



The Rev. Michael Bennett shares some thoughts on how to find fun hiding places with the children of the church as they celebrate a new \$6.5 million home at Rehoboth UMC in Williamsport. Read more in story at right.

Rehoboth UMC moves 185 years in one day

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMCConnection Staff

WE ALL KNOW that time travel is purely science fiction, but how do you explain Rehoboth UMC in Williamsport travelling 185 years on Oct. 6?

The answer is easy. The church, located in land-locked, car-parking-starved downtown Williamsport since the early 1800's, uprooted itself and moved three miles to the east, out to the country, to a spacious, 105-acre piece of land featuring ample parking, a pavilion, and a \$6.5 million new building.

It is the fruit of dreaming, planning, praying, and sacrificing for more than 20 years.

At the de-consecration service at 9 a.m., tears flowed and hugs were shared as people worshipped in the space, located on Salisbury Street, for the last time. A video montage showed pictures of people from an old directory, eliciting a few laughs and giggles, and more than a few “awwws...” as people recognized friends from the past.

The Rev. Mike Bennett, the church's senior pastor, offered a sermon that was inspirational, offering hearty congratulations for the church's big day, but also a reminder not to rest on their laurels.

Preaching to a packed house — including an over-flow room in another part of the building — Bennett said that for those who had worked the hardest on this project, the message from Luke 17:1-9 was clear: you can't stop now.

“You would have thought,” he said, “that the servant in Jesus' story would have been told by the master, after working in the fields all day, ‘come on in, take a seat, well done thou good and faithful servant; you have served the master, enter into the joy of my kingdom.’ Some version of that. ‘You've worked hard; take a break; take a load off. You've earned it.’”

Instead, the servant is instructed by the master to serve dinner and only then is the servant allowed to eat and drink.

“What I hear,” Bennett said, “is the master saying to me, ‘Alright; change clothes, get washed up and get back to work because there's service to be done.’”

As the worship concluded, various elements from the sanctuary were brought out into a waiting white pick-up truck that

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BWC leaders look at what's next for UMC

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMCConnection Staff

THE STAINED-GLASS WINDOW in the new sanctuary at the Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas, is massive. At 35-feet high and 92-feet wide, it was the largest continuous stained-glass window in the world when it was installed in 2017.

The central image of the window is Jesus, robed in white, arms outstretched and elbows slightly bent, as he welcomes you to the church. His face — which takes up one of 161 panels that make up the window — is five feet tall.

Those outstretched arms of Jesus welcomed more than 2,500 people in late September at the church's Leadership Institute. Those same arms may have also welcomed the birth of the next expression of Methodism in America.

A typical Leadership Institute offers advice to church leaders of various denominations for growing their congregations in size and mission work. However, with the church actively entertaining the possibility of a breakup due to longstanding divisions over homosexuality, Leadership Institute 2019

turned into a centrists' and progressives' forum for discussion and strategizing about the denomination's future.

“It's about: Who are we, and who do we hope to be?” said the Rev. Adam Hamilton, senior pastor of Church of the Resurrection (COR), the denomination's largest U.S. church in terms of attendance.

As the answers to those questions come forward, lay and clergy leaders from the Baltimore-Washington Conference are on the front lines.

The Rev. Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, lead pastor at Foundry UMC in Washington, D.C., is a co-convener of the UMCNext group. She said the gathering at COR brought together people to think about, pray about, and dream about the future of the church “that is not held hostage by the Traditionalist Plan.”

The 2019 General Conference approved the Traditional Plan, which keeps the “incompatible” language and reinforces the church's ban on same-sex weddings and ordination of gay clergy. It goes into effect Jan. 1, 2020.

Gaines-Cirelli noted that the three-day meeting spent significant time addressing the

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*Are you called to be a
bishop? Learn more.*

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

“FULLY ALIVE” IS OUR “word” for this month, but in Ephesians, it says, “fully alive like Christ.” I’m all for being “fully alive,” which I can probably experience by skydiving or riding a motorcycle across the plains at fully speed or something. “Fully alive like Christ....”? That makes me pause. We make the audacious claim that “He lives,” and “He’s in the world today,” ever since that first Easter morning. And if we are to be fully alive as he is, what would that mean? What would a “fully alive” church be like? I would say perhaps being “fully alive like Christ” might look like:

- Engaging with people in our communities (outside our church walls) in the places where they are;
- Seeing each other, noticing one another, talking with and caring about our neighbors;
- Sharing a table, literally and figuratively, eating and drinking together; trying to love one another, not just put up with each other;
- Paying attention and engaging people, places and problems where God’s healing or justice is needed.

The “fully alive” Christ isn’t numbing out with despair over the

state of things, but rather, he’s a savior on the move. He’s turning over tables. He’s speaking the truth in love. He’s reaching out to those others reject. He’s washing feet. He’s being about his father’s business. I think that’s part of the work we are called to do, if we are also to be “fully alive.” I also think when church works the best, there is a sense of “fully alive” that happens (we call that the Holy Spirit). You know what I’m talking about, right? Those times when worship becomes something more transcendent than just a key change, and those times during communion when we look into each other’s eyes and we feel the love of God for all the people gathered. Those times in service where you lose yourself and see what it feels like to be a servant, to serve and to be served. When we serve God and neighbor and enter the “thin places” of ministry, and fruits of the Spirit begin to sprout, those are the places where we begin to feel truly, fully alive. Alive, like joy that moves beyond mere happiness, and love that moves beyond mere tolerance... Fully alive, like Christ.

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

MY WIFE AND I are both movie aficionados. Because we have similar taste in movies, picking one is usually easy, unless I want to watch a horror movie. I love horror movies, and my wife can’t stand them. She would rather watch almost anything else, but occasionally she will indulge me and sit through a good old fashioned horror flick. The last one I got her to watch was the original version of “Night of the Living Dead.”

and not fully alive.” Then she went to bed. As I sat there watching the end of the movie and thinking about what she said, I realized, as usual, my wife was right. We are surrounded by people who are not fully dead but also not fully alive, and if we are not careful, we can become just like them. We can become people who are just getting through the day, draining energy from others, and not living full lives. We can become people who feed off the energy of others, never making a contribution and just leaving destruction in our wake. But life does not have to be that way. We all have the opportunity to be Fully Alive in Christ. When we are fully alive in Christ, we have purpose, we contribute positively to the world, and our light shines for others to see. We owe it to the world to not be walking zombies but to be the light of the world for all to see. Friends, this is the real world, not a horror movie, so stand up, step up, live up and be fully alive in Christ. After all, there are already enough zombies out there.

FULLY ALIVE

“Night of the Living Dead” is my favorite zombie movie. It chronicles a night when the dead come “back to life” and wreak havoc on a group of people. The problem with Zombies is that they are not dead, but they’re also not fully alive. They are just walking around, wreaking death and destruction because they are trapped not being fully dead, yet not fully alive. My wife, while watching the movie, said the strangest things to me. She said, “This isn’t scary; this is just real life. There are plenty of people walking around causing trouble because they are not dead

EVENTS

Superintendents installed
Rev. Rebecca Iannicelli
Annapolis District
Oct. 20, 3 p.m.
St Mark’s UMC in Hanover
Rev. Johnsie Cogman
Washington East District
Oct. 27, 3 p.m.
Westphalia UMC in Upper Marlboro

Retirement Planning Session
Oct. 17, 9:30 a.m.
BWC Mission Center
For clergy and their spouses. Register at <https://arenaweb.bwcumc.org/default.aspx?page=3452&event=5418>

re-Call Summit
Oct. 18-19
St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore
Explore privilege, power and poverty. It's a soundtrack in four movements with keynote speaker David Anderson Cooper. Visit www.bwcumc.org/recall.

Contemplative Photo Retreat
Oct. 25-27
Camp Manidokan
A weekend of creative expression and seeing God in new ways. Visit www.bwcumc.org/photo-retreat.

Strawbrdige Shrine meeting
Oct. 26, 9:30 a.m.
Stone Chapel UMC
Bishop LaTrelle Easterling will

be the guest speaker. Visit www.strawbridgeshrine.org.

Immigration 101
Nov. 2
Liberty Grove UMC, Burtonsville
A workshop to explore the history of immigration in the US and the United Methodist stance on this vital issue.

Multiply ministry workshop
Nov. 8, BWC Mission Center
Nov. 9, St. Matthews UMC, Bowie
Church growth and creativity expert Jason Moore, of Midnight Oil, leads the workshop "From Franchise to Local Dive: Multiplying Your Church by Discovering Your Contextual Flavor," from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Visit www.bwcumc.org/event/1321358-2019-11-08-from-franchise-to-local-dive-multiplying-your-church-by-discovering-your-contextual-flavor.

Training Tuesdays
Via Zoom, 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Online traing for church committee leaders:
Nov. 5 – SPRC Training
Nov. 12 – Trustees Training
Nov. 19 – Finance Training
Nov. 26 – Church Council Training
Dec. 3 – Nominations Committee
Jan. 7 – Unified Board

Ministry Hatchery
Nov. 11-14
Maritime Conference Center, Linthicum Heights
An incubator for new ministry ideas. www.bwcumc.org/hatch.

Christians Engaged in Faith Formation
Nov. 14 , 10 a.m. to noon
BWC Mission Center, Fulton
Open to all Christian educators, this month's theme is working with daytime preschools and outside groups.

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/

ROCK Retreat
Feb. 7-9, 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.

UMConnection

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Rehoboth: 20-year dream bears fruit in Williamsport

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would transport them to the new building. The altar cross, candles, Bible, flowers, offering plates and more were taken out.

Craig Koons, superintendent of Sunday School, vigorously pulled the church bell rope as people filed out of the building, walking and standing next to a “For Sale” sign planted in the small front yard. He’s been a member at Rehoboth for 40-plus years.

“This was meaningful to me,” he said about ringing the bell. “It reminds me of when I was a teenager and the kids at the end of the service would come down and they would ring the bell. I thought it was meaningful that we closed it out today in this way.”

At the new church, Bennett cut a large red ribbon at the entrance at 10:45 a.m., and worship in the

new building began at 11. The differences between the two churches were striking.

At 20,000 square feet, the sanctuary – which will be the Fellowship Hall after the “real” sanctuary is built in the next phase – is several times larger than the old building. More than 400 people sat among long tables, facing a platform with a large digital screen. No overflow was needed. An image of Jesus kneeling in the garden, which was prominently painted on the wall behind the altar at the Salisbury church, greeted worshippers in digital form.

After the service at the new church was finished, Bennett spoke about the importance of the day.

“It’s been a powerful day,” he said. “Over the last few years, it’s been a journey for all of us. I know a lot of people in the church are

tired, and I’m tired, but I’m ready to keep going because we have so much work to do.”

Bennett said he originally thought the day would be about simply congratulating the people and that would be that. However, the Holy Spirit had different ideas.

“Probably the biggest caution for our church is now that we’ve made it, we can rest. That leads to death,” he said. “I don’t intend to stop.”

Bill Morrison, a member at Rehoboth for more than 20 years, said the new church was a continuation of offering God’s love to the community.

“It’s an opportunity to bring more people to Christ,” he said. “Rehoboth means ‘room for all,’ and that’s what we attempt to do. We attempt to put enough room where all are welcome.”

The elements brought over from the Salisbury church were re-consecrated by either Bennett or the Rev. John Wunderlich, superintendent of the Cumberland-Hagerstown District. Each was used almost immediately.

The baptismal font, for example, was used when Bennett baptized Michael Beard and Ariana Cantner, the first two people baptized in the new church.

The Rev. David Highfield, a retired Elder who served Rehoboth 1974 to 1983, stood outside the new church as the memories came flooding back.

“They nurtured my sons with Christian education, warmth and love in my nine years here,” he said. “It was a great experience, in Christ, to be a part of this congregation. Today is very



Mike Beard, Lay Leader at Rehoboth UMC, carries the altar cross out of the old church building on Salisbury Street in Williamsport.



Emary Propst lights the altar candles at the new Rehoboth UMC during the commissioning of the new sanctuary on Lappans Road in Williamsport.

exciting. I could feel the emotion even though I haven’t been up here in quite a while.”

In his sermon at the new church, Bennett outlined what comes next for Rehoboth. Once the debt is paid down to “where we are comfortable,” he said, the next phase will start. An identical wing to the one already built will be added on, with a sanctuary that will seat 1,000 people.

“That was the vision from the beginning,” he said. “That we would hear a thousand voices sing.”

Rehoboth is moving closer, every day.

Historical Society looks to the future of education

By BONNIE McCUBBIN*

ON A CHILLY and blustery day, more than 50 people made a pilgrimage to Cokesbury College. Designated a historical landmark by the Uniting Conference of 1939, it was deemed important for all branches of the church, and remains just as monumental today as we again face an uncertain future and look to our educational institutions for leadership.

Cokesbury College is the first Methodist College in the world, and was founded at the 1784 Christmas Conference that launched the Methodist movement in America. Named for the first two Methodist bishops, Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury, it opened in 1785 in Abingdon, Md., to serve the educational needs of young sons of itinerant preachers. Lasting in that location for just 10 years before a fire decimated the school, and only one year to the day in Baltimore, its short life has inspired the creation of over 117 Methodist related institutions of higher learning.

On Oct. 5, the 163rd annual meeting of the United Methodist Historical Society of the Baltimore-Washington Conference converged on this historic landmark to address the question of the future of Methodist-related education.

Worship was led by the Rev. Sarah Elliott of Cokesbury Memorial

UMC and included hymns from the Wesleys that would have been sung when the college was open. Rev. Elliott was honored to host the event, stating that “education is in our DNA.”

After the business meeting, Rev. Dr. David McAllister-Wilson, president of Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., gave a keynote address examining the role of Methodist education as the denomination sits at what he described as an “inflection point” — a mathematical concept of a turning point on a graph. He encouraged listeners to take a long view. In this conference, we have seen multiple cases of schism, merges, opening and closing of churches, yet we endure.

McAllister-Wilson shared that John Wesley and Ben Franklin were contemporaries in a time of experimentation. Franklin harnessed the power of electricity with his key and kite experiment while Wesley was harnessing the power from heaven and the grace of God.

He said, “Methodism was an experiment in grace” and that our scientific method was to test this Spirit to discover effective means of grace to bring about the Kingdom of God on this earth. He then proposed that education is a means of grace whereby God uses the Holy Spirit to give us a foretaste of heaven.

Two questions were posed to

the assembled body: Is this grace hypothesis true? And, will enough Methodist leaders be dedicated to the proposition that grace is true and enough? McAllister-Wilson then said that the role of higher education in the UMC is to name the experience of grace and order their work around it. However, our institutions are not doing this well. Our denomination has let our support for our schools dwindle and this has sped the secularization of the schools. If General Conference 2020 doesn’t change its stance related to LGBTQIA+ inclusion, these schools and our legacy will leave so that they can preserve themselves.

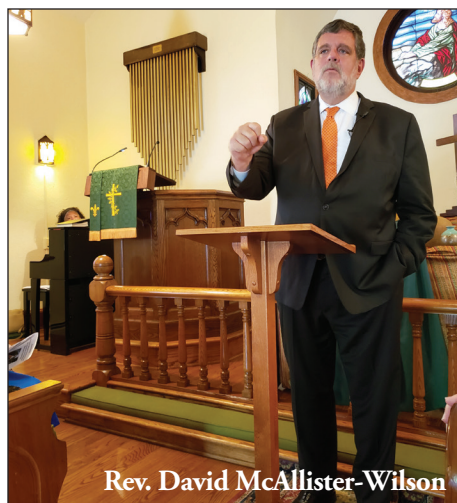
Our colleges can’t lead a spiritual revival in our denomination, but our seminaries can, said McAllister-Wilson. But in order to do so, we must return to thinking

of ourselves as “progressive evangelicals” — those who are trying to foster human welfare and side with those in distress; and also those who have a personal relationship with God and have a concern for the salvation of souls. This is who we are as Methodists — “spirituality with attitude and agenda.”

Listeners were challenged to uphold two virtues: wisdom and courage. Wisdom is the ability to tell the difference between the way things are and where God wants them to be. Courage is the ability to take the next step. Higher education is the epitome of wisdom and courage and this is the legacy of Cokesbury College.

Our denomination faces an uncertain future, but our institutions of higher education have faced this before and can lead us forward with wisdom and courage. With the words from the familiar hymn “God of Grace and God of Glory” (UMH 577) ringing in their ears, attendees left for lunch and a tour of the grounds humming “Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the facing of this hour.”

*The Rev. Bonnie McCubbin serves as the pastor of Good Shepherd UMC in Baltimore and serves on the Historical Society Board of Directors. Her original research into Cokesbury College has been published in peer-reviewed journals, worldwide.



Rev. David McAllister-Wilson

UMCNext: One possible path forward for the church

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historic injustices “that have yet to be fully cared for” in the church, including racism and sexism. Gaines-Cirelli addressed the gathering, speaking on women’s rights and sexism in the history of the church. She ended her segment by playing a North Carolina Conference video in which male pastors read aloud demeaning remarks their female colleagues had heard through the years.

“Women have to work overtime, sometimes for years, to get what men receive upon arrival – that is, simply, the honor of being taken seriously,” Gaines-Cirelli said.



The Rev. Ginger Gaines-Cirelli speaks at the Leadership Institute.

She added that the denomination’s current struggles present an opportunity for a new commitment to attacking discrimination of all kinds, including against women in ministry. “I don’t want to waste a good crisis,” Gaines-Cirelli said, drawing laughs.

Addressing those historic issues is a critical piece for the church going forward, she said. “We need to address and get rid of the injustice and inequities and harm being done to our LGBTQIA siblings, and we need to make sure that we’re building a church that is truly equitable for all people, regardless of race, gender, orientation, identity, or ability,” she said.

UMCNext, an ad-hoc grassroots movement, is committed to a “Wesleyan vision of Christianity,” rejects the Traditional Plan, and commits to “resist evil, injustice and oppression in all forms and toward all people and build a church which affirms the full participation of all ages, nations, races, classes, cultures, gender identities, sexual orientations, and abilities,” according to its website.

Days before the COR meeting, leaders of UMCNext unveiled their package of legislation coming to the 2020 General Conference, titled “The Next Generation UMC Proposal.” Gaines-Cirelli said that there are four “buckets” for the legislation.

First, the legislation repeals the Traditional Plan. “It removes the harmful language that discriminates against LGBTQIA siblings and includes a moratorium on all new and

pending complaint proceedings related to the implementation of the (Traditional) plan.”

The second bucket, she said, is that the legislation seeks to open opportunities for new expressions of Methodism. “This is a piece that’s different from the One Church Plan,” she said. “We recognize that we’re at a point where there will be people who will not want to participate in the next ‘thing’ as The United Methodist Church.”

The third bucket calls for reforming and revitalizing the church. “We believe that there is so much in The United Methodist Church that is beautiful and powerful and a gift to the world,” Gaines-Cirelli said. “We don’t want to lose that. Yet, we know that there is major reform that needs to happen. There’s repentance that needs to happen; there’s systemic changes we need to make.”

The last bucket seeks to ensure that no one is excluded from the ministry of the church.

The Next Generation UMC proposal is one of many circulating throughout the church which delegates will amend, debate, and vote on next May at the 2020 General Conference. Other proposals include the so-called “Indianapolis Plan,” named for where the conveners of that ad-hoc group met, which calls for “amicable separation.”

The Wesleyan Covenant Association, a “network of individuals and congregations who share a common understanding of our Wesleyan doctrine” and who are committed to “the primary authority of Scripture and the Lordship of Jesus Christ,” state on their website that they are focused on “Creating a unified response to the Bishops’ Commission recommendation that would maintain traditional, orthodox Methodist beliefs,” and “developing a plan for a positive and faithful future.”

They will be holding a Global Gathering, Saturday, Nov. 9, in Tulsa, Okla. A simulcast location for the event is located in the BWC,

at Oakdale UMC in Olney.

The meeting included speakers on LGBTQ inclusion, such as Jan Lawrence, executive director of the Reconciling Ministries Network and a lay member at Foundry UMC. She is also on the convening team for UMCNext.

“My role on the convening team,” she said, “is to push them to be as inclusive as possible.”

Her takeaway from the event is that bringing about systemic change in the church is all about relationships. That, she said, is not a new learning for her.

“It is relations that matter,” Lawrence said, “and it is connections that matter. We have to continue building those relationships, continue having those connections, and I have long said that RMN will show up anywhere we’re invited.”

Lawrence believes that this is a unique moment in the life of the denomination. “There’s so much tension that we react out of fear and panic and not thinking through something. So, the more we can have those conversations that ground us in our relationships and who we are as United Methodists, the better off we’re going to be.”

Pastor Dane Wood, a full-time licensed local pastor serving Grace UMC in Baltimore, came to this event to learn more about the future of the church. He left, he said, learning that there are a lot of moving parts.

“To be totally honest,” he said, “there’s some looking forward, but I don’t hear a whole lot of dreams for the future. I hear a whole lot of maintenance for the system. Part of that is because it’s so complicated to move the system. It feels like the dreams have been stifled, a little bit.”

Wood said that he’s hopeful the dreams will break out before the May 2020 General Conference. Grace UMC, he added, will be going through several of the plans within its church council over the next several months. Included in that conversation, he said, will be any possible resistance efforts to the Traditional Plan once it takes

effect.

“We’re not inclined to abandon the conference or withhold apportionments or anything like that,” he said. “We want to be with the Baltimore-Washington Conference, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to remain in good standing considering the decisions that have been made.”

The Rev. Scott Bostic, associate pastor at Bethesda UMC, said his experience at the Leadership Institute was “mixed.” A powerful experience, he said, were the many times he saw or talked with people he has known throughout the years.

“Seeing all those folks come together and wanting to work for a better United Methodist church, that’s a more welcoming place, a more inclusive place, has been really exciting,” Bostic said. He added that he thought the vision of the Next Generation UMC proposal was “spot on.”

One of his concerns, however, was the proposal’s complexity.

“It calls for another special commission to be convened,” he said, “another special General Conference to be convened, and those take a lot of time and a lot of money.”

Bostic said he had practically told folks going into the 2019 General Conference that “‘we’ve spent all this money; we’ve done all these resources, and things are going to get better.’ I believe in the vision, but I’m concerned about the cost, in terms of time, money, and the cost of people that we’re basically telling ‘hold on; we’ll get there in another five years.’”

The thing that brought him to COR, however, was Bostic’s 7-year-old daughter, Brooklyn.

“I want a better church for her. I want a church that she can be proud of, that all of her friends who are a beautiful, diverse group of people in so many ways, that they would all be proud of and that they would all be welcomed at fully.”

**Sam Hodges from United Methodist News Service contributed to this story.*



A full orchestra and mass choir perform at the opening worship of the 2019 Leadership Institute in Leawood, Kansas.

PHOTOS BY ERIC KALISCH

Episcopal candidate nomination process begins

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

THIS FALL BEGINS a season in which Elders in the Baltimore-Washington Conference are asked to discern if they may feel a call to serve as a bishop in The United Methodist Church.

At the Northeast Jurisdictional Conference, which will be held July 13-17, 2020, in Hunt Valley, it is expected that one bishop will be elected. The process to choose this bishop begins with the nomination process this fall.

A candidate for the episcopacy may nominate themselves or be nominated by another person by submitting a 500-word statement to the Rev. Sarah Schlieckert, the BWC delegation secretary, by Nov. 30.

The 24-member delegation and alternates, who were elected to represent the Baltimore-Washington Conference at the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference meeting, will interview the candidate at their monthly meeting on Jan. 11.

The delegation will bring a recommendation about who they endorse to the BWC Annual Conference Session, which meets May 27-29, 2020, in Baltimore. Nominations can also be received from the floor at that session. Annual Conference members will vote to endorse a candidate(s), who will then go forward to be on the ballot at the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference.

In considering the qualities that they might be looking for in a strong episcopal candidate, the delegation, in a process led by Tracy Collins, came up with a list of qualities and characteristics. (The specific responsibilities of bishops are listed in Paragraph 414 of the 2016 Book of Discipline.)

Essential Qualities and Characteristics of an Episcopal Candidate

From the 2020 BWC Delegation

to the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference:

- Those who are discerning a call to the episcopacy should be able to articulate Biblical, theological, and spiritual groundings that are at the very core of their personal wholeness and authenticity. These grounding principles should lead to actions that demonstrate a personal relationship with Christ.
- Episcopal candidates should be risk-takers who are prophetic, visionary, courageous, and relational and show a track record for galvanizing others to be the church – bringing together the evangelical and social Gospels – in innovative and compelling ways, fueled by the Holy Spirit and informed by our United Methodist (Wesleyan) heritage. As bishops, they will be required to address the cultural realities, challenges, and sometimes competing dynamics of sustaining communities of faith in rural/ small communities, suburbia, and inner-city and gentrifying urban areas. They must demonstrate a willingness to assist communities in developing and claiming new ways of engaging in, and growing, fruitful ministries in these changing environments.
- Episcopal

candidates should be servant-leaders, set apart for this special area of ministry and should demonstrate a commitment to removing systemic oppression and discrimination of any and all people; including on the basis of age, ability, racial/ ethnic/national origin,

sexual orientation, gender identity, economic status, level of education, geography, theology, ideology, or on the basis of any other identities that cause division.

Additionally, candidates must demonstrate a track record of:

- Racial/ethnic justice and reconciliation;
- Full inclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning persons in accordance with BWC policies, and behaviors, and actions; and
- A commitment to learning, adopting/developing and deploying a framework/model for Intercultural (or Cross-Cultural) Competence. As leaders in this arena, they should:
 - Exercise Cultural Humility – understanding that the world in which one was born is just one model of reality;
 - Listen for Understanding – acknowledging that agreement is sometimes optional;
 - Assume Positive Intent – as we are all striving toward perfection;
 - Examine Assumptions and Perceptions – so that one might avoid projecting one’s own cultural values onto

others;

- Respect Different Forms of Expression – understanding that one may not really always understand all the dynamics of any one issue or problem set; and
- Seek Relationship – this is how Jesus lived.
- Candidates should demonstrate a vital and renewing spirit. They should be able to show a proven track record of growing vital churches and/or ministries, and making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world
- Those seeking this office should also possess a compassionate, calming, and non-anxious presence, and be gifted in conflict resolution and reconciliation as the church navigates through impending changes.
- Bishops must possess the executive-level managerial and leadership skills and technological acumen that are necessary to manage complex organizational, missional, programmatic and financial systems through denominational disruption and shifting realities that will directly impact the clergy, staff and laity in communities of faith, as well our partners in ministry and the beneficiaries of our missions throughout the world.

In November, prospective candidates must submit a written statement of qualifications that does not exceed 500 words, to the delegation secretary, Sarah Schlieckert at PastorSarahUMC@gmail.com. The deadline for submissions is Nov. 30.

Questions about the nomination process for episcopal candidates can be addressed to the delegation’s leaders: the Rev. Ianther Mills at imills@asburyumcdc.org, or Cynthia Taylor at cynthiaataylor1@verizon.net.



'Living Your Call' summit supports ministry journey

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

AMID AN UNCERTAIN future for The United Methodist Church, God is still at work, calling people to say “yes” to set-apart ministry. That was evident Oct. 5 at the BWC Mission Center as the Board of Ordained Ministry hosted the “Living Your Call” summit.

“Today’s meeting was an opportunity to encourage those in the conference who are feeling a sense of call, or are leaning into that call,” said the Rev. Kirkland Reynolds, pastor of Chevy Chase UMC and the Board’s out-going chair of the Culture of Call Committee, “and to provide some equipping for their journey of the call.”

The keynote speaker, the Rev. Stephen Faller, a chaplain from New Jersey, shared his call story and related it to the biblical story of Moses. Faller said that he could relate to Moses’ journey because he, too, was adopted, and he, too,

lives in two worlds.

“Your call is not linear,” Faller said. “It doesn’t go neatly in a straight line.”

Moses was called, he responded, and the journey wasn’t so much about transportation — “getting the people out of Egypt” — but about about transformation.

From Moses, he said, we get the idiom that our “whole life is a walk with God,” Faller said. “Through our baptism, we begin our journey and our walk. The walk becomes the way, the truth, and the life.”

Glen Surles, who attends Baldwin Memorial UMC in Millersville, was at the summit to discern his call.

“I think everybody has a call,” he said. “I know everybody has gifts from God. It’s how we put those gifts to use.”

At age 72, Surles said that he wants to make maximum use of the gifts he’s been given. “I’ve been hearing from God,” he said. “So, I’ve been working on that.”

His call, he said, was to increase



The Rev. Stephen Faller speaks at the Living Your Call Summit Oct. 5.

his lay ministry, support the pastor and lead worship services.

Chanel Malayne Odom-Jones, 23, a recent college graduate, attended because she’s passionate about the “state of affairs” in the nation and the church. She’s sensing a call to become a Deacon or an Elder “and a congressperson,” she said.

“One of the most difficult parts of my call,” she said, “is discerning where is it that you should be, how it is that you should be there, because my heart is very, very stirred. I want to find that exact moment, that exact place, that exact position that Christ would have me to be in.”

If you’re sensing a call, Reynolds said the first thing to do is to talk with two people: “the person you trust the most,” he said; and your pastor. For more information, visit <https://www.bwcumc.org/ministries/board-of-ordained-ministry/>



J-Term (One and two week intensive courses)

- **Worship in Popular Culture** – Dr. Anna Petrin
- **Faith on Film** – Dr. Deryl Davis
- **Bodies, Books and God** – Dr. Catherine Brown
- **Black Theological Critique of Spike Lee** – Dr. Asa Lee



Spring Term

- **The Willingness to Die and the Hebrew Bible** – Dr. Paul Cho (**Evenings - prerequisite required**)
- **Paul and Practical Theology** – Dr. Emily Peck-McLain (**Daytime - prerequisite required**)
- **Jeremiah** – Dr. Denise Hopkins (**Online - prerequisite required**)
- **BioEthics and Pastoral Care** – Dr. Sondra Wheeler (**Daytime/Afternoon**)
- **Caring for Community Through Non-Profit** – Dr. Jana Strukova (**Hybrid-Online/Weekend**)
- **Preaching Practicum — Sermon Series** – Dr. Lucy Hogan (**Evenings - prerequisite required**)
- **The Holy in Washington** – Dr. Aaron Rosen (**Daytime/Afternoon**)
- **Swords, Spaceships and Salvation** – Dr. Rick Elgendy (**Online**)
- **Ecology and Moral Community** – Dr. Joe Bush (**Daytime/afternoon**)
- **When does life begin and end?** – Rabbi Fred Reiner (**Daytime/morning**)
- **The Art of Toni Morrison and the Problem of Theodicy** – Dr. Josiah Young (**Evenings**)

IMPORTANT APPLICATION DEADLINES –

Apply early to avoid disappointment!

- J-term courses: December 15, 2019
- Spring courses: December 15, 2019

DEGREE PROGRAM DEADLINES

- Masters Degree Spring Deadline: December 15, 2019
- Masters Degrees (Fall 2020 start for those seeking scholarships): February 1, 2020
- Doctor of Ministry Degrees (January 2020 start): October 15, 2019
- Doctor of Ministry Degrees (May 2020 start): February 15, 2020

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- wesleyseminary.edu/admissions or contact Rev. Dr. Chip Aldridge admissions@wesleyseminary.edu

BWC partnership in Russia continues to grow

BY CHARLES HARRELL*

THIS SUMMER, THE REV. Rod Miller taught at the United Methodist Seminary in Moscow, where he encountered students who are starting small covenant groups in predominantly Islamic communities, launching a coffee house in a church, building a school for the Roma people in their town, starting a drama ministry with special needs children, ministering with people who have been part of the Russian mafia, and pastoring churches where the government is hostile to them.

“The church in Russia is more clearly a movement than an established church,” he said. “Their worship is passionate and their individual prayer life is strong. They don’t appear to be deterred by the troubles that

inevitably arise. They simply keep going and find ways to continue to be in ministry. They are inspiring bunch of folks.”

Miller's trip was part of "In Mission Together Eurasia" that has been an active mission partnership of the Baltimore-Washington Conference since 2007. But why is BWC's covenant partnership there important?

The sheer size of Russia and its population provides part of the answer, as well as its location at several of the political, cultural, and religious fault lines on our planet. Methodism, focused on the grace and work of Jesus Christ joined with a call to practical divinity and social ministry, offers a spiritual alternative to Russia's still-influential atheistic past ideology. And among Christian traditions in Russia, Methodism's encouragement of a personal

faith that is open to questions and vital involvement by laity as well as clergy, makes it occupy a unique and important place on the spiritual landscape.

In August, an opportunity both festive and strategic came with the biennial In Mission Together Consultation, attended by four people from our conference. Consultation XX brought together United Methodists from Russia, Ukraine, Central Asia, parts of Europe and the United States to discuss how the church in that part of the world is working and planning ahead to fulfill the Gospel mandate and United Methodist mission to “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”

Held at a hotel just a short distance from the borders with Slovakia and Hungary, the three-day consultation was followed by a two-day festival celebrating 130 years of Methodist work in Russia.

Eurasian United Methodists have identified five priorities for the next five years: 1) Methodist identity; 2) Forming brave and humble leaders; 3) Mission and being a missionary movement; 4) Strengthening the financial base; and 5) Building external relations with other expressions of the Church.

All of these are challenging; and we learned quickly that the language doesn't necessarily mean the same thing to Eurasians as it might to Americans. For instance, "Methodist identity" might suggest to someone in the

states either our institutional connectionalism or something having to do with Wesley's shades of grace (prevenient, etc.). But there, it means helping people to live in ways which are faithfully Christian and distinctively Methodist, such as building strong families, covenant discipleship, or publication of a life-application study Bible that is Wesleyan in its outlook.

The Eurasians' gradual pivot from seeing themselves as a receiving body to a missionally sending one is also exciting, starting with the important work being done among the Roma people and international students from Africa and Asia.

A powerful story shared at the consultation was that of Alla, a woman grew up in a town in western Ukraine. She was part of a Methodist church that had been planted as a mission. Later, when the region was absorbed into part of the Soviet Union, pressure had been put on the church to close. The church dwindled in size to as few as four persons, but today, that church continues, one of a handful that survived the Soviet period as Methodist churches.

And Alla? She is now Pastor Alla, a graduate of the seminary in Moscow.



Restoring facilities at Camp Kristal is one of the BWC's projects in the Russia.

For a more information on the Eurasia partnership, visit bwcumc.org/russia-global-partnership/

A word from the bishop

The weaponization of our stewardship

A WEAPON IS DESCRIBED as an instrument of offensive or defensive combat; something to fight with; a means of contending against another. Further, it is described as an implement that can be used with intent to inflict damage or harm.

The typical use of a weapon is for hunting, self-defense, law enforcement and warfare. A less honorable use is in the commission of a crime. From these descriptors, it is clear that a weapon is used tactically to gain an advantage over an adversary or target.

None of those descriptors comfortably fits within the context of stewardship. Stewardship refers to the responsible planning and management of resources, which would include our tithes and offerings.

As described biblically, our tithe represents an offering of our first fruits back to God in recognition of God's generosity and blessing. It requires a mindset that everything belongs to God and is given by God.

There are many references in the Hebrew Bible to tithing (Gen. 14: 19-20, Leviticus 27: 30-34, Proverbs 3: 9-10, Malachi 3: 8-10), and references to faithful giving in the New Testament (Matthew 6: 1-4, Matthew 23:23-24, Mark 12: 41-44, Hebrews 7: 1).

Personally, I believe that reconciling our financial resources is a part of our spiritual disciplines. And, I believe that tithes and

offerings are part of our reasonable sacrifice as Christ-followers. Our giving continues to remind us that we are to place God foremost in every aspect of our lives, including our finances. What do you believe?

Recently, you may have heard the phrase, "the weaponization of stewardship." It refers to the withholding of tithes and offerings in the personal sense, and mission shares or apportionments in the congregational or conference sense, out of disagreement or protest. For some, this protest arises from the current stance within the Book of Discipline on human sexuality, the outcome of the Special Session of General Conference, or the events of Annual Conferences. These individuals, congregations or even conferences are withholding their stewardship to make a statement. Some have even forthrightly stated that they intend to inflict pain so as to be heard and to influence future actions.

This begs the question: Is that how we are to offer our tithes and offerings to God, or live into our connectional responsibilities? Is our giving supposed to be predicated on our agreement or disagreement with the actions of the conference or denomination?

Should our stewardship be reduced to attempting to gain advantage over an adversary or target? Are we to look upon one another as adversaries? As targets?

How does this comport with the aforementioned Scriptures and the teaching of Christ in the Great Commandment, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Matt. 22: 37-39)

John Wesley also spoke a great deal about faithful stewardship, for example: "None of these temporal things are yours: you are only stewards of them, not proprietors."

There are many congregations who are in direct disagreement with the exclusionary language contained within the Book of Discipline yet who continue to faithfully practice good stewardship. Some of those congregations pen a letter to myself and other leaders of the conference stating their protest, but living into their connectional responsibility.

They are making their voices heard and remaining faithful to our shared mission and ministry. I am grateful for their witness and their faithfulness. They are not violating one aspect of our covenantal life to raise their objection to what they deem to be another violation of our covenantal life.

In other words, they do not live behind the philosophy that two wrongs make a right.

The tithes and offerings within a local church support the mission and ministry of that parish and

the ability of the church to contribute to the mission and ministry of the Annual Conference. In turn, the conference carries out its faithful work and contributes to the mission and ministry of the global denomination. While a portion of those funds supports the salaries and benefits of those working at all levels of the church, the lion's share of it enables The United Methodist Church to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world. The funds also support the work of our agencies, which provide critical resources for the entire connection.

We know we are not of one mind concerning the full inclusion of our LGBTQIA+ brothers and sisters within the life of our denomination. We have not been in such agreement since 1972, when the current language was introduced into the Book of Discipline. And, there are many others aspects of our life together that we do not agree upon. How we engage these disagreements matters. How we express our objections matters.

Our stewardship matters.



Bishop LaTrelle Easterling

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- Part 2:**
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Download Resources Now!
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