UM clergy sign letter urging removal of DC mascot

A group of religious leaders around the Washington, D.C., area have signed a letter urging the National Football League and current Washington team owner, Daniel Snyder, to change the team's name. “The derogatory term ‘redskin’ offends many Native Americans and others in this country,” the letter states. Dated Dec. 5, 2013, the letter was sent to Snyder and Roger Goodell, Commissioner of the NFL. This past October, Snyder sent a letter to season ticket holders, explaining why the name of the team would not change. According to published reports, Snyder’s letter read, in part: “As some of you may know, our team began 81 years ago – in 1932 – with the name ‘Boston Braves.’ The following year, the franchise name was changed to the ‘Boston Redskins.’” On that inaugural Redskins team, four players and our Head Coach were Native Americans. The name was never a label. It was, and continues to be, a badge of honor,” he said.

The religious leaders’ letter, however, states that “just because something was acceptable 80 years ago does not make it so today.” The Rev. Ianther Mills was one of four United Methodist Church clergy who signed the letter. The letter was sent to Snyder and Roger Goodell, Commissioner of the NFL. The letter read, in part: “As some of you may know, our team began 81 years ago — in 1932 — with the name ‘Boston Braves.’ The following year, the franchise name was changed to the ‘Boston Redskins.’” On that inaugural Redskins team, four players and our Head Coach were Native Americans. The name was never a label. It was, and continues to be, a badge of honor,” he said.

The following year, the franchise name was changed to the ‘Boston Redskins.’ On that inaugural Redskins team, four players and our Head Coach were Native Americans. The name was never a label. It was, and continues to be, a badge of honor,” said Snyder. “After 81 years, the name ‘Redskins’ continues to hold the memories and meaning of where we came from, who we are and who we want to be in the years to come,” Snyder declared.

The religious leaders letter, however, states that “just because something was acceptable 80 years ago does not make it so today.” One of the things that makes Nats special, pointed out Bishop Marcus Matthews, is that it hosts and operates a public charter school for 332 students in grades K-5. Their impact in the community is significant, said the bishop. The church’s focus on youth was especially apparent during worship, when half of the congregation came forward for the offering plate. “This church is a light at the intersection of faith and mission,” said the bishop. Baltimore Metropolitan District, assured church members that they are loved and will be taken care of. “The flames did destroy the building, but the flames don’t have the power to destroy what that building represents,” she said. “There isn’t any flame on earth or in hell that can destroy what that building represents.”

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Got Love? More than 6,000 youth and 443-324-7861, or Nancy McCarthy at nmccarthy@bwcumc.org. A benefit concert and silent auction will involve a visit to the altar of health and change and possibility rooted in our own potential. But the season of Epiphany calls us to a different altar — it calls us to kneel before our children to Christ, and to live differently because of what God has done for us in Christ. What if, like the magi, we emptied our treasure store at the feet of Jesus? What if we dedicated for us in Christ. What if, like the magi, we emptied our treasure store at the feet of Jesus? What if we dedicated for us in Christ.

Leadership Days
Baltimore Region
Saturday, Jan. 18, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at Pleasant Hill UMC, Owings Mills; Saturday, Jan. 25, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Towson UMC
Workshops are offered for training in a variety of ministries. Visit www.bwcumc.org/leadershipdays2014/baltimoreregion.
Washington Region
Saturday, Jan. 25, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Blake High School, Silver Spring
Enthusiastic Leadership will be the focus of this vibrant training event. In addition to a morning plenary, participants will enroll in two 30-minute workshops or one 180-minute track. Registration is closed, but for a complete event guide, visit www.bwcumc.org/leadershipdays2014/washingtonregion.

Western Region
Saturday, Jan. 25, 9 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., Otterbein UMC, Hagerstown
Participants can choose between 14 workshops to help them grow as church leaders. Online registration, due Jan. 15, is $20; registration by paper is $30. Visit www.bwcumc.org/leadershipdays2014/westernregion.

“Not your parents’ offering plate”
Tuesday, Feb. 25
Glen Mar UMC, EllicottCity
Cll Christopher will lead a workshop on stewardship. Cost is $10. Learn more at www.maumfl egacy.org.

Correction:
In the Oct. 9 UMConnection, we incorrectly attributed the quote, “Unite the pair so long disjoined, knowledge and vital piety,” to John Wesley. It is, in fact, from his brother Charles, who used the phrase in a poem he wrote at the opening of the Wesley’s Kingswood School. It is also the basis for the motto of Duke University, “Erudition et Religio,” as pointed out by the Rev. Ed Moore.

Clarification:
In a commentary in the Dec. 11, 2013, UMConnection, Jim Richards writes that the Book of Discipline says that “homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.” However, para. 161 states “The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.” (Emphasis added.)
I n previous years, members of the Baltimore- Washington Conference at the annual session have placed approximately $55,000 in the collection plate for a special offering. But this year, conference leaders are expecting to receive 100 times that amount as they collect $5.5 million in local church donations and pledges for Imagine No Malaria.

Celebrating the BWC’s campaign to eradicate death by malaria will be one of the highlights of this year’s annual conference session, which will be held from Thursday, May 29, beginning at 2 p.m., until Saturday, May 31, at 4 p.m. The session will be held at the Marriott Waterfront Hotel at Baltimore’s Inner Harbor.

The annual conference draws clergy and lay members from 642 churches in Maryland, Washington, D.C., the panhandle of West Virginia and Bermuda. The theme of this year’s conference is “Building Bridges: Be Love.”

There will be three worship services at the session. The scriptural focus will be the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-35. Bishop Marcus Matthews will preach at the opening service at 7:30 p.m. May 29. Bishop Kenneth H. Carter Jr. of the Florida Conference will preach at the Memorial Service May 30 at 10 a.m., and at the Service of Ordination May 31 at 2 p.m. Carter is author of eight books, including “Pray for Me: the Power of Praying for Others.”

These worship services and the morning Bible studies are open to the public, and will be broadcast live on the conference website. The Bible study, held at 8 a.m. May 30 and 31, will be led by Dr. James Salley, associate vice-chancellor for Institutional Advancement for Africa University, the United Methodist affiliated university in Old Mutare, Zimbabwe. Salley has been working for 22 years interpreting the mission and dreams of this “School of Dreams.”

Plans are currently underway to bring the choir from Africa University to perform and share in worship at the May session. Worship music will also be provided by the “No Other Name” Latino choir, and the choirs from Eden Korean UMC in Baltimore and First UMC in Hyattsville.

In addition to setting the 2015 conference budget, members will learn about the ongoing conference ministries and vote on resolutions submitted by individuals and groups in the conference. The deadline for these resolutions to be submitted has been extended to Jan. 20. Copies of the resolutions will be posted at www.bwcumc.org before Jan. 31 and published in the PreConference Journal, which will be mailed to all members at the beginning of April.

To ensure delivery, church administrators should log into Gateway (on the conference website) to check and update mailing addresses for their active lay members to Annual Conference as soon as possible.

To assist members in fully understanding and discerning the business coming before them, two preconference briefing sessions will be held – one for clergy and one for laity.

The clergy session, which will also include the official Clergy Executive Session, will be held Thursday, May 15, from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., at Towson UMC in Towson.

The laity session will be held Saturday, May 17, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., at John Wesley UMC in Hagerstown.

Also this May, a luncheon is set for Tuesday, May 13, at the BWC Mission Center in Fulton, to honor those clergy who are retiring this year.

For more information, visit, www.bwcumc.org/events/annual_conference_2014.

The pastor of St. John’s UMC in Houston, Texas, Rasmus grew his church from nine members into more than 9,000 today. Many of his members were homeless and struggled with severe challenges. “The people I’m called to serve don’t need an explanation of hell,” he said. “They can give you dates and times.”

The Bible mentions “Sheol” 65 times; it speaks of “Hades” 12 times, and it talks of Gehena, the place of the lost.

“Do you know some lost people?” asked Rasmus. “Hell may be closer than you think.”

But the church today tends to intellectualize hell, he said, but the church misses because we are mute, he added.

Rasmus encouraged those present to stop paying lip service to change and find their voices. He challenged them to throw the monkeys of blame and shame off their backs and to live wholeheartedly.

He also challenged them to live without the idea of falling back on second chances and saying or doing things differently in the future. “I live without regret,” Rasmus said. “It raises the bar on every human interaction.”

Rasmus’ remarks opened the two-day annual meeting of the Northeastern BMCR, which featured opportunities for fellowship, learning and conducting business.

During the meeting, the local conference chapter of BMCR elected leaders for the coming year. They include Willis Kymard, BMCR Coordinator; Rev. Tony Love, Vice Coordinator; Eddimae Tisdale, secretary; and Colleen Cates, treasurer.

In addition several members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference were elected to serve as leaders of the NEJBMCR chapter. They include the Rev. Dred Scott, coordinator; Larry McCrae, treasurer; Dawn McCrae, publicity; Valerie Barnes, by-laws; the Rev. Herbert Brison, Young People.

For more information, visit www.bwcbmcr.webs.com.
Fire: A reminder that church is more than a building

From page 1

Cold Spring Road. The crystal clear winter’s day allowed them to see right through the church building, where they had been members since 1947. Now both in their early 90s, the Teeple’s couldn’t believe what they were seeing. “I’m very sad,” said Janis. “The Teeple’s four children grew up in the church, she said, and she had cooked hundreds of meals in the church’s kitchen. Both Janis and Warren were Scout leaders, she said, and they both sang in the choir. “This church is just part of you,” Janis said. “I’ve been up here since I was little. I heard the roar of the fire trucks and I looked out my front window. I couldn’t see the church, but when I walked outside, I just went ‘oh, it’s the church.’”

The Rev. Raphael Koikoi, associate pastor at Emory UMC in Washington, D.C., received his call to ministry in 1990, while he was a member of Northwood-Applod. He was at the church, taking photographs. “The church has always been a haven in this community,” he said. “Since 2002, the vision has been one of excellence in education.”

By Deborah Carey

You should go!” exclaimed Gordon as he placed the sign-up sheet in front of me. “That was all I needed. As a Presbyterian freshman desperate for a Christian community, I was immediately working my homework assignments around our weekend away. I am so glad that I went — it was a weekend of valuable service, community and time with God.

We first arrived at Bethany St. John’s UMC in Pleasantvile, N.J., and went to work. We were assigned to a house right on the water that had been gutted after holding four feet of water during Hurricane Sandy. Its owner was rebuilding the entire thing by hand — we were there to do whatever he needed.

By the end of the day we had painted his future guest room, assisted him in putting up drywall, and eaten a lot of his homemade meatballs. The most poignant memory, I think, is when the fireman said it was time to go, and I thought, “I wish we could stay for dinner. Everyone pledged to pray for the church. Sandy Ferguson, director of connectional ministries for the Baltimore-Washington Conference, is expecting that churches around the conference will join in these prayers and in the rebuilding. Just hours after the fire had been put out, the BWC’s disaster response team and Volunteers in Mission were considering how they might provide assistance.

“I think that this is an example of how our connectional system works,” Ferguson said. “We are all marching back into that building and consecrate it to the glory of God.”

Thank you, Metropolitan United Methodist Church, for supporting this trip in prayer, partnership and finances. I can say with confidence that everyone involved was truly blessed.

The BWC Young Adult Council is sponsoring a mission trip to N.J. in April. Want to go? Details at http://www.bwcumc.org/ministries/youngadult.

Members of a Metropolitan Memorial VIM team helped to rebuild a home in New Jersey.

From page 1

Methodist clergy to sign the letter. Pastor at Asbury UMC in Washington, D.C., Mills said she signed the letter because it was the right thing to do. “I am personally troubled by the racial overtones in the team’s name,” she said. “It’s racist. I feel it’s the equivalent of naming a team after African-Americans the ‘N*****s’ or the ‘Jiggaboos.’”

The team’s name, “she said. “It’s racist. I feel it’s the equivalent of naming a team after African-Americans want our team’s name changed, but that it was difficult to accomplish when the vast majority of the city’s residents are fans of the team. “When you have a society that operates under the idea of getting as much money as it can, as quick as you can, and for as long as you can, why change?” he said. “For Daniel Snyder, he’s making a lot of money (off the team).”

The Rev. Robert Barnes, pastor at Glen Burnie UMC, did not sign the letter but offered a comment when asked about changing the team’s name. “The plight of Native Americans is one of the great social justice issues that our country must one day holistically address,” he said. “Ironically, complaining about sports nicknames like the ‘Redskins’ is actually counterproductive. The thing to remember is that although many sports nicknames are stereotypes that do not do justice to various groups of people, we only name our teams for peoples who we in some way respect. So when we root for Redskins, Braves or Seminoles, we are reminded that there are peoples who ‘we have mistreated and yet admire, and that one day we may put things right with them.’”

Barnes added that this viewpoint only makes sense “if one believes that America is a great nation precisely because we were founded on high ideas which we have always struggled to live up to. If one reduces everything to white racism and exploitation then probably we should rename not only the football team but the city they play in as well.”

“Firefighters fought for seven hours to contain the blaze.”

In the messages, people shared memories of being baptized, confirmed or married at the church. Others remembered how the church was a fixture in the community and how its bells, which chimed at 6 p.m. each day, called the neighborhood kids to their homes for dinner. Everyone pledged to pray for the church.

Fire: A reminder that church is more than a building

In the hours and days that followed the fire, many members of that “family” checked in via social media. On Sunday morning before worship, Michel Parker printed out 12 pages of messages to them via Facebook.

While many of us in the afternoon wanted to go to a different site, (since only a few of us were needed) God used our resident’s interactions with his neighbors to remind us to be less like Martha and more like Mary.

Instead of being focused on doing for our resident, he reminded us of the importance of simply being with him during this trying process of rebuilding.

I knew Pleasantville would leave an impact on me greater than I could possibly return, just as every service project does. But I could not have imagined the extent to which it did. That is a funny paradox — we always go in wanting to be God’s hands and feet, and end up realizing that God completely blessed every aspect of the project.

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From page 1

Watching a fire from a distance is relatively easy. Thank you, Metropolitan United Methodist Church, for supporting this trip in prayer, partnership and finances. I can say with confidence that everyone involved was truly blessed.

Redskins: Resolution lapses regarding Native mascot names

From page 1

“In the resolution read in, part: ‘… the General Conference calls upon all the general agencies, annual conferences, and United Methodist Church-related organizations and institutions… to hold meetings and events in cities that do not sponsor sport teams using Native American names and symbols. ’

“In the Baltimore-Washington Conference, the Committee on Native American Concerns (CONAM) has quietly advocated for these issues for many years, but the 2012 BOR did not appear in the 2012 BOR.

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“In the Baltimore-Washington Conference, the Committee on Native American Concerns (CONAM) has quietly advocated for these issues for many years, but the 2012 BOR did not include them. Bob Willasch, chair of the committee.

“This mascot issue is just around the corner of the iceberg,” he said. “This issue is around since the days of King George.”

Willasch, a member of Mays Chapel UMC in Timonium, said that in the 1700s, the Massachusetts colony offered bounties for the scalps of Native Americans. The term ‘redskin’ was used in a derogatory way as far back as the early 1800s.

Willasch said that CONAM has quietly advocated for the team’s name to change, but that it was difficult to accomplish when the vast majority of the city’s residents are fans of the team. “When you have a society that operates under the idea of getting as much money as it can, as quick as you can, and for as long as you can, why change?” he said. “For Daniel Snyder, he’s making a lot of money (off the team).”

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Mills’ church is part of a downtown cluster of churches, a loose-knit ecumenical group, she said. She was invited to sign the letter last October through that organization.

By Deborah Carey

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By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

Defrocked pastor joins Foundry UMC in Washington, D.C.

FRANK SCHAEFER, the United Methodist clergyman who was defrocked Dec. 19, is now a member of Foundry United Methodist Church and is mulling over an offer from a United Methodist bishop to move west.

Schafer, his wife, Brigitte, and two of his four children—sons Kevin and Jordan—were received into membership by the Washington congregation, with dozens of people surrounding the family on the platform during the installation.

“Frank needed to be in a United Methodist church this Sunday (Dec. 21) that would love him and affirm him,” said the Rev. Dean Snyder, Foundry’s senior pastor, in remarks introducing Schafer. Snyder acknowledged that when he learned the news of the defrocking, he felt sick to his stomach and that he had been discouraged. “I wanted him (Frank) to come and encourage us.”

Snyder noted that a “love offering” would be taken for the Schafer family during the worship services. An online portal had been opened all day prior, he said, and in the first eight hours, more than $15,000 had been contributed. As of Jan. 7, that total had reached more than $30,000, according to the church.

Schafer was found guilty in a Nov. 18-19 church trial for violating The United Methodist Church’s rules against performing same-gender weddings. He had performed the wedding of his son to another man in 2007. The board of ordained ministry in the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference met with Schafer Dec. 19 and ordered him to surrender his credentials. Schafer said he intends to appeal.

Snyder told the Foundry congregation that in the defrocking process, Schafer not only lost his ministerial credentials but any United Methodist connections because ordained elders do not have membership in a local church but in an annual conference. He was, in effect, a Christian without a church, Snyder said.

Schafer, who still resides in Lebanon, Pa., gave the sermon at both morning worship services, receiving standing ovations. He said he and his family are in a time of discerning whether to accept an offer from Bishop Minerva Carcaño of the denomination’s West Coast jurisdiction to be a part of a new church. “They’re in good company,” he said. When people find themselves in such a position, “they’re in good company,” he said.

“When I went through my church trial,” Schafer said, “I had hoped the church would be more like this church.”

Spirituals: in Word and Song.

The audience that filled the Foundry sanctuary after the morning worship services, he said, included “strangely warmed my heart. I am leaning towards taking the offer, but I need more time for discernment and prayer.”

Schafer spoke on the lectionary text for the Fourth Sunday in Advent, Matthew 28:25-27, and offered Joseph as a model of love and biblical obedience.

When Joseph learned Mary was pregnant, he was going to quietly dismiss her, rather than subject her to public disgrace. “He was a righteous man,” Schafer said. “No public trial, no stoning.”

“Joseph showed grace and love, even amid great pressure,” he said. “That’s what God wants us to do: act in love and grace.”

Sometimes, showing those acts is impossible, Schafer said. When people find themselves in such a position, “they’re in good company,” he said.

“Foundry will be a sanctuary after the morning worship services, he said Thursday, I felt welcomed and accepted by this (phone call) from Bishop Carcaño,” Schafer said.

Schaefer pointed out to the congregation the stained glass window over the balcony in the sanctuary, which shows Jesus with outstretched, welcoming arms. “You are following this example,” he said. He told the congregation that he has received hundreds of e-mails, most of them supportive. He said some of the notes were from people who said they were going to leave the church because they were upset with the response to people: “Don’t. We need you in our fight. If you’re left, come back.”

Schafer said he told Bishop Carcaño, “You made my family’s life easier.”

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“When I went through my church trial,” Schafer said, “I had hoped the church would be more like Joseph. I had violated one of their rules, yes, but I was...
Church spruces up teacher’s lounge

SEVERN – The teachers at Van Bokkelen Elementary School of 481 students, have a newly renovated lounge, thanks to volunteers from Delmont and Severn UMCS, served by the Rev. Wendy van Vliet.

The students at the school carry more than books in their backpacks, she said. “They carry hunger and frustration and fear. So teachers have a lot to deal with even before they start teaching.”

Delmont’s women’s ministry spent time and resources to provide new cabinets, refinish dining tables and reupholster sofa cushions in the lounge. Severn members also pitched in.

“I am so appreciative of the changes,” said Selecia Hardy, the school’s principal.

“It’s warm and inviting,” agreed teacher Chante Small.

“It is rare to find so many people with such joy and passion for what they do. In this way, you are much like Jesus,” Hardy said.

Severn UMCS also hosted breakfast with Santa, providing everything including breakfast, games, crafts and a snowball hunt.

Taste-testing healthy recipes

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Volunteers from Brighter Day UMC (the former AP Shaw and Congress Heights UMCS) keep their food pantry and clothing bank at Congress Heights open three days a week, as cuts in government aid increase the need for their services. A main source of foods that churches in D.C. and Maryland distribute in their communities is the Capitol Area Food Bank. Recently the bank has taken on an effort to help the food recipients remedy the unhealthy diets that often accompany poverty.

With the aid of volunteer cooks and a chef, they are making healthy recipes that will feed a family of four on less than $8.

Among those testing the recipes is Arvis Powell, the Mission and Outreach team leader at Brighter Day.

Those cooking and testing the recipes were required to follow exactly the recipes prepared by the chef, to be sure they’re not too time-consuming, complicated or bland.

Powell took issue with a recipe for collard greens and potatoes, which called for chopping the collards. “In my home, we never chopped collard greens, we pulled them,” she said.

Once the recipes are approved by the 10-person test group, they are placed in an online data base, printed in English and Spanish and distributed to more than 500 social service agencies in the area.

Vacation Bible School during Advent

EDGewater – While many churches hold Vacation Bible School during the summer, Mayo UMC’s numbers attending their small church VBS were dwindling, so instead, for the past two years, it has offered VBS during Advent.

Parents were pleased since the evening provided dinner, music, lessons and crafts, setting parents free to shop, wrap presents or have a “date night,” said the Rev. Kathy Altman.

The week-long program culminated in a Christmas pageant held during worship. Parents and families were invited. Some of the 12 participants, half of whom were not church attendees, had never heard the story of Christ’s birth.

This year’s VBS focused on Christmas customs around the world and dinner each night featured a theme from a different country.

Conference staff give to nearby school

FULTON – As part of Bishop Matthews’ directions to the annual conference membership to form partnerships with local schools, the staff at the BWC Mission Center decided to make part of their mission to partner with Cedar Lane School, a stone’s throw away.

Staff contributed to a collection of toys for the students, 90 special needs children, some with severe or multiple disabilities. It took a truck to move the mound of toys across the parking lots Dec. 13.

“What a spectacular group of people!” wrote Lori T. Pummer, the school psychologist, to Pat Thomas, the staff member who leads the collaboration with Cedar Lane.

Pummer and Paul Owens, the principal, attended a staff Christmas party at which the toys were presented.

“It is rare to find so many people with such joy and passion for what they do. In this way, you are much like the Cedar Lane staff,” Pummer said. “The emphasis on acceptance, compassion and diversity are traits that we share.”

The toys went to nine families with a total of 22 children.

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Serving the wider parish

SMITH’S PARISH, BERMUDA – The Revs. Richard Stetler from Centenary UMC and Joseph Whalen from Mazedon UMC welcomed Greater Washington District United Methodist Women’s (the former AP Shaw and Congress Heights UMCs) School of 481 students, have a newly renovated lounge, Superintendent Joe Daniels with eight officers of the Greater Washington District United Methodist Women’s mission team to lead the installation of UMW units in each church.

These two churches, whose history goes back to 1835, became part of the Baltimore-Washington Conference in 2008.

“We gave them a lot of information that will help them to build their units,” said Gertrude White, president of the church.

“It’s warm and inviting,” agreed teacher Chante Small.

“I am so appreciative of the changes,” said Selecia Hardy, the school’s principal.

“It is my strong belief that when these community partnerships come together, we can form one powerful group,” Hardy said.

Severn UMCS also hosted breakfast with Santa, providing everything including breakfast, games, crafts and a snowball hunt.

Church spruces up teacher’s lounge

SEVERN – The teachers at Van Bokkelen Elementary School of 481 students, have a newly renovated lounge, thanks to volunteers from Delmont and Severn UMCS, served by the Rev. Wendy van Vliet.

The students at the school carry more than books in their backpacks, she said. “They carry hunger and frustration and fear. So teachers have a lot to deal with even before they start teaching.”

Delmont’s women’s ministry spent time and resources to provide new cabinets, refinish dining tables and reupholster sofa cushions in the lounge. Severn members also pitched in.

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Taste-testing healthy recipes

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Volunteers from Brighter Day UMC (the former AP Shaw and Congress Heights UMCS) keep their food pantry and clothing bank at Congress Heights open three days a week, as cuts in government aid increase the need for their services. A main source of foods that churches in D.C. and Maryland distribute in their communities is the Capitol Area Food Bank. Recently the bank has taken on an effort to help the food recipients remedy the unhealthy diets that often accompany poverty.

With the aid of volunteer cooks and a chef, they are making healthy recipes that will feed a family of four on less than $8.

Among those testing the recipes is Arvis Powell, the Mission and Outreach team leader at Brighter Day.

Those cooking and testing the recipes were required to follow exactly the recipes prepared by the chef, to be sure they’re not too time-consuming, complicated or bland.

Powell took issue with a recipe for collard greens and potatoes, which called for chopping the collards. “In my home, we never chopped collard greens, we pulled them,” she said.

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Viewpoint: Church can unite in connection and discipline

By Melissa Rudolph
Pastor, North Carroll Cooperative Parish

I t is the last edition of the UMConnection, there was a graphic depicting the church torn into two parts, with commentary from representatives on each of the sides. But this is not an accurate picture of where our church stands right now. The truth is that there are not two sides in this debate: there is at least one more. I consider myself to be part of a large group in the middle that is not for status quo and not for being lukewarm or choosing not to take a stand. Rather, what many of us in the middle are for is the entire body of United Methodists as a global, connectional church. Our Book of Discipline, in part II, is headed by the description “Global Book of Discipline.” It states: “The Book of Discipline reflects our Wesleyan way of serving Christ through doctrine and disciplined Christian life. We are a worldwide denomination united by doctrine, discipline, and mission through our connectional covenant. The Book of Discipline expresses that unity.” (¶101)

Through Holy Conferencing, we come to agree on a set of principles by which we are governed. We may not all agree with them and we may commit ourselves to trying to change them, but for any of us to sidestep the work of our own bishops and Boards of Ordained Ministry is a breach of our covenant as a people. Many call acts of defiance in this current climate “civil disobedience.” But, what they miss is that by definition, “civil” disobedience does not pertain to ecclesiastical life: it is not for the church, but for secular society. What I value most about our United Methodist Church is that there is no one group, faction or person able to speak on the Church’s behalf, except for the General Conference.

If we ignore items that arise within that body because they simply don’t fit our own agendas, then we are forcing the issues in a way that is no more than cultural imperialism. I do not side with any polarizing faction within our church. I am part of the global, connectional, United Methodist Church and stand to honor the voice and contributions of all our ministry partners around the world, not just a vocal minority in the United States. As the apostle Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians, “Brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: Agree with each other and don’t be divided into rival groups. Instead, be restored with the same mind and the same purpose.” (1 Corinthians 1:10, CEB)

We die to ourselves in order to be united in the body that holds us accountable: that is what we do to be part of this movement called Methodism. We humble ourselves before the God who uses each of us in unique ways and in different seasons.

Connection. Discipline. These matter if we are going to be a force in the world. When these are broken, then we are impotent.

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Dr. Cheryl B. Anderson
MLK Sunday, January 19, 2014
(9:30 AM & 11:00 AM services)
Professor at Garret-Evangelical Seminary in Evanston, IL and author of Ancient Laws and Contemporary Controversies.

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www.bwcdisabilitycommission.org
**What is a Methodist? A re-writing of Wesley’s wisdom**

**By Michael Ribeir**

‘A Methodist need, how about that? Specifically, I’m a John Wesley nerd. I think that Methodism, at its very core, has incredible things to offer this world. Our way of understanding the Gospel and sharing the love of God is incredibly applicable to the world we find ourselves in. Alas, so many United Methodists do not know what it means to have inherited this rich heritage. I’ve begun a new member class at my church and have opened it to current members as well. The whole point is to teach people about what Methodist Christians believe and how we live this out, or at least how we should. To help spread my Methodism (Methodiditiveness? Methodistintuuus?), I wrote a newsletter article that went through some of the 16 points John Wesley made about Methodist identity in his address, “The Character of Methodism.” So here it is. My understanding of how John Wesley understood what it means to be Methodist. 

1. **We are not defined by our opinions.** We believe in the authority of Scripture, we believe that Jesus Christ is Lord. But any other opinions, whether religious, social or political – that aren’t at the root of Christianity – just open up other possibilities.

2. **We are not defined by our words.** We don’t use super-religious words or phrases. We speak plainly and truly in ordinary conversation and when we speak of God.

3. **We do not engage in any freaky religious rituals or worships, or abandon our reason – unless it is said so in Scripture.**

4. **We don’t believe in religion that is about ideology.** Ideology ends with saying “yes and amen.”

5. **Methodists are filled with compassion, kindness, mercy and love for God and others.** We desire to have our hearts set on God alone, and to not want for anything of this world, casting aside love, envy, and hate.

6. **Methodists surrender their will.** We want to do what God wants us to do instead.

7. **Methodists know that “trees are known by their fruit.”** And that the genuineness of our faith is revealed by our words, our actions and our attitudes.

8. **Methodists devote everything they have and everything they are to God.**

9. **The ways of this world will not drag a Methodist down.** When worldly wisdom says “buy more stuff for yourself,” we give to others. When it says “go gossip and speak badly of others,” we only encourage and speak well of people. When the world says “it’s okay to include a little bit of fleshly desires,” we reject lust and excess and greed. Methodists focus on “whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – anything excellent or praiseworthy.” (Philippians 4:8)

10. **Methodists do as much good as they can to as many people as they can as often as they can.**

So, when you look at this list, how do you fare? Are you a Methodist? I think I can check off maybe one or two, the rest I could work on a bit. But that’s the point. This is why we are METHODist. We have a method of living lives of love for God and neighbor, devoted and holy lives. The whole point of being Methodist is to grow as a Methodist.

Methodism was never supposed to be a denomination, it was/was meant to be a movement. We are meant to grow in holiness and, together, to move and change things in this world for the glory of God.

*The Rev. Michael Ribeir is pastor of Chelsea UMC.*