Anticipating a decline in membership that could lead to the loss of an episcopal area, the Northeastern Jurisdiction College of Bishops has begun a proactive study to address the scourge of heroin, which is destroying lives throughout Maryland, Washington, D.C., West Virginia and beyond.

Heroin’s tragic story touches UMC

Annmarie McLaughlin sometimes saw God in the starry night sky. She was a girl who understood the mystery, and the beauty, of the galaxy. She also loved playing with her dog, Zeke. When she was little, she had plans of growing up to be Santa Claus or a farmer or president. And, at 19, she died broken — a victim of the heroin that took over her life.

She was not alone.

Maryland’s new governor Larry Hogan has declared heroin as the No. 1 crime problem facing the state. From 2011 through 2013, the number of overdose deaths in the state spiked by 60 percent to 464, state officials reported. That number continues to rise.

In 2013, in Maryland, more people were killed by heroin than those murdered, and the stats are equally as troubling in West Virginia and the District of Columbia.

In West Virginia, law officials report, two-thirds to three-fourths of the cases they receive on a daily basis are heroin related. According to the Centers for Disease Control, nearly half a million Americans are thought to be addicted to heroin.

The statistics are troubling, but behind each of them is a story that is often marked with destruction and despair. What amazes people about Hannah McLaughlin’s story are the people she leaves behind who are using her legacy to educate others about the lethal dangers heroin poses.

Hannah is a child of The United Methodist Church. She’s the daughter of the Rev. Craig and Lisa McLaughlin of Mt. Zion UMC in Bel Air. Lisa wears Hannah’s photo in a locket around her neck.

Today the spirit of that simple prayer, “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can…,” strengthens the McLaughlins as they tell their daughter’s story to anyone who will hear it; to anyone who doesn’t fully understand the evils of this drug.

For those who loved Hannah, it’s been like a blink of an eye and forever since March 24, 2014, when Craig and Lisa found Hannah in her childhood bedroom, dead of an overdose of heroin mixed with fentanyl. Part of their healing is sharing Hannah’s story, creating a legacy of hope and recovery.

‘An Instant Addict’

It’s a story that started when Hannah was in middle school.

She was dabbling with marijuana and alcohol. Noticing troubling changes in her behavior, Craig and Lisa insisted Hannah take a serum to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can…,” strengthens the McLaughlins as they tell their daughter’s story to anyone who will hear it; to anyone who doesn’t fully understand the evils of this drug.

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Anticipating a decline in membership that could lead to the loss of an episcopal area, the Northeastern Jurisdiction College of Bishops has begun a proactive study to address the missional needs, strengths and challenges of annual conferences in this region.

“While the statistics to determine if the Northeastern Jurisdiction will be asked to go from nine active bishops to eight are not yet in, the College wants to make sure it aligning leadership and resources in the most effective manner possible as we strive to make disciples for the transformation of the world,” said Bishop Marcus Matthews, who heads the Jurisdiction’s Vision Table and led the College of Bishops when this study was announced at a meeting in Baltimore Feb. 13.

“No decisive actions have been taken,” Matthews said. “However, the bishops feel it is our role to act faithfully and strategically in looking at the way we align our Areas to best serve the church and its people. Initial indicators seem to point to a few possibilities for realignment that we’ll be investigating in the months ahead.”

In particular, the bishop said, the potential and challenges of realigning the Baltimore-Washington and Peninsula Delaware Conferences is beginning to be seriously investigated.

The Northeastern Jurisdiction, which stretches from West Virginia to Maine, has 10 annual conferences and nine episcopal areas and is home to 450,734 United Methodists. Changing borders and restructuring annual conferences requires the action of the lay and clergy Jurisdictional Conference delegates, who meet annually. See NEJ, page 3

By Melissa Lauber
UMConnection Staff

See Heroin, page 4

See NEJ, page 3
On Being,” will help faith communities
jurisdiction training on volunteers in

The Rev. Michael Armstrong, pastor of
The BWC will host a Northeastern
Institute for Community Engage-

$225. For more information, visit http://

May you observe a holy and life-changing Lent.

To a dusty world. I’m dust with a destiny. And so are you.

so that I can look to the potter that has shaped me, and

right hand of the throne of God. “

of the joy that was set before him endured the cross,

cling to, in favor of clinging to Jesus, “who for the sake

of the savior of the world. We don’t want to be “dust in the wind” in

Dust is a reminder of our earthly origins and

the relative brevity of our time on earth. Dust is easily

wiped away, with a cloth and some polish or a good

hard breeze. We don’t want to be “dust in the wind” in

the words of the old Kansas song. Surely, we are more

important than that, we say. “We work so hard to deny

our mortality or even our aging. Dust is not something

we want to identify with.

But Lent is a time to embrace that God is God and we
are not… always a message I personally need to hear.
And we are dust that has been enlivened by the breath
of God (Genesis 2). Our dry bones live because of God’s
creating work and by God’s Holy Spirit we are sustained.
Remembering that we are dust is good news if we are
called to be Easter people, whose Good Friday bodies
pale in comparison to our Easter resurrected selves.
Maybe it’s time to get rid of some dusty practices or
dusty arguments or dusty unfruitfulness in our lives to
make room for the work of the Easter Holy Spirit.

Lent is a great time to clean our spiritual houses and
toss out dust bunnies of complacency and hopelessness.
A time to cast off the weight of all the dust that we
cling to, in favor of clinging to Jesus, “who for the sake
of the joy that was set before him endured the cross,
disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the
right hand of the throne of God.”

Lent reminds me that I am dust – dust that has been
created and redeemed and loved and healed and freed –
so that I can look to the potter that has shaped me, and
the One who was raised from the dust, for you and for
me.

I’m dust, called to bring the good news of the Gospel
to a dusty world. I’m dust with a destiny. And so are you.
May you observe a holy and life-changing Lent.

UCC Annual Prayer Breakfast
Community UMC in Crofton
March 14, 8 a.m.
The Rev. Michael Armstrong, pastor of
Coleville UMC, will be the guest speaker
at this annual breakfast. The 2015 UCC
awards will also be presented. The
breakfast is $25. For more information,
contact Malcolm Clory at 301-420-0299
or 301-233-7376.

Volunteers in Mission Training
West River Camp in Churchtown
March 18-21
The BWC will host a Northeastern
Jurisdiction training on volunteers
in mission and disaster relief. The cost is
$225. For more information, visit http://
bwcumc.org/ministries/vim or contact
Pam Bowen at pbowen@bwcumc.org.

Conversation on Race
Oxon Chapel, Wesley Seminary, D.C.
Tuesday, March 17, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
The Institute for Community Engage-
ment at Wesley Downtown is convening
a panel to examine theologically and
strategically race relations in the United
States. This moderated conversation
moderated by Krista Tippett, host of NPR’s
“On Being,” will help faith communities
explore fruitful ways of moving forward.
RSVP to events@wesleyseminary.edu by
March 12.

Festival of Preaching
Eccumenical Institute in Baltimore
April 17-18
The Eccumenical Institute in Baltimore
will host a Festival of Preaching April
17-18. The theme is “Preaching for

The goal is to equip preachers to effectively
address the pastoral and prophetic issues
facing the contemporary church and
society. In conjunction with the festival,
a springminster course, “Preaching,
in the Black Church Tradition,” will
be offered. It will be taught by the Rev.
C. Anthony Hunt of Epworth UMC in
Baltimore. Learn more at www.stmarys.
.edu/festival-of-preaching.

Pre-Conference Briefings
Saturday, May 16
Damascus UMC from 8:30 a.m. to noon
First UMC in Hyattsville, 2 to 5:30 p.m.
Lay and clergy Annual Conference
members are encouraged to attend one
of these briefing sessions to learn and
discuss the proposed 2016 budget, and
the resolutions and petitions they’ll be
called to vote upon at the May 28-30
session of the Baltimore-Washington
Conference in Baltimore. Learn more
about the session at http://bwcumc.org/
ac-sessions/2015-ac-sessions. Members
are encouraged to read the resolutions
and petitions online before they come
to and print them if they want hard
copies.

EVENTS

UMConnection is the newspaper of the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church, 11711 East Market Place, Fulton, MD 20759-2594. Telephone (301) 420-0295 or (800) 420-2225 - fax (301) 316-0386 - editor@bwcumc.org. Subscriptions are $15 per year. The UMConnection is published monthly. To subscribe, email kspears@bwcumc.org. Postmaster: Send address changes to UMConnection, 11711 East Market Place, Fulton, MD 20759-2594.
UM's invited to 'Dare to Believe' at BWC's Annual Session

By MELISSA LAURER
UMConnection Staff

"Dare to Believe" is the theme of the 231st Annual Session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, which will be held May 28-30 at the Marriott Waterfront Hotel in Baltimore.

The theme of the conference comes from Matthew 14:22-36, the story of when Peter walks on the water.

This year’s highlights will include the preaching of Bishops Marcus Matthews of the Washington Area and Jonathan Holton of the South Carolina Annual Conference. Bishop Peggy Johnson, a daughter of the Baltimore-Washington Conference who now serves the Philadelphia Area, will speak at a retiree luncheon and evening event.

The Rev. Laurie Haller, a pastor in the West Michigan Conference but who serves in the Detroit Conference, will lead the Bible study. Haller, author of "Rescue Radiography: Play and Purpose," is known throughout the denomination for her efforts in raising $1 million, while serving as a district superintendent, to build the Ubuntu Retreat Center at Africa University in Zimbabwe.

Also at this session, members will elect six lay and six clergy delegates to represent them at the 2016 General Church to become church law or policy.

The bishops are developing a number of strategic initiatives based on the findings in the assessment.

The analysis indicated that:

• The fastest de-churching culture is in Upper New York; Western Pennsylvania and New Jersey, or of Eastern Pennsylvania and New York; West Virginia, while all three show challenges in the area of fruitfulness.

• There is a possibility that the Jurisdiction will be required to realign its episcopal areas.

• The greatest strengths in the jurisdiction are in the area of participation and more.

• The 10 year trend for worship attendance – Eastern Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey, or of Eastern Pennsylvania and New York to make 1 profession of faith.

• The 10 year trend for worship attendance – Eastern Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey, or of Eastern Pennsylvania and New York will benefit Africa University, a United Methodist school in Zimbabwe.

From page 1 every four years. Realigning Episcopal areas is under the authority of the order of the College of Bishops.

At the Feb. 15 meeting, Matthews reported, a complex and detailed demographic analysis was shared that outlined and ranked the size and complexity, capacity for mission, and present and potential fruitfulness of each annual conference in the Jurisdiction.

Compiled by Bishops John Schol of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference, Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball of the Baltimore-Washington Conference and Bishop Mark Webb of the Upper New York Annual Conference, the Episcopal Area Supervision report provides an in-depth look at 23 factors that range from number of churches, pastors and conference staff, to theological and educational systems, retirement security, congregation, mission participation and more.

The analysis indicated that:

• The fastest de-churching culture is in Upper New York, New England and New York annual conferences.

• West Virginia, Western Pennsylvania and Susquehanna annual conferences have the most church culture in the Jurisdiction, but all three show challenges in the area of fruitfulness.

• The greatest strengths in the jurisdiction are in Baltimore-Washington and Greater New Jersey Annual Conferences.


The bishops are developing a number of strategic initiatives based on the findings in the assessment.

However, one immediate measure is the initiation of a study on aligning the Baltimore-Washington Conference and the Peninsula Delaware Annual Conference as one Episcopal area.

The two conferences shared a bishop prior to 1988.

Bishops Matthews, Bishop Peggy Johnson, who leads the Peninsula Delaware and Eastern Pennsylvania Conferences, and Bishop Forrest Strith, a retired bishop, were given the task of forming a study group to explore how such an alignment could best take place. Following their consultation, the trio will report back to the College. Based on their recommendations, the realignment could take place in 2016 or 2020.

The College of Bishops also discussed the possibilities of aligning Susquehanna and Eastern Pennsylvania or Eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey, or of Eastern Pennsylvania having its own bishop. However, Matthews stressed, these conversations are in the preliminary stages.

What are your thoughts on realigning the Baltimore-Washington and Peninsula Delaware conferences into one Episcopal area? What might be gained in this new configuration? Of what things should conference leaders be mindful? Join the conversation. Send comments to connection@bwc.org.

Later this spring, the statistics from 2014 will be officially compiled. If the membership drops significantly, there is a possibility that the Jurisdiction will be required to move from nine to eight bishops in 2016.

However, members of the College suggested, the alignment of Peninsula Delaware and the Baltimore-Washington Conference may multiply mission resources and be beneficial to both conferences and could go forward either way, depending on what the study group finds. (A pdf. of the Episcopal Area Supervision Assessment is available at http://bwcumc.org/ the-united-methodist-church-northeastern-jurisdiction.)

What are your thoughts on realigning the Baltimore-Washington and Peninsula Delaware conferences into one Episcopal area? What might be gained in this new configuration? Of what things should conference leaders be mindful? Join the conversation. Send comments to connection@bwc.org.

Conf2013Table

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<th>Conference Mission Fruitfulness (2013 data)</th>
<th>BW</th>
<th>EPA</th>
<th>GNE</th>
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<th>UNY</th>
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Dealing hope instead of dope: Robert’s story and struggle

By Erik Alsgaard

UMConnection Staff

T he epidemic of heroin is not limited to neighborhoods in big cities, nor to the suburbs that surround them. In rural areas across the Baltimore-Washington Conference, heroin is often more easy to obtain than alcohol.

The following story is true. Only the names and locations have been changed.

Robert “drank and smoked pot like a lot of other kids when he was in high school, but he didn’t like the way the hard drugs made him feel. What he did like was being part of the “in” crowd, so he quickly learned that selling drugs secured the attention he craved.

“I sold these things, I’d be the life of the party,” he said. “I sold a little bit of everything: cocaine, pot, OxyContin.” Even, sometimes, heroin. “Getting drugs is all about who you know and what you’re willing to do. Robert was never part of a larger operation. One of his primary suppliers was a neighbor with multiple prescriptions for OxyContin. “She had about five prescriptions per pill from doctors around here, and more from doctors in other states,” Robert said.

A single gram of heroin, bought in Baltimore for around $150, could easily return a $200 or $400 profit when cut and distributed.

At the peak of his “success,” Robert owned a car and shared a townhouse. “I had everything I ever wanted. I never gave up laundry; I bought clothes and threw them away. I spent my days playing video games.”

One day Robert watched a woman struggling to walk the dumpster she saw, for the first time, that there was a lot of need in her rural community, at schools, and churches. They’ve made videos for the sheriff’s department that will be shown in movie theaters and people with stories as heart-breaking as their own, often seek them out for advice and prayer. They have started a support group called Loving An Addict for family members and friends of those caught in addiction.

Some churches have asked the McLaughlins what they do. Craig advises hosting 12-step and Celebrate Recovery programs. He also urges church leaders to speak authentically and candidly to youth about everything. “You need only be as sick as your biggest secret,” he said.

He encourages pastors to attend these recovery groups to learn the language of addiction and the difficult truths of recovery. “Too often we say the exact opposite thing that a person with an addiction needs to hear,” he said.

“A huge thank you to all of you who loved Hannah, and to the youth everywhere, his words are simple: “Please, do not do drugs.”

While Hannah was alive, her parents prayed for a miraculous healing. “God chose not to do that,” Lisa said. “But, they both agree, God was always present with Hannah and the whole family.”

Worries like this one marred her life, along with her recovery efforts. “I want you to go farther outside your comfort zone than you ever thought possible,” she said.

He kept his arms covered even in summer to hide his tattoo. “I cover them because they are who I am, not who I want to be,” Robert said. “Robert attends worship twice a week. Robert is involved in his congregation’s mission and outreach.

“I give now for myself, but I also gave regularly to help others. Robert sits a few rows behind the altar. Robert receives the bread and wine as symbols of the body and blood of Christ. Robert gives the elements as a reminder of his own need for grace, but he doesn’t give up. “You’re only as sick as your biggest secret,” he said.

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A Spiral Into Darkness

Alcohol was the way they spoke of signs of hope.

One day, Hannah and her friend decided to stop using and threw their dope and needles in a dumpster, her parents found them under the bed. When she shook them back out, they couldn’t find them. She sunk down against the dumpster—beginning to “get dope sickness.” She was body snatching, Craig said. But when she looked back at the dumpster she saw, for the first time, that there was a message written on it: “Everything will be okay.”

“She considered this a word from God for her,” Craig said.

The pair started sharing Hannah’s story in their community, at schools, and churches. They’ve made videos for the sheriff’s department that will be shown in movie theaters and people with stories as heart-breaking as their own, often seek them out for advice and prayer. They have started a support group called Loving An Addict for family members and friends of those caught in addiction.

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Perspectives on God, interfaith group explores the truth

By Linda Worthington
UMConnection Staff

Acknowledging that the world is filled with tragic misunderstandings, hatred and violence, often in the name of religion, panelists from three Abrahamic religions and a humanist met for a panel discussion at the BWC Mission Center Feb. 15. About 50 people attended while many more participated via live streaming of the program to several different churches.

The event was arranged by Wesley Nexus, Inc., an online organization created in 2009 as a nonprofit organization dedicated to the dissemination of information about the dialogue between science and religion within the Wesleyan tradition in the 21st century. It was the third annual Evolution Weekend program the group has sponsored.

“Science, Story, Scripture: Living Together with Understanding” featured a panel of a Muslim Imam, a traditional Christian, a progressive Jew and an “unabashed” atheist, to talk about God.

Youth, youth leaders by the thousands attend ROCK 2015

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Following a set of pre-arranged questions, each panelist was first asked to summarize their perception of God and communicating with God.

Hathryn Younis, a Muslim Imam, a scholar in Arabic and Islamic studies and an architect, said he believed there is “a rational agreement of the existence of a Creator” who must be God who is “One and only One,” a belief voiced over and over in the Muslim Holy book, the Quran. Communication with God is through prayer five times a day.

“Unabashed” atheist, to talk about God.

Dennis Skoza, a practicing Catholic and Adjunct Professor of Philosophy specializing in contemporary European philosophy, first noted that he does not speak for the Catholic Church. His view of God is that the relationship is experiential and comes out of listening to the heart. God can be communicated with through prayer, which itself is a dialogue. “On prayer, we pray first then come to know about God,” he said, “We know someone is out there.”

The Jewish voice on the panel, Daniel Spiro, an author, lawyer and co-founder of the Jewish-Islamic Dialogue Society of Washington, described God as “great, infinite love – and a divine mystery.” Nothing is outside of God and God is not too busy, he said. He communicates with God through prayer. “Talking to God reveals my innermost feeling of God,” he said.

Humanist John Shook is a research associate in philosophy and instructor in Science Education for the University of Buffalo. An “unabashed atheist,” in his own words, he said that atheism is not secularism. “Atheism is an ancient way of thinking about the ultimate,” he said. “I don’t believe in your God or any of the other gods. Religions are built to deal not with God, but with each other.”

Another question given the panelists dealt with concepts of evolution, it being Evolution Weekend.

“I’m commanded to follow truth … and to follow the dictates of science,” Spiro said. “Science and religion can’t contradict each other. Science is not absolute truth, but says when it doesn’t have it. Religion needs science in order to know what it’s dealing with (nature). Science doesn’t need religion, … which operates in the social field. We need to deal with the wisdom of what’s coming next (science), not lingering over something of the past (religion).”

“The Quran brings scientific evidences of creation,” Younis said, including nature and humans. “There is a Creator. If you examine heaven and earth, you’ll never find a mistake,” he said and added, “No matter what name, you’re talking about One.”

In a series of questions, the panelists expounded further on the main panel presentations.

“Take science seriously,” Spiro said. “Now too much of religion is dedicated to debunking science. Theology is about what is old, science deals with the new.” He spoke about climate change and said that in religion, many people feel like God will take care of us, but, he concluded, “If we want to do something about the world, we better get busy.”

In terms of climate change, Younis said, “The Prophet talks about apocalypse, not the end of the world. … We understand that mankind will head toward the cliff but God will intervene.”

The Rev. William Maisch, a WesleyNexus board member, gave a brief takeaway as time ran out: “When we talk about science I hear there is a place for that. And story has a place, serves a purpose. Story can be harmful or helpful. You all appealed to the holy texts, you sat together; you respected each other; you had a common text; you provided space. In that I see hope.”

Youth, youth leaders by the thousands attend ROCK 2015

By Melissa Lauber
UMConnection Staff

July 2015, the first ROCK youth retreat, held in 1995, about 125 people attended. It was held at what is now the Coastal Palms Hotel on 120th Street in Ocean City, Md.

Meeting in an unheated room over a parking garage, people sat in plastic lawn furniture and huddled together to keep their own warmth. Two-by-fours were constructed for the lights to hang on, using empty coffee cans to help focus them on stage.

because no hotels in Ocean City in 1995 had the proper kind of lights for an event of this scope.

That first ROCK was the spark, and because the spark was “all about Christ,” that’s why it exploded, said Rick Buckingham, one of the organizers of that very first event.

In early February 2015, more than 5,500 youth, young adults and youth group leaders gathered in the same Ocean City, but this time taking over an entire Convention Center.

And during ROCK this year, those nearly 5,500 people spent a moment to recognize and thank the founders, Buckingham and Jeff Zima.

The idea began in 1995 through the District Council on Youth Ministries in the former Washington West District, Buckingham said. Zima was the District Youth Coordinator at the time, and even at the first ROCK, the teenagers on the Council played an important role in the decision-making process.

“We thought it would be a draw for people, just to come out to Ocean City,” said Zima.

The first retreat was in 1995.

“This is all about God,” said Zima. “I’m thrilled to death to come back and see that God is still the main focus. I heard the purpose statement from the stage on Friday night, and it was the same one we had. It’s all about God.”

Zima said that, since the beginning, the idea of ROCK is to build up to a time Saturday night where teenagers are invited into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Sunday, he said, was a time to prepare the youth to go home with instructions on what they needed to do in their own personal lives and in the life of the church.

Zima, who now lives in North Carolina, hadn’t been back to ROCK in eight years. He was thrilled to see what the event had turned into.

“I wasn’t here, but I was hearing reports,” he said. “This is God’s work. There’s no limitation to what God can do. Just to come back and be a part of it, to be present, it’s awesome. This is a blast!”

Buckingham, who is celebrating his 30th year as the youth leader at St. Paul’s UMC in Kensington and has missed only one ROCK, is proud of the legacy of ROCK in that it has always been led by laity, and that teenagers have always been key leaders and decision makers in the planning and implementation of the weekend.

“We’ve had the opportunity, year by year, to see this grow,” he said.

And the growth has not been only with the size and scope of the event, Buckingham said. Lives have been changed.

“Every year, with my group, I get to see kids come to a relationship with Jesus Christ in a new way and with a new perspective,” he said. “This is an opportunity where the Spirit can activate the emotions in a young person because they’re away from home, it’s away from school, it’s away from parents, the Spirit works in the mind to re-focus and respond … to what life really means, what it all is about.”

To see images from ROCK 2015, visit http://bwcumc.org/rock, or scan the QR code below, and scroll down to the slideshow at the bottom of the page.
We believe our approach can help us fulfill our
Chet Pritchett, executive director of the Methodist
Health Benefits announced in January that it would
House of Hope in Baltimore. At last count she had raised
Federation of Social Action, which has been advocating
Board of Pensions and Health Benefits will continue
Investment Strategies Kirsty Jenkinson commented,
Shivering with her were three members of Halethorpe
took the “polar plunge” at ROCK this year on Feb. 7.
GBPHB divests from coal
superintendent of the Baltimore Metropolitan District,
dives into the icy ocean.
“We celebrate this divestment and hope the General
The Rev. Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, superintendent of the
Baltimore Metropolitan District, is a leader in the Baltimore-area
violence can receive,” King said, “and to strengthen the
The Rev. Eric King from Metropolitan UMC helped
The Music Fest held in the auditorium of the Spring
The Habitat house the cluster of churches will build
The Rev. Ed Grove, who retired in 2009 but
responsible for lifting the financial limits that victims of police
“a $5,000 capital improvement grant from Preservation
and the church prospered.
It’ s not just soup, it’ s ‘souper!’
Members of Mt. Zion UMC sample soups as they raise money
Churches honor their history
PARKTON – Stabler’s UMC, in Parkton recently
celebrated its 200th anniversary with special music by
the group “Total Surrender” and preaching from the
Darryl Zoller, who wore garb from the early
Christian Stabler Sr. purchased one-half acre of land for
the Maryland to help put a new roof for its 124-year-old
building.
It’s not just soup, it’s ‘souper!’
Members of Mt. Zion UMC sample soups as they raise money
for the homeless in their community.
FINKSBURG – The Sunday of the Super Bowl is used
by many church youth groups to raise funds for local
charities of their choosing. The Mt. Zion UMC has a
little different take.
They held their fourth “Souper Bowl” event with 15
crocks of different soups, reported Barb Hayes, the
Missions Chairman. They “charged” a can of soup with a
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“We had a great turnout and it was a lot of fun along
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for the homeless in their community.
To be optimistic is to get excited and worked up about something that is going to happen and then, when it does happen, to be defeated, demoralized and disillusioned.

Instead, the Christian faith is based on hope, the reality that what is needed, wanted and planned for will happen, not in a proscribed time set by you or me, but in the context of God. It will happen. We have this hope. In the meantime, keep vigilant, be alert, be sharp, be hope-filled, and move forward. We are people of hope, rooted in reality.

There is a great illustration in Jim Collins’ book, “Good to Great.” Admiral Jim Stockdale, the highest ranking officer held captive in North Vietnam, was asked, “Who didn’t make it out of prisoner of war camp?”

Stockdale responded, “The optimists!”

The optimists—were the ones who said, “We are going to be out by Christmas... and Christmas would come and go... then ‘we will be out by Easter...’ and Easter would come and go... then ‘thanksgiving...’ and thanksgiving would come and go... then ‘we will be out by Easter’... and Easter would come and go... then ‘thanksgiving’... and thanksgiving would come and go... and they died of a broken heart.”

“Our hope is that one day, when our King returns, this world will fully become the Kingdom of our God and that all things will be made right and righteous.”

In “Charles Albert Tindley, Faithful Servant,” Amy C. Smith writes of the Christian life as possessing a kind of hope that is brokenness, that the burden of saving the world is not ours. Our hope is that one day, when our King returns, this world will fully become the Kingdom of our God and that all things will be made right and righteous.

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Have your tools ready.
God will find you work.

(RE)building the way we think about ministry...together

The resource you have been waiting for is here! You are invited to experience a new, smartly searchable feature of our website that will prayerfully support and celebrate faithful, transformational ministry. The Ministry Toolbox is designed for leaders across the conference to resource, encourage and equip clergy and laity to be Christ with, and for, one another in our churches, neighborhoods and the world.

At home, the tools you may need today to fix a leaky sink today are different than the tools you may need to completely remodel tomorrow. Likewise, the ministry tools you or your congregation need depends upon your unique situation and context. There are only a few tools in the ministry toolbox today but with your help—through asking good questions and sharing your comments and answers—new tools will be added weekly.

The first 100 people to share a tool, ask a ministry question or add knowledge to an existing tool will be eligible to receive a $100 Cokesbury gift certificate.