Bridge-builders gather at AC 2014

Bishop Marcus Matthews ordains Kelly Linette Grimes during the Baltimore-Washington Conference session May 31.

BTHETHI BANNERS of area bridges that spelled out the word "LOVE" lay and clergy members of 640 churches came together for worship, learning, fellowship and holy conferencing at the 230th session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, May 29-31 at the Marriott Waterfront Hotel in Baltimore.

Bridge to a Global Church

For the first time in many years, a United Methodist missionary was commissioned at the annual session. Bishop Marcus Matthews, the area’s presiding episcopal leader, commissioned Richmond Williams, who works on the staff of Bel Air UMC, to serve as a Baltimore-Washington Conference-supported missionary in Zimbabwe. This focus on “the world as our parish” surfaced in many other parts of the conference. During worship and Bible study sessions, the choir from the United Methodist-sponsored Africa University in Zimbabwe performed; Dr. James H. Salley, the Associate Vice-Chancellor for Institutional Advancement for Africa University, led the Bible study on the story of the Good Samaritan; members celebrated raising $1,960,562 so far in gifts and pledges for the BWC’s $2.1 million Imagine No Malaria campaign; and a task force, which will report to the 2015 annual conference, was created to study a campaign to raise funds for Africa University.

In addition, Bishop Ryang Soo Han and his wife, along with eight other pastors from the South Conference of the Korean Methodist Church, visited as part of a cultural exchange in the BWC’s partnership with that church; and it was announced that a new conference staff position, Global Initiatives Coordinator, was created, to be filled by the Rev. David Simpson.

Called to Do a New Thing

Closer to home, conference members broke new ground when they suspended the rules that called for debate and participated in “Circles of Grace,” using holy conferencing in small groups to explore five resolutions on human sexuality.

Bishop Matthews praised conference members for “staying open to the Holy Spirit” as they talked, listened and prayed together in a spirit of discernment. During the opening worship service, the bishop honored those bridge-builders on whose shoulders church leaders now stand and called on the 1,500 clergy and lay members “to build bridges for those who will come after us – bridges of understanding, bridges of hope, for others to experience for themselves some measure of God’s deep and abiding grace.”

Continuing to build this bridge requires us to do a new thing, the bishop said. “Whenever Jesus truly shows up in our lives, the spirit of discernment….”

BWC does Holy Conferencing in a new way

It was that sentiment that led Bishop Marcus Matthews and the Sessions Committee to deviate from the more traditional debate format, Robert’s Rules of Order, which allow only six people to speak for two minutes each on any resolution, limited conversation and created a sense of winners and losers, the bishop said. "The 'Circles of Grace,' as they were called, allowed everyone to be heard.”

Thus, Friday evening, the ballroom was rearranged into 120 circles of 10 chairs each. Each circle had a pre-assigned facilitator, three questions and a toy bridge that was passed from person to person in an invitational method of conversation.

To hear one another, members had to lean into the circle as they discussed the five resolutions. The resolutions included: eliminating discrimination of gays and lesbians in West Virginia; doing away with discriminatory language from the Book of Discipline; becoming an inclusive conference; removing trials for clergy who perform same-gender marriages; and agreeing to disagree on the church’s response to LGBT people.

Following the discussion, balloting was done. The See Overview, page 8

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Following the discussion, balloting was done. The See Holy Conferencing, page 5

In May 30, 855 members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference gathered in small groups in the ballroom at the Waterfront Marriott Hotel to participate in holy conferencing as they attempted to discern God’s will on issues of human sexuality – issues that for decades have deeply divided the church.

“My opinion matters!” Donavan Parris, a youth lay member from the Greater Washington District wrote. The Word is ‘Growing’......... Tweets from Conference........ Be it Resolved......................

Bible Study............................ Money as Ministry.............. Making a Difference...................

Ministry and Mission............... Be a Great Thanksgiving............

ANNUAL CONFERENCE COVERAGE

The Word is ‘Growing’.............. p. 2 Tweets from Conference........... p. 3 Ordination Service.................... p. 3 Ministry and Mission.............. p. 4 Money as Ministry.................... p. 4 ‘For All the Saints’.................... p. 5 Be it Resolved............................ p. 5 Making a Difference.................... p. 6 Bible Study............................. p. 7 A Great Thanksgiving................ p. 7

Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church • Becoming fully alive in Christ and making a difference in a diverse and ever-changing world • www.bwcumc.org • Volume 25, Issue 6 • June 2014

By Melissa Lauber
UMConnection Staff

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

**BY MANDY SAVERS**
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

...well said

(As a way to express what word means to you)

**DEAR 13-YEAR-OLD SON, Nathan, is growing like a weed, growing like kudzu, growing like the plant in “Little Shop of Horrors.” He wears a size 13 shoe. I can’t keep up with his need for bigger clothes and I usually discover he needs them at the time he has to have them. It’s the day he leaves for a camping trip and he needs hiking boots but the Jolly Green Giant doesn’t live anywhere close to us to borrow his. Nathan loves growing. He loves hugging me by putting his long man-child arms around my shoulders. But growing doesn’t always feel so good at the time. The epiphrases are filled with exhortations to grow as disciples of Jesus, to move from the milk of spiritual infirmity to the meat of maturity, to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, to put away our childish ways, and to grow up in every way into Christ. The “growing pains” associated with this process can be quite difficult.

Growing in Christ sometimes feels good only when we look back on it, when we look in the rear view mirror and see how far we’ve come by faith. The means of grace that helps us grow don’t always seem like — the disciplines of Bible study and serving others and partaking of the Eucharist and praying, for example. Growth can be such a pain sometimes. Even our own founder says he “went very unwillingly [to a Bible study] on Aldersgate Street” on the night that his heart was “strangely warmed.”

However, our call is to grow into Christ and to become a spiritually mature disciple of Jesus. This means a certain amount of “dying to self.” It means putting God’s agenda before our own and learning to love people we might not otherwise choose to talk to, much less to love.

In this season of vacations and rest, as we harvest strawberries and tomatoes and other good summer growing things, let us pray that we ourselves might also be growing, as individuals and families and as churches, not for the sake of our own selves, but for the sake of the growing things, let us pray that we ourselves might also choose to keep growing. You never know how big you will get.

**EVENTS**

**Register for Summer Camp**
West River, Manidokan
Now through summer.
Get registrations in for summer camp experiences. See www.funsfriendsfaith.org for details on programs and schedules. Campership applications are available for churches to apply for summer camp assistance.

**Peace with Justice Sunday**
All churches
June 15
Special Sunday with offering. Half of the offering stays within the annual conference to empower peacemakers to promote cooperation through the love of Christ. Order resources at http://shop.umc.org/category/search/2014-special-sundays-resources/763

**Training for youth and adult leaders**
Board of Church & Society
July 23-25
A three day seminar, “In Focus,” is a familiarization event about UMBC seminars on national and international affairs. Deadline to register is July 5. For information and to register, contact Aimee Hong at ahong@umc-gbcs.org, or (202) 488-5649, or Dave Johnson at djohnson@umc-gbcs.org, or call (202) 488-5544.

**Mission u**
Bethesda Marriott
Aug. 8-10
The Roma of Europe, people with disabilities, and balancing inner and outer dimensions of the Christian life are the classes of the 2014 Mission u. The event is sponsored by the Board of Global Ministries and United Methodist Women. Cost varies depending on room accommodations and ranges from $160 to $585. A youth session is also available. For registration information, contact Darlynn McCrae at darmacray@yahoo.com.

**Early Childhood Educators Conference**
Wesley Freedom UMC, Sykesville
August 14, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Childcare providers in local churches may obtain the necessary certification for their MSDE Credentials. The keynote address, Reflect, Not Deflect,” will be given by the Rev. Michelle Holmes Chaney. Eighteen workshops are available. Cost is $55, includes workshops and lunch. Register at www.bwcumc.org/. For information, contact Pam Bowen at pbowen@bwcumc.org.

**ROCK in September**
Townson UMC, Towson
Sept. 12, 7 p.m.
Preston Ceneta, the keynote speaker at ROCK 2014, and the band “Urban Street Level,” will come together with the youth of the Baltimore-Washington Conference Friday, Sept. 12, at 7 p.m. at Townson UMC, to raise money for the rebuilding of Northwood-Appold UMC. Northwood-Appold was destroyed in a fire last December. Registration, which opens soon, is $20.

**Correction:** In the clergy retirees story in the May 14 UMConnection, we regret omitting the retirement of Limja Huh Gim, who served 11 years. Also note that Elza M. Hurst served 9 years, not 17, as was listed; and Stella S. Tay served 16 years, not 9 as listed. She was mentioned in the story. With this additional information, the total years of service to the conference increases to 781 years.

**FORGOT TO ORDER YOUR JOURNAL?**
Pre-order your 2014 Conference Journal today.
Go to getconnected.com/2014-journal-order-form Reserve before the Sept. 1 deadline.

**UMConnection**

**Bishop Marcus Matthews**
Resident Bishop
Assistant to the Bishop
**Maidstone Mulenga**
Director of Communications
**Melissa Lauber**
Managing Editor
**Erik Alsgaard**
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Ordinands called upon to create a new vision for the church

By Linda Worthington
UMConnection Staff

In the celebration, ceremony and solemnity of the Ordination and Commissioning Service, family and friends filled the ballroom of the Baltimore Waterfront Marriott Hotel May 31 for the ordination of their loved ones, 19 in all, including 10 candidates commissioned and eight ordained as Elders and one as a Deacon.

“The church has commissioned people for leadership and service,” said Bishop Matthews. “Throughout history, the church has found itself right where the district superintendents met them, prayed with them, with what the church looks like now, you are likely to get obsessed with what the church does not exist.”

Carter spoke of his own ministry and said, “The common thread over 31 years of ministry is that God had a vision, a dream of this world to alleviate human suffering (wipe away every tear from their lives); this is the incarnation. “You are sent out by Bishop Matthews to be a living embodiment of the church that does not now exist.”

“Are you filled with hope for you, for the church of the future, not where the church finds itself right now? To do this work, you have to have the vision for the church that does not now exist.”

Bishop Sutton led in the examination and ordination of the provisional candidates, who “now come to declare their faith, their commitment, their desire to live out their covenant made at their baptism.”

At the end of the service, Bishop Matthews issued a call to anyone in the audience to come forward, if they felt the call to enter the ministry. Many did, walking down the aisles to the front of the podium, where the district superintendents met them, prayed with them and promised to be in touch.

The choir from First UMC in Hyattsville provided special music during the service. A listing of the ordinands can be found at www.bwcumc.org/news/ordinands.

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Missionary commissioned as BWC’s gift to the world’

By Melissa Lauber
UMConnection Staff

Amid the enthusiasm of student partners from Connections in Baltimore speaking out and dancing for justice, the spoken word poetry of Rev. Wanda Duckett, vignette reports on a variety of ministries, and the commissioning of Richardson Williams, who will now serve as a United Methodist missionary at Africa University in Zimbabwe, the Baltimore-Washington Conference told its ministry story at the annual session May 30.

“This is a story of people in love with God and living out that love with their hearts, hands and voices. It’s a story of the church alive in the world. The conference connects us in ways that create wonderful opportunities for shared ministries,” said Sandra Ferguson, the BWC’s director of connectional ministries.

In a service that recognized the call to missionary service, Bishop Marcus Matthews commissioned Williams, who worked on the staff of Bel Air UMC, to be a missionary, serving as a professor at Africa University in Zimbabwe. He will be supported by BWC churches that choose to enter into a covenant relationship with him. As part of the service, conference members promised, “We call and support you. You are our gift to the world.”

Churches that wish to support Williams or enter into a covenant relationship with him, can contact the Board of Global Ministries (http://www.ummission.org) and reference his missionary support code #824055.

The 2015 budget sets the collection rate at 92 percent, an increase in the minimum salary for full-time clergy, and the apportionment base for the first time in three years.

Grants for new ministries will increase by $113,000, or 27 percent over 2014 funding.

The 2015 budget, Lauder said, assumes a growth in the apportionment base for the first time in three years. Beginning in 2015, the apportionment base will grow 0.8 percent. This is the dollar amount reported by local churches upon which the apportionments are figured.

The budget sets the collection rate at 92 percent, with the Benevolence Factor remaining steady at 27.5 percent. The Benevolence Factor is a percentage used by the conference to calculate apportionments for local churches, based on local church spending.

The result for 2015, Lauder said, is that churches are expected to contribute 10.8 percent of operating income in 2015 to apportionments. “We’re approaching our goal of 10 percent,” said Lauder, “and this is something to celebrate.”

Churches throughout the BWC contributed $5.9 million in apportionment askings in 2013, a collection rate of 96.8 percent. She noted that December 2013 was noticeably lean, with contributions down $100,000 from previous years.

Total income from all sources in 2013 was just over $1 million, and $0.5 million was lower. However, expenses were lower by $100,000 in 2013, and were on budget, Lauder said.

“CFA is aware of one-time activities that negatively impacted the 2013 budget,” she said, adding that the Council is working with those churches that experienced these one-time events.

The good news, though, Lauder said, is that the number of churches giving 100 percent remains strong. Ninety percent of our local churches have given 100 percent in at least one of the past two years,” she said.

In approving the budget, conference members granted a 2 percent raise for conference staff; increased missions funding by 3 percent; approved the addition of a Global Partnership Coordinator; allowed the campus ministry funding by 3 percent; approved the addition of a Global

We Are The Ones
By Rev. Wanda Duckett

We are the ones. Sometimes too deep in the verse to rehearse what it means. Steeped in meditation of the text as it streams through our memory. Let’s see, “What comes next?” Oh yes, “Love your neighbor.” That’ll preach ….

But it still doesn’t reach the wounds or the bruises

On both sides of the tracks the enemy attacks and the world hungers and bleeds

So many with needs that call us outside

Our blood stained glass as we ask Who is our neighbor?

But we are the ones!

On our way to the New Jerusalem, we are the ones

Who must draw lines in the sand spelling out love

Loud and clear for all the world to hear.

We are the ones who build bridges that place us everywhere God needs us.

Let us be Scripture as the world reads us.

Not a blueprint of the law that only orders our steps to commit the

Verse to memory.

But committed and fitted for a mission commissioned by Calvary.

The world is waiting and we are the ones.

We are those neighbors whose doors are open wide

As we decide whether to live or to die,

to succeed or just try,

Caged birds are singing, while we are clinging to memory

Never doubt the power within us to make a difference.

We are the ones. What are we waiting for?

We are the ones…open wide every door!

We are the ones.

Can’t hear them from our shrines
Can’t see them through closed blinds
Can’t love them with closed minds.

External life? Let’s get this right.

The world is waiting and we are the ones.

$17.3 million budget to fund ministry passed unanimously

By Erik Allgaard
UMConnection Staff

For the second year in a row, the Baltimore-Washington Conference unanimously adopted a budget. Without debate on the floor nor amendment, conference members approved a $2.3 million ministry spending plan for 2015.

The Rev. Ann Laprade, chair of the Conference Council on Finance and Administration, presented the budget, noting that the increase for 2015 was held to 1.1 percent.

“In order to build bridges and to love, it takes funding,” she said.

The 2015 budget contains two significant areas of focus, Lauder said: new church starts and grants for new ministries.

“Ninety percent of our local churches have given 100 percent of General Church apportionments and 100 percent payment of Africa University askings. In so doing, BWC is one of 27 conferences in the church to pay such a pin for the first time.”

The complete 2015 budget is online at http://www.bwumcums.org/sites/default/files/BudgetPublication.pdf.
Holy Conferencing: New model for discussions

From page 1

results were announced the following morning. All five resolutions passed, with about 60 to 65 percent of the 8,656 members voting in favor of the resolutions. The balloting on eliminating discrimination in West Virginia was 80% in favor and 20% opposed.

For many of the members, the process of holy conferencing meant more than the results of the vote. I was hesitant, but I have never been so in love with the church,” one person wrote. “Usually this discussion brings up ‘black and white’ opinions. This conversation brought out the many colors of thought that go into spiritual discernment,” said another.

Others just said thank you, noting that “the Spirit spurs me every time.” One member wrote, “For the first time in 10 years, someone other than God heard my thoughts.” Not all of the evaluations were positive. About 40 people expressed reservations about not carrying out the more traditional debate in the larger plenary setting. One person wrote, “This left me in despair.”

Parrish, the youth from Greater Washington, wrote, “I do not like seeing people so angry at their ‘neighbor,’ but nodding politely as if they agree…. Stop not loving everyone as you love God…. I want no part of this government if I have to vote on loving.”

As the conference drew to a close the next morning, two rulings of law were requested. The first, from the Rev. Stephen Richts of Providence Church, Greater Washington UMC, questioned if the vote on the resolutions was legal and in compliance with the 2014 Book of Discipline since there was no vote on the resolutions. The second was requested by Matthew Schiel of Wesley UMC in Hampstead. He asked if the “Resolution to Agree to Disagree on Issues Pertaining to Gender and Sexual Minorities” is in compliance with paragraph 2002.1(b) of the Book of Discipline and Judicial Council Decisions.

Circles of Grace - Words that Bridge

Acceptance • Agape • Authentic • Awesome • epic • Both/and • Challenge • Christ • Compassion • Conflicted • Connecting • Connecting love • Courageous love • Daring • Discernment • Diversity • Emmanuel • Empowered • Engaging • Faith • Grace • Graciousness • Healing • Heart • Heartfelt • Holy • Holy openness • Honesty • Hope • Holy • Hopeful • Inclusion • Inclusive • Integrity • Journey • Justice • Leadership • Listen • Love • Love all • Love hope • Loving • Openness • Peaceful • Progress • Puzzle • Quiet • Respect • Respectful • Reverent wrestling • Safe-place • Shalom • Solidarity • Support • Tears • Trust • Trust respect • Unbound • Understanding • United • Unity • Valuable • Voice • We

By Melissa Lauber
UMConnection Staff

and that God’s story was your story.

“As we remember these men and women today, we can see their faces, hear their laughter. We call this the connection,” he said.

“Perhaps you, like me, now have more friends on the other side of the river than on this side. Along this journey they blessed us. … They stood in the river of life with us. If we listen, they are singing to us. We sing back, ‘Yes, we’ll gather at the river, gather with the saints at the river that flows from the throne of God.”

“We remember with thanksgiving and celebrate the life of…’ said the Rev. Mary Jo Sims, as she solemnly read one by one the name of each bishop, bishop’s spouse, clergy, clergy spouse, or lay person who had died since annual conference last year. A family member or friend lit a candle and placed it on the altar while the congregation sang prayers.

Following the recessional, “Shall We Gather at the River,” the guests were invited to a luncheon.

By Linda Worthington
UMConnection Staff

Conferees remembered who ‘traveled with us on the journey’

A t the “Service of the Saints,” May 30, Bishop Joseph Yeakel, retired, called to worship the families and friends of those clergy, clergy spouses and lay members who have died since the last annual conference. During the service he lit a candle for his wife, Lois, who died this spring. The seven-member Eden Korean Women’s choir sang “There is always more love to be shared,” he said. “There is always more of God.”

Bishop Joseph Yeakel, left, honors the memory of his wife.

At the Memorial Service, candles are lit to honor loved ones.

Power in Praying for Others.

Carter said that baptisms, whether in a river immersion, done by a bishop at annual conference as his first daughter was, or renewed at the River Jordan, “is a set-apart immersion into this life of death and resurrection of Jesus.” Baptism began in the Exodus, when the Hebrews on the journey went through the Red Sea, he said. It is a set-apart immersion into this life of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Like Moses, some of us avoided this call to ministry, Carter said, referring to the clergy being remembered.

But somewhere along the way we waded into those waters and Jesus came with us. We knew we were not alone.”

“In your journey it must have seemed like a huge leap of faith to cross those waters,” he said. “Sometimes your journeys must have seemed like a wilderness – new parsonages, new people, new communities, learning to live one day at a time. … But there were also times when you could say, ‘I’m doing what God created me to do,’

and more clearly defined the membership of the Connectional Table, which reviews and discusses Conference ministry objectives, strategies and practices.

As part of perfecting the resolution, eight non-leaders, who are not involved in church leadership, were added as “15th disciple” and provide fresh perspectives.

Jen Ihlo, chair of the conference Rules Committee, walked members through changes to the Rules of the Session and the policies that guide the election of 2016 General Conference delegates and episcopal nominees.

These resolutions on rules passed with only slight changes. Conference members also adopted resolutions that: outline how an outside group can partner with the Baltimore-Washington Conference, allow for the payment of moving expenses to local pastors; and renewed the BWCC’s covenant with the Board of Child Care.

The conference Committee on Disability Concerns, under the leadership of the Rev. Nancy Webb, brought forth two resolutions that ask the BWCC to study how the church might be stigmatizing people with mental illness. It calls for the creation of General Conference resolutions or other ways to address any conflicts with the United Methodist Social Principles that might be sent to General Conference in 2018. Both passed.

Conference members also affirmed the passage of the $10.10 minimum wage that will go into effect incrementally in Maryland by 2018 and renewed their commitment to push for a living wage for all people.

According to Board of Church and Society Chairperson Sherrie Koob, for a family of one adult and two children, an hourly living wage is reported to be $25.95 in D.C., $28.23 in Maryland and $20.69 in West Virginia.

For those interested in learning more, Koob recommended viewing the Living Wage Calculator at http://livingwage.mit.edu.

Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church
UMConnection 5


Bishop Matthews has 30 days to make a ruling, which will be published on the conference website, www.bwcumc.org.

When the voting was completed, members decided together upon one word that summarized their collective response to the circle experience and wrote it on their toy bridge talking stick. Love, respect, hope and grace were the most common responses. (See the sidebar, below, for other “words that bridge.”)

The toy bridges, reflecting the theme of the conference “Building Bridges: Be Love,” were then linked as one across the front of the stage.

As the session came to a close, Bishop Matthews asked those assembled to “stay open to the mystery. … There is always more love to be shared,” he said. “There is always more of God.”

By Melissa Lauber
UMConnection Staff

O pting for an additional study, Baltimore-Washington Conference members affirmed the dangers of fossil fuels but postponed a response to companies using them. The Rev. Jackson Day, dangers of fossil fuels but postponed a response to companies using them. The Rev. Jackson Day, dangers of fossil fuels but postponed a response to companies using them. The Rev. Jackson Day, dangers of fossil fuels but postponed a response to companies using them.

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Yeakel as she thanked him, “You are a man who stands...

Ministry team members made personal contact with...

people, prayers and beads come together...

People, prayers and beads come together...

Bishop Yeakel encourages retirees at luncheon...

FULTON – The conference Mission Center was packed May 13 when most of the 33 retirees and family members gathered for the annual luncheon to recognize the past service of those retiring.

Retired Bishop Joseph H. Yeakel spoke of his own retirement years and urged those coming into retirement to continue being active and engaged in the work of the church. He also spoke out in strong support for Bishop Talbert, who Yeakel said has been criticized for offering a blessing at a same-gender wedding.

District Superintendent Laura Easto reminded Bishop Yeakel as she thanked him, “You are a man who stands up. You told us two books we need to stand on: the Bible and the Book of Disciplines.”

Bishop Yeakel announced that he would soon be moving to Ohio to be nearer his daughter – a loss that will be keenly felt by the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

Each of the eight district superintendents called the retirees in their care to come forward. They also told a unique anecdote about the person being honored.

People, prayers and beads come together...

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Members of the Prayer Ministry of Asbury UMC were on the streets of D.C. to participate in their own unique way in the May 1 National Day of Prayer.

At 8 a.m., they opened the doors of the church, set up tables at both the K and 11th Street entrances and armed themselves with literature, “I Prayed” stickers and ready hearts for the people coming by. Prayer Ministry team members made personal contact with nearly 300 individuals, received 102 prayer requests, prayed for 10 persons at Franklin Park (two blocks away), prayed for and gave out 50 free lunches to homeless neighbors in the 11th Street Park and distributed 284 “One Voice United in Prayer” guides.

New deaconess consecrated...

LOUISVILLE, KY. - Among the 26 deaconesses from 18 conferences consecrated during the closing plenary worship at the United Methodist Women’s Assembly April 27, was Jane Grays from the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

Deaconesses are women called by God to lay vocations in a lifetime relationship in The United Methodist Church. "This class of deaconesses reflects the strength and unity found in the diversity of those who are called to ministries of love, justice and service,” said Becky Louter, executive of the UMWA’s Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner program. Home Missioners are men in a similar capacity and commitment.

Grays will work in prison ministries and with Sharon Leatherman in conference Global Ministries. She joins three other deaconesses in the conference: Shelly Owens, Carolyn Anderson and Gertrude Daly.

Baptist Church adds large new addition...

SHEPHERDSTOWN, W. VA. - In some places, The United Methodist Church is declining. However, Asbury UMC dedicated a large new addition April 26. With 200 in attendance, District Superintendent Edgardo Rivera, spoke at the ceremony that officially opened Asbury’s Multi-purpose Center.

The new one-story building has a multi-media center, a multi-purpose room that can seat 500 or be used as a gymnasium, classrooms, nurseries and a commercial kitchen. Asbury’s Mighty Men of God choir and the award winning Shepherdstown Middle School Jazz Band performed at the celebration.

The facilities are an investment in the community, said Ginger Medley. The church uses its current and expanded facility to offer parenting classes and computer literacy classes for adults,UpdatedAt 150th Anniversary of the former Washington Conference October 18 - 1 p.m. - Martin's West in Woodlawn

visit http://www.bwumc.org/events/remember_rejoice_renew for more details

“Lift every voice and sing.”
By Linda Worthington
UMConnection Staff

**T**he Africa University Choir sang, drummed and danced the people in to Bible study each morning of annual conference to listen with hearts and minds to James “Jim” Salley bring new understanding to the Scripture of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37.

Salley, a South Carolinian, is associate Vice-Chancellor for Institutional Advancement for Africa University in Zimbabwe since 1992, the major fundraiser for the United Methodist pan-African university. He brought to the study stories of his experiences while traveling for AU. Using the conference metaphor of “bridges,” Salley said Africa University has a “bridge of dreams” dedicated in 1994.

The scriptural story is also about a bridge, as it brings together two sides, the wounded man on one side, the priest and Levite passing to the other side, and the Samaritan from the other side crossing the road.

Salley told of one day “passing by on the other side,” like the priest and Levite, a blind man sitting against a wall on a street; he had $200 in his pocket. As he turned around to go back to the man, he saw a small boy come by and put a coin in the man’s hand. The experience has never left him. “I have the responsibility to assist where I’m able,” he said, “and I lied in ignoring him.”

“The word of the day is mercy,” Salley said in Saturday’s study, and quoted DS Conrad Link who had said, “Mercy is a forgotten word.” Mercy is a bridge, Salley said.

The Samaritan ministered to the hopeless wounded man lying in the ditch by the road. “If you find yourself in a ditch, call on Jesus,” Salley said. Love has mercy, God has mercy.

Another experience Salley shared was on the long flight from Zimbabwe to the U.S., via Rome, when a young man had a seizure. A doctor onboard did everything he could to assist the man on the floor 12 feet from Salley’s seat. And everyone, of many religions, prayed. Forty-five minutes from landing in Rome, the man suddenly “got up and sat on the floor” and cried, moved by the lives and message of the choir.

He was taken to a hospital, with no logical reason for his blackout. And sometime later, he contacted Salley. That man, Dan Umba Kissalanga, is working now in Davao City, Philippines, for the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries.

“Wherever you are in life, God is with you. God will never leave you. God has plans to get you (out of the ditch) on the road to bring,” Salley said.

The Africa University choir sang throughout the study, and as they left the ballroom, they knelled and greeted folks singing “I’ll meet you in the morning, in the sweet by and by.”

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**Bible study encourages BWC to create ‘bridge of dreams’**

**When ‘Thank you’ says a thousand other words ...**
From page 1

 territory of God’s Kingdom becomes enlarged, our human consciousness becomes expanded, and all of our former narrow and limited ways of thinking are put to the test.”

The bishop celebrated those engaged in ministries in their churches and communities. “One of the premises of our covenant with God is that the minute we make ourselves fully available to God, God can then do some amazing and miraculous things with us,” he said.

Honoring Ministry

At the conclusion of the conference, Matthews, along with Bishops Violet Fisher, Joseph H. Yeakel and Kenneth Carter laid hands on and prayed for eight Elders and one Deacon who were ordained as clergy members, and nine provisional Elders and one provisional Deacon who were commissioned.

Carter, the bishop of the Florida Area, preached at the ordination service and at the Memorial Service, which honored the saints of the church who had died in the previous year. Included in those whose lives were celebrated was Lois Yeakel, the wife of Bishop Yeakel. In other observances, the ministries of 33 retirees, representing 781 years of service, were celebrated and the new appointments of 116 pastors were noted.

27 conferences to do so.

Engaging in Holy Conferencing

During the session, 55 resolutions were considered. Those dealing with clarifying conference rules all passed, as did resolutions on the minimum wage and working toward a living wage, and studying the denomination’s policies and practices with mentally ill clergy. Opting for additional study, members affirmed the dangers of fossil fuels but postponed a response to companies using them. A task force will be formed to explore the potential impact of divestment. A resolutions on three corporations that benefit from the Israel/Palestine conflict was deferred indefinitely.

Five resolutions on human sexuality were discussed in small groups and voted on by paper ballot. These resolutions: ask that the BWC be an inclusive conference; call for the church to agree to disagree on polity affecting LGBT people; encourage the banning of clergy trials for same-gender weddings; encourage removing discriminatory language from the Book of Discipline; and speak out against laws discriminating against gays and lesbians in West Virginia.

Two questions of law were requested of Bishop Matthews on whether the suspension of rules, which did not allow for the making of amendments to the resolutions on human sexuality was legal, and if the resolution on “Agree to Disagree on Issues Pertaining to Gender and Sexual Minorities” was in compliance with the Book of Discipline and Judicial Council Decisions 1115, 1115, 1120 and 1219.

During the three-day session, conference members heard from several distinguished guests including

Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe, General Secretary of the denomination’s Board of Church and Society; the Rev. Jeffrey S. Allen, Executive Director of the West Virginia Council of Churches; the Rev. Albert Mosley, president of Gammon Theological Seminary; the Rev. Robert Martin, dean of Wesley Theological Seminary; Historic Black College Fund student Nicole Pleasant; and the Rt. Rev. Eugene Taylor Sutton, the Episcopal bishop of the Diocese of Maryland.

In Other Actions

Members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference:

• Accepted an award for contributing the highest amount of funding for missionary support in the Northeastern Jurisdiction.

• Collected 1,928 care kits with supplies for area homeless shelters.

• Heard reports from the eight superintendents that highlighted ministries in their districts.

• Saw a dramatic presentation by students from Connexions, a performing arts school in Baltimore, one of the many schools now partnering with area United Methodist churches.

• Heard from Conference Lay Leader Delores Martin on the importance of training and mobilizing laity to be the hands and feet of Christ.

• Participated in training sessions the day before conference began on such topics as Volunteers in Ministry.

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The 192 years of ministry of Calvary UMC in Churchville were also lifted up in prayer and a candle was lit on the altar as members voted to discontinue the church under paragraph 253 in the Book of Discipline.

Funding Ministry

For the second year in a row, conference members unanimously adopted a budget with no debate or amendments. The $173 million budget represents a 3.3 percent increase in spending on mission and ministry.

Members also voted to increase the minimum salary for full-time clergy to $40,760 and raise the housing allowance a 14 percent increase to $19,866.

The Rev. Ann Laprade, chair of the Council on Finance and Administration, led the conference in a celebration of paying 100 percent of General Church apportionments. BWC also has paid 100 percent of the contributions that support Africa University, and is one of only 27 conferences to do so.

Richmond Williams is commissioned as a missionary.

Members gather in circles of grace for holy conferencing on issues of human sexuality.

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The 2015 session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference will convene Thursday, May 28, at the Marriott Waterfront Hotel in Baltimore.