God when we withhold our tithes and offerings," the bishop said. "Ceasing to give points to a serious issue in the relationship between you and God. I pray that we will not withhold giving based on what we think is right or wrong. I pray that we are faithful stewards with all that God

ensure that young people are "no longer recipients of ministry, but agents of ministry," said Director of Connectional Ministries Christie Latona. (Learn more at www.bwcumc.org/ministries/young-peoples-ministries.) Parts of the plan have already been implemented to great success. The campus ministry at the University of Maryland, for example, has doubled the number of students participating.

To help the BWC address these six priorities, Bishop Easterling and conference leaders will be working to help the church "grow by shrinking. We have too many places of worship that have a sign out front that says 'United Methodist Church' but are no longer being the church. They're just being community for one another," she said. "My hope is to have 100 percent at 100 percent by

Mt. Zion UMC is sustained by the prayers of the broken

By CRAIG McLAUGHLIN

Mt. Zion UMC in Bel Air is bursting at the seams with mission. Its ministry are empowered, in part, by prayer. Its pastor, the Rev. Craig McLaughlin shares vignettes from the church's Gospel-driven story.

IN 2003 Mt. Zion UMC established an orphan care ministry called Children of Zion Village in the southern African nation of Namibia. The money was raised to build the buildings, hire the staff, feed the children, etc. Others have joined the effort through the years, and many children's lives have been saved and immeasurably blessed as a result.

I first traveled to the orphanage during its second year of operation. While I was there, I prayed with the boys each night when they went to bed. They prayed in their tribal languages, so I couldn't understand what was being said, but in the midst of their prayers I heard them pray for "Mt. Zion Church" and "Uncle Pastor Craig" and "Auntie Lisa" (my wife). I was blown away. These children who had nothing in this world, but who are very rich in faith, were praying for us.

In 2001, Mt. Zion gave \$30,000 to a very poor Methodist congregation in Cuba so that they could repair their sanctuary which was in very bad shape. Four years later, I was blessed to be able to go with a small team on a short-term mission trip to Cuba. While we were there, we went to the village where the church we helped is located.

The members of the church came running out to the van when we pulled up. The pastor took us

to his parsonage, which was a thatched hut with dirt floors. I was stunned to learn from the pastor that the members of the congregation, in gratitude for Mt. Zion's gift, had been praying and fasting one day a week for four years for Mt. Zion UMC.

Five years ago, I received a phone call from a young woman in a drug rehab. She was close to finishing the 28-day program, and wanted to go a halfway house but she didn't have any money to pay the intake fee. I told her that we would cover the cost. She was so happy she cried. She has done very well, and tells me to this day that she thanks God every single morning for Mt. Zion UMC.

Three weeks ago, the leader of our Third Saturday ministry (which does home repairs, yard work, etc., for elderly poor residents of Harford County) received a phone call from a woman for whom one of our teams had built a ramp four years ago so that she could get her disabled son in and out of the house. She was asking if a team could come and help her with another project.

The team leader was surprised that she remembered his name. She replied that of course she knew his name; she had been praying for him and for our church every single day for the past four years.

Mt. Zion has become a home for a lot of broken people.

It is the poor who are rich in faith (see James 2:5). That's who I want praying for me and for Mt. Zion. Those of us who have the things of this world have a harder time getting into the Kingdom than

a camel does getting through the eye of a needle (see Matthew 19:24). If we will give to the poor, they will pray for us.

After Sunday evening worship, a woman was sitting on a couch in the lobby waiting to speak with me. I hadn't seen her in worship in a while. She looked to be in a bad way. She smelled badly. She told me she was living in her car, her son was in full-blown addiction, and she was asking if we had any food she could have. I said, "Of course."

We talked. I got down on the floor at her feet and I poured out my heart in prayer, crying. As I prayed, I felt her put her hands on my shoulders, and she prayed for the Lord to bless me and bless Mt. Zion UMC. I went and got several bags of food and took them out to her car. The car was piled high with clothes, smelled terrible, and in the back seat sat her son, trying to talk to me, but nodding out, barely coherent. I offered to help with housing, drug treatment, etc. They drove away into the darkness of the night.

I got a phone call from a young man, 27 years old, who I hadn't seen in nine years. He had grown up at Mt. Zion, and I knew from his mother that he was struggling terribly in addiction, and was homeless. He told me that his girlfriend had died of an overdose, and he asked if he could come talk with me.

The next day he came to the office. I could see that he had used enough so that he wouldn't be heading into withdrawal, but not too much, so that he could have a conversation and not be nodding

out. We spoke for an hour and a half. He didn't ask me for anything. I offered him help. He just wanted to talk. As we were walking out through the office when we were done, he turned and said to me, "Wow, Pastor Craig, you and I really have a lot in common." He went out the door, and I smiled. That young man spoke a profound truth. We all have so much in common — much more than the differences between us.

A young man who has been worshiping with us made an appointment to see me. I have known him for about five years. He says he is Rastafarian, but that he worships Jesus at Mt. Zion because, "he loves Pastor Craig." He struggles terribly in addiction and mental illness. He is in and out of trouble with the law.

I have visited him several times at Spring Grove, a state prison and hospital for the mentally ill. He comes in and talks non-stop for an hour. He swears about a thousand times as he talks. We get to the end, and he asks me if he can tell me a poem he wrote. I said, "For sure."

He starts the poem and the f-word is in the first line. He stops, and says, "Is it okay if I say that word?" I said, "Yep." He finishes the poem. He gets up. He prays for me. He cries. I pray for him. He leaves.

What an amazing privilege to serve as a pastor, especially when Jesus leads you to the poor and broken. James 2:5 says, "...has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?"

Let it be so.

Camp Manidokan. I am a parent and grandfather. We pull out all the stops bringing our children up and yet we are not protecting what they will absolutely need, a livable world.

Find BWCUMC Creation Care on the conference website (www.bwcumc.org/ministries/advocacy-action/creation-care), and on our Facebook page. Use the United Methodist Women's "Climate Justice" book and resources and other denominational resources; see what UM Global Ministries Earthkeepers are doing; be a Creation Care ambassador at your church or UMW unit. And a very important thing is to talk about creation care. Talk about the fact that creation is in crisis. Talk about it in your local settings, preach it, and teach it. We were created for such a time as this to be good stewards and caretakers. All are called to work to protect our common home.

We must make creation care a top priority and be unceasing in talking and preaching about it.

**Mike Koob is a UMC Global Ministries Earthkeeper and chair of the BWC Creation Care team.*

Creation care advocacy and action needed now

By Mike Koob*

WE ARE FACING a climate crisis. The way we humans have lived since the beginning of the industrial revolution has resulted in a very negative impact on the natural world. We are beginning to experience the first stings of climate chaos and are on a trajectory to see the situation getting much worse.

Here in the mid-Atlantic region, we are aware of rain events flooding Ellicott City; sea level rise and king tides in Annapolis; expansion of the warm season which increases the range of insects bearing illnesses; water quality under stress; raising asthma rates; and exposure to carcinogens. The US military understands that climate change is a threat multiplier to its mission and is planning for it. Climate change is a threat multiplier to us in building the Beloved Community too.

God created a beautiful world for human kind and all God's creatures to inhabit. Unfortunately, we have not been good stewards or good caretakers of this world. Creation is in crisis.

We have not fully understood

how to be good stewards. But there are things we now know that are becoming more well known every day.

First, we must stop putting pollution into the air. The burning of fossil fuels contributes to ever-increasing levels of greenhouse gases that traps heat and warms the atmosphere and oceans. We have to rapidly transition to renewable energy. The transition has to be undertaken with the greatest urgency and at a scale that will prevent us from wrecking the planet further.

Besides moving to wind, water, and solar power, we need to simultaneously work on many other things including reforestation, regenerative agriculture, zero waste, clean production, plant rich diets, sustainability, and local living. "Project Drawdown," the most comprehensive plan ever proposed to reverse global warning, is a good resource.

United Methodists are called to advocacy and action for the change in our world that will ensure the fullness of life for all of God's creatures. Our Creation Care team is about sounding the alarm and offering ways for people in our churches, districts, and

our conference to participate in protecting what God is passionate about -- God's Very Good Creation. We have tremendous denominational resources. We have great local interfaith partners in Interfaith Power and Light and Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake. We must build a movement to protect creation.

If we don't get this right it will make it impossible to accomplish everything else our Savior calls us to: feed the hungry; clothe the naked; welcome the stranger; care for the ill; and visit the prisoner.

Climate and environmental injustice affect the most vulnerable first. The NAACP recognizes this and states, "Environmental injustice, including the proliferation of climate change, has a disproportionate impact on communities of color and low income communities in the United States and around the world. The NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program was created to support community leadership in addressing this human and civil rights issue."

I experience cognitive dissonance whenever I am with, or think about, children and youth. I spent many years teaching and leading in the classroom and at

reCall explores narratives of power, poverty, privilege

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

THE CHURCH, SAID the Rev. David Anderson Hooker, is in a unique position to address the issues of privilege, power and poverty. That was the message Oct. 18 and 19 in Baltimore as he spoke at the reCall Summit 3.0.

Hooker, who once served as Assistant Attorney General in Georgia, brought razor-sharp insights over two days and four sessions at the summit, attended by about 50 people at St. Mary's Seminary.

The reCall Summit, now in its third year, is a response to the Call to Action for Racial Justice from the 2016 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference, according to the Rev. Stacey Cole-Wilson. Lead organizer of the event, Cole-Wilson serves the BWC as Executive Minister of Justice and Service.

"I hope participants come away with a deeper commitment to follow Jesus Christ," Cole-Wilson said, "and to engage in conversations with people across various lines of difference, real and perceived."

A major goal of the summit, she said, was for people to come away with tools, resources and strategies for continuing the work of racial justice "in deeper and broader ways."

Hooker provided ample resources and tools, sharefromhis

years of serving as a mediator, community builder, scholar and advocate. He began by looking at trauma as it relates to poverty, and vice versa.

"Trauma isn't just one event or circumstance," Hooker said. "It occurs when your capacity to respond is overwhelmed. Not all responses to trauma are negative."

After looking at six types of poverty, Hooker examined in detail the themes of absolute poverty, relative poverty, and social exclusion.

"There are only a handful of organizations, the church being one, equipped to have the capacity to deal with trauma and poverty" at every level, from individual to corporate, he said.

But the cost of changing the face of trauma and poverty, Hooker said, is expensive, not in terms of dollars (although that is needed), but in what needs to change. He listed institutional structures, theology, personal privilege, power, and prestige as examples.

On Saturday morning, Hooker spoke about power and narrative. Using John 5:1-8 and the story of the man who had waited 38 years by the pool of Bethesda, Hooker examined some of the narratives emerging from this passage. He then asked the question, "What impedes you from being whole? What impedes our society from being whole?"



The reCall Summit Oct. 18-19 opens with creativity and artwork.

The difference between narrative and story, Hooker said, is simple. "Stories are a particular series of events. The narrative is what gives the story form."

The words "would/could/should" are elements of a narrative, he added. Changing a narrative is an invitation to make new meanings out of it.

"The idea is not to build a shared vision of the future," he said. "Our idea is to build a vision of a shared future. There's a huge difference."

Later, Hooker unpacked the "meta-narrative" of the hero's journey. This narrative is seen in Star Wars, the Black Panther, Hunger Games, and many others, Hooker said. It is also seen in the life of Jesus.

"Some otherwise hapless individual is set out on a major task – some transformational assignment," he said, explaining the hero's journey. "They either find some compatriots or some wisdom text along the way, add a few new skills, have three or four challenges – failing at the first one or two – and then they succeed and transform themselves and their world."

Narratives such as this are taught, Hooker said, through songs, movies, games, toys, ancient texts, and social norms, just to name a few.

"What Scriptural narrative would we offer to those for framing the conversation between black political

folks and white political folk," Hooker asked. "How do we recognized the inequitable distribution of power in our narratives and then work to change them?"

As part of the continuing movement of racial justice, Cole-Wilson is looking for people interested in receiving community organizing training, whether they attended reCall or not.

"Those who raise a hand, we will begin working with them," she said, "to strategically work in their districts to listen and learn the needs of the people. My hope is that, for example, Cumberland-Hagerstown will begin organizing and then move and work with the Frederick District, and then they'll move to Baltimore Suburban and on to Baltimore Metropolitan. Then, we'll have four districts working together."

By September 2020, Cole-Wilson said, the goal is to have every district mobilized to address needs.

"It's so important for us to hear from persons contextually," Cole-Wilson said, "and have people tell us what they need instead of us trying to discern what other people need."

If you're interested in community organizing training, contact the Rev. Stacey Cole-Wilson at scolewilson@bwcumc.org.



Rev. David Anderson Hooker speaks during a plenary session at reCall.

Lovely Lane UMC receives large grant for restoration

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

THE MOTHER CHURCH of Methodism received a \$250,000 grant Oct. 28 that will help its members redefine their future as a church that also serves as a thriving arts and community center.

Lovely Lane UMC in Baltimore traces its roots back to the first congregation in Methodism. Its current home, built in 1887 by famed architect Stanford White, has fallen into disrepair, said the Rev. Deb Scott. "But we are now restoring it to its glory as an anchor to the community."

The church received the grant from the National Fund for Sacred Spaces. It was one of 10 religious organizations to receive funding this year.

Sacred Spaces, headquartered in Philadelphia, works with the Lily Endowment and the National Trust for Historic Preservation to repair and restore historic sacred places for the common good.



Rev. Debbie Scott of Lovely Lane UMC, left, and Baltimore City Councilman Robert Stokes speak at a ceremony celebrating a grant for sacred spaces.

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, along with Baltimore County Executive John Olszewski, who is a member of the church, and Baltimore City Councilman Robert Stokes were on hand at a ceremony to tour and celebrate the space and hear the vision for Lovely Lane's future.

The church has already begun

using the Brannan Chapel as an arts and performance gallery, and the Baltimore Folk Music Society holds dance classes each week in the Fellowship Hall, said Jackie Noller, chair of the building committee.

The sanctuary of the building, with its dome that portrays the star-filled sky on the night the

church was consecrated, was restored in the early 2000's, Scott said. Plans are currently underway to add four bathrooms, restore the chapel windows, install air conditioning in the fellowship hall, and add a ramp for accessibility.

Noller anticipates that these measures and a raft of other improvements will total \$2.2 million. The congregation, which averages 60 in worship attendance in a sanctuary that seats 1,000, has started an aggressive fundraising campaign.

A spirit of the creativity and possibility is sweeping through the church and all its does, said Scott, who envisions the church brimming with arts exhibitions, dance, concerts of all kinds, learning, and community events, as history mingles with human spirit and sacred intentions.

"This church is resurrection," she said. "This is a resurrection story."

For more information about Lovely Lane, visit <http://lovelylane.net/home/>