



UMC Connection

Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church • Equipping Disciples to Transform the World • www.bwcmc.org • Volume 24, Issue 9 • October 9, 2013



Andy Jones

The band Stellar Kart brought the energy, music and the Word during the 2013 'Encounter Youth Festival' at Manidokan Camp last month. More than 200 youth and adult leaders from throughout the Baltimore-Washington Conference gathered for a weekend of worship, workshops, fellowship and music.

Maryland church aims for hunger-free ZIP code

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

FOR THE PASTOR and congregation at St. Paul's UMC in Kensington, it all started three years ago. "We believed, with all our heart, that God was calling us to feed hungry people," said the church's pastor, the Rev. Adam Snell.

And the church responded, he said, with small steps: feeding people at Thanksgiving and Christmas, handing out coupons to a monthly pancake breakfast the church held, and buying 2,500 re-usable bags that were handed out to members of the church with an invitation to fill the bag when they went grocery shopping and return the bag to the local food pantry.

"But today, it's about to take a very big step," Snell said. "It is a very big leap of faith for us."

Speaking at a Sept. 10 press conference on the

church's front steps, Snell outlined a program whereby the church's ZIP Code – 20895 – would become the first hunger-free zone in the country.



Alison Burdett

The Rev. Adam Snell, of St. Paul's UMC in Kensington, holds an emergency food bag during a press conference at his church.

In partnership with Bethesda Help, an organization that provides emergency relief and food assistance to area residents, the church's vision is that chronic hunger in 20895 would be eliminated.

"Our promise is that anyone living in 20895 who is hungry will be fed," said Snell.

According to the 2010 United States Census, ZIP code 20895 had a population of 19,054, with an average income per household above \$111,000. With those statistics, it might be hard to imagine anyone not having the resources to buy food, or anyone going hungry.

And yet, in 2012, Bethesda Help assisted more than 300 households, according to Karen Auerbach, president of the organization and another speaker at the press conference.

"Through the first six months of 2013," she added,

See St. Paul's, page 3

Six new superintendents welcomed with worship services

BY MELISSA LAUBER & ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

THIS FALL, IN six distinct worship services, the people of the Baltimore-Washington Conference officially welcomed district superintendents to their new ministries, creating the most diverse Cabinet to ever serve this conference.

The new superintendents' appointments began July 1. However, they were officially installed during these services, which were held in their home districts over three weekends.

The Rev. JW Park is serving the Central Maryland District; the Rev. Edgardo Rivera leads the Frederick District. The Rev. Joseph Daniels is superintendent of the Greater Washington District and pastor of Emory Fellowship UMC; and the Rev. Rebecca Iannicelli will serve the Washington East District. The Rev. Laura

Easto leads the Baltimore Suburban District and Cynthia Moore-Koikoi is superintendent of the Baltimore Metropolitan District.

When choosing the people who would serve as superintendents, Bishop Marcus Matthews said a number of factors guided his discernment.

They must love God, the bishop said, and live out that love in daily ways. They must be connectional and understand and uphold the polity of The United Methodist Church; they must understand what it means to be part of a team. And, said Bishop Matthews, "they must have integrity. They must be someone with whom I can trust my life."

"I see those qualities and characteristics in all the superintendents," Matthews said. "God has called these people and set them aside for this office."

Edgardo Rivera – Frederick District

At the first installation service Sept. 14 at Trinity UMC in Frederick, Rivera shared stories from his homeland of Vieques, Puerto Rico, where he took his first steps in the Lord. He also confessed his initial reservations about being a superintendent and how God liberated him from fear with the realization that "the bishop and Jesus didn't call me to be somebody else. Jesus called me to be myself. Jesus called Edgardo."

Rivera encouraged all the people of the Frederick District to realize that God is calling them to be exactly who they are. "Risk," he said. "Put out into the deep. Dare to dream. What an awesome opportunity we have to share the dream of God in our lives."

The service closed with the congregation rising to dance throughout the sanctuary as Rivera's son, Eduardo, sang "God's Dance Floor."

See DS, page 3

... well said

(a chance to express what that word means to you.)

BY MANDY SAYERS
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

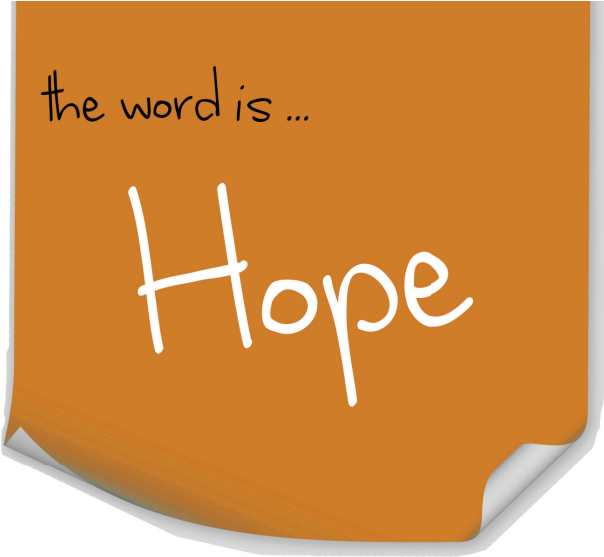
WHEN CHRISTIANS TALK about hope, what do they mean? Is it a wish? Is it like holding your breath as a “Hail Mary” pass flies to the hands of a wide receiver?

To Emily Dickenson, hope is “the thing with feathers that perches in the soul.” For the apostle Paul, Christian hope is rooted in God’s action in Christ. God has saved us and our response to that salvation is something rising up in us called “hope.” In Romans 8 we read, “For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”

When a Christian talks about hope, it’s not just an ethereal wish. It’s grounded in God’s saving action in Christ. Christian hope is a lot like the Christian notion of mystery. My systematics professor told us that Christian mystery is not just a throwing up of hands. He reminded us that the mystery of faith is not “I don’t know, I don’t know, I don’t know.” It’s “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.”

Christian hope is wild and untamed and audacious hope, like Dickenson’s wild bird of the soul. It stands in the gap of government shutdowns and a collective lack of options to whisper words about angels and Easter and a love that is stronger than death. It allows for mustard seeds turning into great shrubs. However, it’s not a cotton candy hope. It’s a hope that’s firmly grounded in God’s promises in Christ. It is invisible and mysterious, and at the same time, strong enough to risk everything for. That’s why we can stand at a graveside and proclaim the “sure and certain hope” of the resurrection. It is a wild leap of faith into God’s often unseen, but still sure and certain, embrace.

“My hope (all wild and audacious, all unruly and unlikely) is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness. On Christ the solid rock I stand (sometimes my legs quiver, but I stand), all other ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand.”



what does “Hope” mean to you?
“chitchat” with us on
getUMSocial.com

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 DARYL WILLIAMS
Pastor, Nottingham Myers UMC, Upper Marlboro

HAVE TO CONFESS, from time to time I lose things. I think I know where they are, but when I need them I just can’t seem to find them. The most popular thing that I lose is my keys.

I don’t know why it is, but from time to time I just can’t seem to remember what I did with my keys. The interesting thing about losing my keys is that I always discover that I have lost them when I need them most, as I am leaving my house.

It is in those moments that I frantically run around upsetting everything trying to find my keys so I can get on with my day. It seems the more important it is for me to get going, the harder it is for me to find my keys. Losing them always sets me back, slows me down and makes me late. If I could just keep up with my keys I would be able to get a lot more done, in a timely fashion and under a lot less stress.

It occurs to me that as important as it is to not lose my keys, it is more important that I not lose my hope.

Hope is the key to making our lives work. When we know where our hope is we have the courage to face the day. When we know where our hope is, life is less scary, days are less stressful and the future seems much brighter. When I know where my hope is, I am prepared to tackle big challenges, speak truth to power and never give up no matter the circumstance.

We all have big things to do that we can’t do on our own so we can’t afford to lose hope. To not lose hope, you have to know where you put it.

I keep my hope safely tucked away in Jesus Christ so I can do all things because he strengthens me. “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus’ name.”

I never lose my hope because I know exactly where it is. Where is your hope?

... well said

EVENTS

UMM annual meeting
Oct. 12
Arbutus UMC, Baltimore, 8 a.m.
Bishop Marcus Matthews will be the guest speaker. Cost is \$25 per person. RSVP online at www.bwcumm.org.

Strawbridge Shrine annual meeting
Oct. 12, 10 a.m.
St. Paul UMC, New Windsor
Guest speaker will be John Strawbridge, a direct descendent of Robert Strawbridge. Lunch is provided by reservation for \$12. For more information, contact William Louis Piel at julo1@verizon.net, or call 410-751-9049. Visit the shrine’s web site at www.strawbridgeshrine.org.

Youth Lay Servant training
Nov. 9, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
BWC Mission Center, Fulton
The basic course for Lay Servant Ministries will be taught to youth. Register by Oct. 15. Registration fee is \$20; includes lunch and snacks. Register online at www.bwcumc.org/academy.

‘Building Healthy Congregations’
Friday, Oct. 18, Liberty Grove UMC in Burtonsville, and Saturday, Oct. 19, at Washington Square UMC, Hagerstown, both from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 20, from 2 to 6 p.m., at Nichols Bethel UMC in Odenton. The Rev. Bob Farr, Director of Congregational Excellence for the Missouri Annual Conference, will lead. Cost is \$35 per person. Registration is by church teams online through Gateway. For more information, contact

Jo Chesson at jchesson@bwcumc.org, or 800-492-2525, Ext 490.

Older Adult Day Away
Wednesday, Oct. 23, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
West River Camp & Retreat Center
Bishop Marcus Matthews will be the keynote speaker. For details and registration information go to www.bwccampsandretreats.com/WRDayAway.html.

Older Adult Ministries workshop
Oct. 24, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Asbury Methodist Village, Gaithersburg
“Exploring the Longevity Revolution: Ministry with Boomers and Beyond,” a workshop for clergy and laity interested in learning more about ministry across the mid-life and older stages of life, will be led by the Rev. Rick Gentzler, former director of the Center on Aging and Older Adult Ministries for the General Board of Discipleship. Registration fee is \$35, includes lunch. For more information contact Rev. Wayne A. DeHart at 240-316-1265 or wdehart@asbury.org.

Bishop’s Day Apart with Clergy
Dec. 3, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Catonsville UMC, Catonsville
Dr. Marvin McMickle, president of Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School will be the featured speaker. The new Imagine No Malaria campaign will also be launched. The cost is \$15. Register before Nov. 25 at http://www.bwcumc.org/events/bishops_advent_day_apart_clergy. Participant will receive .3 CEU’s

youth retreat

ROCK

To register visit

www.bwcumc.org/rock

Special guest speaker **Preston Centuolo**
Featuring praise and worship music by **Mandisa** from American Idol
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DS: Superintendents share their stories and expectations

From page 1

JW Park – Central Maryland District

At Park’s installation service Sept. 15 at Montgomery UMC in Damascus, a Korean liturgical dancer performed. Park, who also serves as Dean of the Cabinet, is the first Asian-American superintendent appointed within the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

Park shared stories about his life growing up in an affluent family in South Korea and how it contrasted with the difficult circumstances that surrounded his call to ministry in Oklahoma.

God used this time of testing to shape him into the person God needed him to be as a pastor, said Park, who from those days, still claims Psalm 146 as an inspiration and foundation for his life. That passage says to trust in God, and help the orphans, widows, weak, hungry and powerless.

Park has taken these words to heart, and passed them along to the people of his district. “I want you to feel freedom, flexibility and creativity. You are good enough as you are. Do what you feel God has called you for,” he said. “I will listen to you. I can promise, I will walk with you.”



Bishop Marcus Matthews, left, hands the bishop's crosier to the Rev. JW Park, superintendent of the Central Maryland District.

Joe Daniels – Greater Washington

Daniels’ installation service on Sept. 21 was held at Brightwood Education Campus in Washington, D.C., two blocks from the church he also serves, Emory UMC. As if to solidify the importance of being in ministry with schools, an opening prayer was offered by Dr. Kaya Henderson, Chancellor for the Washington, D.C. Public Schools. Henderson said that Daniels often meets in her office with her and others on her staff for Bible study.

In his sermon, Daniels urged his audience to “claim your ZIP code for Christ.”

One way to do this, he said, is to preach. He implored clergy and laity to preach at all times, because, he said, “My Bible says faith comes through hearing. How can

they hear without someone preaching?”

Daniels shared a story from his childhood about how, in a third-grade play, he was too modest to have a speaking part. Instead, he opted to be “the curtain-puller.” When his parents found out, they went to the principal of the school and said, “No.” In the end, Daniels ended up having the lead.

“God had something greater for me – and for you!” he said. “Rise up, take your mat and walk. Claim your ZIP code for Christ.”

Rebecca Iannicelli – Washington East District

Seventeen years to the day that she first set foot in a United Methodist Church, Sept. 22, 1996, Iannicelli was installed as superintendent of the Washington East District at La Plata UMC. Iannicelli gave credit to her then four-year-old son, Aaron, who asked on Sept. 21, 1996, why they couldn’t go to a church they drove by that day – Oxon Hill UMC. They did the next day.

Three days later, “something happened,” she said, “my life changed forever.” Three words came to her in that experience: “Go and tell.”

Reminding the congregation that there are people not yet in our pews, Iannicelli said, “Our God is a saving God. God saved me.”

She said that there is a fundamental “sent-ness” of God’s people, and added that that meant all Christians are on a mission.

“I have some news for us. We don’t have to travel overseas to go on a mission trip,” she said. “All we have to do is wake up” in the morning.

Iannicelli said that, for her, the Christian life, the “sent-ness” life, is best summed up in one phrase: “Hear and do, then look for a clue.”

Laura Easto - Baltimore Suburban District

“The Journey” was the theme of the welcome service for the Rev. Laura Easto, held Sept. 28 at Milford Mill UMC in Pikesville. Standing in a pulpit where she preached as pastor 17 years ago, Easto reflected on how, with God, “you don’t ever know where the path is going to lead you.”

There were joys and challenges, Easto said, as the voice of Christ in her life pushed her to be more truthful, loyal and loving, and compelled her to stand up when she would rather have sat down. However, looking back on the entire journey, she found herself quoting a song the first clergywomen of the Baltimore-Washington Conference used to sing, “I wouldn’t take nothing for my journey now.”

Along the journey, Easto shared with her people that it is essential that we love one another as God loves us and respond to Christ’s admonition to Peter to “feed my

sheep,” by reaching beyond ourselves and out into the whole world with a spirit of transforming love.

Love, she said, is the call, the hope and the expectation.



The Rev. Laura Easto, superintendent of the Baltimore Suburban District, offers a prayer during her installation service.

Cynthia Moore-KoiKoi – Baltimore Metropolitan District

In an emotional worship service, the Rev. Cynthia Moore-Koikoi was welcomed as the new superintendent for the Baltimore Metropolitan District after serving last year as superintendent of the Greater Washington District. The service was held Sept. 29 at Sharp Street Memorial UMC, a historic site for black Methodists. Moore-Koikoi’s great-grandmother sang in the choir there.

Founded by former slaves, the church is a living witness to people who refused “to believe the lie,” and instead focused on the truth that with God all things are possible. The service drew together the district’s cultural diversity and focused on the prophet Jeremiah’s call for God’s people to make themselves at home and create a sense of peace, wholeness and salvation in a strange land.

We are blessed, she told the people of her district, outlining the many cultural, economic, artistic and educational resources within their bounds. To build on this blessing and further build the church’s roots in the community, Moore-Koikoi invited anyone who wants to join her on a prayer walk around the different sections of the city every Tuesday morning from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. “Our district will become a mobile prayer station,” she said.

She also invited each person to form a relationship with somebody within seven blocks of their worshipping communities, saying, “It is likely in the sharing they’re going to see the light of Christ in you.”

Photos of the six installation services are on the conference’s Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/BWCUMC>.

St. Paul’s: Church joins in unique partnership to end hunger

From page 1

“we’ve already helped 190 households. The need is there.”

In 20895, Snell said, there is a population of immigrants, transients and people who are hungry. “The need is great,” he said. “The reality is, it will always be great here. For whatever reasons, there are people who run short of food. When people call, and we’re able to respond and people get fed, it’s hunger-free.”

The church’s district superintendent, the Rev. Joe Daniels, spoke at the press conference and applauded the efforts of the congregation.

“It is always good to meet the needs of the community,” he said. “Hunger is a problem, not just here but throughout the region. This church is doing a wonderful work in meeting the need.”

Snell said that members of the church have three ways they can become involved in the campaign, either through being a driver to help deliver food, packing the food into boxes for delivery, or for someone to coordinate the responses to requests.

“We promise to deliver a three-day supply of food to those people who are hungry in our neighborhoods,” said Snell. “All they have to do is simply ask for it.”

To spread the word about the campaign, the church has produced lawn signs and postcards in both Spanish and English. Members of the congregation will be distributing the signs throughout the community, especially targeting other houses of worship.



The Rev. Joe Daniels, left, superintendent of the Greater Washington District, stands with the Rev. Adam Snell, right, and Karen Auerbach, President of Bethesda Help, at the press conference in Kensington announcing the ‘Hunger Free ZIP Code’ initiative.

Planned Giving School issues a stewardship challenge

BY MAIDSTONE MULENGA
UMConnection Staff

NEARLY 100 PASTORS and church leaders from three annual conferences were challenged recently to create generous disciples for the stewardship and successes of United Methodist Church ministries. This was at the inaugural Planned Giving School organized by the Mid-Atlantic United Methodist Foundation (MAUMF) at Simpson UMC in Wilmington, Del.

Held in conjunction with the General Board of Discipleship, the Planned Giving School, held Sept. 9-10, provided information regarding planned giving and offered easy-to-follow instructions on how to develop, manage and market a planned-giving program to increase available funds for ministry.

The MAUMF was established in 2010 as a merger of the Eastern Pennsylvania-Peninsula and the Baltimore-Washington Area Conference Foundations.

During the training, pastors and church leaders were urged to consider planned giving as stewardship that grows faithful and generous disciples of Jesus Christ.

“Your church probably has some bills to pay but we need to embrace the ministry of stewardship from just being a means of paying bills into raising disciples with a sense of stewardship,” said the Rev. Ken Sloane, who serves as the Board of Discipleship’s director of stewardship.

Sloane challenged churches to think about creating a theology of development that aims at not just raising funds but raising generous disciples and thereby shifts the image of stewardship.

In shifting the focus, pastors and church leaders were urged to move from thinking about stewardship as a seasonal event to one where it is a continual aspect of ministry.

“There is a need to talk about stewardship year long,” Sloane said. “Build stewardship into everything you do.

Use bulletins, social media, newsletters, bulletin boards, classes, fellowship, et cetera.”

He also reminded church leaders to shift from focusing on scarcity to celebrating abundance, noting that in 2011, United Methodists gave \$6.2 billion, or about \$121 million a Sunday, or \$12,000 a minute.

“Help shift the focus in your local church from giving as a law or an obligation to giving as the natural expression of gratitude,” Sloane said. “We need to move from the scarcity attitude to one of abundance.”

As part of the celebration of abundance, pastors and churches were urged to tell stories of success, such as the denominational fight against malaria, and to move the local church from an organization whose purpose is to maintain a building to one that is about growing in mission.

***‘In 2011, United Methodists gave \$6.2 billion, or about \$121 million a Sunday, or \$12,000 a minute.’
– Rev. Ken Sloane***

The keynote presenter at the school, the Rev. Frederick Leasure, executive director of the United Methodist Foundation of Western Pennsylvania, explained the importance of planned giving, noting that “planned giving is about story-telling, letting people tell their story.”

He shared with the participants what to look for in potential donors and how single gifts, even large ones, are seldom a predicator of planned giving activity.

Pastors were urged to remember that donors may not only give to churches; thus, there is a need to ask. “We are myopic when we think the church is the only place they give their money to as donors,” Leasure said. “Ask for it. The reason there isn’t enough planned giving in the church is because the church does not ask for it.”

Church leaders also learned that planned gifts

should be seen as testimonials of values, affirmations, invitations for dialogue and a great way to show that you care about someone.

As part of the training, the pastors and church leaders learned about several types of donors, from the impulsive donor through the habitual donor to the thoughtful and careful donors. Churches were also urged to create motivators for giving so that the donor would believe in the mission and attest to the fact the church was changing people’s lives.

“The goal of the Planned Giving School was to provide inexpensive, but intensive, Christian-oriented training in this specialized field,” said Jack Brooks, executive director of MAUMF. “It was an intensive two-day course for those who are looking to begin a planned giving program, and for those who want to sharpen their skills in this growing field of funding ministry.”

The participants were impressed with the inaugural school in the Northeastern Jurisdiction (NEJ) as evident from their comments about how valuable the training was, how effective the speakers were, and the relevance of the topics.

“Important information, presented in a way that non-investment professionals can understand and use,” noted the Rev. Bob Everett of Philadelphia.

“It was valuable to learn how to begin and sustain planned giving programs and to know where the resources are. I personally liked the challenge for us and the leadership in our churches ‘to walk the talk,’” said Ann C. Davis of Bethesda UMC.

During the school, the Foundation demonstrated a new tool for churches and agencies to use in Planned Giving, the MAUMF Planned Giving website, www.maumflegacy.org. The site contains educational videos, current news and tools to help guide individuals through the Planned Giving process. For more information, contact the Foundation at 800-828-9093, Ext. 7008.

UMC high court to tackle issues of homosexuality

BY MAIDSTONE MULENGA
UMConnection Staff

WHEN THE JUDICIAL Council – the highest court of The United Methodist Church – meets in Baltimore this month it will be tackling four cases that address the issue of homosexuality in the denomination.

It will also be weighing the links between non-profit corporations and annual conferences that would make annual conferences guarantors of any failed obligations of such entities.

In the first case involving the issue of homosexuality (1013-10), the Judicial Council will decide whether the North Carolina Annual Conference decision to include money in its budget to support the North Carolina Council of Churches (NCCC) is allowed. The NCCC is accused of promoting the acceptance of homosexuality.

The court will have to decide whether the amount budgeted for the NCCC violates ¶613.20 of The Book of Discipline, which forbids the giving of “United Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality.”

“Upon extensive research into the North Carolina Council of Churches position, I could find nothing that provides the position that the practice of homosexuality is a sin or a call to repentance. Quite the opposite – all the literature, position papers, etc., sound the call that the practice of homosexuality is to be accepted as a normal lifestyle,” said Chris Humphreys, a clergy member of North Carolina Annual Conference, in his request for the ruling.

If the Judicial Council rules against the North Carolina Annual Conference, a number of conferences which give money to regional Councils of Churches may be affected.

The second case involving homosexuality is from the Southwest Texas Annual Conference, where a candidate for ministry was discontinued.

“I request a ruling of law as to whether a Board of Ordained Ministry can discontinue the candidacy of a certified candidate for ordained ministry who has been appropriately recommended by a District Committee on Ordained Ministry without an interview and examination by that Board of Ordained Ministry,” the Rev. John Elford said in his request for a ruling.

Southwest Texas Annual Conference Bishop Jim Dorff ruled that the request, as presented, was moot and

hypothetical.

By church law, all bishops’ rulings on law are forwarded to the Judicial Council for review.

The case centers on Mary Ann Kaiser, whose candidacy for commissioning and Provisional Membership in the Annual Conference was denied by the Executive Session of the Southwest Texas Annual Conference, following the recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM).

According to the Reconciling Ministries Network, Kaiser’s candidacy was halted because “Mary Ann identifies herself as a lesbian.” As quoted on www.rmnetwork.org, Kaiser says: “I am called by God to serve The UMC as a Deacon. ... But the Southwest Texas Conference Board of Ordained Ministry won’t interview me because I identify as a lesbian.”

The question before the Judicial Council is whether BOM can discontinue a candidate who has been recommended by the district committee without



Members of the Judicial Council meet this month in Baltimore.

interview and examination by the BOM.

The third case before the Judicial Council in regard to homosexuality is from the New York Annual Conference, which adopted a resolution to commend those who have taken a stand of justice for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.

After the vote, William Voth, a Lay Member of the Conference, requested a ruling of law on whether the resolution violates The Book of Discipline, and Judicial Council Decisions 886, 1111, and 1115.

In his ruling, Bishop Martin D. McLee ruled that the resolution does not violate the Discipline.

In a similar case, the Judicial Council is being asked

to decide whether the action taken by the California-Pacific Annual Conference regarding a resolution that supports a Western Jurisdiction statement of disobedience to the Discipline that states “our belief that the United Methodist Church is in error on the subject of ‘homosexuality’s incompatibility with Christian teaching.”

The statement calls on bishops, clergy and churches to operate as if the law that condemns homosexuality does not exist.

The action prompted the Rev. Paul Dinkel to seek a ruling on whether it is “legal for an annual conference to take an action urging the church ‘to act as if ¶161F of The Book of Discipline does not exist’ as in Resolution 13-16.”

In her ruling, Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño, Resident Bishop of The California-Pacific Annual Conference, said that Resolution 13-16 does not violate the legal authority of The Book of Discipline.

In two other cases about non-profit organizations and their associations with annual conferences, the Judicial Council has been asked to decide whether the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference should serve as the organization that underwrites the administrative overhead for “A Future with Hope” organization and provides volunteers and administrative staff.

In a related case, the Judicial Council is being asked to clarify the role of the Greater New Jersey president of the Conference Council on Finance and Administration and his role as president of the Board of Directors of the Future with Hope Corporation.

Another case from New Jersey deals with whether the annual conference can authorize the Council on Finance and Administration, the Primary Task Team and its Executive Committee, the Personnel Committee, and the Bishop to take certain actions between sessions of Annual Conference.

Among those actions would be the approval and implementation of the “A Future with Hope” corporation and electing its board of directors.

Since there have been no requests for oral hearings for this session of the Judicial Council, all of the work will be in closed session. Announcement of the decisions will be made as soon as possible following the court’s adjournment.

You can read about the decisions as they are posted on the Baltimore-Washington Conference’s Facebook page, www.facebook.com/BWCUMC.



BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

HOPE INSPIRES. HOPE heals. Hope transforms. In the Baltimore-Washington Conference, hope recently helped to build 23 churches and parsonages in Zimbabwe.

In 2006, the Baltimore-Washington Conference embarked on a \$1 million fundraising campaign. Two hundred thousand dollars went to help rebuild Mississippi churches damaged by Hurricane Katrina; \$200,000 benefitted the World AIDS Fund, and \$600,000 was raised “to fortify our partnership with those in dire need in Zimbabwe.”

By 2009, all the funds were collected. During Phase 1 of the Hope Fund, from 2009 to 2012, nine projects were completed. One project, the Shamva Parsonage, was carried over into this year. Thirteen Hope Fund

projects were completed during Phase 2 this year. This fall, the roof was put on the sanctuary of Gwese UMC, one of the final Hope Fund projects.

The Hope Fund encouraged churches to complete as much as they could on their own. Many of the churches molded their own bricks. Assistance for the final stages of the building was delivered by the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

In addition to these Hope Fund projects, the Baltimore-Washington Conference provided \$100,000 to finance the first phase of a comprehensive Broadband Internet project to bring an infrastructure to communications ministries in the country.

The United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe has 66 institutions, which include hospitals, clinics, schools and district offices; 42 of these have no access to the Internet. The Broadband project brought electronic access to many of these institutions in the form of self-sustaining Internet cafes.

Members of the conference also shared in the labor of building churches, parsonages, clinics and schools.

Many BWC Volunteer in Mission teams visited to help construct buildings

and create relationships with United Methodists in Zimbabwe.

“It really is about the partnership,” said Jim Gourley of Nichols Bethel UMC in Odenton who, during seven trips, spent 13 months during the past four years as an Individual Volunteer in Mission in Zimbabwe coordinating the Hope Fund projects.

Gourley, who retired from the Navy, became devoted to ministry in Zimbabwe at the 2007 annual conference, when he heard two women from

He worked with the bishop and other United Methodist leaders in Zimbabwe, assessing needs, getting estimates, project managing and also helping to build.

He confessed he didn’t know “which end of the hammer to hold” in 1996 when he retired from the Navy and began volunteering with Habitat for Humanity.

“Our presence, just our simple presence, there is so important,” he said. “We vow to give the church our prayers, presence, gifts and service. Jesus tells us to go out into the world and work among all his people. We’re commanded by our Lord to go and try to do something. At this point in my life I’m still physically able.”

According to Gourley, “the Hope Fund helps us put our wants and words into action.” Now that the 23 churches and parsonages have been completed, Gourley hopes the partnership the Baltimore-Washington Conference has with Zimbabwe will begin to shift to address educational and medical projects, which he believes are areas in which the church can reach the largest numbers of people. “Eds and meds” is what the Rev. Joseph Daniels, chair of the BWC Zimbabwe Initiative, calls this approach.

On Oct. 11, Gourley returns to Zimbabwe and will work in ministry there through Dec. 15. While his mission is self-funded, he has raised more than \$5,000 from his congregation. He hopes to see it put to good use at rural medical clinics in Mutare.

“All those people who gave their nickels and dimes and all those who gave thousands of dollars to the Hope Fund ought to know what their money has gone toward,” he said. “The Bible says God will provide. With the Hope Fund, we got to participate in that provision.”

Community UMC in Crofton talk about delivering sewing machines to women in Zimbabwe. It touched his heart and he answered an altar call to “go and help.”

Political turmoil and violence in Zimbabwe deterred his departure until 2009. On his first trip, he went for five-and-a-half months, by himself, living in a small cottage, often spending the evenings sitting by candlelight because there was no electricity.

Zimbabwe, he explained, is the second poorest country on earth. One in four children has been orphaned by AIDS and there is much need. But Gourley also found exceptional faith in the people he encountered.

Hope Fund Projects

For most of these projects, members molded the bricks and invested their time and labor in the completion of the buildings. Their contributions and the Hope Fund money allowed churches and parsonages to rise.

Phase One

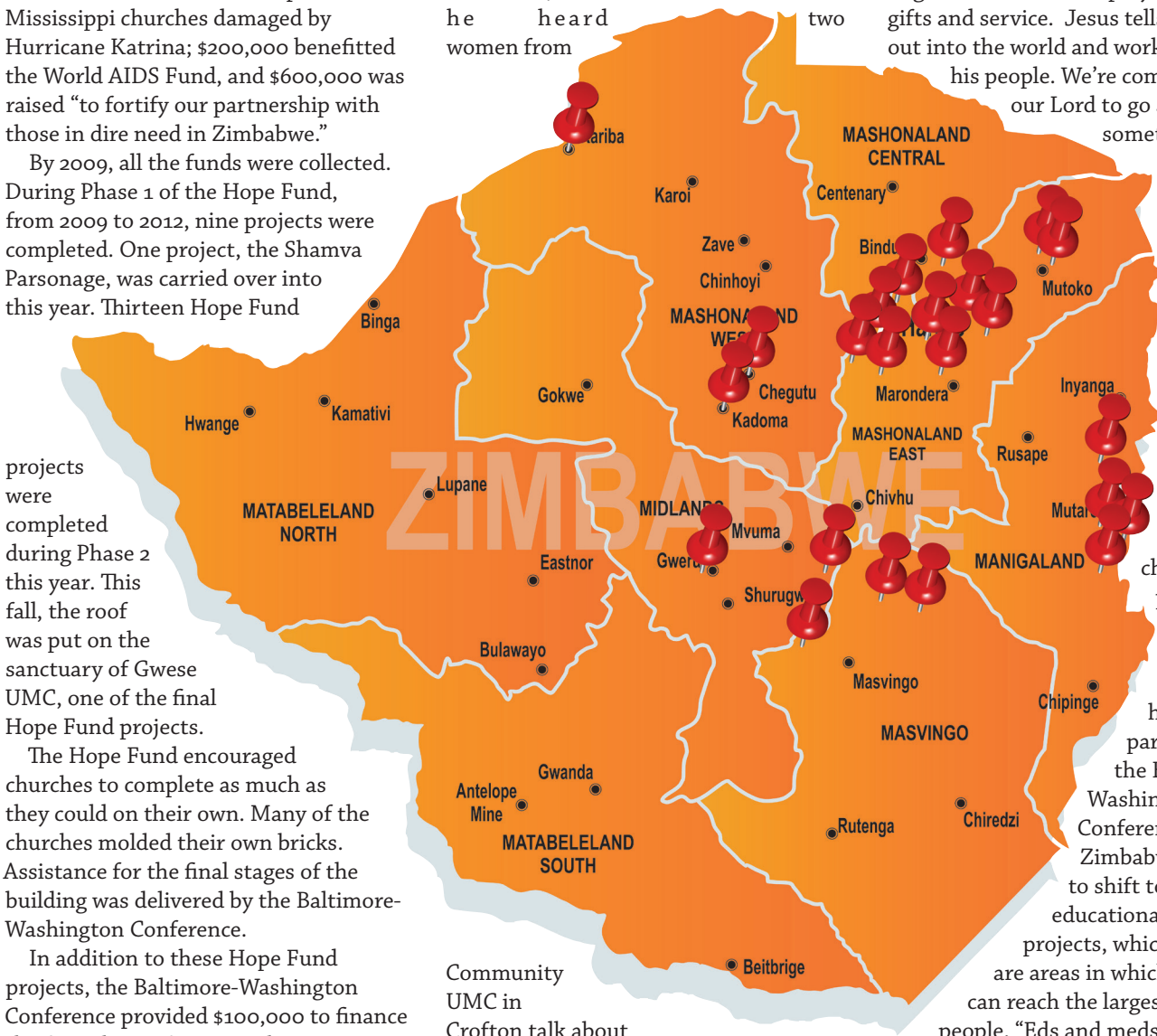
- Bikita Parsonage - \$24,455
- Chegutu Parsonage - \$20,000
- Gwindingwi Parsonage - \$10,000
- Nyamuzizi Parsonage - \$7,771
- Shamva Parsonage - \$9,682
- Gudyanga Church - \$21,162
- Juru Sanctuary - \$15,000
- Muradzikwa Church - \$30,840
- St. Dorcas Sanctuary - \$20,000
- Munyarari Clinic - \$100,000

Phase Two

- Chitungwiza Maondera District Parsonage - \$22,400
- Kadoma East Parsonage - \$22,230
- Makon Buhera District Parsonage - \$17,000
- Mudzonga Parsonage - \$13,500
- Mutasa Nyanga District Parsonage - \$17,600
- Chemhondoro Sanctuary - \$16,200.
- Domboramwai Sanctuary - \$21,900
- Gwese Sanctuary - \$20,300
- Gwindingwi Sanctuary - \$13,000
- Kariba Sanctuary - \$20,800
- Matendeudze Sanctuary - \$32,000
- Mukoba North Sanctuary - \$19,500
- Mupandawana Church - \$45,173

Other Hope Fund Expenses

- Bishop Nhiwatiwa Emergency Funds 2008 - \$8,000
- Project Office Vehicle Purchase 2009 - \$7,200
- Pastor/Spouse Workshop 2008 - \$1,720
- Pastor School 2009 - \$1,650
- Laity School 2007 - \$5,000
- Zimbabwe Partners Summit 2009 - \$2,290
- Zimbabwe Project Office Support - \$3,000



The Board of Child Care is seeking a

Director of Spiritual Life

The Director of Spiritual Life is responsible for ensuring that all youth admitted to our program have an opportunity to develop spiritually while in our care, regardless of religious affiliation.

Duties include, but aren't limited to:

- **Providing** regular Chapel Services on campus.
- **Working** as part of an interdisciplinary team, participating in initial spiritual assessments, treatment planning, discharge planning, and review meetings.
- **Acting** as an effective resource for children, youth, and staff requiring his/her expertise.
- **Teaching** issues relating to morality and ethics in group settings for children and youth.
- **Providing** supplemental community service opportunities to those planned by the Residential Program, and ensuring proper documentation of such opportunities.

A Master's Degree in Divinity or Pastoral Counseling is preferred. The ideal candidate will have a demonstrated history of designing worship experiences for youth and youth activities. He/she will also possess the ability to lead large and small groups, and be comfortable with public speaking. Candidates must be willing and able to relate to youth in small groups and one-on-one.

This position is open to all qualified candidates, regardless of religious affiliation.

Please forward resume to Stacey Nickerson at snickerson@boardofchildcare.org.

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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Celebrating a river baptism

Thirteen people of all ages from Calvary and Mt. Zion UMCs gathered recently at the Cacapon River in Great Cacapon, W.Va., with their pastors, Kenny Mason, Dick Voorhaar and Rick Vance, to be baptized. Before they entered the river, a picnic and worship service was held, attended by their congregations and celebrating the gift of baptism.

Queens Chapel dedicates windows

Almost two years after its consecration, Queen's Chapel UMC, the Baltimore-Washington Conference's "church on the new frontier," (www.queenschapelumc.org) celebrated the installation of altar furniture and new stained-glass windows in its sanctuary.

Summer campers give 'ark-full' of animals

MANIDOKAN - Campers at Manidokan continued their tradition of giving and this summer reached their two year goal of raising \$5,000 to make an "Ark" level donation to Heifer International, said Chris Schlieckert, the camp's director. This donation will provide two of every type of animal Heifer International uses to build self-sufficiency in needy communities around the world.

Since 2008, Schlieckert said, Manidokan campers have donated more than \$13,500 to various projects around the world.

Shrine hires new curator

NEW WINDSOR - Helen Kemp has been hired as the new resident curator of the Strawbridge Shrine in New Windsor. To schedule a tour of this historic site with Helen or her husband, Tim, call 410-635-2600 or e-mail tours@strawbridgeshrine.org.

The pair report they are learning that the historic artifacts at the shrine "are no mere museum pieces, but tools to tell an important story." Learn more about the shrine and its role in Methodist history at www.StrawbridgeShrine.org.

St. Luke restores historic hall

REISTERSTOWN – While carrying on important ministries in the community, St. Luke UMC in Reisterstown is also working on an historic mission – to preserve and promote the impact the church has had on the African-American experience in Reisterstown.

In August, the church restored the roof on its Fellowship Hall. According to historians, the hall, which housed a school, church and benevolence building, is one of two examples of Post Emancipation Settlements still in existence in Maryland. The church is now seeking funding for the complete restoration of the Fellowship Hall.

Loch Raven celebrates 60th anniversary

BALTIMORE - Loch Raven UMC celebrated its 60th anniversary Sept. 15 with a sermon by its founding pastor, the Rev. Carroll Doggett. In 1951, a one and three-quarter acre tract of land was purchased at the corner of Loch Raven Blvd. and Glendale Road for \$26,000 for the creation of a new church under Doggett's leadership, and in 1953 services began in a small white frame cottage for a congregation to be known as the Loch Raven Methodist Church. Three years later a sanctuary was built.

Church receives grants

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR) awarded nearly \$98,000 in grants in September. Among the seven recipients was Epworth UMC in Gaithersburg, which was granted \$20,000. The church, pastored by the Rev. Jennifer Fenner, serves a Spanish-speaking community and a growing African community. The grant will enable the congregation to grow its multicultural-multilingual community, with an emphasis on children, youth and young adult discipleship.

Mission trip changes lives

BALTIMORE – Jan Keadle, a member of Hiss UMC, made a second mission trip to the Dominican Republic. "It was hard work but by far the most rewarding experience I have ever had," she said.

During the week, the mission group from Timonium and Hiss UMCs, held vacation Bible school for the children, handed out rice and beans and laid cement floors in 14 homes. But what she liked best, Keadle said, "was building relationships with the children in the bateyes.

"I encourage anyone who has been toying with the idea of going on one to just take the plunge and do it," she said.

Quality of Life retreats celebrate 25 years

FULTON –The Quality of Life retreats observed their 25th anniversary during the fall gathering Sept. 5-8 at Mar-Lu Ridge, a Lutheran campground in Jefferson.

About 30 participants, all living with HIV/AIDS, attended and the Rev. Terri Rae Chattin, "mother" of the retreats, which she started, was a speaker.

Chattin recalled some of the high points of the retreats and their birthing pangs. And she lamented, "This is a disease that hasn't gone away."

The first retreat in 1988 was "hit or miss" she said. Among the 12 who came, "some were active church-goers, but no one in their churches knew they had HIV," she said.

"I'm always amazed at how God works through each of us to help one another face our trials," said Pastor Nancy Green, who co-directs the summer retreat at Manidokan with her husband, Steve Green. "We can't travel our journeys by ourselves. We need to be there for each other."

Navy Yard shooting raises tough questions about faith

BY REV. DAVID WENTZ
Trinity UMC, Annapolis

Note: On Monday, Sept. 16, a mass shooting at the Navy Yard in Washington, D.C., killed 13 people, including the shooter. Bishop Marcus Matthews issued a statement that day, calling for the church to pray and to act.
“(A)fter our prayers are said, we are also called to act to end the gun violence in our nation,” the bishop wrote. “We must stand up to the pain these acts of violence inflict. Connected to one another and to God, we must take a stand for peace so that Christ’s ‘shalom’ is available to all.”
Read the full statement at http://www.bwcumc.org/news/bishop_calls_prayer_and_action.

WRITE THIS TWO days after the shooting at the Navy Yard. I wish I could say the nation is still in shock, but it seems that this kind of thing has happened so much recently that we have become largely numb to it. Yet the questions remain: Where was God in all this? Why were some people killed and others escaped? Did God cause it, or allow it, or ignore it? Or was God powerless to prevent it? One of our members works on the same floor where the shootings took place. He decided to stay home that morning. We praise God for that decision, and rightly so. Yet, was that God’s divine intervention? If it was, why didn’t God keep the victims home from work? Does God play favorites?

There is a whole branch of theology, called theodicy, devoted to answering the question of evil: how can we reconcile the evil that happens every day with an all good, all knowing and all powerful God? A large portion of the Christian world subscribes to a theological viewpoint that says God does indeed play favorites, that God causes everything that happens, and that we just have to accept it – either because God knows it’s best even though it looks evil to us, or just because God is God and can do what God wants to. I have to admit that at times like this, I’m almost tempted to subscribe to that viewpoint, just because

it seems like an easy answer. There are certainly Bible verses that seem to support that interpretation. Others say, with less biblical justification, that the victims must have really been bad people, secret sinners who died because God was punishing them for their sins. This was the argument Job’s “friends” used to explain Job’s suffering. If you read to the end of the book of Job, you will see that this line of reasoning made God very angry, because it was so far from the truth. I can’t reconcile either of these views with my understanding of the whole flow of the Bible. The Bible consistently and repeatedly illustrates that God is love, God is on the side of those who suffer, (and that) God does not want to condemn or punish us.



So why do these things happen? Here are the truths with which I comfort myself in times like this. First, we live in a fallen world. This world is not the way God planned it. God created us to share a relationship of love with him. Love that is forced is not love, it is coercion. So God gave us free will. Our first ancestors used that free will to disobey God. That introduced sin, decay and death into God’s creation. In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus told us to pray for God’s will to be done on earth as it is being done in heaven. If everything that happens is God’s will, Jesus wouldn’t have told us to pray that prayer. Any way in which earth is different from heaven is a way God’s will is not being

done on earth – and it’s a call for Christians to work toward change. In Luke 13:1-5, Jesus as much as says that you can’t judge people’s righteousness based on what happens to them. Fallen people in a fallen world make fallen decisions and take fallen actions, and those decisions and actions often harm innocent people. I do think it’s safe to say that a person who is an active Christian, seeking every moment to live for God, and surrounded by a loving, supportive Christian community, will not be the perpetrator in a tragedy like that of the Navy Yard. But I don’t think we can say that such a person would never be a victim. I believe every Christian can and should cultivate an awareness of the Holy Spirit’s guidance in our lives to the point that we can recognize warnings about situations of danger. And I do believe in the power of prayer for protection. However, neither of those beliefs should be construed to say anything about the spiritual standing of someone who suffers a tragedy. Tribulation in this world is the birthright of every Christian (John 16:33). And most importantly, we must live knowing that God is love.

We know, by faith and by much testimony, and by personal experience, that despite the seeming logic of the question of evil, God is all loving, God is all knowing, God is all powerful. That means we can trust God. We can rest in God. We may not understand it, but we don’t need to. In words familiar to many at the Navy Yard and elsewhere, “That’s above my pay grade.” God knows, and that’s good enough for us. After all, if we could explain everything, where would be the need for faith? When tragic things happen – and as long as we live in a fallen world, they will – we pray for the victims, we help the survivors, we look to our own standing with God, and we work to be the answer to Jesus’ prayer that God’s will be done. Ultimately, we rest in the hands of the God who loves each of us enough to die for us. That answer may not satisfy the skeptics of the world, but it is all we need.

BMCR considers state of the black church

BY CYNTHIA BELT
Centennial-Caroline UMC, Baltimore

THE CRISES FACING the black community today are legion. There is the issue of poverty with disproportionate numbers of persons living at or below the poverty line identified as persons of color. There is the atrocity of the prison industrial complex with its focus on incarcerating black males for profit; unemployment, which is in the double digits for black America; housing, education, health care; indeed we could sit here for the next week listing the plagues that impact the black community. However, our task is to find a way forward, a way through and a way out of these crises. The black church and Black Methodists for Church Renewal are uniquely positioned to address these issues with the prophetic power of the Word of God and the transformational spirit of God. In the words of Rev. Dr. Gil Caldwell, one of the founders of BMCR, “BMCR exists to represent and reflect the best of the social justice commitment of Methodism as well as that of activism in the Black Church. More than ever there is a great need for Black United Methodism to articulate and express a Scripture-based prophetic ministry in these ‘best of times, worst of times’ moments. We cannot be seduced by the ‘best,’ when the ‘worst’ is so evident: Income inequality, inadequate public school education, mass incarceration, black-on-black violence, signs every day that this is not a ‘post-racial/racist’ time. What we need in this climate is genuine, biblical concern of each other because ‘We Are (or should be) Family.’ It is the task of the church to create the kind of environment where all of God’s children find a welcome.” Caldwell’s words are words of encouragement and words of challenge as we seek to move from a place of complacency to a place of scripturally based, God-ordained action in the world. Part of our problem, particularly in The United Methodist Church, is our failure to grasp the fact that many people we would evangelize are neither spiritual nor unspiritual – they are simply trying to survive. We are planning programs to attract mostly the middle class, young people with jobs and futures, and

we have disregarded the masses of poor. We can’t preach about heaven if we’re not willing to deal with the day-by-day problems of the people. The key problem we face as a Church, and as a caucus, is not “the ills of the world.” The key problem we face is one of irrelevance. We are good at programs and pronouncements, but not so good at building the kinds of relationships that help people to survive. We excel at resolutions, but are less successful at forging relationships with people who can’t help us out of our financial binds and who may not even become members of our churches. We’ve been challenged by our bishop to connect with schools in our neighborhoods, but how many of us have gone into the homes in our neighborhoods to assess the challenges our children face with education even before they leave home? Somehow our Church and our caucus must answer the call to shift its focus away from programs toward people, away from individualism toward community, away from exclusion toward the inclusion of all of God’s children. In order to move forward, we have to be willing to take a risk. That is, we must put our faith and trust in God and launch out into the unknown. This might require us to expand our concept of the connection and realize that we might need, as the Rev. Vance Ross says, “to look at those places where churches are doing ministry in the world on behalf of the connection.” In taking the risk that we are called to take, the church has to be constantly reminded that it is the least and the lost, those who are dispossessed and in despair, the diseased and the disowned that should set our agenda. Their concern is not religious platitudes or necessarily social transformation – it’s simply to survive. We need agitators in positions of power and we certainly need social transformation – but when we determine that our primary focus will be at the seat of power, we become irrelevant to the world that we are called to serve. Restoring health in the black church and the black community involves understanding our history as people of the African diaspora, claiming our unique identity as black United Methodists and continuing to tell the story of black people in The United Methodist Church.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Bishop’s views don’t represent church

I do not think it is appropriate for the official BWC paper to have provided such an unbalanced report of retired Bishop Melvin Talbert’s presentation on a position that has clearly and repeatedly been rejected by the General Conference of The United Methodist Church (UMConnection, Sept. 11, 2013). I suspect I will now have to spend more time explaining to some of our best attenders, volunteers and financial supporters that what Talbert and other quoted clergy said does not align with the Book of Discipline (BOD) or Wesley’s teachings or Scripture, hoping they won’t leave our local church in search of a fellowship that respects Scripture and thinks God expects holiness of living. The lack of balance in the article makes it sound as if Talbert’s views are now our conference’s position. I am tired of saying goodbye to God-fearing Christians as they have taken their families to non-UMC churches in search of fellowships that speak of a God who is more than a source of “cheap grace” (Bonhoeffer). I am tired of trying to explain to church members how some in our UMC leadership can make statements that are so out of line with a plain reading of Scripture and statements in our Book of Discipline. To have Bishops Talbert and Swenson’s statements promoted without challenge in our conference communications (and thus tacit approval) is disappointing and troubling for the future of The United Methodist Church. REV. DAVID GRAVES
St. Paul UMC, Lusby

An extended version of this letter is available online at www.bwcumc.org/Graves_letter.
All letters to The UMConnection will be considered for the “Viewpoints” section, as space is available. Letters should be no longer than 250 words and be submitted at least two weeks prior to publication. Please include your name, church, daytime phone number and/or e-mail address. Submit Letters at Baltimore-Washington Conference’s social network site, <http://getumsocial.com/chitchat>.

‘Be what you proclaim,’ says Wesley Seminary’s new dean

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

JOHN WESLEY’S ADMONITION to “unite the pair so long disjointed, knowledge and vital piety,” is carved in one of the cornerstones of the library at Wesley Theological Seminary. It also served as a touchstone at the installation of the Rev. Robert K. Martin as the seminary’s new dean.

On Sept. 10, Martin was installed as Wesley Seminary’s seventh dean and professor of Christian Formation and Leadership during worship at Oxnam Chapel on the Washington, D.C. campus.

Lifting up Wesley’s quote, the seminary’s president, the Rev. David McCallister-Wilson, said that “Wesley has a long history of faithful, church-focused, scholarly deans. We continue this tradition with the selection of the Rev. Dr. Robert Martin. I anticipate his leadership will be central to our growth in the coming years.”

Bishop Marcus Matthews, who serves on the seminary’s Board of Governors, also celebrated Martin’s appointment to the school.

“As dean, Robert Martin will bring a creative, scholarly and practical approach to the development of Christian leaders,” he said. “Wesley is known as being a seminary for the church. I’m excited about how our new dean will deepen that relationship and enrich the way we are able to engage disciples for the transformation of the world.”

Martin, an Elder in the Missouri Conference, has served on the faculties of St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City and Yale Divinity School. He earned his Ph.D. from Princeton University in practical theology with a concentration in Christian Education, and is author of “The Incarnate Ground of Christian Faith.”

In a lecture following his installation, Martin

explored how traditional ideas about the nature of church are going through a sea-change. Providing a bold and faithful approach to theological education, and embodying Christ in transformative and incarnational ways, is crucial, he said.



The Rev. Robert K. Martin, Wesley Seminary’s new dean.

“Conventional communities and patterns of practice are less meaningful for more and more people,” he said in an e-mail. “For more and more people to do more of what we used to do will not be very productive. But we

should not be chasing every fad, either.

“Rather, in order to align ourselves with the ‘new thing’ that God is doing in a particular context, we need to dive deeply both into the foundations of faith and the context, anticipating that the synergy between the two will emerge creatively in and through us. We need to lead change in the community, but that process is difficult and complex, it does not happen well by accident.”

The intentional learning and missional opportunities that seminaries provide make them important partners for local churches.

“Education is absolutely essential to developing the capacity of faith communities and their leaders to grow spiritually and minister more effectively,” Martin said. “Learning is the only way we transcend our current habits and abilities so that we can better meet the challenges of a new era.”

Wesley Seminary equips local church leaders by engaging the foundational resources of the faith at deeper levels, expanding their horizons and enabling them to think about life in new ways and assisting them to learn ministerial skills that foster greater discipleship, said Martin.

But seminary is also a place for exploration, discovery and transcendence.

Martin shared some of his thoughts on this in his sermon at the installation service. Preaching on Communion, he invited those present to ingest Christ’s presence in their lives and to “practice the presence of God.”

Encouraging the seminarians and the church to “become bread and wine for all the nations,” Martin prayed: “May we become more fully what we dream about. May we become the reality we proclaim.”

7-year old saves lives, raises \$2K for Imagine No Malaria

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

“I saved people from Africa.”

Seven-year old Nicolina Stine is sitting at her dining room table with her mom, Michele, and dad, Kenny. Nicolina is talking about how she has raised more than \$2,000 in the last two years to help fight malaria.

“At church, there was this thing, and we raised money at church and I thought about it and did it for my birthday,” she said.

What Nicolina had heard that day, more than two years ago, was a presentation about “Nothing But Nets,” where a \$10 donation bought an insecticide-treated bed net that would help stop the spread of malaria.

Later, at home, Nicolina emptied her piggy bank and rummaged through the house, gathering all the loose change she could find. When Michele asked her what she was doing, the then five-year-old said she was doing what they said in church to do: get money to save lives of people living in Africa.

Michele matched the amount Nicolina had found: \$70.

Nothing But Nets was launched in 2006 by a partnership that included The United Methodist Church. Today, “Imagine No Malaria” continues the Nothing But Nets campaign, but with additional emphasis on prevention, treatment, education and communication. The denomination is seeking to raise \$75 million through Imagine No Malaria to rid Africa of a disease that claims one life every 60 seconds. The Baltimore-Washington Conference goal is to raise \$2.1 million as part of that overall commitment.

Active members at Mt. Carmel UMC in Frederick, the Stines were further amazed when Nicolina announced to them that for her sixth birthday, she didn’t want presents; instead, she wanted people to donate money to buy nets.

“I didn’t want presents,” Nicolina said. “So I made my birthday into, like, where people give money to people in Africa and they buy nets.”

Nicolina might not have the distribution information just right, but she is clear on what the nets do: “They cover themselves with them so the mosquitoes don’t get them,” she said, “and they don’t get malaria.”

When Nicolina first told her mom about her idea – at age 5 – she said she wanted “a bug party.”

Michele’s reaction was predictable. “She made the weirdest face,” said Nicolina. “She said, ‘Is everyone going to bring bugs to the party?’ And I said, ‘No, people bring money so I can save kids in Africa.’”

“With her being so little when she did that, I didn’t understand what she meant,” said Michele. “We almost got into a little bit of a heated conversation because she wasn’t exactly getting her point across.”

Once everyone understood the request, Michele sat in her office and cried for about two hours.

And they were tears of joy.

“I was just floored,” Michele said. “I couldn’t wait for my husband to come home.”

“I’m just very proud of her,” said Kenny. “I’m taken aback by the way she’s approached this whole project. I was real surprised by the way all the parents thought it was a great idea, too. Instead of going out and buying something that would end up in a yard sale, it was a simple thing and a great thing to do.”

Kenny and Michele sat down with Nicolina, just to make sure she understood that this was what she really wanted to do.

“I wanted her to understand the magnitude of what she was doing and that there would be no presents,” said Michele.

Nicolina, she said, understood. “She said, ‘Mom, I get it. The kids are gonna bring money and we’re gonna buy

nets.”

So the family sat down and began to plan for the party, which included pony rides, snacks and a moon bounce at their home. They raised about \$700 at that first party, with additional contributions coming in in the weeks and months afterwards following an article in the local newspaper about what Nicolina had done.

The following year, for her seventh birthday, the party grew larger. They invited Nicolina’s entire first grade class, the Girl Scout troop, friends from dance class and children from Sunday school. The party moved to the church and they raised more than \$1,000.

In addition, the local mall in Frederick set aside all the money thrown in the fountain for Nicolina’s campaign, bringing in another \$231.

“We had to collect it and clean it,” said Kenny. “It took us three days to clean all those coins.”

Nicolina is already planning on doing another “bug party” for her eighth birthday next summer.

“Because, I just want to. Bigger. More people, more money.”

How does raising all this money make Nicolina feel? “Happy, because kids are getting saved.”



Nicolina Stine, center, stands in front of a bed net with her parents, Michele and Kenny, at her home in Frederick.