It might not seem strange to see two 17-year-old girls playing and swimming together at a pool party. This sort of thing happens all the time in summer. But it is an extremely unusual sight if you know the history of separation between these two girls – Dize Kibrisli and Meropi Zymaridi – and that they are from opposite sides of Cyprus. In knowing their history, you come to appreciate what is really going on in cool waters on a scorching July day in the gently rolling hills of Potomac, Maryland.

Meet “pool diplomacy.” The island nation of Cyprus is a country divided. Since 1974, Cypriots have been forced to live apart, needing passports to visit sections deemed off-limits by one side or the other. Northern Cyprus is an area controlled by Turkey and predominantly Muslim.

By Melissa Lauber
UMConnection Staff

Baltimore-Washington Conference Bishop Marcus Matthews, left, his wife, Barbara (hidden behind the bishop), and the Rev. Maidstone Mulenga, the bishop’s assistant, greet women from Hilltop UMC in Zimbabwe during a trip in July to deepen the partnership between the annual conferences.

Working to make peace in Cyprus, one teen at a time
By Erik Alsgaard
UMConnection Staff

Excitación is Spanish for “excitement.” It’s an emotion that naturally bubbles forth from the Rev. Leo Rodriguez as he begins his ministry in the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

“We’re going out to the community, learning from the people on the street,” he said in his office, peppering his words with hands pointing this way and that. “We’re going to work with them, not for them. We’re going to help people be the protagonist in their own redemption.”

Rodriguez brings passion to area Hispanic Ministry
By Erik Alsgaard
UMConnection Staff

Encountering God in the faces
The focus of the group was a Pastors’ School at Africa University and a mission experience helping to build the sanctuary of Gwese UMC. However, it was often in the unplanned moments when the deepest connections were made.

For Bishop Marcus Matthews, episcopal leader of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, it was looking at the faces of the students who gathered for Sunday School at Hilltop UMC in Sokubva, one of the poorest neighborhoods in Africa. Some of the living conditions startle the soul and “you’re aware of the overwhelming poverty. But there is so much more,” he said.

For Matthews, and many of the members of the BWC team, spending time playing with children, at Hilltop and with two United Methodist-sponsored program for orphans, felt like an encounter with the living God.

But it was also a prompting to assist these children in overcoming obstacles and reaching the full potential God has in store for each of them, the bishop said. For Matthews, whose ministry emphasizes education, living in the fullness of God often involves learning. As the vice chairperson of the Board of Directors for Africa University, he was excited about the potential the Pastors’ School has to ripple throughout churches and communities, shaping the life of a nation.

Pastors’ School offers learning, challenges
Every other year, leaders from the Baltimore-Washington Conference participate in the Pastors’ School, which draws Zimbabwe’s 425 clergy together for a time of learning, worship and fellowship at Africa University in Old Mutare.

Working to make peace in Cyprus, one teen at a time
By Erik Alsgaard
UMConnection Staff

Excitación is Spanish for “excitement.” It’s an emotion that naturally bubbles forth from the Rev. Leo Rodriguez as he begins his ministry in the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

“We’re going out to the community, learning from the people on the street,” he said in his office, peppering his words with hands pointing this way and that. “We’re going to work with them, not for them. We’re going to help people be the protagonist in their own redemption.”

Rodriguez brings passion to area Hispanic Ministry
By Erik Alsgaard
UMConnection Staff

Encountering God in the faces
The focus of the group was a Pastors’ School at Africa University and a mission experience helping to build the sanctuary of Gwese UMC. However, it was often in the unplanned moments when the deepest connections were made.

For Bishop Marcus Matthews, episcopal leader of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, it was looking at the faces of the students who gathered for Sunday School at Hilltop UMC in Sokubva, one of the poorest neighborhoods in Africa. Some of the living conditions startle the soul and “you’re aware of the overwhelming poverty. But there is so much more,” he said.

For Matthews, and many of the members of the BWC team, spending time playing with children, at Hilltop and with two United Methodist-sponsored program for orphans, felt like an encounter with the living God.

But it was also a prompting to assist these children in overcoming obstacles and reaching the full potential God has in store for each of them, the bishop said. For Matthews, whose ministry emphasizes education, living in the fullness of God often involves learning. As the vice chairperson of the Board of Directors for Africa University, he was excited about the potential the Pastors’ School has to ripple throughout churches and communities, shaping the life of a nation.

Pastors’ School offers learning, challenges
Every other year, leaders from the Baltimore-Washington Conference participate in the Pastors’ School, which draws Zimbabwe’s 425 clergy together for a time of learning, worship and fellowship at Africa University in Old Mutare.

Working to make peace in Cyprus, one teen at a time
By Erik Alsgaard
UMConnection Staff

Excitación is Spanish for “excitement.” It’s an emotion that naturally bubbles forth from the Rev. Leo Rodriguez as he begins his ministry in the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

“We’re going out to the community, learning from the people on the street,” he said in his office, peppering his words with hands pointing this way and that. “We’re going to work with them, not for them. We’re going to help people be the protagonist in their own redemption.”

Rodriguez brings passion to area Hispanic Ministry
By Erik Alsgaard
UMConnection Staff

Encountering God in the faces
The focus of the group was a Pastors’ School at Africa University and a mission experience helping to build the sanctuary of Gwese UMC. However, it was often in the unplanned moments when the deepest connections were made.

For Bishop Marcus Matthews, episcopal leader of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, it was looking at the faces of the students who gathered for Sunday School at Hilltop UMC in Sokubva, one of the poorest neighborhoods in Africa. Some of the living conditions startle the soul and “you’re aware of the overwhelming poverty. But there is so much more,” he said.

For Matthews, and many of the members of the BWC team, spending time playing with children, at Hilltop and with two United Methodist-sponsored program for orphans, felt like an encounter with the living God.

But it was also a prompting to assist these children in overcoming obstacles and reaching the full potential God has in store for each of them, the bishop said. For Matthews, whose ministry emphasizes education, living in the fullness of God often involves learning. As the vice chairperson of the Board of Directors for Africa University, he was excited about the potential the Pastors’ School has to ripple throughout churches and communities, shaping the life of a nation.

Pastors’ School offers learning, challenges
Every other year, leaders from the Baltimore-Washington Conference participate in the Pastors’ School, which draws Zimbabwe’s 425 clergy together for a time of learning, worship and fellowship at Africa University in Old Mutare.

Working to make peace in Cyprus, one teen at a time
By Erik Alsgaard
UMConnection Staff

Excitación is Spanish for “excitement.” It’s an emotion that naturally bubbles forth from the Rev. Leo Rodriguez as he begins his ministry in the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

“We’re going out to the community, learning from the people on the street,” he said in his office, peppering his words with hands pointing this way and that. “We’re going to work with them, not for them. We’re going to help people be the protagonist in their own redemption.”

Rodriguez brings passion to area Hispanic Ministry
By Erik Alsgaard
UMConnection Staff

Encountering God in the faces
The focus of the group was a Pastors’ School at Africa University and a mission experience helping to build the sanctuary of Gwese UMC. However, it was often in the unplanned moments when the deepest connections were made.

For Bishop Marcus Matthews, episcopal leader of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, it was looking at the faces of the students who gathered for Sunday School at Hilltop UMC in Sokubva, one of the poorest neighborhoods in Africa. Some of the living conditions startle the soul and “you’re aware of the overwhelming poverty. But there is so much more,” he said.

For Matthews, and many of the members of the BWC team, spending time playing with children, at Hilltop and with two United Methodist-sponsored program for orphans, felt like an encounter with the living God.

But it was also a prompting to assist these children in overcoming obstacles and reaching the full potential God has in store for each of them, the bishop said. For Matthews, whose ministry emphasizes education, living in the fullness of God often involves learning. As the vice chairperson of the Board of Directors for Africa University, he was excited about the potential the Pastors’ School has to ripple throughout churches and communities, shaping the life of a nation.

Pastors’ School offers learning, challenges
Every other year, leaders from the Baltimore-Washington Conference participate in the Pastors’ School, which draws Zimbabwe’s 425 clergy together for a time of learning, worship and fellowship at Africa University in Old Mutare.

Working to make peace in Cyprus, one teen at a time
By Erik Alsgaard
UMConnection Staff

Excitación is Spanish for “excitement.” It’s an emotion that naturally bubbles forth from the Rev. Leo Rodriguez as he begins his ministry in the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

“We’re going out to the community, learning from the people on the street,” he said in his office, peppering his words with hands pointing this way and that. “We’re going to work with them, not for them. We’re going to help people be the protagonist in their own redemption.”

Rodriguez brings passion to area Hispanic Ministry
By Erik Alsgaard
UMConnection Staff

Encountering God in the faces
The focus of the group was a Pastors’ School at Africa University and a mission experience helping to build the sanctuary of Gwese UMC. However, it was often in the unplanned moments when the deepest connections were made.

For Bishop Marcus Matthews, episcopal leader of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, it was looking at the faces of the students who gathered for Sunday School at Hilltop UMC in Sokubva, one of the poorest neighborhoods in Africa. Some of the living conditions startle the soul and “you’re aware of the overwhelming poverty. But there is so much more,” he said.

For Matthews, and many of the members of the BWC team, spending time playing with children, at Hilltop and with two United Methodist-sponsored program for orphans, felt like an encounter with the living God.

But it was also a prompting to assist these children in overcoming obstacles and reaching the full potential God has in store for each of them, the bishop said. For Matthews, whose ministry emphasizes education, living in the fullness of God often involves learning. As the vice chairperson of the Board of Directors for Africa University, he was excited about the potential the Pastors’ School has to ripple throughout churches and communities, shaping the life of a nation.

Pastors’ School offers learning, challenges
Every other year, leaders from the Baltimore-Washington Conference participate in the Pastors’ School, which draws Zimbabwe’s 425 clergy together for a time of learning, worship and fellowship at Africa University in Old Mutare.

Working to make peace in Cyprus, one teen at a time
By Erik Alsgaard
UMConnection Staff

Excitación is Spanish for “excitement.” It’s an emotion that naturally bubbles forth from the Rev. Leo Rodriguez as he begins his ministry in the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

“We’re going out to the community, learning from the people on the street,” he said in his office, peppering his words with hands pointing this way and that. “We’re going to work with them, not for them. We’re going to help people be the protagonist in their own redemption.”

Rodriguez brings passion to area Hispanic Ministry
By Erik Alsgaard
UMConnection Staff
By Mandy Sakers
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

THE WORD “AWESOME” used to be reserved for truly breathtaking things: the Grand Canyon, the view of Earth from the Moon, and, of course, our “Awesome God.” Now anything and everything is awesome. We are losing our ability to truly awe by much at all. In a flat screen, IMAX, Pixar world, awe feels almost quaint, a feeling for folks who don’t know any better.

Still, there are moments where we feel true awe directed at God, when we get just a whiff of incense, or hear echoes of the “Holy, holy, holy” of the angels. The stillness of a summer night in the mountains or a beach sunset can point to the transcendence of an awesome God. Sometimes, in moments of service to others, we see in a breathtaking moment how much God really loves, and how seriously God takes that love.

Sometimes, on a normal benign Sunday, the Eighty-Sixty-First Sunday after Pentecost, in Ordinary Time, the Holy Spirit sneaks in through the walls, tucked in unsuspecting bulletins. We feel a strange sensation in our knees, right in the middle of a praise song or an old familiar hymn. We feel the wobbly need to kneel before the one who made us. The prayer concerns sound different somehow. We look in someone’s eyes during Eucharist and our eyes start to water. We feel the rough cloth of Jesus’ garment and we know that the kingdom of God is at hand, despite appearances to the contrary.

In venerable, majestic old August, may God surprise us enough to unleash awe, driving us to our knees and then pulling us close to God’s heart. But be warned. “Awe” can unsettle a person. An awe-filled August could change a church’s September, and that’s awesome.

H ave you ever known that you were in the presence of God? There is something spectacular about knowing that we are so close to the Almighty that makes us feel different. We can find it in many places. Some of us find ourselves in the presence of God when walking through nature noticing the beauty of creation. Others of us feel the presence of God while spending time reading the Word of God and knowing that God is speaking to us. Yet others of us feel the presence of God while spending time enjoying praise, preaching and the fellowship of the saints.

No matter where you find God you know the feeling that it gives you. For me, I know I am in the presence of God when I feel awe. When I am in the presence of God I feel the strange mix of dread, admiration and wonder that, when combined, can only be described as awe.

When I am in the presence of God I feel dread. Like Isaiah, being in the presence of God reminds me of all that I am not. I am reminded that I am no more than a sinner that lives among sinful people in the presence of a perfect God. I also feel admiration when God is near. I am reminded of the greatness and power of God when I feel God near, knowing that God is the great I Am.

Finally, I feel wonder when in God’s presence. I wonder what God desires of me, and what I can do to fulfill God’s plan. In short, when God is near, I feel awe.

I invite you to join me in the feeling of awe. The next time you feel the presence of God, take a minute to feel the dread of knowing your imperfections in the site of a perfect God. The next time you feel God, take some time to admire the handiwork of God, knowing God is the creator of all things. Finally, take some time to wonder; to know that you don’t know and wonder what God will do next. In short, the next time God is near, take some time to stand in awe of the awesomeness of God.

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.

What does “Awe” mean to you? “Chitchat” with us on getUMSocial.com
Cyprus: Peace will be solved by these youth, pastor says

From page 1

Southern Cyprus is controlled by Greece and is predominately Christian. In between, the United Nations patrols a border, keeping an uneasy peace. Depending on whom you ask, Turkey either invaded the north in 1974 following a military coup, or it came to the rescue of its people. Either way, prejudice runs deep. Children learn early and often to foster hatred and anger against “the enemy.”

The Cyprus Friendship Program (CFP) is hoping to change that, one child at a time. Breaking down those barriers – deceitful and imagined – is the goal of CFP, which pairs teenagers between 15 and 17 years old from the north and the south with the goal of forming relationships that will build peace.

“We went to a pool-party and met lots of people I didn’t know before,” said Kibrisli. “It was a chance to get closer to people.”

Kibrisli, who is from the north, said that she wants to make peace in her home country. “We don’t have a passport just to visit areas of my own country.”

Kibrisli didn’t know before,” said Kibrisli. “It was a chance to get closer to people. I didn’t know before,” said Kibrisli. “It was a chance to get closer to people. That’s why I was interested in CFP . They both see hosting as part of their mission u offers study, fellowship for disciple-making

Transformation of the World.”

the north and the south with the goal of forming relationships that will build peace. For Belvin, one eye-opening moment came when she realized that many of the teens in the CFP had not informed friends back home of what they were doing in the United States. “The teens, she added, were aware of the peer pressures – of being shunned. Peace will be solved by these youth in these countries,” said Sarah Fish. “This is kind of easy.”

The kids, she said, “are taking the risk.” They are stepping out of their comfort zones and choosing to see the enemy as friend. The results of their actions could be isolation, both personally and from their friends,” said Fish.

Laprade, pastor of Potomac UMC, said, “The teens involved in CFP show great courage.” However, Laprade said, they also understand what’s at stake.

“They get it,” she said, “and that’s exciting to watch. They’re articulate, they see the need, and they see the practical side of building peace. War is such a waste. It’s in everybody’s best interest to build peace.”

Laprade said that the program doesn’t stop with the four-weeks in Maryland; peace-making and risk-taking continue once they return home.

“We support them in their risk-taking,” she said. “We come along side them.”

CFP provides plenty of opportunity for the teens to meet and become aware of each other. From social outings like pool parties, to classroom sessions at the Potomac UMC, to speaking in front of local civic groups, to living together with host families, these Cypriot teens are changed individuals when their four-week visit to the United States is done.

The number of host families has doubled this year, the pastor said, and many more people have stepped up financially to support the cost of bringing teens overseas. According to the CFP brochure, it costs about $16,000 for airfare and insurance for two teenagers to participate. The teens’ family contributes about half, with the rest made up from donations.

Is all this really worth it? “Our hope is that Cyprus has a chance to be a place of peace-making in the Middle East,” said Laprade. “The last thing the whole world needs is an island where Christians and Muslims begin warfare.”

For more information on the Cyprus Friendship Project, visit http://cyprussfriendship.org/
Zimbabwe: 16-year partnership bridges both sides of the ocean

During one session, youth and young adults from the Baltimore-Washington Conference commanded the energy and attention of the clergy, challenging them to begin to embrace young people as relevant, enthusiastic, authentic and loving members, and as leaders of their churches.

Jordan Warner and Joia Daniels, 24-year-olds from Emory Fellowship UMC in Washington, unpacked the story in Acts 20 of Eutychus who was “preached to death” by the apostle Paul.

“As Christians, we’re responsible for the spiritual death of our young people. As Christians, we must take responsibility for killing them and bring them back to life,” said Warner. Their unusual interpretation of this story was applauded by the Zimbabwe clergy who are just beginning to create ministries for youth and young adults.

Another workshop that drew energy from the pastors was going to change her practices in worship to become more welcoming.

BWC pastors also preached during the Pastors’ School. The Rev. Evan Young, superintendent of the Annapolis District, touched a particular chord with his sermon of encouragement and fanning the flame of the Gospel despite personal and societal hardships.

“The message was just powerful, contextual and relevant in assisting the pastor to respond positively to the socio-economic and political circumstances of our time. It is the word of the time,” the Rev. Togara Bobo, pastor of St. Johns Chikanga in Mutare, told the Zimbabwe church press.

“It’s critical that we be here,” said Greater Washington District Superintendent Joseph Daniels, who led the trip. “We live in a global world. The world is bigger than our country and God is much bigger than the world. Our role is discovering and responding to who God is and what God is up to.”

Daniels said he has learned a great deal about evangelism and effective small group ministries from his partners in Zimbabwe. But even more impressive to him is how the pastors “serve God with such joy. This rubs off on you,” he said. “I will take home some of that joy and hope.”

**Passing bricks up a hill**

The summer’s trip to Zimbabwe marked the first time that a large group of people from the Baltimore-Washington Conference accompanied those teaching at the Pastors’ School to serve on a mission trip. Twenty-four members of the BWC team worked over two days helping to build a sanctuary at Gwese UMC, a church in the countryside more than an hour away from Mutare.

Gwese has about 300 members and 350 in worship. Created in the 1990s, the congregation worships in an open air pavilion with stone benches and a stone pulpit, said Mutare District Superintendent Dandai Chisiku. The members worship from 9:10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Sunday and during the rest of the week care for 82 orphans who live scattered throughout the village. They also operate a modest grinding mill to raise money for the orphans’ food and school fees.

While most of the people in the village have cell phones, electricity is limited and people bring the phones to a hut where there is solar energy to be charged. It’s a simple life, said the Rev. Caleb Rubando, the church’s pastor. But it can also be a bit difficult and tricky. His members respond with faith, he said. “They have zeal.”

It is that zeal that enables the church’s United Methodist Youth Fellowship to crush stones to make the sand needed to make bricks. The bricks are being used to build a one-room sanctuary on top of a nearby hillside. Money to build the church is being provided by the Baltimore-Washington Conference’s Hope Fund.

“The new structure is a dream come true,” said Rubando.

“The message was just powerful, contextual and relevant in assisting the pastor to respond positively to the socio-economic and political circumstances of our time. It is the word of the time,” the Rev. Togara Bobo, pastor of St. Johns Chikanga in Mutare, told the Zimbabwe church press.
Zimbabwe: 16-year partnership bridges both sides of the ocean, bringing joy and hope.

This has been a life-changing experience,” said Sharon Milton, of First UMC in Hyattsville. “They have something money can never buy.

“From hand-to-hand we passed the bricks,” said Daniels, who now leads the Africa Initiative Project. “It is that zeal that enables the church’s United Methodist Youth Fellowship to crush stones to make new sand, and then the group took time for worship and prayer while most joined in the group did plastering, most joined in a line that wound up a hillside.

“With the completion of the sanctuary at Gwese and the Mutasa-Hyanga District Parsonage, the Hope Fund projects will be complete and much of the ministry efforts of the Baltimore-Washington Conference in Zimbabwe are expected to shift to supporting Africa University.

“Our staff is working hard to get and planning was impossible because money wouldn’t work anymore. The journey has been eventful, but God was there for us,” Tagwira concluded. “We paid our staff through food, but through it all, we never lost a day of learning, not a single day.

“The Baltimore-Washington Conference has been involved with Africa University from the very beginning and you still are,” Salley said. “That is a God-given gift to us. We can’t say thank you enough for being the church, not only in the U.S., but in the world.”

“This is a spiritual thing for me,” said Bishop Matthews, “because every time I see the students I see the face of Christ in them. Their stories are stories that touch the heart. Many of them have lived lives that have been broken. But the university helps put them back together. This is a place of transformation – for the students and for the continent.”

The Spirit of Safari

During the opening sermon at the Pastors’ School, Bishop Eben Nhiwatiwa called on all those present to adopt a “spirit of safari,” traveling on a journey of faith together with urgency, expectancy and an openness to wonder.

Adopting this safari spirit, Daniels then called on the people of Zimbabwe and the Baltimore-Washington Conference “to do new things, do transforming things and do things we never thought were possible.”

The dream continues

“Africa University is the ultimate connectional story. It is the church at its best,” said the Rev. Jim Salley, Associate Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement at the school.

The project is a dream come true,” Tagwira is a dream come true,” said Bishop Matthews, who gives credit for the dramatic changes to the leadership of the late Bishop Christopher Jokomo. “When we started the partnership, it was almost taboo to use that word. As partners, we helped to influence their educational process about the disease and today we’re privileged to see the results of it.”

In recent years, the conference has also raised $600,000 through the Hope Fund for mission projects at churches, parsonages, schools, orphanages and clinics. Volunteers in Mission teams from throughout the conference have been active throughout Zimbabwe assisting with the Hope Fund’s projects.

Partnership bears fruit

“The partnership between the Zimbabwe Episcopal Area and the Baltimore-Washington Conference was forged 16 years ago by the Holy Spirit,” Daniels, who now leads the Africa Initiative Project said.

In recent “hard years,” that hit Zimbabwe between 2007 and 2010, hyper-inflation was at more than one million percent. “It’s hard to imagine today,” said the school’s Vice Chancellor, Fanwell Tagwira. “You would walk into a shop and price an item and then come back in two hours and the price would have gone up by five times. … Food was hard to get and planning was impossible because money wouldn’t work anymore.

“Th e new structure is a dream come true,” said Bishop Matthews, who gives credit for the dramatic changes to the leadership of the late Bishop Christopher Jokomo. “When we started the partnership, it was almost taboo to use that word. As partners, we helped to influence their educational process about the disease and today we’re privileged to see the results of it.”

In recent years, the conference has also raised $600,000 through the Hope Fund for mission projects at churches, parsonages, schools, orphanages and clinics. Volunteers in Mission teams from throughout the conference have been active throughout Zimbabwe assisting with the Hope Fund’s projects.

With the completion of the sanctuary at Gwese and the Mutasa-Hyanga District Parsonage, the Hope Fund projects will be complete and much of the ministry efforts of the Baltimore-Washington Conference in Zimbabwe are expected to shift to supporting Africa University.

University, which now has more than 4,000 alumni and 1,999 students in six courses of study, draws together students from 25 African nations.

AU was started 20 years ago by an action of General Conference with 40 students in old farm buildings. The university receives funding from every annual conference through apportionments and other giving.

In recent years, the conference has also raised $600,000 through the Hope Fund for mission projects at churches, parsonages, schools, orphanages and clinics. Volunteers in Mission teams from throughout the conference have been active throughout Zimbabwe assisting with the Hope Fund’s projects.

The Baltimore-Washington Conference has been involved with Africa University from the very beginning and you still are,” Salley said. “That is a God-given gift to us. We can’t say thank you enough for being the church, not only in the U.S., but in the world.”

“This is a spiritual thing for me,” said Bishop Matthews, “because every time I see the students I see the face of Christ in them. Their stories are stories that touch the heart. Many of them have lived lives that have been broken. But the university helps put them back together. This is a place of transformation – for the students and for the continent.”

The Spirit of Safari

During the opening sermon at the Pastors’ School, Bishop Eben Nhiwatiwa called on all those present to adopt a “spirit of safari,” traveling on a journey of faith together with urgency, expectancy and an openness to wonder.

Adopting this safari spirit, Daniels then called on the people of Zimbabwe and the Baltimore-Washington Conference “to do new things, do transforming things and do things we never thought were possible.”

The dream continues

“Africa University is the ultimate connectional story. It is the church at its best,” said the Rev. Jim Salley, Associate Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement at the school.

University, which now has more than 4,000 alumni and 1,999 students in six courses of study, draws together students from 25 African nations.

AU was started 20 years ago by an action of General Conference with 40 students in old farm buildings. The university receives funding from every annual conference through apportionments and other giving.

In recent years, the conference has also raised $600,000 through the Hope Fund for mission projects at churches, parsonages, schools, orphanages and clinics. Volunteers in Mission teams from throughout the conference have been active throughout Zimbabwe assisting with the Hope Fund’s projects.

The Baltimore-Washington Conference has been involved with Africa University from the very beginning and you still are,” Salley said. “That is a God-given gift to us. We can’t say thank you enough for being the church, not only in the U.S., but in the world.”

“This is a spiritual thing for me,” said Bishop Matthews, “because every time I see the students I see the face of Christ in them. Their stories are stories that touch the heart. Many of them have lived lives that have been broken. But the university helps put them back together. This is a place of transformation – for the students and for the continent.”

The Spirit of Safari

During the opening sermon at the Pastors’ School, Bishop Eben Nhiwatiwa called on all those present to adopt a “spirit of safari,” traveling on a journey of faith together with urgency, expectancy and an openness to wonder.

Adopting this safari spirit, Daniels then called on the people of Zimbabwe and the Baltimore-Washington Conference “to do new things, do transforming things and do things we never thought were possible.”

The dream continues

“Africa University is the ultimate connectional story. It is the church at its best,” said the Rev. Jim Salley, Associate Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement at the school.

University, which now has more than 4,000 alumni and 1,999 students in six courses of study, draws together students from 25 African nations.

AU was started 20 years ago by an action of General Conference with 40 students in old farm buildings. The university receives funding from every annual conference through apportionments and other giving.

In recent years, the conference has also raised $600,000 through the Hope Fund for mission projects at churches, parsonages, schools, orphanages and clinics. Volunteers in Mission teams from throughout the conference have been active throughout Zimbabwe assisting with the Hope Fund’s projects.
I
t was Benjamin Franklin who said, "Lighthouses are more helpful than churches." Darlynn McCrae understands that sentiment. There's a three-foot tall lighthouse near the desk in her office: "There's a larger one next to the bookcase. That's a metaphor for the next phase of her ministry.

McCrae, a member of Amos UMC in Bel Air, who has served the past 40 years, has come to work at the Baltimore-Washington Conference Mission Center as a resource person for the Baltimore Region, which includes the Baltimore Metropolitan and Baltimore Suburban districts.

"The lighthouse is appropriate," she said. "It's a tool to help steer, to point you in the right direction. I think that's what I'm called to do."

McCrae, along with six others, began a new ministry of "steering" July 1. Joining her are the Rev. Chris Owens, working in the Annapolis Southern Region (Annapolis and Washington East districts), and Christie Latona, working in the Washington Region (Central Maryland and Greater Washington districts). In the Western Region (Cumberland-Hagerstown and Frederick Districts), four people have come on board to be a link between pastors and churches for resources and assistance. They are: the Rev. Sarah Babylon Dorrance, who also serves as lead pastor at Taylorsville UMC (focus areas are youth ministry, evangelism, mission and leadership), the Rev. G. Edward Grove (focus areas are small membership churches, pastoral spiritual growth and one-on-one consultations); Sherie L. Korb, a certified lay minister and member of Middletown UMC (focus areas are social justice, mercy ministries, leadership development and communications); and the Rev. Barbara Suffecool, a Deacon in full connection who also serves as minister of music at Hancock UMC (focus areas are music, mission, worship, and children).

"Ours is a very contextual work," said Owens. "My ministry is to work with pastors and congregations to develop ministry."

For example, he said, one church needs help right now to focus on where they go in the future. Owens is working with them to help bring about a new vision. Another church wants to form a covenant relationship with a nearby school, heeding the call of Bishop Marcus Matthews at the 2013 Annual Conference session to do just that. Owens will work with that church on a discernment process and help facilitate a meeting between the church and the school.

"God is always at work around us," Owens said. "We just ask and pray for God to show where God is at and then we make adjustments. We go, in ministry, in obedience; preventence grace is already there."

Owens said that what once was called "guiding ministry" has now changed in the conference. What once may have been perceived as "Senior D.C." is now more focused on networking pastors and laity to resources when they are ready to take the next step.

"I'm coming in as a colleague, as a brother in the faith," said Owens, who most recently served as pastor at First UMC in Laurel. "I'm coming in with biblical principals seeking a definite outcome, but this a joint venture between the Holy Spirit, me and the church."

Latona, who also began her new position July 1, is also excited for this next stage of her life.

"I get to do what I feel called to do and sleep in my own bed," she said. Most recently, Latona has been working as a consultant with the Path 1 team from the General Board of Discipleship, and working with annual conferences and churches in a process often referred to as "coaching."

"I'm using all that I've learned and brought it to this ministry in the Washington Region," she said. "I'm looking forward to being closer to the mission field."

Latona said that she has a guiding Scripture for her new ministry. "What does a vibrant church look like?" she asked. "Romans 12 gives you a pretty good description."

Latona said that she is called to help lay people, especially, come to the understanding that God is calling them, too. To that end, she hopes to be working as a multi-cultural environment in the area of leadership development in the region's churches. "We have to reclaim the idea that disciple-making is relational," said Latona. "You can't start with an ideal disciple and work backwards. You need to start with a relationship and move forward into discipleship."

Churches provide life-giving water to Zimbabwe

HAMPSTEAD – Two small churches in the Baltimore Suburban District – Shiloh UMC in Carroll County, and Mt. Zion UMC in Baltimore County – recently raised more than $4,000 in second-mile giving for water projects in Zimbabwe.

The churches' pastor, the Rev. Denise Millett, said how the two churches raised the money can be attributed, in part, to an apron. "Grandma's Apron," Millett said.

"We took an old bib apron with two large pockets and sewed one pocket shut, all but a small slit," she said. The "other pocket contained the story of 'Grandma's Apron' and a small family treat."

"The idea, she said, was that each family would share the story and the treat during a family time during the week, then insert their donation into the allotted pocket. The next Sunday, they would pass the apron to another family.

At Mt. Zion, Millett said, the missionary that the church had been supporting retired in 2012. "The church had been inspired by a book telling the true story of King Peggy, a poor community in Africa that came under the rule of their first female "king." The church voted to give any mission money toward the goal of buying one water filtration system for the community.

"We learned how the village was challenged by many things that we assume will always be available to us," said Millett, "water being one of them."

A congressional appeal brought in $475. An all-you-can-eat soup meal was held, raising $767. Grandma's Apron brought in 944. Add in a spring fashion show and an Easter pancake breakfast and soon the total reached $2,700, said Millett.

At Shiloh, they pledged their yearly mission budget to fund the water project, along with monthly special offerings. The United Methodist Women, special donations from local businesses and generous donations from church members helped the church reach their goal and go beyond.

In other Conference news:

• Hughes UMC in Wheaton is providing bag lunches to 30 needy children in the community this summer.

• St. Luke's UMC in Reisterstown is restoring their 1898 community hall, which area historians say is "a prime example of the post-emancipation settlement pattern for African Americans."

• Oakdale-Emory UMC in Olney celebrated 30 years of service with the Appalachian Service Project by sending 42 people to work rehabilitating homes in Logan County, W. Va.

• On June 21, the Rev. Barry Hiderly blessed "The House that Bel Air Built," the 75th home that Habitat for Humanity Susquehanna, Inc. has built since 1993.

• Grace UMC and St. John's UMCs are exploring how they can link their two mission-centered Baltimore congregations.

Making a Difference

Urban and rural youth combat stereotypes

LUSBY – The UMC God Squad is a cross-cultural mission experience for youth of different backgrounds to get to know each other while working together on local mission projects. This past June, youth from Lusby spent a week living in Northeast Washington, D.C, where they were immersed in urban life. The kids worked together daily on projects that spread a positive message of hope.

In July, the exchange of culture happened again when the urban kids traveled to Southern Maryland to join in local service projects with youth of Calvert County. Twenty-seven kids were enrolled in the four-day camp where they learned about farming, oysterering, fishing and crabbing. Local businesses and non-profits partnered to host the camp.

"We all walked the steps of the Lincoln Memorial to the site of Martin Luther King's I have a dream speech," said the Rev. Faith Lewis, pastor at Olive UMC in Lusby. "They put their feet together on the spot where he spoke those famous words 50 years ago this August. As I took their photos, I realized that these kids are the dream and every one of us is trying our best to live it out."

Sterotypes about urban or rural communities are often born out of lack of opportunity to know each other, said Lewis, who created the program of cross-cultural exchange for United Methodist congregations as a way to heal the racial divisions that exist within churches. By hosting each other, Lewis said, the kids get to know what it is like to appreciate the hospitality of a stranger and the joy of sharing with others.

Asmes UMC in Bel Air has filled 16 cleaning buckets for UMORC. They are pictured here loaded in the Rev. Jay Blake’s Jeep bound for the BWC Mission Hub at Bentley Springs.

• Members of Good Hope Union UMC in Silver Spring participated this spring in the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure in honor of Bridgette "Brid B." who is being treated for breast cancer. Fuchs said of her cancer: "I never saw this coming but God is getting me through it. I have seen the Lord's hand. We can see God in many ways. I have seen miracles along the way. God promised to be with us everyday. I know that he will not leave me.”
**Zimbabwe stories:** Life-changing begins to describe it

**DONNA YOUNG**
Severnna Park UMC

**JORDAN WARNER**
Emory Fellowship UMC

**JANE WOOD**
Pastor of Locust UMC in Columbia

---

**Recently returned from a mission trip to Zimbabwe, and all I can say is that the Rev. Joe Daniels was correct when he told all of us preparing for the trip that it would be a life-changing experience.**

My first God moment occurred at Dulles airport just outside the gate as Bishop Marcus Matthews prayed for our journey. As our 33 member delegation gathered for prayer, others around us saw our circle forming and us holding hands and asked if they could join in the prayer. We learned that we were not alone in our mission efforts. Our 33 member delegation consisted of clergy and laity, teens, young adults, middle age and seniors—truly a diverse and multigenerational group. The other passersby that joined us in our prayer circle were going to Uganda, Tanzania and Panama to build churches, visit orphanages and dig wells. My heart was so full by the end of our prayer time, as I shared with others who, like us, were about fulfilling the Great Commission. I felt so blessed to have witnessed the collaborative efforts between the BWC and the Zimbabwe Episcopal Area to create the Pastors’ School that’s held every two years. One of the most moving moments of the Pastors’ School events was morning devotions. A member of the assembled group would strike up a song acapella, and soon the whole room reverberated with grand harmonies and infectious, melodious and joyful praise and dance. This was another God moment for sure as I was able to take my worship experience to another level.

While on this trip I learned much about some of the tangible ways our conference is assisting Zimbabwe, particularly at Africa University. I have an importance to meet with faculty, administration and several students from Africa University whose stories of dedication and perseverance truly inspired me. These conversations were another God moment.

---

**What an immense, eye-opening and humbling experience to serve on the opportunity presented to me to serve on the continent of Africa. Here I was, a simple, 24-year old school teacher on her summer break, preparing to embark on not only my very first mission trip, but at the opportunity presented to me to serve on the continent of Africa. Here I was, a simple, 24-year old school teacher on her summer break, preparing to embark on not only my very first mission trip, but**

---

The Rev. Jane Wood at the stone pulpit of Gwese UMC. Jane Wood passes bricks up a hill to help build a sanctuary.

---

The Scriptures, however, tell us to “be anxious for nothing” and, in the midst of human fear, to expect God to show up and show off mightily. I should have known all along.

From the moment our group gathered in prayer at the Dulles Airport to embark on our journey, the Spirit of the Lord was preparing our way. A foretelling of the work God would ultimately do in Zimbabwe and in me was underway before we even left the ground as missionary groups headed to various countries in Africa as well as people whom we had never met, joined our prayer circle in the airport.

Once in Zimbabwe, the power and majesty that God displayed is almost too overwhelming for me to put into a coherent description. Beginning with the beautiful landscape and the welcoming spirits of the Zimbabwean people, I was stunned and humbled by the sheer beauty of the country physically and in the beauty of the spirits of the people. I also grossly underestimated, and was nowhere near prepared for, the way in which the Holy Spirit would work through the human connection. It is one thing to donate money and material from the confines of our homes and churches, but is an entirely different and awe-inspiring experience to actually serve and physically encounter the people with whom we are in ministry thousands of miles away.

Witnessing the fierce passion and dedication as hundreds of pastors across the Zimbabwe Episcopal area soaked up hours of intense teaching and information to take back to their respective congregations was nothing short of amazing.

Many had come from far and wide, enduring hours and hours of traveling to gain a greater understanding of what God had in store for their ministries. Ideas were exchanged and relationships were formed across conferences that undoubtedly will withstand distance and time for years to come.

Perhaps the most life changing aspect of experiencing the human connection in Zimbabwe was service: assisting in the building of a new church for the people of a rural village in Mutare, playing with and listening to the stories of beautiful children at a local orphanage, and witnessing firsthand the fruits of labor planted years ago in previous mission trips to Mutare at a thriving and growing after school program were all experiences that have forever changed my outlook on service and have changed my life in general.

At the very heart of Christianity is the mandate to spread the love of Christ through service to others. Never before has this mandate become more relevant as I begin to understand and respond to all that God has showed me in Zimbabwe.

The true purpose of my living is to serve diligently. I can honestly say that I grew more than I gave very little in comparison to the amount of spiritual growth and outlook expansion that I gained as a result of my “safari” experience.

A “safari” we did, indeed, embark upon and I will forever carry the spirit of safari with me as I continue to grow in service through Christ.

---

The pastor, Caleb Rubando, worked alongside us as we formed a line to pass and/or throw bricks from the bottom of the hill to the top.

The women of Gwese taught me and other women to carry water and sand on our heads. We prayed together, worshipped together, ate together and dined together. We met orphans at Gwese and this experience for me was heart wrenching.

I was honored to preach at Dangamvura East UMC to more than 200 men, women and children. The singing by the choirs was soul-stirring. The pastor there was the Rev. Diana Matikiti. The blessing for me was when Rev. Matikiti placed a baby girl in my arms and asked me to bless her. Oh what joy flooded my soul. My ministry and I are forever changed.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow!
I'm a unique mixture of answered prayers and a fairy tale come true, the quilt shop Prints Charming is opening in the Baltimore-Washington Conference Center building in Maple Lawn Aug. 31.

In fairy tales, the heroine’s wishes come true and she almost always gets her prince. Several years ago, Sandy Royster and Debbie Albrecht, members of Glen Mar UMC, began daydreaming about pursuing their passions and opening a quilt store.

In quilting, the fabrics quilters use come in a variety of prints and a “charming” is a 5-inch square. The name of their new shop, Prints Charming, was clever, but the pair says it was God and not some fairy godmother, that brought their dream to life.

“God has been there for every wish we’ve needed,” Albrecht said.

As trained Stephen Ministers, both Albrecht and Royster recognize that people need a place to share their desires, their stories, to be heard and be creative,” said Albrecht, who believes quilting is a therapeutic endeavor that can help people work out stress and lower their blood pressure.

As training Stephen Ministers, both Albrecht and Royster recognize that people need a place to share their desires, their stories, to be heard and be creative,” said Albrecht, who believes quilting is a therapeutic endeavor that can help people work out stress and lower their blood pressure.

Royster agreed. “God’s hand was in all of this. I see God’s hand in the timing, in the financing, everything,” she said. “Every day, God is here.”

This became especially clear when it came time to sign the lease for the funding that would allow them to move forward. Royster was nervous, but then realized while driving to the bank, “That brought me all this way. I realized it wasn’t only about money. We believe in God’s presence in this, in our lives.”

With this in mind, the pair is choosing to make Prints Charming more than just a place to buy fabric, quilting patterns and supplies, quilting related gift items and to take quilting classes.

“We want to create a sanctuary, a safe place for women and men to come and be themselves, to share their stories, to be heard and be creative,” said Albrecht, who believes quilting is a therapeutic endeavor that can help people work out stress and lower their blood pressure.

Royster and Debbie Albrecht show off some colorful fabric at their new quilt shop, Prints Charming.

“We are working with them, learning from them and loving them,” said Rodriguez. “We will see what emerges.”

They also ask the person if a new Hispanic church was started, “would you and your family consider attending and knowing more about it?”

Suarez and Rodriguez are doing this exploration, as they call it, to see what needs are present in the Hispanic community, and how the Baltimore-Washington Conference can meet them. They are also going door-to-door, asking people if they have any sick relatives at home or in the hospital, any problems or needs, and asking if they could pray “right now.”

“We are working with them, learning from them and loving them,” said Rodriguez. “We will see what emerges.”

One gift that has already emerged is from Agers Road UMC in Hyattsville. The Rev. Paul Johnson, the church’s pastor, has already opened up his church so that Suarez can be self-sustainable. This, in turn, will revitalize the neighborhood, he said, “but to also create a DNA where we already have,” he said, “but to also create a DNA where we can begin a different kind of Hispanic church, where they can be self sustainable. This, in turn, will revitalize the whole church in general.”