According to church law, all questions of law are presented at the 2014 Annual Conference Session, which met in May. The Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church will decide on two cases that focus on actions taken at the 2014 Annual Conference. The conference voted, with a two-thirds majority, to suspend its rules so that it could use a holy conferencing process, called Circles of Grace, to discuss and vote on the resolutions.

Two questions of law were presented at the BWC conference will be watching the proceedings when the Judicial Council meets later this month, the Baltimore-Washington Conference, and the Rev. Charlie Parker, UMC in Washington, D.C., by Bishop Marcus Matthews of the Baltimore-Washington Conference. He retired for the first time in 1980. He came out of retirement in 1985 and served for one year in Zimbabwe where he helped establish Africa University. He also served after retirement in the Albany Area and New York City, finally retiring a second time in 1996.

“Every bishop has a right to be consulted, and that is what this does,” said Younes. “This removes the burden of being diocesan superintendent from our hands.”

In 1996, Mathews was again elected bishop, this time in the United States, thus becoming what is believed to be the only person ever elected twice as bishop in the Methodist tradition. His election took place at American University in Washington, D.C. – where Eunice had graduated with an English degree in 1937 – and he was consecrated bishop at Metropolitan Memorial, just across the street.

“After his election, Bishop Mathews served the New England Area and the Baltimore-Washington Conference. He retired for the first time in 1980. He came out of retirement in 1985 and served for one year in Zimbabwe where he helped establish Africa University. He also served after retirement in the Albany Area and New York City, finally retiring a second time in 1996.

“I remember being 8 years old and watching them confirm my father as bishop,” said Stanley Mathews as he stood in the sanctuary of Metropolitan after the plaque was dedicated. “I didn’t understand what it meant at the time, but today’s events help bring closure to that.”

The dedication of the plaque brought Stanley Mathews, his sister, Anne Mathews Younes and Eunice Mathews back to Metropolitan, along with dozens of other family members and friends.

“We are all deeply moved by having this plaque in the church sanctuary,” said Younes. “It honors the commitment of my parents.”

The plaque mirrors a similarly-designed plaque on the opposite side of Metropolitan honors Bishop Mathews

Metropolitan honors Bishop Mathews

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

Several hundred people gathered Sunday, Oct. 5, to pay honor and tribute to the late Bishop James K. Mathews, who died in 2010, and his wife, Eunice, who turned 100 years old this past April.

A plaque was unveiled in the sanctuary of Metropolitan Memorial UMC in Washington, D.C., by Bishop Marcus Matthews of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, and the Rev. Charlie Parker, senior pastor of Metropolitan, a place the Mathews called home for more than 80 years.

And you could say that it all started with rice.

As a newly-ordained Methodist minister in the mid-1930s, Mathews heard a lecture by the bishop of India at Boston University School of Theology, where he was studying for his master’s degree in theology. He decided to become a missionary, withdrew from school and sailed for India in 1938.

He had originally considered going to China, but decided on India because he didn’t like rice. Mathews received quite a shock upon arriving: rice is a staple of the Indian diet, too.

But because he landed in India and not China, Mathews met Eunice Jones, the daughter of famed Methodist evangelist and missionary, E. Stanley Jones. They fell in love and were married in 1940, a union that would last for 70 years.

In 1956, while serving the then Methodist Board of Missions in New York City, Mathews was elected bishop of India. He declined the honor because he thought Indian Methodists should be led by an Indian bishop.

In 1960, Mathews was again elected bishop, this time in the United States, thus becoming what is believed to be the only person ever elected twice as bishop in the Methodist tradition. His election took place at American University in Washington, D.C. – where Eunice had graduated with an English degree in 1937 – and he was consecrated bishop at Metropolitan Memorial, just across the street.

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See Judicial Council, page 3

BY MAIDSTONE MULENGA*
UMConnection Staff

When the Judicial Council meets this month, the Baltimore-Washington Conference will be watching the proceedings to see how the highest court in The United Methodist Church will decide on two cases that focus on actions taken at the 2014 Annual Conference.

Two questions of law were presented at the BWC 2014 Annual Conference Session, which met in May. According to church law, all questions of law and ruling by bishops are automatically referred to the Judicial Council for review.

In the first BWC case, the Rev. Stephen Ricketts of the Providence-Fort Washington Charge in Fort Washington requested a ruling regarding the conference’s voting procedures and process on five resolutions on human sexuality.

The conference voted, with a two-thirds majority, to suspend its rules so that it could use a holy conferencing process, called Circles of Grace, to discuss and vote on the resolutions.

In his question, Ricketts questioned if the voting “was legal and in compliance with the Book of Discipline since we did not have the chance to offer amendments.” He also claimed the “structure did not provide protection against discrimination.”

BWC Bishop Marcus Matthews ruled that “the procedure and process used by the Annual Conference to vote on the five human sexuality resolutions was lawful and did not violate the Discipline.”

In his analysis, Matthews noted that General
"Remember. Rejoice. Renew." will observe Jr., a Baltimore native and president of Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg redemption. You have a story because God had a story work? midst. What are some of your church's stories of God at the sanctuary saying, "He's not here. He has risen." are the women running from the tomb, running from a wide-eyed recognition that, in the blink of an eye, we the Jesus who woos us and works in and on us today. It's come to see how the Jesus we hear about in Scripture is preaching works, we come to see that the story of faith Christ. In that larger story, we see ourselves and, when is, at base, a story of God and people, a story of covenant. From those stories, I learned who I was, where I came from and what was important in life. So much of the Gospel is told in story form. Scripture is, at base, a story of God and people, a story of covenant and consummation and the life and work of Jewish Christ. In that larger story, we see ourselves and, when preaching works, we come to see that the story of faith is our story. We see ourselves in Israelites and Egyptians, in Peter the Doubter and Peter the Rock. The best part of the preaching moment is when we come to see how the Jesus we hear about in Scripture is the Jesus who wooed us and works in and on us today. It's a wide-eyed recognition that, in the blink of an eye, we are the women running from the tomb, running from the sanctuary saying, "He's not here. He has risen." In every church, we must tell the story of the Gospel and we must tell the Gospel as being lived out in our midst. What are some of your church's stories of God at work? I promise: you have a story to tell about God's love and mercy, about faults and failures and God's redemption. You have a story because God had a story first...that "old, old story of Jesus and his love." The truth always lies somewhere in between. The mistake that we often make in life is pretending to be all hero or all villain. We tell people that we are all villain or all victim. Our real story has times that we applaud and times we wish we could take back. Our real story casts us as both winner and loser. Our real story is what makes us who we really are today. Today, all of us are people who have done great things, learned lessons from mistakes, survived failure and come back to be winners. No matter where you have been, where you are or where you are going, that is your story. So tell the whole story, the good and the bad. That is what makes you authentic, makes you real. I have been sinner and saint, victim and victor, hero and villain. Through faith in Jesus Christ and His love, I'm not perfect but I am working towards perfection. I make mistakes, but I am forgiven. I fall down but I get back up and Jesus has made all the difference in my life. That's my story, and I'm sticking to it. Now, tell your story.
Communication summit hails life-saving technology

BY KATHY L. GILBERT AND JOEY BUTLER

A mobile phone won’t save a baby’s life, but a phone call could connect a doctor with a mother having a difficult delivery.

A solar computer can’t put food on a table, but it is helping to ensure an education that will lead to a living wage.

Mobile banking won’t keep a husband from beating his wife and taking her cash, but it can help survivors of domestic violence.

Mothers and technology — mobile phones, solar computers and digital development — are starting to look a lot more like life-changing tools instead of like gadgets for the affluent or devices for social media. There’s a name for this fact, but it’s one that is changing the way the church looks at information and communications technology for development.

“At its core, ICT4D is about connecting humans to one another. Talking to someone on a cell phone is a magical experience, and I want everyone to have that,” said Wayan Vota, co-founder of Kurante and one of the speakers at the Game Changers Summit, a conference hosted by United Methodist Communications.

More than 240 people from nine countries attended the Sept. 3 summit, including several from the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

“The Game Changers Summit was a very informative and eye-opening event,” said the Rev. David Simpson, Coordinator of Global Initiatives for the BWC. “There is an expanding network of NGO personnel who are studying, experimenting and testing new technologies that are working to improve the possibilities of what we are able to accomplish in a global mission setting.”

Simpson said that he was excited to learn the scope of the church’s collaboration with other global partners and the expansion of practical products available to assist others.

For the Rev. Faith Lewis, pastor of Mount Harmony Wesley UMC in Hampstead, who wanted to know if the church could use ICT4D to support worldwide mission efforts, the summit was “very enlightening.”

“The kind of technology we have available now is very sexy,” Lewis said. “It is going to make it possible for me to connect with people in other parts of the world in ways that we never thought possible.”

Lewis said that she has tried to implement text-messaging as one way of interacting with her parishioners, but that there was push back.

“Technology can include and connect people across the globe in a way never before possible,” she said. “I have been able to support mission efforts through text-messaging, which is powerful.”

“Nothing in the Discipline precludes an annual conference who was present was given a chance to testify that buildings can be destroyed and books can be torn. There is, he said, something more enduring: “Leave me (that) messages to the villages to wash their hands before breast-feeding and before handling food worked. It is not difficult. It is not a luxury item for self-indulgence,” she said, “and turned the conversation around to envisioning how technology can connect us globally for serving others.”

Lewis said that she has tried to implement text-messaging as one way of interacting with her parishioners, but that there was push back.

“At the conference,” she said, “we saw how United Methodist missionaries and agencies distribute life-saving messaging without push back because getting a text about safe drinking water is vital to their survival.”

ICT4D was front and center at the conference, which focused on devices that work on the ground in places where there is no electricity, no running water, no Internet connection and no money in an average household budget.

For three days, some of the leading innovators in ICT4D were on hand, showing how ICT4D can help the church and society.

ICT4D technology is not a panacea, but it can be a powerful tool for the church.

“The church has always been a very flexible organization,” said the Rev. John T. McCord, executive director of United Methodist Communications. “As we continue to be part of this evolving world, we must be open to learning new technology and how we can use it for the work of the church.”

“ICT4D is exciting,” said Scott H. Portland, an ordained elder in the Washington Conference. “Technology is changing the church. It is empowering us to share in constructive ways with others. It flowers less when it is the subject of charity,” he said.

The Rev. Larry Hollon, top executive of United Methodist Communications, said knowledge builds jobs and better economies.

“The human spirit flourishes when people are empowered to share in creative ways with others. It is a luxury item for self-indulgence, but when we are working with others, it becomes an important tool for serving others.”

Sichel specifically questioned if the resolution was in compliance with paragraphs 2702(b), 2704.2(a) and 324.13 of the Discipline and Judicial Council Decisions 2013-2014, 2015-2018 and 2019-2022.

In his ruling, Matthews ruled that the resolution does not violate the Discipline and does not conflict with the decisions of the Judicial Council.

The resolution, the bishop ruled, was aspirational since it uses qualifying words as “encouraged to support,” or “consider refraining,” and does not have prescriptive force.

In addition, Matthews said, “the Judicial Council’s admonition against an official who terminates, ignores or violates the Discipline’ does not mean that an annual conference must stand silent when it decides, as a body, that its collective conscience is calling it to speak out, including by announcing its disagreement with the resolution.”

Matthews said that James Mathews and Eunice, the world “truly was their parish and that it was appropriate to celebrate their service on World Communion Sunday.

Mathews, it is said, crossed the Atlantic Ocean more than 220 times and not all by air. He visited Africa nearly 30 times, along with Korea, Latin America and Japan.

Looking at the plaque to be dedicated, Matthews asked the congregation to consider the legacy they would be leaving for others.


Most people, Matthews said, want to pass something along to the next generation but many work miserably in plans big in quantity but small in quality.

“We give thanks today for the witnesses to our faith in James Kenneth Mathews and Eunice Jones Mathews,” the bishop said.

“We, too, can pass along an inheritance.”

In retirement, Eunice and Kenneth Mathews served as bishops in retirement. Parker, remembering fondly his connections with Bishop James Kenneth Mathews, “I had the single ‘t,’ I had the double ‘t.’”

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Scouting transforms lives, UM leader tells BWC

BY MELISSA LAUDER
UMConnection Staff

BISHOP MARCUS MATTHEWS gathered together area youth leaders Oct. 22 to thank them for their good works and encourage United Methodists to become more involved in hosting and providing leadership to Scout programs.

The church and Scouting share a common call to love God and neighbor, the bishop told the more than 120 Scout and church leaders at a dinner at the Baltimore-Washington Conference Mission Center. They also share the wearing of uniforms.

Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts wear uniforms “to openly show their commitment to the ideals of Scouting. The uniforms display Scouting spirit and character,” Matthews said. “For Christians, love is their uniform. People will know we are Christians by our love and the way we live our lives. ... We honor those who continue to wear the uniform.”

The United Methodist Church, through its United Methodist Men, have a rich history of encouraging local church involvement in civic youth-serving agencies as an outreach ministry, said Larry Coppock, the denomination’s chief executive for Scouting.

Scout packs and Boy Scout troops and 988 churches have co-educational Venturing crews. In the United States, about 27,000 United Methodist churches host Girl Scout troops and 127,000 girls participate in troops meeting at those churches.

Reaching out to and nurturing children and teens and incorporating them into the life of the church can have a transforming effect on the Scouts, their families and the congregation, Coppock said.

On average, he continued, 25 percent of the Scouts that meet in United Methodist churches are United Methodist, 25 percent come from other faith groups and 50 percent are from un-churched families. “Scouting provides a tremendous tool for serving and evangelism. Scouting brings youth to the church and the church to youth,” Coppock said.

In addition to being service oriented, Scouts also define themselves as “reverent,” pointed out the Rev. Ken Lyons, chair of the conference Scouting Committee.

One way churches can get involved in significant ways with Scouts is through the Programs of Religious Activities with Youth (PRAY), which offers training and awards, through the God and Me, God and Family, Church, Life, Service and World, and through the Girl Scouts “My Promise my Faith” pin.

In addition, PRAY award recipients invite Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts to attend Bible study or meetings.

“Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts view the Bible study and meetings as a way to earn a pin,” Coppock said.

Lyons, retired BWC clergy, is the president of the National Board of Directors of PRAY.

Following formal presentations, the Scouting Committee leaders led table talks, encouraging churches to become chartering organizations for Scouting groups.

Mid-Atlantic UM Foundation triples assets in four years

BY LINDA WORTHINGTON
UMConnection Staff

I MAGINE WHAT YOU could do with $9 million in 2010 that, four years later, had grown to more than $18 million. That’s what happened to the assets of the Mid-Atlantic United Methodist Foundation, Inc.

And it happened through a difficult economic period and recession.

“The Foundation’s ministry calling is to engage individuals and congregations in financially supporting the making of Christian disciples,” said Jack Brooks, the executive director. “Every dollar we manage and invest comes from the generosity of someone responding to an invitation.”

The Foundation has made this astounding growth primarily through acquiring new assets to manage, as churches have become aware of the benefits for setting up endowments or investment and capital accounts, explained Frank Robert, associate director of the Foundation, whose office is in the Baltimore-Washington Conference Center. They also manage BWC ministry funds from the camping program and other ministries.

The Foundation, headquartered in Valley Forge, Pa., was formed in 2010 from a merger approved at the annual conference of the Eastern Pennsylvania-Peninsula UM Foundation and the United Methodist Stewardship Center and Foundation of the BWC.

The combined assets at that time were $92 million.

MAUMF’s territory includes 4,837 United Methodist churches and generates about $800,000 a year for the Foundation; one-half of this money pays the banks and brokers who do the investing, while the other half is used for the three full-time and one part-time staff, rental space and costs of doing business, and for ministry to and for the churches.

George Monk, who was appointed to the board in 2013 and serves on its stewardship committees, is a lay person from Chevy Chase UMC, where he is a member of the Board of Trustees. He cites CCUMC as an example of the work churches and the Foundation work together.

His church accepted MAUMF’s invitation to manage its endowment fund and two smaller funds. “In the old way (prior to 2010), such funds were given to the conference, which had a small group of people to administer the funds,” Monk said. “Now our church pays annually a fee of only 1 percent of its managed funds to the Foundation,” he explained.

Prior to this arrangement, CCUMC’s endowment fund was managed primarily by one person in the church.

“When Sam leaves or dies, there would be no one to take over,” Monk said. “As it now is, MAUMF will handle it.”

“We have a need, we get a fast response from MAUMF,” he said, noting that the Foundation sends monthly investment performance reports.

MAUMF meticulously follows the Book of Discipline, screening all investments against the General Board of Pension and Health Benefit’s list of restricted securities and following the UMC’s social principles.

“Our goal is to... provide additional ministry and mission resources to the Annual Conferences we serve, strengthen the financial health of The United Methodist Church and make disciples of Jesus Christ,” Brooks says in a FAQ. In 2013, the Foundation distributed over $5.5 million in ministry funding.

That ministry includes workshops and financial leadership courses throughout its three conferences and consulting to individual churches on how best to manage their financial resources, grow their assets and establish endowment accounts, Robert said.

The Foundation offers consultation or training on a wide range of possibilities from outright gifts of cash, bequests and charitable remainder unitrusts, to gift annuities that benefit the church. Many of the vehicles for giving also offer tax incentives and some offer income for life to the giver.

“There are better ways to give to the church than just writing a check,” Robert said, and providing that information and education is what MAUMF does.

Robert tells of a very small African-American church which asked for a consultation. They had $3,000 to begin to set up an endowment for the future. “The next year they added $100,000,” he said, and two years later received an estate gift of $200,000.

That church had many needs, but saw the wisdom in setting up an endowment fund to assist the church far into the future.

“The more assets we have to manage, the more mission and ministry we can do for the churches,” Robert added.

To set up an appointment, contact Robert at 800-492-0225, or FrankRobert.mlafoundation@gmail.com.

One of the Foundation’s goals is to promote excellence in clergy financial leadership. Starting in January 2015, it is offering a Financial Leadership Academy, which includes seminars, peer groups and coaching for clergy over a two-year period in six quarterly weekend sessions.

To learn more, contact MAUMF at mlafoundation@gmail.com or go to www.maumf.org.
First Historic Site in D.C. one of six added in Conference

The newly registered sites are:
1. Sharp Street Memorial Church (no. 494) was built in 1898 by the congregation with a history dating to 1795 when Bishop Francis Asbury mentioned its inception in his Journal. At its Sharp Street site, the congregation hosted the first Washington Annual Conference in 1864. It opened the Centenary Biblical Institute in 1866, and had plans for such important conference institutions as the N. M. Carroll Home for the Aged and Mt. Auburn Cemetery. At its present site, it continued its leadership role, especially in the modern Civil Rights Movement, and hosted the office of the conference’s presiding bishop after 1940.

2. Asbury Church, Washington, D.C. (no. 493) has occupied the same location in downtown Washington since 1876. It has hosted the second Washington Annual Conference in 1866 in its second building which opened that year. The present building was built in 1915 during the pastorate of the Rev. Matthew Wesley Clay, who would be elected bishop five years later. Asbury Church and the Georgetown Cluster are the first Historic Sites designated by the United Methodist Church in the District of Columbia.

3. Georgetown Cluster (no. 492) traces its roots to 1772 when, as William Watters recalled in 1806, “Mr. (Robert) Strawbridge preached to a large room full of inhabitants who gave some attention to the things that were said and behaved with decency.” On Christmas Eve that year, Robert Strawbridge arrived, accompanied by Richard Owings. Georgetown soon became part of the Frederick Circuit and, in 1775, Bishop Asbury came to dedicate a church on Montgomery Street with members both black and white, enslaved and free. In 1801, Great Oak Bethesda, from across the Potomac, was opened west of the grounds.

4. Dumbarton Church opened in 1849, replacing the church on Montgomery Street. It was commanded as a military hospital during the Civil War, and President Abraham Lincoln came to hear his friend, Bishop Matthew Simpson, preach at its re-consecration in 1865.

5. Old Georgetown Church (now Fifth Church of Christ Scientist) was built by descendants from the Montgomery Street Church. Its separate existence ended with the Methodist reunion of 1939.

6. Mt. Zion Church began after the War of 1812, the first African-American church planted in the District. In 1868, the church hosted the fourth Washington Annual Conference, the first to elect delegates to General Conference.

Four of the six new sites are to be recognized in this centennial year of the Washington Conferences:

a. The Old Methodist Burying Grounds and Free Burial Ground, as designated by the General Conference of the United Methodist Church, in 1863. The estate was a plantation based upon slavery and many of those enslaved became Methodists. There was a chapel attached to the home where Mrs. Gough held daily services led by visiting preachers. Constructed as a five-part Georgian structure, three-fifths of it was lost to fire in 1839.

b. Robert Strawbridge Cluster (no. 493) consists of the Log Meeting House, Bethesda Church (New Hope UMC), Sam’s Creek, the Stone Chapel at Pike Creek, the Andrew Poulson House, the Henry Willis House, and the John Evans House.

This article excerpted by permission from “Third Century Methodism.” United Methodist Historical Society of the BWC, www.lovelylanemuseum.org, e-mail: archives-history@bwcumc.org.

Ward’s Chapel ‘leans into Jesus’ with new additions

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

The members of Ward’s Chapel UMC in Randallstown have smiles on their faces these days. They can’t help it: a new, $2.9 million addition to their church, dedicated a few weeks ago, has everyone beaming with pride and possibility.

“I am relieved and thankful,” said the Rev. John Nupp, the church’s pastor. “Since the 1980s,” he said, “forward-thinking people have been dreaming of adding more space downstairs, we can include a lot more people.”

The new space opens up new opportunities for ministry and mission said the Rev. Barbara Charnock, a member of the church for 75 years. “We have now have rooms for multiple choirs, including the possibility for a children’s choir. We have space for growth.”

Nupp said that financing the project came without the assistance of an outside lender.

“Since the 1980s,” he said, “forward-thinking people contributed to a Heritage Trust Fund that had grown to a principle of more than $1 million.” The pastor added that combined with sacrificial gifts, estate gifts from saints of the church like Leonard Miller and others, and the investments in the Trust fund, the church has “only” a $250,000 debt, payable to the Trust Fund.

Since our beginning, Ward’s Chapel has been a laity-driven congregation,” Nupp said. “They are passing that same spirit of enthusiasm and dedication to the next generation, which is so exciting to be a part of.”

Charnock added that the church has always been an open and inclusive congregation, and she’s anticipating with joy what might come next. “We’re formulating ideas to include a lot more people,” she said.

The addition is the realization of a long dream, said Easto. As a person who has served in churches in the area of conference staff, she has been driving to and from the office. “I want others to feel your momentum,” she said to church members. “I’m glad to see you lean into Jesus.”
WHEN METHODISTS
ARE UNITED
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2

On UMC #Giving Tuesday last year, gifts from United Methodists totaled $6.5 million. That means 16,300 gifts given through The Advance reached mission and ministries around the world.

What’s next?

www.umcmission.org/give

MAKING A DIFFERENCE
Hiss UMC: serving the community 175 years

Current pastor, the Rev. Timothy Dowell, left, stands with former pastors, the Revs. Luise Cressmore, Mark Smiley, Marjory Schammel and Ken Sununu

PARKVILLE — Hiss UMC celebrated its 175th anniversary Sept. 24 with more than 345 people in a combined worship service, including all former pastors and District Superintendent Cynthia Moore-Koike.

The church was recognized and given citations by the Maryland House of Delegates by church member Delegate John Cluster; by Senator Kathy Klausmeier for the Maryland Senate; and by Baltimore County Council member David Marks.

The congregation is involved in mission and ministry throughout the community and world, such as support of Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops, Manna House, Baltimore County Christian Workcamp, Habitat for Humanity and a Playground for science and religion discussions. The event was hosted by WesleyNexus, a conference-recognized organization.

Getting the discussion off to a good start Friday evening was a one-hour video, Brianne Swimme and Mary Evelyn Tucker’s “Journey of the Universe: An Epic Story of Cosmic, Earth and Human Transformation.” It covered Earth’s story from “the big bang to the symbol using, meaning seeking sapiens that we are,” reported Rick Barr, secretary of WesleyNexus’s board of directors.

In the discussion following, the group noted the absence of language of the sacred.

Dr. Connie Bertka, from the Smithsonian Institution and a lecturer at Wesley Seminary, gave the keynote from her perspective as an astro-biologist and a theist. “I not only accept an evolutionary origin of all living things, but also celebrate the awareness it can awaken in us that we are part of an interdependent web of existence. We are not alone, even when we think otherwise,” she said.

Breakout sessions gave small groups opportunities to speak and to listen to others’ perspectives. “I learned a great deal and made new friends at the same time,” Barr said.

Not stopping with looking at the distant past, a plenary explored how to reach young people within the faith and science dialogue, led by David Hosey, a chaplain intern at Metropolitan Memorial UMC. See www.wesleynexus.org.

Church harvests veggies for the hungry

HUNTINGTOWN — More than 45 members of Huntingtown UMC gathered on July 29 to help harvest more than a half-ton of potatoes and turnips. The produce came from the church’s “Hungry Hearts and Souls” garden.

With more than 10,000 families in Calvert County relying on local food pantries each month, the church members felt they could do more than donate non-perishable food items to the Calvert Community Food pantry, as they have for 22 years. So two years ago, the church decided to use a small parcel of land between the parsonage and church as a garden. “God calls us to feed the hungry both physically and spiritually,” said Dan Yoder, HUMC’s Garden Coordinator.

Members from 2 years old to 80 contributed to the garden effort, cultivating, planting, weeding between rows, planting flowers to keep the birds away and finally harvesting the crop.

On harvest day, it took less than an hour to harvest 1,080 pounds of potatoes and turnips, then all were treated to grilled hot dogs and homemade ice cream.

‘Brrrr, it’s cold!’

FULTON — The Rev. Tony Love, Director of Vibrant Communities for the BWC, shivered and shook as he took the Ice Bucket Challenge in front of the conference center Sept. 4.

Pat Thomas and Joyce King dumped the icy water over him. Love challenged several others to follow suit or make a contribution to ALS, referred to as Lou Gehrig’s Disease.

Way to go!

BALDWIN — A member of Union UMC is a champion. James Thomas won Champion in the 4-h Tractor Operators Safety Event at the 2014 Maryland State Fair. He’s now off to Lafayette, Ind., to represent Maryland at the 2014 National Youth Engineering Challenge.
Impact of camping ministries measured beyond dollars

**By Andy Thornton**

I was saddened recently to see that the Missouri Annual Conference has moved to close all of its camping and retreat centers. Even with $455,000 of apportionment support, the sites collectively were running at a deficit and there was a need for more than $2.5 million in capital improvements. It is not clear yet what will be done with the properties. They are looking at creative and alternative means to provide this important relational ministry within the Annual Conference.

This news came on the heels of the announcement that the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference closed its camping program for this summer. There was a long outstanding deficit and registrations were too low to justify the expense of the program. The sites remain open for retreats but summer camp is up in the air for future years.

Other Annual Conferences are selling and decommissioning sites and consolidating their camp and retreat program. Within our own Annual Conference bounds, others have made similar decisions. It is funny that “ministry” is seldom questioned until programs and churches start to bleed red ink. But aging buildings with deferred capital investment makes these facilities less and less attractive as places to send a child for a week of camp or to get away for a time of retreat, fellowship and faith formation.

Nearly 20 years ago, the Baltimore-Washington Conference made a dramatic shift in the way funding is provided for Retreat and Camping Ministries. Conference funds were designated for capital expenses for site improvements and to pay the property insurance, not to be put in the operating budget. The thinking was that, ultimately, the physical plant and the liability were the pursuit of the Annual Conference. The budget for the day-to-day operations is to come from current income, fees from camp and retreats. In addition, in the late 90s, a campership endowment was established through the generosity of people committed to this ministry. Those steps laid the foundation for a secure fiscal footing.

The structure has allowed us to build the Retreat House at Harmison, two new lodges at Manidokan and the Dining Center at West River. In addition, a large number of improvements have been made to the existing facilities and added other features, such as new zip lines, climbing walls, waterfront and other programming activities.

There have been some years that the operating income did not meet the expenses and the deficit was picked up by the Annual Conference. Fortunately, as a Conference, we have been fairly healthy. But last year Retreat and Camping Ministries showed a surplus and some of those funds were channeled back into the Annual Conference budget. (About half of the surplus was designated for camperships.)

While they may not meet everyone’s hopes or expectations in levels of comfort, our sites have a sound infrastructure, are well cared for and offer up-to-date technology for meetings and retreats. I am also pleased to report that the endowment, managed by the Mid-Atlantic Foundation, has grown to nearly $100,000 and provides a constant source of funding for summer camperships for the long term.

Usage is on the rise. Retreat usage through August is up 11 percent. Summer camp saw a dramatic rise of 18 percent at Manidokan. West River residential camp grew by only 2 percent, but there was a 60 percent growth in the day camp program.

But more important than the numbers is the impact that summer camp and retreats continue to have on those who participate. I am still convinced that when we provide local churches to send youth to summer camp and provide opportunities for folks to be apart from the pressures and issues they face on a day-to-day basis, transformation happens. Being in a closer element with creation and in the presence of others seeking to grow in their faith creates a fertile bed for deeper fellowship and making disciples for Jesus Christ.

Summer Camp also gives teens and young adults a place to put on the mantle of spiritual leadership. Campers rise to be Junior Counselors and Counselors, guiding others in their spiritual journeys. There are many people who have been a part of this leadership experience that are now serving in key roles as lay and clergy make disciples throughout our conference and denomination.

The BWC has long been supportive of Camp and Retreat Ministry through its participation, gifts, presence and prayers. That support is reflected in the vibrancy of the ministry and the effectiveness in which the gospel is shared. For that, I am humbled and very grateful.

*Andy Thornton is director of Retreat and Camping Ministries for the Baltimore-Washington Conference.*
BWC celebrates Hispanic/Latino Heritage Month

**By Erik Alsgaard**

The Hispanic Heritage month was celebrated with a gran fiesta in the Baltimore-Washington Conference Saturday, Oct. 4. Festive worship, music and food was shared at Hughes-El Buen Samaritano UMC in Wheaton.

As the fourth annual celebration, said the Rev. Eleazar Valentin-Castanon, pastor at Trinity UMC in Frederick and chair of the conference’s Committee on Hispanic/Latino Ministries. On behalf of the committee, he welcomed people to the worship service and festival on a bright, sunny fall afternoon.

Bishop Marcus Matthews introduced the preacher for the worship service, General Secretary of the Commission on Religion and Race, Erin Hawkins. She challenged the conference to continue to reach out to those whom others in society might reject.

Erin Hawkins, General Secretary of the Commission on Religion and Race, preaches at the worship service.

Using the biblical account from Matthew, where Jesus rebuked his disciples for trying to prohibit children coming to him, Hawkins said the story is much more than a reminder about being nice to children. The story, she said, is one of justice.

Noting that one in five children today live in poverty in the United States, Hawkins asked her listeners where they found themselves in the story: like the children, like the disciples or like Jesus?

"The children did not show up seeking Jesus on their own," Hawkins said. "They were led. Who do we have the power to bring to the feet of Jesus?" The disciples, she said, were the biggest sinners of all in this story: Jesus rebuked them.

Diana Rojas-Balderas, age 2, and Isabella Nunez, age 6, join with a group of children in singing 'Jesus loves me' at the end of the worship service.

"'Rebuke' is a very strong word," she said, "usually reserved by Jesus for demons or demonic forces. But this is what happens when our egos become too large." Hawkins said that more than 70,000 young people will cross the border from Mexico into the United States this year, fleeing violence, abuse and poverty.

"It hurts my heart to hear that some of the most hateful, hurtful comments and actions about these young people are coming from disciples of Jesus," she said. "Instead of rebuking the evil powers and principalities responsible for creating this situation, they rebuke the people affected."

Then, addressing several stacks of Spanish-language Bibles that were dedicated earlier in the service, and which are ear-marked for Spanish-speaking children at the Board of Child Care in Baltimore, Hawkins said, "Dedicating these Bibles is an act of defiance. It speaks against the demonic powers of this world that would say to these children, 'You have no place here.' Instead, these Bibles say to them, 'You have a place here; you have a future with hope.'" Hawkins said that it is the church’s job not only to welcome those whose society would cast away, but to touch them, to lay hands on them like Jesus did and bless them; to not just say words of welcome, but to do actions that show love. She invited the congregation to look around in their own lives for someone in need of an embrace or a touch. "You are blessed," she said, "to be a blessing."

"The harvest is here," he said amid a festive dinner following the worship service. "We believe we are called to bring revival to the church." Rodriguez said that the Latino culture, food and faith would bring a new day to the church. He also said that a new type of clergy is needed to bring about the harvest.

"We need clergy...who will go out and live and be in ministry with the people, not be in ministry for them," he said. "We need pastors who will be ‘amigos,’ but more than that, mid-wives, helping to give birth to a new day in God’s Kingdom."

The Rev. Leo Rodriguez, left, speaks with the Rev. Giovanni Arroyo at the Hispanic/Latino Heritage Month celebration. Rodriguez is the Coordinator of Hispanic Ministries for the Baltimore-Washington Conference.