Comedian’s death opens doors to difficult conversations

The shockwaves of comedian Robin Williams’ self-inflicted death Aug. 11 are still rumbling. In their wake, people are asking questions about depression, bi-polar illness (which Williams had, according to published reports) and suicide. And many who have been touched by depression and suicide are taking to social media to bring this painful subject to their wake, people are asking questions about depression, bi-polar illness (which Williams had, according to published reports) and suicide. And many who have been touched by depression and suicide are taking to social media to bring this painful subject to the fore.

What they are saying: help is available; you are not alone.

Suicide is the second-leading killer in the United States, according to statistics provided from the American Association of Suicidology. In 2011, more than 39,500 people died by suicide, or 108 per day. There were 3.6 male deaths for each female death, they note, and most of those were middle-aged (between 45 and 64) white men. By comparison, homicides contributed 16,238 deaths in 2011, vehicle accidents accounted for 35,303, and breast cancer, 39,520.

The Rev. Sarah Andrews Schliekert, pastor of Ardin UMC in Martinsburg, W.Va., knows the impact of suicide on those left behind. Her brother, Dan Andrews, also a United Methodist pastor, committed suicide last June.

“I do not believe suicide is either a valiant or predictable action,” she wrote in an Aug. 12 blog post. "I believe that if you are struggling today with stresses, illness and burdens that seem overwhelming, you can find help and live a life not controlled by those. It may (and likely will) be some hard work.”

Schliekert wrote that she had been pondering what to say about suicide for some time, but that Williams’
I graduated from seminary 4 years ago, and I am one of those folks that loves school. Seminary was soul-feeding and wonderful, an opportunity to study the subjects I love most with ‘nary a math formula in sight. I was the happiest person at graduation, not because I was glad to leave, but because I savored all of it. Friends worried I would miss graduate school so much, I’d immediately have to go back.

In the past 4 years in ministry, I’ve found that being a pastor feeds my soul just fine and is full of learning opportunities. Every day, in fact, is a learning opportunity. Early on in my pastorate (like the first week), I thought, “Well, that’s it. I’m a total flop at this!” I blamed myself for any imperfections in the church (abern, as if there were any…), and thought that every meeting was somehow a failure and my fault.

In prayer, in my car, asking God to help me get a job at Baskin Robbins, I had an epiphany. In my spirit, God said, “Baby girl,” (God calls me that sometimes), “did you learn anything today?” I started to smile. What if a key to longevity in ministry is to get less twisted up about failure and to be more excited about learning? There is, after all, a whole lot to learn, all the time, about God and the love of Jesus, about humanity and grace, and about compassion and mercy. Every single day, in my prayers, I can honestly thank God that I learned something today. And my “worst days” become “days when I learned a whole lot.”

Discipleship is not about perfection out of the gate. It’s a sanctification journey; it’s about learning and growing by God’s grace. After all, they called Jesus “rabbi” and “teacher.” Maybe every day following Jesus is “back-to-school” Sunday. So, you can keep your M.Div., at least for by God’s grace. After all, they called Jesus “rabbi” and “teacher.”

EVENTS

ROCK in September
Towson UMC, Towson
Sept. 12, 7 p.m.

Preston Centurow, the keynote speaker at ROCK 2014, and the band Urban Street Level will come together with the youth of the Baltimore-Washington Conference to raise money for the rebuilding of Northwood-Appold UMC, which was destroyed in a fire. Cost is $20. Register at www.bwcumc.org/bwcumc-website-master-calendar/rock-to-benefit-the-rebuilding-of-northwood-appold-umc/.

Safe Sanctuary Training:
BWC Conference Mission Center
Sept. 13, 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

In 1996, General Conference delegates passed a resolution requiring all conferences to adopt policies to safeguard children and youth. This workshop will provide guidance for making ministry areas safe and secure for children, youth and volunteers. No cost, but you must register online to attend. Visit http://bwcumc.org/bwcumc-website-master-calendar/basic-lay-servant-4-2-3/.

Inaugural Plumbline Lecture:
Foundry UMC, Washington, DC
Sept. 15, 7-8:30 p.m.

The Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA) is hosting the Rev. Alan Storey as the speaker. Storey pastors the Central Methodist Mission (CMM) in Cape Town, South Africa. Tickets for the lecture are $12. To purchase, go to www.eventbrite.com/e/plumbline-lecture-rev-alan-storey-tickets-12545139851.

Science & Religion retreat
West River Conference Center
Sept. 19-20, 7:30 Friday – 4:30 Saturday.

Explore questions of science on the image of God, our thinking about humanity, what brain science has to say, and others. Cost is $61.50 to cover meals and lodging. Sponsored by WesleyNexus. For details and registration, go to www.wesnex.org/.

Bishop’s Dinner for Scouting
Sept. 22, 6:30-9 p.m.
Baltimore-Washington Conference Mission Center

Guest speaker is Larry Coppock, National Director of Scouting Ministries for The United Methodist Church. Registration is $20. For information and to register, contact Pam Bowman, phowers@bwcumc.org.

Susanna Wesley House annual event
Tremont House, 225 N. Charles St. in Baltimore
Sept. 27, 11:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

The annual Fall Luncheon and Silent Auction is to support Susanna Wesley House in its mission to provide a safe, clean home for women and children in need. Tickets are $50. For tickets and information, call 410-837-3787, or e-mail susannawesleyeverton.net.

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FIND US ON FACEBOOK

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ANCIENT CHURCH MOTHERS AND FATHERS OFTEN GREETED ONE ANOTHER WITH THE PHRASE, “GIVE ME A WARD!” THIS GREETING LED TO THE SHARING OF INSIGHTS AND WISDOM. TODAY WE CONTINUE THIS TRADITION WITH THIS MONTHLY COLUMN.

By Mandy Sayers
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

In September, the month of “back-to-school,” I’ve definitely made the shift from student to parent. I bless other people’s backpacks in Sunday worship. I long for the peace and quiet of an empty house, or the office without a middle-schooler in it. Camps are expensive and no one can cover all summer, you can trust me on this.

In September, the month of “back-to-school,” I’ve definitely made the shift from student to parent. I bless other people’s backpacks in Sunday worship. I long for the peace and quiet of an empty house, or the office without a middle-schooler in it. Camps are expensive and no one can cover all summer, you can trust me on this.

By Daryl Williams
Pastor, New Hope Fellowship UMC, Upper Marlboro

Some of us live in a very big world. We take the opportunity to see everything that we can. We go to places that are unfamiliar, talk to people that we do not know and experience things that are new to us. We do all of this in the effort to open our minds, find out more and learn.

By contrast some of us live in a very small world. We make the decision that we are going to stick to the familiar. We are not going to try new things. We certainly are not going to make any new friends. We like our world neat, tidy and small.

No matter if you like being a part of a big wide world or a small tidy one, you are always learning. Learning is just the process of changing our behaviors based on our experiences.

When we decide that we want to have vast and different experiences, we learn vast and different things that change who we are and how we see the world. When we decide that we want to have neat, tidy and repeated experiences, we reinforce the same ways of seeing the world and reinforce who we currently are.

There comes a time in life when we have to decide which world we want to live in. Do we want to live in a small tidy world where we are the expert and have learned all we will ever need to know, or do we want to live in the big diverse world where there is always something new to learn?

Like everything else, learning is a choice. We can continue to learn what we already know or we can work to learn something new every day. It is our choice if our world gets bigger, smaller, or stays the same. The choice is yours. What will you be learning today?
untimely death brought the topic to people’s minds. “My prayer is that losses like Dan and Robin Williams’, she writes, though they can never be redeemed or made right for those left behind, can become an impetus for us to talk openly about mental health, become aware of resources out there, make us compassionate towards one another, and understand that we have meaningful choices to make that have consequences not only for our own lives but for the lives of those around us and indeed the world.”

Amy Kulp is Deputy Director of the American Association of Suicidology (http://www.suicidology.org/), based in Washington, D.C., and a member of Wesley Freedom UMC in Eldersburg. The organization’s goal is to better understand and prevent suicide. She said that churches could help by making the topic of suicide more comfortable to talk about openly. “Most if not all congregations have people who have thought about suicide, lost a loved one to suicide, or known people who have thought about it,” Kulp said. She suggested that churches could start support groups or offer space for existing support groups, for people who have contemplated suicide or for those whom it has affected.

She urged pastors to be on the lookout for warning signs and risk factors for suicide, especially as media coverage of Williams’ death continues. By focusing the risk factors Kulp mentioned are untreated mental illnesses, a close relative who has committed suicide, certain physical illnesses which can pre-dispose a person to suicide. Warning signs are sometimes obvious, sometimes subtle, she said. The signs can run from a person suddenly making a will and starting to give away personal possessions, to stockpiling medicine or purchasing a gun.

“So many people will come in and talk to their pastor about what the Bible says about suicide,” Kulp said. “Sometimes they’re worried about their eternal life.”

The United Methodist Church, in its Social Principles, teaches that suicide “is not the way a human life should end,” and that “the church has an obligation to see that all persons have access to needed pastoral and medical care, to support them in their therapy in those circumstances that lead to loss of self-worth, suicidal despair, and/or the desire to seek physician-assisted suicide.” (¶164B)

Above all, the church teaches that nothing, including suicide “separates us from the love of God.” (Romans 8:38-39)

“Suicide is preventable in most cases,” Kulp said. “We need to reduce the stigma of depression and start the conversation.”

The Rev. Chris Owens, on staff at the Baltimore-Washington Conference, is thankful his wife started a conversation with him a few years ago. He wrote in his blog Aug. 12 (http://pastorchrisowens.wordpress.com/2014/08/12/robin-you-are-never-alone/) that he shares a kinship with Williams and depression. After donating a kidney three years ago, Owens fell into a depression that nearly ended in suicide.

“I’m here today because my wife noticed a grave shift in my behavior and insisted on knowing what was going on,” he wrote. “I said that nothing was wrong (a lie, but easier than talking about the truth). She gently pushed me, and then I spilled it all out. We decided that I would more openly communicate how I was feeling, especially if I had the desire to do so. Shortly afterwards I underwent a long round of medication and therapy.”

Owens wrote that he was sharing his struggles now so that others would not think they were alone. He also offered some facts on his blog about depression:

- It does not indicate character, moral or spiritual defects.
- Depression does not indicate weakness. In fact, some of history’s strongest people suffered from depression. “I’m good in company with the likes of Abraham Lincoln and Winston Churchill.”
- Depression is a medical condition to be treated like any other medical condition – therapy, medication and self-care.
- Depression does not have to define who a person is, but it can bring about the opportunity for tremendous growth, healing and strengthening. “I truly hope that Robin Williams’ death will shed some more light on the reality of depression while sweeping away untruths and misconceptions,” Owens wrote. “Robin, you are finally not alone. There are many of us who suffer like you did and we will help you live on together in hope, healing and in God’s love and light. Rest in peace, my friend, and thank you.”

“By starting tough discussions around depression or having thoughts of suicide, help is available. The suicide prevention hotline is 1-800-273-8255. Or you can visit http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/. Suicide prevention hotlines are often located at large universities and also have their own hotlines as well. If you feel on the verge of hurting yourself, she wrote, call 911.

“If you are dealing with a loved one who is struggling with mental illness,” wrote Schlockert, “or you like me, have lost someone to suicide, there are also many resources for you. Find a counselor or support group in your area that can help you. Don’t keep it in. You don’t walk this journey alone. Ever.”

### Churches join forces to save money

By Paul Hazen

R eligious denominations in the United States have supported the creation of co-operatives for more than a century. Organizations and individuals of the Protestant, Catholic and Jewish traditions all have provided critical help to the co-operative movement for economic development and social justice. Now, as religious bodies have supported the creation of co-operatives for their own benefit.

One church was paying $2,000 a month for trash supplies and solar panels. With many members having faith based organizations have for social justice in CPA, I believe we’ve made an important step toward fulfilling our missions together in a way that makes each congregation more environmentally and economically sustainable.

Churches join forces to save money

Faith organizations suffered a significant drop in contributions in the 2008-09 recession. This was certainly the situation for the UMC. According, to BWC Treasurer Paul Eichelberger, congregations in the BWC saw an average of a 5 percent decline in contributions. This situation repeated itself across the faith-based community.

In response, a group of religious leaders in Washington, D.C., gathered to discuss forming a purchasing cooperative to cut costs. In 2011, a dozen congregations purchased electricity together and saved nearly $100,000. By 2012 there were more than 100 participants and soon they were expanding to other services. The co-operative was formally incorporated in March of this year.

CPA has three goals: saving money for its members through bulk purchases; organizing for social change, and aiding the environment. Rebates and dividends are used for investments in sustainability, worker equity and community organizing. While it’s not always possible, the cooperative tries to support only vendors who engage in business practices consistent with the group’s values and social mission.

The co-operative has achieved major savings in contracts for electricity, natural gas, trash hauling, copier services, heating and air conditioning, cleaning supplies and solar panels. With many members having large sanctuaries, utility bills have been a particular source of savings. Priority is given to local vendors that show a commitment to worker fairness, economic justice, concern for community, renewable energy and environmental sustainability. More than 150 institutions have participated in CPA purchasing programs, with average annual savings of over $8,000.

“If all 600-plus churches in the BWC joined the CPA, our collective savings would be $4.8 million, money that could be used elsewhere,” stated the Rev. Joe Daniels, Greater Washington District Superintendent and an early supporter of the CPA.

Most of the funds saved through CPA are managed by people with little experience in negotiating contracts. An early participant, the Rev. Donna Claycomb-Sokol of Mount Vernon Place UMC in Washington, put it this way: “There are none of the kinds of things that are taught at seminary.”

The purchasing decisions of these organizations can have a significant impact. In addition to houses of worship, CPA members may own schools, rental housing, daycare centers, retirement communities and community centers. Their shared values and concern for their community binds them together.

*Paul Hazen is the Financial Development Committee Chair at Foundry UMC in Washington, D.C.*
Mulenga preaches to 55,000 in Zimbabwe

By Erik Alsgaard
UMConnection Staff

Five members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference were in Zimbabwe recently to join the Ebenezer Convention, a nationwide revival that started on Friday, August 14.

The five — Assistant to the Bishop Rev. Maidstone Mulenga, Charlie Moore, David Bonney, Jim Gourley and Sue McCann — took time on Thursday, August 14, to tour the new Zimbabwe East Conference Center being constructed in Harare. BWC contributed financial support to the project. They were accompanied by Bishop Nkawitiwa of Zimbabwe and Bishop Scott Jones of the Great Plains Annual Conference.

At the Ebenezer Convention, more than 35,000 people packed the sports stadium in Harare for worship, prayer and fellowship. Mulenga said. Last Friday, he pronounced the benediction for the day’s service which ended at 10 p.m.

The next morning, Mulenga gave a presentation where he highlighted the partnership between the Baltimore-Washington Conference and Zimbabwe.

The Baltimore-Washington Conference has given $100,000 for the new conference center.” Mulenga said. The news was greeted with a standing ovation. Mulenga and the others in the group also presented a gift to Mrs. Nkawitiwa on behalf of Barbara Matthews, Bishop Matthews’ wife, and the women of the BWC.

“The Saturday session,” said Mulenga, “ran from Saturday morning through to Sunday morning; over night.”

Early Sunday morning, Bishop Nkawitiwa invited Mulenga to preach the closing sermon at 6 a.m. “He said he felt that there was fire in me and wanted to share the pulpit with me,” said Mulenga. “I felt blessed to share God’s word with our friends and partners in Zimbabwe.”

On Aug. 18, Mulenga traveled to Zambia, his birth country, to meet with conference staff and preach in four different churches throughout the week.

Rules and Tips for Submitting Resolutions and Petitions

By Jen Ileto
Rules Committee Chair

To say that Annual Conference 2015 will have a jam-packed agenda may be an understatement. Members will attend to the usual agenda: engaging in Bible study, participating in worship, hearing reports and petitions, and electing new members to the General and Jurisdictional Conferences, both of which will meet in 2016.

Needless to say, we will need to be extremely mindful of time — which includes consideration of resolutions AND any petitions to General Conference. Consequently, Annual Conference 2015 is a good year to consider:

• whether you really need to file multiple resolutions;
• whether you need to submit both a resolution and a petition on the same topic;
• and whether your resolution or petition is clear enough to allow for consideration without lengthy debate.

Once you’ve decided that you are going to submit a resolution or petition, it is important to know the rules associated with each. This article provides answers to Frequently Asked Questions about resolutions and petitions, as well as offers some tips for writing and submitting both resolutions and petitions.

If you have a question that is not addressed here, please send it to our communications staff (mlauber@bwcumc.org). It will be answered and posted on the Conference website, along with these questions and answers:

Q: Who may submit resolutions or petitions?
A: Any congregation, clergy member or lay member from a congregation within the Baltimore Washington Conference (BWC) may submit a resolution or petition. Although “any organization, clergy member or lay member of The United Methodist Church may petition the General Conference“ (¶ 507, The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2012, hereinafter “Discipline“) only those affiliated with the BWC may petition the General Conference.

Q: What is the deadline for submission?
A: The deadline for submission for both resolutions and petitions to General Conference is January 15, 2015.

Q: To whom and how do I submit a resolution or petition?
A: The BWC Rules require that each resolution address a single issue, using the format and length designated on a form provided by the Conference Secretary. The form is posted on the Conference website at [link].

Q: Are the BWC rules different for passing resolutions and petitions?
A: Generally, no. We typically follow the process that is outlined in our Rules, which includes, for example, amendments, speaking for/against, and voting. Last year, we used the “Circles of Grace” process for consideration of some of our resolutions, which worked very well.

Q: What is the deadline for submission?
A: Due to the deadline for submission, the BWC Conference Secretary will forward the resolution to the CT, by their deadlines: July 1, 2015, for resolutions and/or CFA well in advance of the filing deadline. The Procedures and Format in the current Discipline should be used for petitions. Be certain you are referring to the 2012 Discipline, and not one from a previous year. With the conference rules, the Conference Secretary will provide a form for petitions that includes instructions and an example of how to prepare a petition. This information is also posted on the Conference website at [link].

Q: Are the BWC rules different for passing resolutions and petitions?
A: No. We tried that last year in hopes of allowing the writers to perfect their resolutions but it became too confusing. For instance, the Pre-Conference booklet included the originally submitted resolution with the CT’s concurrence/non-concurrence recommendation but the Annual Conference, in some instances, considered/noted on a different version.

Q: What happens if I miss the deadline?
A: For resolutions, you may resubmit by the deadline for the next Annual Conference. Petitions to General Conference do not require Annual Conference adoption for submission, so you may submit directly to the General Conference, by their deadlines: July 1, 2015, for petitions without digital media; October 15, 2015, for the final deadline. The Instructions for Petitions to the 2016 General Conference are posted on the BWC website at [link].

Q: Are there any common tips for writing resolutions AND petitions?
Yes:
1. Keep them short and succinct. Your resolution or petition is not the only one that the members of Annual Conference will need to read and consider. Short usually equals clarity.
2. Each resolution or petition should address a single issue. Petitions to General Conference that amend the Discipline differ slightly, so be sure to review the Instructions for Petitions to the 2016 General Conference.
3. Use single underline for proposed additions and strike through for proposed deletions to existing rules, provided the Discipline permits.
4. Do not use Track Changes.
5. Plan ahead. Resolutions to amend the Rules of the Session must be reviewed by the Rules Committee; resolutions with financial implications must be reviewed by CFA. The sooner you submit these to the Conference Secretary, the sooner she can refer them to the appropriate committee.

You will want to seek review of the Rules Committee and/or CFA well in advance of the filing deadline. This will be particularly important if the reviewing entity disagrees or recommends needed edits to your resolution. Resolving any problems, if possible, prior to submission or the resolution will save much needed time during Annual Conference and may well make passage of your resolution more likely.
A September arrives, church programs are starting back in earnest. With that in mind, the United Methodist Church of Baltimore-Washington Conference to share the resources they’re recommending to their congregations right now. We asked, specifically, what books they are recommending, what programs they’re urging churches to use; what techniques for church growth and vitality they’re teaching; and what churches/pastors are NOT doing right now that you wish they were.

Some of the answers may surprise you.

**BOOKS**

The Rev. Barbara Suffecool, who serves as one of four part-time Guides in the Western Region and pastor at Taylorsville UMC in Mt. Airy. “Our congregations are part-time Guide in the Western Region and pastor at” “I have an allergy to the word ‘program,’” said Suffecool. “If that’s the only word that has been effective over the past few years, we HAVE to use it.”

A book that the Rev. Sarah Dorrance is recommending and using with her own church council is “Deep and Wide,” by Andy Stanley. Dorrance serves as another part-time Guide in the Western Region and pastor at Taylorsville UMC in Mt. Airy. “Our congregations are getting smaller,“ she said. “We need a way to do things differently.”

Another book she recommends is “Sticky Faith,” by Eugene H. Peterson. “I read it, it spoke, emphasizing the disabilities of hard-of-hearing worshippers can’t hear the pastor, he or she will stop listening. Pastors don’t listen to the pastor or to each other; and a lot of us shut out the voice of God. Very rarely does the voice of God come only to one person, so very rarely does only one person have all the answers.”

**TECHNIQUES**

Dorrance stresses with her congregations the need for a change in leadership styles. “Some of our pastors are great shepherds,” she said, “but they are not great leaders. We live in a culture that needs great leaders.”

She recommends some of the one-day workshops offered by the BWC’s Vibrant Communities office, as well as the Willow Creek Leadership Summit, and the Church of the Resurrection Leadership Institute.

Dorrance also checks into blogs on a regular basis. She suggested www.careymusic/code for topics that church leaders face on a daily basis. She also visits www.facebook.com/clergycoachingnetwork.

As Owens works with congregations, he’s noticing a trend: they need “three internal keys.” The first is a passionate Kingdom builder – one who believes the Kingdom of God in the world. But in order to do that, they need the courage to let go of the baggage of doubt and attitudes that are inconsistent with the history, and a handful of “influential problem people who consistently get in the way of change.”

In order to move towards God’s vision and away from crippling baggage, Owens said a church congregation then needs to be diligent enough to set and keep some concrete SMART goals (specific, measurable, audacious, realistic and timely). He suggests the Church Council (or other governing board) setting these goals.

**NOT DOING**

Suffecool, in general, her churches are relying on preferences and their own logic to determine ministry strategy. She’d like to see more prayer. “All major Christian movements are undergirded with significant amount of prayer,” she said. “I don’t think we’re doing enough listening,” said Suffecool. “Pastors don’t listen to their congregations; laity don’t listen to the pastor or to each other; and we need to get rid of it.”

**Mission u gathers people to pray, learn and transform**

**By Linda Worthington**

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that ... you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:2)

**With those words, Zilpha Pinkney, Dean of “Mission u,” greeted more than 175 people gathered at the Bethesda Marriott Hotel in Maryland. It was the annual United Methodist Women’s and Board of Global Ministries’ educational and inspirational event.**

Mission u, formerly called the School of Christian Ministry, had as its theme, “Transformation of the World.”

The name of the event may have changed but the mission has not – to help clergy and laity, women and men, know what it means to be missional and friendships of the church. This year the geographic study was on “The Roma of Europe” and the social issue was on “The Roma of Europe.”

For their spiritual growth and leadership development, 20 youth were having their own sessions with Dean, the Rev. Michael A. Parker II. For their spiritual growth study, Breesan A. Jenkins, assistant to the pastor at Queen’s Chapel UMC, led the youth in understanding the innate power in each Christian. Minister to Youth at St. Paul UMC in Oxon Hill, Rashida C. Walker, taught the youth-focused study, “Focusing on the Future.”

Several one-hour Focus Groups added to the knowledge attendees could soak up. The first to fill up was on Line Dancing. Other classes were a bit more serious, including Rev. Brian Jackson on Prison Ministry, Kathleen Charters on the Charter for Racial Justice, and Brittany Drakeford taking on Social Media.

“Reluctantly, we will (have) experienced a transformation through our personal experiences, so that we can begin to transform our world,” Pinkney said.
Simpson begins Global Initiatives ministry for BWC

By Erik Alsgaard

2.2 million pounds (1,000 metric tons) of greenhouse gas emissions are prevented in particular, the island of Vieques.

For Europe, Simpson said, that would mean gifts of wonderful, inspired ideas about doing ministry in some location around the world. The genesis for most of these ideas is due to direct, people-to-people contact where a person from the BWC already knows someone else from another area.

“But these often aren’t coordinated between ecumenical offices,” Simpson said. “While our intentions may be good, it may not be in keeping with the vision and mission of the resident bishops in areas where we want to go. They and their Cabinets, of course, have the best handle on what needs to be done.”

Simpson makes it clear that these partnerships are not a one-way street. “We want to promote the exchange of information and ideas both ways,” he said. “The idea is to share our best practices with each other. For example, the Korean emphasis on personal prayer and piety is something we could learn lots from. The Russian experience of emphasizing Christian community in places where none exists; that’s something we don’t have to deal with but it could become a problem for us in the future.”

Simpson lifts up the Africa University choir tours as one example of how the partnership works to bring ministry here. The recent visit by the Korean delegation to the Annual Conference Session is another.

“Individual pastors are visiting local churches, too,” he said. “One of the Russian Initiative pastors has been here a couple of times.”

Simpson also noted that international students from the partnership areas come to this area to attend school. Churches and members are encouraged to keep the partnerships and make sure communications is happening between the two partners.

At this point, Simpson said, the BWC has four different international partners in ministry: the Russian Initiative, which will now be called the Eurasia Partnership, that works with the Black Soil District in Russia; the agreement with the South Conference of the Korean Methodist Church (see UMConnection, August 2014); the partnership with the Zimbabwe Annual Conference, which is the BWC’s longest-standing alliance; and a new partnership agreement in the works in Latin America, which is focused on Puerto Rico and, in particular, the island of Vieques.

Simpson also noted that international students from the partnership areas come to this area to attend school. Churches and members are encouraged to keep the partnerships and make sure communications is happening between the two partners.

For Mexico, contact Dr. Tereza Qiuss, or the Rev. Marcus Matthews. He said he’s excited to re-join the conference staff and getting used to the rhythm of being away from parish life.

“No funerals, no weddings, no hospital visits,” he said with a chuckle.

His new focus of ministry, he said, has two major pieces: the first is as Field Coordinator of the Imagine No Malaria campaign which Simpson and his wife, Sylvia, have led for the past 12 months.

The second piece is the new aspect, he said, which involves the conference’s global partnerships. Simpson said his new role will be to help align ministry partnerships and make sure communications is happening between the two partners.

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“Several of these partnerships have been in effect for a number of years,” said Simpson. “We need to take a look at them and say ‘How can we build on our past successes and do a better job of connecting the churches and members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference with the churches and members of those annual conferences around the globe.’

What happens, Simpson said, is that people will get these wonderful, inspired ideas about doing ministry in some location around the world. The genesis for most of these ideas is due to direct, people-to-people contact where a person from the BWC already knows someone else from another area.

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For Mexico, contact Dr. Tereza Qiuss, or the Rev. Marcus Matthews. He said he’s excited to re-join the conference staff and getting used to the rhythm of being away from parish life.

“No funerals, no weddings, no hospital visits,” he said with a chuckle.

His new focus of ministry, he said, has two major pieces: the first is as Field Coordinator of the Imagine No Malaria campaign which Simpson and his wife, Sylvia, have led for the past 12 months.

The second piece is the new aspect, he said, which involves the conference’s global partnerships. Simpson said his new role will be to help align ministry partnerships and make sure communications is happening between the two partners.

At this point, Simpson said, the BWC has four different international partners in ministry: the Russian Initiative, which will now be called the Eurasia Partnership, that works with the Black Soil District in Russia; the agreement with the South Conference of the Korean Methodist Church (see UMConnection, August 2014); the partnership with the Zimbabwe Annual Conference, which is the BWC’s longest-standing alliance; and a new partnership agreement in the works in Latin America, which is focused on Puerto Rico and, in particular, the island of Vieques.
Methodist Churches are not unique within the historical context of Methodism. In October, we will celebrate the 150th anniversary of emancipation in Maryland and the creation of the Washington Conference. Bishop James Thomas Love asked, “What have we wrought?” For black Methodists, the results of the “Uniting Conference of 1959” in Kansas City and the establishment of the Central Jurisdiction (and subsequently the Washington Conference) effectively meant the establishment of a “denomination within a denomination—a church within a church.”

Dr. William B. McLaren, in his 1999 article, “When a Dream is Deferred,” intimates that the creation of the Central Jurisdiction was yet another effort of the Methodist Church to rid itself of the race problem by sweeping it under the church’s “rug,” as was evident with the 1939 Plan of Union and the compromises among the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church South and the Methodist Protestant Church. One of the selling points of the establishment of an all-black jurisdiction and conferences was that black Methodists would be able to elect their own bishops and build their own institutions.

In 1968, at the dawn of the formation of The United Methodist Church and the elimination of the former Central Jurisdiction, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. eloquently and prophetically cautioned that with the elimination of the Central Jurisdiction, there existed the possibility of black Methodists “being integrated out of power.” Some 46 years later, we are left to ponder the profundity and accuracy of King’s observation. McClain asserted that notwithstanding the 1968 merger, the legacy of segregation has continued to plague The United Methodist Church.

What have we wrought? Indeed, the effects of church segregation of the past persist in United Methodism today. In fact, the vast majority of United Methodist congregations across racial, ethnic and geographic lines remain essentially segregated. The legacy of racial segregation is most evident in the decline of many black United Methodist congregations. Over the past 50 years, this decline is apparent in consistently decreasing membership, worship attendance, stewardship, and diminished vitality in worship and witness in many churches.

And yet today, a biblical-theological prospect, as raised in a question raised by the prophet Ezekiel in the 6th century B.C.E., is before us. “Who will stand in the breach? I looked for anyone among them who would repair the wall and stand in the breach... but I found no one.” (Ez. 2:30)

As one who is counted among those who are products of the Washington Conference, and as a committed United Methodist, I stand with many others on the legacy of our segregated past with a hope rooted in the promises of God. As we who are of many hues continue to work together towards truly becoming the “United” Methodist Church, this is a hope that with God’s help, our future will outshine our tragic past.
Concerts planned to benefit Northwood-Appold

By Eddie McWilliams
UMConnection Staff

JACK AND MAUREEN Danz met at Northwood-Appold UMC before it was United Methodist. Now married 35 years, the Danzes were part of the church’s vibrant youth ministry in the 50s and 60s.

When Northwood-Appold UMC burned two days after Christmas last year, the Danzes were on site that afternoon, taking in the tragic scene. Thankfully, no lives were lost nor injuries sustained in the blaze, but all that remained were the outer brick walls of the church.

Today, Jack and Maureen are members of Grace UMC in Baltimore, but they’re leading an effort to raise money for the rebuilding of their former church. A benefit concert is planned for Saturday, Oct. 25, at 7 p.m., at Grace UMC in Baltimore, featuring the music of the Maryland Boychoir and the chancel choir of Grace UMC.

The Danzes said Grace holds 500 people and they would love to have a full sanctuary.

“The proceeds will go to Northwood-Appold,” said Jack, Danz, “to help out. Yes, the church had insurance, but they also need to replace things like Bibles, hymnals, Sunday school materials… they need that.”

The goal, he said, is to get the church back up and going again. All that was saved from the church after the fire was the cross on top of the steeple. “We want to get that cross back and have it where it belongs,” said Jack.

Today, a tarp covers the roof of the church and reconstruction efforts have yet to begin. Danz said that the church has held several meetings with members of the community to determine that when the church rebuilds, it will better meet their needs.

“The re-building of Northwood-Appold is moving forward,” said Danz’s partner, the Rev. Cecil Gray. “It’s slower than we desire, but at God’s pace, we are sure.”

Gray said that the trustees of the church meet frequently as they travel what he called a “journey” of restoration, resurrection, rebirth and new birth. “It can only happen if God has chosen us to travel this journey,” he said, “and we are certain that God is leading and guiding us to the victory.”

Gray said that the Danz’s and the congregation at Grace UMC are “incredible people.” He also thanked the Rev. Amy McCullough, Grace UMC’s pastor, and the Rev. Nancy Webb, Grace’s former pastor, for their support.

“I am humbled and thankful for the benefit concerts for the rebuilding of the church,” Gray said.

The October concert is a partnership between the two congregations, said Maureen Danz. She recalled going to the church in the 1960s when Northwood was the fastest growing church in the Baltimore Metropolitan area, and the center of everyone’s social network.

“Even if you didn’t attend Sunday services there,” she said, “you attended one of their many other activities during the week.”

The benefit concert came about, Jack said, after a lunch the Danzes had with the church’s pastor, the Rev. Cecil Gray. “He said, ‘It’s not until after Christmas that you’re sure what you’re going to do on New Year’s Day.’”

“The final result was a benefit concert,” said Gray. “We are one body in Christ and this was a wonderful opportunity for me to meet the other parts of that body. This assembly made me proud of my faith and its values. Our main job in this assembly was to listen to one another. We were supposed to hear the opinions of our brothers and sisters from across the planet about the issues presented before us, and then vote on those issues.”

I took it further than that, and I know many others did as well. We didn’t just listen to each other about the petitions; we listened to our friends’ problems. Bob told me about his difficult finding work. He says in Uganda there are not many opportunities for training in information technologies when he can earn enough money to pay for a semester of classes. In the meantime, he tries to practice his skills by doing work on computers for pay. In doing all of this listening, I felt the message of Jesus. He would eat with the sinners and touch lepers, people who were ignored or harassed by the society they lived in. At GYPCLA we crossed geographical, cultural and social boundaries. No one was ignored because they were different. I was welcomed to eat with the Russians or play games with the Ugandans. We were one body and the togetherness that our faith brings us affected me deeply.

During a bus ride, a friend I met, Anton, and I were discussing U.S. and Russia relations. After discussing the anger and suspicion, he said he doesn’t think the governments ever represented the people. He traveled to the U.S. some years ago and met many good, friendly people. He doesn’t think all Americans are war mongers or mass murderers like he said he doesn’t think the governments ever represented the people. He traveled to the U.S. some years ago and met many good, friendly people. He doesn’t think all Americans are war mongers or mass murderers like he said.

I thought about that and he said he was right about all Russians being Commissars trying to sabotage our national security. I thought, “But isn’t that just what I did away from GYPCLA?” To love your neighbor.