



UM Connection

Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church • Equipping Disciples to Transform the World • www.bwcumc.org • Volume 24, Issue 8 • September 11, 2013



On Aug. 24 and 28, tens of thousands of Americans came to D.C. to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington, at which Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech. Today, said Bishop Marcus Matthews, the march continues as God stirs the waters and we act on our certain knowledge that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." You can read the Rev. Dr. Tony Hunt's reflection on the anniversary on page 7 of this issue.

Simpsons to lead BWC's Imagine No Malaria campaign

By MAIDSTONE MULENGA AND ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

BISHOP MARCUS MATTHEWS has named the Rev. David and Sylvia Simpson as field coordinators for the revamped Imagine No Malaria Campaign for the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

David Simpson serves as senior pastor of the Ellicott City Parish in Ellicott City, which includes Bethany UMC and Emory UMC. He is also treasurer for the Northeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church.

Sylvia Simpson retired from Hughes Network Systems as director of Engineering Services and is a contractor for the General Council on Finance and Administration. Both have previously served on BWC staff.

In addition to providing leadership for the INM, both Simpsons will continue in their present roles. "I'm so grateful to be able to say my work is all about 'saving lives,'" said Sylvia. "When I look into the faces of small children and pregnant women who could very well be a fatality because of malaria, it grips my spirit."

As BWC field coordinators, David and Sylvia will work closely with the Imagine No Malaria staff in Nashville, Tenn., to implement conferencewide strategies for education, advocacy and fundraising within the Conference. The Global Health Initiative will provide a grant to BWC to support the work of field coordinators.

See Simpsons, page 5

Church called to 'biblical obedience'

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

"IT IS TIME to do the right thing."

Retired Bishop Melvin Talbert spoke those words to more than 550 people Sept. 1, during the 2013 Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) Convocation held at the National 4-H Youth Conference Center in Chevy Chase. RMN's mission, according to its web site, is to "mobilize United Methodists of all sexual orientations and gender identities to transform our Church and world into the full expression of Christ's inclusive love."

By "doing the right thing," the bishop was speaking about biblical obedience, specifically in reference to Micah 6:6 and Mark 12:28-31. In those passages, the bishop said, you will find the heart of the prophetic witness and the teaching ministry of Jesus Christ.

In a nutshell, the bishop was saying to love God and to love one another.

That may sound simple, but Bishop Talbert reminded his audience that since 1972, The United Methodist Church has had language "enshrined in the Book of Discipline" that calls homosexuality "incompatible with Christian teaching."

In fact, he said, over the last 40 years, the

See RMN, page 6

... well said

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

BY MANDY SAYERS
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

ONE SUNDAY MORNING, I heard a choir singing from Genesis about God as creator. As part of the song, they had a section where they whistled, representing God getting lost in the work of creation, like a carpenter making a true corner or a baker kneading dough.

They got some flack for "whistling in the sanctuary," believe it or not. I loved the idea of God at work, happily in the "flow" of giving life, tracing rivers, shaping a giraffe's neck...sleeves rolled up, maybe, glasses sliding down the divine nose.

Perhaps on the evening of the sixth day, God collapsed with that feeling of "good tired" that you get after a long productive day of labor. After all, God's work was good ... very good.

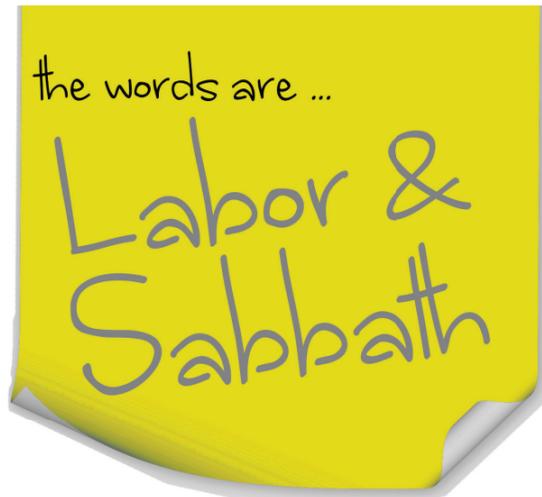
God wills that we should rest from our labors, but God also wills that we labor, that we use our gifts to bless the world and to show Christ's love.

Rest and vacation and the indolent days of summer only make sense as exclamation points on our labor. Work without rest is a sin that leads to burnout and death, but rest without work makes us feel almost equally awful.

Part of being alive is to labor, to get in the game of living and loving and creating. Labor is the word we use for childbirth, a literally life-giving work. Hard labor is a phrase we use for punishment, like Adam getting bread by the sweat of his brow.

It matters how we labor and what we labor for. We can make a golden calf or a meal for someone in need. If we are the body of Christ, our labor needs to be Christ's.

Lord, bless and use our labor to your ends. In the words of Psalm 90: "Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and prosper for us the work of our hands - O prosper the work of our hands!"



what do "Labor" & "Sabbath" mean to you?
"chitchat" with us on

getUMSocial.com

BY DARYL WILLIAMS
Pastor, Nottingham Myers UMC, Upper Marlboro

FRIDAY USED TO mean something! It was everyone's favorite day of the week. No matter if you were a third grader or a grizzled CEO, Friday was fun day.

You knew that the work week was over and it was time to take a break. You knew that if you could just make it through Friday, that everything would be okay. The week would be gone. The hassles of the work would be put aside for a brief respite to relax and rejuvenate. The best thing about Friday was that there was nothing that you had to do the next day. Friday meant we could finally relax. Then something happened and Fridays went sideways.

Somewhere along the line, Friday stopped being the end of the work week and started being the beginning of the work weekend.

Can we be honest? For many, Friday is no longer the day that we begin to rest, it is the day that we take up our weekend jobs. We start doing all the stuff around the house that we didn't get to because we were too busy and tired during the week. Our kids have dance practice, followed by soccer, followed by a play date and then an evening birthday party that we are blessed to provide chauffeur service to and from. With all that running and working we often need a day off from our days off.

The Bible has a word for time off, Sabbath. God intended for us to take time off from working and striving from the very beginning. Remember, even the Almighty took off a day after creating everything that exists. In six days God created everything, then rested.

Many of us have convinced ourselves that being on the go all the time is a badge of honor. Take it from me, it's not. There comes a time when we all have to just SIT. IT. DOWN.

Taking Sabbath is not a sign of weakness; it is a sign of intelligence. None of us can do it all. God intended for us to take breaks. So stop feeling bad about it, or waiting for permission and take a break. Remember the Sabbath day, keep it holy, and take a break.

... well said

... well said

EVENTS

Second Mondays at Wesley Wesley Seminary, Washington, D.C.

"Second Mondays," a lecture series which is open to the public, will be held from September to February. Meet from 7:30 to 9 a.m. on Wesley's main campus at 4500 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. A list of upcoming speakers is available at www.wesleyseminary.edu/friends/secondmondays.aspx.

Superintendents' welcome

Worship and receptions will be held in September to welcome incoming District Superintendents.

- **Rev. Edgardo Rivera**, Superintendent of the Frederick District, Saturday, Sept. 14, 3-5 p.m., at Trinity UMC, 703 W. Patrick St. in Frederick.
- **Rev. JW Park**, Superintendent of the Central Maryland District, Sunday, Sept. 15, at 3 p.m., at Montgomery UMC, 28325 Kemptown Road in Damascus. All clergy should wear white robes and red stoles and arrive by 2:45 p.m. to robe in the Choir Room. Bring a dessert for potluck reception. RSVP to Pam Mullay at pmullay@bwcumc.org or 410-309-3493.
- **Rev. Joseph W. Daniels Jr.**, Superintendent of the Greater Washington District, Saturday, Sept. 21, at 3 p.m., at the Brightwood Education Campus, 1300 Nicholson Street, NW, in Washington, D.C. Following the worship, there will be a reception. Clergy robes are not required; come as you are. For more information, contact Olivia Gross at ogross@bwcumc.org or call 410-309-3443.

- **Rev. Cynthia Moore**, Superintendent of the Baltimore Metropolitan District, Sunday, Sept. 29, 3 p.m., at Sharp Street Memorial UMC, 1206 Etting St. in Baltimore. RSVP by Sept. 20 to ckumar@bwcumc.org.
- **Rev. Rebecca Iannicelli**, Superintendent of the Washington East District, Sunday, Sept. 22, 3-5 p.m., at La Plata UMC, 3 Port Tobacco Road in La Plata.
- **Rev. Laura Easto**, Superintendent of the Baltimore Suburban District, Saturday, Sept. 28, at 3 p.m., at Milford Mill UMC, 915 Milford Mill Road in Pikesville. All clergy should wear white robes and red stoles and arrive by 2:40 p.m. to robe. Bring a dessert for potluck reception.

BMCR's State of the Black Church Sept. 13-14

McKendree-Simms-Brookland UMC Washington, D.C.

Black Methodists for Church Renewal will hold their 2013 State of the Black Church event beginning Friday, Sept. 13, with worship and a jazz concert. The conversation will be held Sept. 14 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, contact dredscott@gmail.com.

Encounter Youth Festival

September 13-15

Manidokan Camp and Retreat Center

An annual weekend festival for youth featuring Stellar Kart and the Wayne Kerr Band. Learn more and register at www.encounterfestival.com/encounter/index.html.

Adult youth ministry training

Saturday, Sept. 21

BWC Mission Center, Fulton

Learn the nuts and bolts of youth ministry with Rori Francis Blakeney. Cost is \$12. Register at www.bwcumc.org/youth-ministries.

Hispanic Heritage Celebration

Saturday, Oct. 4, 4:00 p.m.

Epworth UMC in Gaithersburg

Includes worship, dinner and program featuring the many flavors of Latino culture.

The Longevity Revolution

Oct. 24

Asbury Methodist Village Gaithersburg

The BWC's Older Adult Ministries Task Force will host a workshop on "Ministries with Boomers and Beyond." Online registration is \$35. Visit www.bwcumc.org/OlderAdults.

Correction

In the May 15, 2013, issue, the Pleasant Grove UMC in Reisterstown was incorrectly located. It is, and always has been, in Maryland. Also, the project coordinator should have been listed as Leuvene Merryman.

UM Connection

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UMConnection is the newspaper of the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church, whose vision is to seek to become like Christ as we call, equip, send and support spiritual leaders to make and cultivate disciples, grow vital congregations and transform the world.

The UMConnection (ISSN 005386) is owned and published by the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church, 11711 East Market Place, Fulton, MD 20759-2594. Telephone: (410) 309-3400 • (800) 492-2525 • fax: (410) 309-9794 • e-mail: milauber@bwcumc.org. Subscriptions are \$15 per year. The UMConnection is published monthly. To subscribe, email kspears@bwcumc.org. Postmaster: Send address changes to: UMConnection, 11711 East Market Place, Fulton, MD 20759-2594.

The Oasis offers young adults strength for the journey

By LUKONDE MULENGA
Special to the UMConnection

SCORES OF YOUNG adults from all over the Northeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church gathered in Washington, D.C., on the weekend of Aug. 16 to worship and plan for the future.

The gathering, called “The Oasis,” included more than 150 young adults who participated in the enlightenment, uplifting each other’s souls and having just a plain old good time.

Oasis came together through Restoration Generation, a new initiative created to inspire the building of community and service in the young people of the church. The young adults, ranging in ages 18 to 35, met at Mount Vernon Place UMC and Wesley Theological Seminary’s urban ministry campus.

The event officially kicked off Friday morning with opening worship, which was led by Restoration Generation manager, the Rev. Hannah Adair Bonner, one of the coordinators of the Oasis weekend. During the worship service, she explained that the event, although called The Oasis, is just a stopping point on the journey that the young adults of the church are taking together.

The Oasis, she explained, “is the place to gather, to gain strength, to build relationships, so that we will be stronger to journey forward together.”

The first of four speakers during the weekend, the Rev. Lorenza Andrade Smith, gave the message that morning. Smith is widely known throughout The United Methodist Church for giving up all of her possessions in 2011 and living on the streets as a homeless person to better serve the homeless population.



The Rev. Lorenza Andrade Smith speaks at The Oasis, a recent event for young adults held in Washington, D.C.

She spoke of her time on the streets and the time she spent a night in jail after being ticketed for sleeping on a park bench. During that night in jail, Smith ended up “peeing and praying” as her jail mates learned that she was a pastor and called on her to pray with them even though she was using the facilities.

She used this experience as a metaphor and called on the group to mix our personal business with our social

business, saying, “Personal holiness and social holiness can and should be done together in a line,” as it will lead to a better relationship with God.

The morning worship service ended with a reaffirmation of baptism. Participants approached bowls of water in the middle of the sanctuary and touched their bodies with the water while taking away small shells that were inside the bowls, symbolizing the receiving of God’s blessings upon them.



After lunch, the young adults participated in mission service in the Mount Vernon Place community. During this time, they learned about the homeless who live in the area and about opportunities in which they could help in urban ministries, such as US-2, a two year mission program with the General Board of Global Ministries, in which a person is assigned to work in a struggling community.

Afterward, John Francis, a Contemporary Christian Music folk artist who provided the music for the opening worship, gave a talk about his life and how people can respond to the justice issues encountered through worship. He ended the day with a concert.

Saturday morning began with prayer and a workshop that discussed diversity within ministry. The opening worship, called the “Missional Challenge,” started with music provided by Dana Scott, a well-known worship leader in the Baltimore-Washington Conference, and other musicians.

The third speaker to grace The Oasis, Demetrio Beach, gave a message titled “It Is What It Is!” At 25-years-old, Beach, the conference lay leader from the Peninsula-Delaware Conference, is the youngest lay leader in the denomination.

His message called on the group to not always accept the end result of a situation, telling us to remember that “something may seem like a statement of fact but for believers, with God, all things are possible.” The morning worship ended with the group writing their burdens on a piece of paper and putting them in a bowl of water, symbolizing giving up their troubles to God.

After lunch, the Rev. Jim Walker, a pastor from Pittsburgh, led a discussion titled “Agent of Transformation,” putting emphasis on the word “agent.” Walker reminded everyone that we, as one church, should stand together and be one agent of change to

become a bridge to the community, stating that “a bridge is always open; a bridge connects.”

At the closing worship, the culminating point of the entire gathering, the message was brought by speaker number four, Bishop Martin D. McLee of the New York Annual Conference.

His message, “How About A Drink!” centered on how Jesus is thirsty and the only way to quench his thirst is to be active disciples and praise his name.

During his message, McLee not only inspired the young adults to bring the church back to life by shaking up the typical Sunday by recusing the church from “dead” music, he also managed to paraphrase a lyric from Jay-Z and rap at the end of his sermon.

He told the group that “folk are looking for spiritual swag” and that not everyone responds to the hymns that are reverently held in the United Methodist Hymnal.

“If you do not know Jesus, it’s hard to cherish the ‘Old Rugged Cross,’” the bishop said.

McLee then called for a time of reflection and prayer where anyone with burdens could come to the altar and lay them down.

One by one, people came down to the altar, some staying for a short time, some staying until the service was completely over. What was evident during this time was the love everyone had for each other; everyone who was at the altar had a hand placed on their shoulder to remind them that they’re not alone. Everyone then left the sanctuary with new bonds formed, old bonds reinforced and smiles on their faces.

One of the most import discussions that occurred during Oasis detailed the extent of young adult ministries in different conferences.

Within the Baltimore-Washington Conference discussion, there was a consensus that young adult ministries depended on the individual churches because some churches have very few young adults while others have many who attend.

Also made evident was the fact that this is a group usually ignored because of the awkwardness of the group – not considered old enough to be adults but too old to be considered youth. Young adults have to deal with not only trying to find their place in the world but also trying to find a place within the church.

Despite this, young adults do hold an important role within The United Methodist Church – they are the immediate future. This group is the one who will take over the “adults” when their time has passed and it is this group that will set the tone for future generations of United Methodists.

Discussing the importance of young adults, Bonner said, “We recognize that we are more than a category within the church – we are a generation. And that generation will move throughout time, throughout the decades; we will not age out of this. This is something that goes on. So we want to make sure that we have a hard foundation built for the future decades of life together in this church that lie ahead of us. The community that will be built is one that will continue on.”

Mind the (young adult) gap, new BWC leader says

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

THE “GAP” THAT Cheryl Cook talks about when it comes to young adults has nothing to do with a popular clothing store. Instead, she’s talking about how churches often fail to provide opportunities for ministry for this age level.

“High schooler’s go off to college,” said Cook, “and when they leave and return home, there’s nothing for them.”

Cook is passionate about filling that gap. For the past several years, Cook has been active at her home church of Calvary UMC in Annapolis, working with youth and young adult ministries as a volunteer. Since July 1, she has been on staff at the Baltimore-Washington Conference as the new director of Young Adult Ministries. Her goal, she said, is to bring young adult ministry to the forefront of the conference, and to see more young adults involved in the life of the church and on college campuses.

A graduate of Penn State University, Cook has a degree in public relations, and has spent nine years in marketing and event planning. This experience comes in



Cheryl Cook

handy, she said, when reaching out to young adults.

“They are at a pivotal point in their life,” said Cook, who defines young adults as those between the ages of 19 and 35. “They’ve finished college or started a job. They’re making huge life decisions, such as who to marry, what career field to pursue.”

And in the midst of those decisions, Cook said, not enough young adults have a relationship with Christ to help guide them. “With Christ in their lives, they would be more confident about the decisions they make,” she said.

“So many churches are interested in reaching out to young adults,” she said, “but they don’t know where to begin. There’s this huge myth going around that in order to attract young adults to your church, you need to have a ‘hip’ worship service with a coffee shop. That’s not true.”

While emphasizing that there is no one answer to the question of how to attract more young adults to your church and its ministry, Cook said that the number one thing churches can do to improve their young adult ministries is to be intentional.

Rather than making it an afterthought, she said, come up with a plan that helps keep the church a part of their lives.

Other ideas:

- Connect each young adult with an older mentor/member of the church.
- Send care packages while they are away at school or the military.
- Send devotional/spiritual materials to them while they are away.
- Send them the church newsletter.

“If the young adult moves back home ... or should I say, ‘when’ the young adult moves back home, if they have some sort of established relationship with the church, they are much more likely to become active again,” she said.

The key, said Cook, is to be authentic.

“Young adults don’t want to be marketed to,” she said. “Make sure your church is authentic in its purpose of making disciples for Jesus Christ.”

Cook also is quick to add that young adults, in general, want to be in service, and suggests that churches offer several hands-on ministry opportunities throughout the year.

“You often hear that children, youth and young adults ‘are the future of the church,’” Cook said. “They are the church. Their input and their service are important now.”

Area church finds mission field at elementary school

At the 2013 session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, Bishop Marcus Matthews called upon every church to adopt a school in their ZIP code. Many churches this September are providing backpacks for needy area school children. Good Shepherd UMC is forging a deeper relationship. For more information on school partnerships, visit www.bwcumc.org.

By JOYE F. JONES, PASTOR
Good Shepherd UMC, Silver Spring

BROAD ACRES ELEMENTARY School is less than a mile from Good Shepherd UMC in Silver Spring yet worlds away in many respects.

Children who attend Broad Acres are among the poorest in affluent Montgomery County. The children come from all over the world, representing 31 countries and speaking 28 languages. More than 90 percent are eligible for free or subsidized meals. In 2000, the school was one of the poorest performing on standard exams, and was threatened with state takeover. It has subsequently undergone a miraculous transformation, and today, at Broad Acres, playing chess is cool!

Good Shepherd's relationship with Broad Acres began as so many church missions do: a member of the congregation became aware of a need and shared it with our missions team.

In 2007, Carol Penne learned about Broad Acres parents who could not afford to give gifts to their children for Christmas. Working through Linkages-to-Learning, a Montgomery County organization that helps children and families in need, Penne identified three "Advent families," and the ministry was underway.

Members of the congregation provide gifts for every child in the family, as well as a gift for each parent. On a Sunday near Christmas, we gather after worship to wrap presents, stuff stockings and organize the gifts. These are delivered to the homes by members of the

congregation during the week before Christmas. We are overwhelmed by the joy in the faces of the parents. We are now up to seven families.

In 2009, our ministry with Broad Acres really took off.

That year, we began collecting backpacks and school supplies, which we distribute to kids through Linkages-to-Learning in late August. We usually collect 40-60 backpacks plus a mountain of school supplies.

m=eec²
ministry=each church each child
The Baltimore-Washington Conference

As we were thinking about the Advent Families project, we realized that while the children were able to experience the joy of receiving, they rarely had the chance to experience the greater joy of giving. So that year, we set up a "Holiday Shop" at Broad Acres.

Members of the congregation brought small gifts of the sort that children give their parents; we used these to stock the "shop." One afternoon near Christmas, children came to select and "buy" gifts for members of their family for Christmas. Church members help the children wrap their gifts and select cards to go with them. The children take the task of choosing and wrapping presents very seriously, and it feeds our hearts.

And that year, we began thinking about how cold it

is in the winter. So we began our coat drive. The church collects coats all fall, and members enlist the aid of co-workers and friends to join the collecting.

Many members take advantages of shopping at nearby thrift stores where good quality coats are available for good prices. All coats are cleaned and checked to be sure buttons are sewed on and zippers work. Working through Linkages-to-Learning, we distribute coats to the families who need them. Last winter, we gave away 164 coats.

This year, we have begun sending snacks to the school for kids to take home over the weekend and school holidays. With so many children receiving their only meals at school, hunger is a real problem during the days when schools are closed.

Then it became personal for me. I had been looking for a way to volunteer my time in the community.

Although I drive past two schools between home and the church, I decided to offer my time to Broad Acres. In 2010, I became a reading tutor for 2nd graders. The school aims to have every child reading at grade level by the third grade; volunteers like me are used to help kids that are just below that standard. I have come to know the school well, and found that Good Shepherd is well known to the school. And every time I see a backpack or a jacket I wonder, "Did we do that?"

"As you do it to the least of these, you do it to me." The joy in giving, the joy in sharing, the joy in the smiles. We don't do this because we receive, but in the giving, we receive far more than we could ever imagine.

Sew what's new? Church makes dresses for Haitian girls

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

THEY SAY, "A stitch in time saves nine." But what about 325? Or more?

Making these stitches count is the mission of a small group of dedicated women at Pasadena UMC, who come together every month to make girl's dresses for Haiti, Africa and around the world.

"These are fun to make," said Charlotte Seibert, a member of the church, who was sewing dresses and also teaching her granddaughter, Hailey Londzynski, 10, how to sew.

While the meaning of the original proverb may be a reminder that it's worth doing the little things before they grow big and troublesome, the ministry of sewing for this group is in taking something little and making it



Women like Charlotte Seibert, above, at Pasadena UMC have a sewing ministry to provide dresses for girls in Haiti.

big and important.

"We are doing this to give the girls some dignity and love," said Marilyn Shepherd, the de facto leader of the effort and a member of the church. "God gave me the gift to do some sewing, and these other ladies, too, and

they feel that they are accomplishing something by putting to good use the gift God gave them by making dresses for someone else."

Shepherd said that the dress-making ministry at Pasadena UMC began in the spring of 2012 when one of the church's preschoolers asked her parents for permission to give her allowance to her caregiver who was going on a mission trip to Haiti.

"When we heard the story, I thought, 'We can do that,'" said Shepherd. She gathered a few friends and, together, they sewed 79 dresses and sent them with the caregiver to Haiti. Since that beginning, the group has fashioned more than 325 dresses. On this day in mid-August, a group of about 10 women were working on finishing another 50.

"We had so much fun and fellowship with the work we were doing, we are now meeting nearly every month to sew," Shepherd added. The fellowship aspect of the sewing bee is evident, as the women sit at tables, sharing a laugh or a story.

Most of the women bring their own sewing machines, and each person contributes something to every dress, whether it's sewing on lace collars, buttons or adding pockets. The dresses come in various sizes, designed to fit toddlers to early teens.

Members of the church — and the church itself — support the ministry, either by contributing money or fabric. Shepherd calculates that it costs around \$3 to make each dress, which is patterned after the well-known "pillow case" dress.

Each dress is about 42 to 45 inches wide, cut for different lengths, and tied at the top so that it looks like a sun dress, Shepherd said. They only use 100 percent cotton material, since it is light-weight and breathes better than other fabrics.

Pamela Shears began making these dresses at the first meeting of the group. As she starts sewing on another dress, she said that she participates because this is a hands-on mission project and "it's great seeing how the raw materials come together and turn out," she said. "I

feel a sense of satisfaction seeing this go from start to finish."

The finished products are bundled in packages of 25 and sent to Mission Central in Pennsylvania, said Shepherd. From there, they are sent to areas of the world where the dresses are needed.



Marilyn Shepherd holds a finished dress. Each dress is different and personalized with ribbons, buttons and other flourishes.

"When girls have a dress to wear, they are given dignity," said Shepherd, "and they know that they are loved by others."

Simpsons: BWC to raise \$1.2 million to help end malaria

From page 1

"Sylvia and I are honored to accept Bishop Matthew's invitation to serve as BWC Coordinators for the Imagine No Malaria campaign," said David. "I believe God wants to fulfill in us the promise to do exceedingly far more than we ever hoped or imagined."

With this new leadership team, the BWC is confirming its 2010 commitment and pledge to join United Methodists across the globe in raising \$75 million to help eliminate deaths caused by malaria in Africa. The BWC is committed to giving \$2.1 million and has \$1.2 million left on that pledge yet to raise.

"Together, we can help eliminate the suffering and deaths caused by malaria in Africa," said Bishop Matthews. "Imagine No Malaria is about saving lives, especially young lives, from this preventable, treatable and beatable disease. David and Sylvia are well-positioned to lead our conference in this life-saving mission."

David notes that one of the Four Areas of Focus for The United Methodist Church is combating the diseases of poverty by improving health globally. Imagine No Malaria, he said, specifically targets this area, but impacts on the other three as well: engaging in ministry with the poor; creating new places for new people and renewing existing local churches; and developing



David Simpson

principled Christian leaders for the church and the world.

"I believe it is past time for us to set aside all that distracts and divides us and pull together to live out the denomination's vision," David Simpson said. "I am Wesleyan to the core of my being and have spent my career trying to lift high the duality of heart and life. Imagine No Malaria holds those two core principles of discipleship in creative tension."

Each year, malaria infects millions of people globally. About 600,000 people die annually from this disease, with 85 percent of these deaths occurring in sub-Saharan Africa, mostly pregnant women and children under the age of 5.



Sylvia Simpson

"Our prayer is that in 2015, we, the people of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, will be able to say we chose to heal the sick and eliminate malaria as a source of suffering and death. We chose to listen to the word of God and we did what it said," Bishop Matthews said.

Through Imagine No Malaria, United Methodists are using a comprehensive approach to eliminating malaria deaths through prevention, education, communication and treatment.

So far, the campaign has helped reduce the number of malaria deaths from about one death every 30 seconds to one every minute.

No Malaria? Why it's so hard to imagine

By JOYE F. JONES, PASTOR
Good Shepherd UMC, Silver Spring

1949 WAS A watershed year in public health. The United States was declared to be free of malaria. If you were born after 1945, you probably didn't even know that malaria was once a serious problem in this country. Concentrated mainly in the warm, humid southeast, malaria was found as far north as the District of Columbia. The defeat of malaria in the U.S. was as significant as overcoming polio and smallpox.

Fast forward more than 60 years. Worldwide, malaria is one of the leading causes of death in children under the age of 5. In Sub-Saharan Africa, approximately 24 percent of all early childhood deaths are due to malaria. That's a staggering number, but unless you have had malaria or seen someone in the grip of the disease, it's hard to imagine the suffering.

During the fever phase, the child is racked with shivering so severe that you think you can hear the bones rattling. Severe anemia and brain damage can lead to death. In addition, babies born to women with malaria often have complications at birth and may die.

Some 40 years ago, I was a Peace Corps volunteer teaching science in Malawi, a country that still has a high incidence of malaria.

I can remember teens and young adults sitting in class, wrapped in blankets, shaking. "Go to the hospital," I would say.

"Oh, no, madam," came the reply. "It's just malaria." These were the survivors, the ones who had had malaria as young children and lived to have it again.

Why is this ancient scourge still around? Why didn't we apply the techniques used in the U.S. to other parts of the world where malaria is still a leading cause of illness and death?

We did.

And they didn't work.

Malaria is caused by microscopic parasites called plasmodia. There are four kinds of human malaria, each caused by a different kind of plasmodium. Humans get malaria from the bite of an infected anopheles mosquito. The parasite has two necessary life cycles, one in humans and one in anopheles mosquitoes. Only by completing both life cycles can plasmodia continue to live – and thrive.

The U.S. eliminated malaria by attacking mosquitoes and mosquito breeding places. Massive amounts of DDT were sprayed at ground level and from the air, killing mosquitoes. Swamps were drained, and pesticides that would kill mosquito larvae were used where drainage wasn't possible. And it worked. But, it was expensive. And DDT caused terrible damage to the environment, nearly exterminating a number of species of birds. Worst of all, mosquitoes developed resistance to DDT, and it was no longer effective.

With DDT banned and mosquitos worldwide developing resistance to many pesticides, researchers had to look for other ways to attack this terrible disease.

One way that held promise for a long time was the use of medicines to prevent malaria in the first place. But over time, the parasites became resistant to nearly every drug researchers were able to develop.

Indeed, one of the big problems right now is that the number of drugs available to treat malaria is rapidly shrinking, as the parasites become resistant to drugs faster than scientists can find new ones. Even so, children and infants who get malaria and are treated immediately have a good chance of survival, if, of course, they can get medical help in time.

The big leap forward was the development of insecticide-treated mosquito nets – the "Nothing but Nets" program that the UMC helped launch. These work, and work well. They are probably the single most important reason for the reduction in child deaths caused by malaria from one death every 30 seconds to one every 60 seconds (still an unacceptably large number).

Nets remain critically important tools in the worldwide fight against malaria, but there are not enough for everybody. In most places where malaria is common, people don't have the nets. We just can't get enough nets to people fast enough. And very recently, researchers have found some mosquitos that are resistant to the insecticide used in the nets. This is scary indeed.



The Rev. Joye F. Jones, seen here in Kenya, is an expert on malaria. She says there is reason for optimism in eradication efforts.

Save a Life today...

Every 60 seconds, malaria claims a life in Africa.

Imagine No Malaria is an extraordinary effort of the people of The United Methodist Church to put their faith into action to end preventable deaths from malaria in Africa.

Imagine no Malaria builds on the denomination's original Nothing But Nets program, by creating an integrated strategy of prevention, treatment, education and communication.

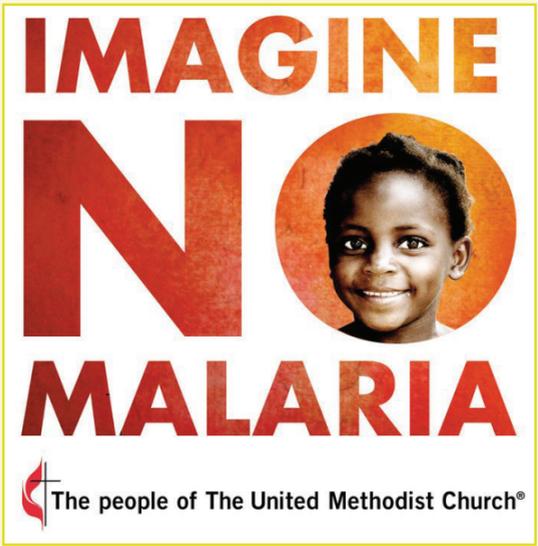
Over the next year, your church will be invited to give generously to this life-saving campaign.

A vast array of resources are available as you plan your fundraising efforts. Visit <http://www.imagenomalaria.org/resources>.

Over the next few months, a variety of opportunities for giving will be introduced. However, know now that every \$10 you give buys an insecticide-treated bed net that will save a child's life.

Gifts to the campaign can be marked "Imagine No Malaria" and sent to:

Conference Treasurer
11711 East Market Place
Fulton, MD 20753.



The greatest hope for totally eliminating malaria is what has worked for diseases such as smallpox and polio – a vaccine. But no one has ever developed a vaccine to prevent any parasitic disease. The complex life-cycle of plasmodia make them very difficult targets for vaccine.

But there is reason for optimism. Researchers know that people can develop immunity to malaria. If you survive your first case of malaria, you may get it again, but it usually won't be as severe. Now, researchers have reported promising results of a vaccine developed for infants and children. For the first time, a vaccine has reduced the rate of infection and disease in areas where malaria is endemic. The results are not as good as everyone wanted, but there is promise that things may be going in the right direction.

So as we try to imagine a world with no malaria, we remain a people of hope. Using God-given gifts of talent, imagination and doggedness, coupled with the willingness to spend money and not give up, researchers are trying new ideas. Someday, we can indeed rid the world of this terrible disease that kills so many before they have a chance to live.

The Rev. Joye F. Jones has a PhD in parasite immunology – the study of how the immune system fights parasites and how parasites evade immune responses.

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RMN: UMs celebrate marriage equality with worship

From page 1

denomination's stance has "hardened" to the point where United Methodist clergy are forbidden from performing same-gender weddings or unions, and United Methodist facilities are forbidden from hosting such services.

In the bishop's mind, this stance is not just wrong, it is "immoral, evil, unjust and oppressive," a phrase he repeated several times in his 30-minute speech Sunday afternoon, and repeated again during his sermon Sunday night at a packed Metropolitan Memorial UMC in Washington.

"Giving loyalty to God is higher than giving loyalty to the laws of the church," the bishop said. "The goal is to be faithful to God."

Biblical obedience, the bishop said, means doing the right thing – loving one another – no matter what. It is also, he said, "a soul-searching struggle," one that has led him to give his life to the cause of full inclusion of gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgender and queer United Methodists.

After verbally re-committing himself to this cause, he received a standing ovation.

Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, also retired, spoke after Bishop Talbert and explained why she, too, has given her life to this cause. A child of segregated schools in Mississippi, Bishop Swenson said that in her ministry, she has dealt with public and private scorn with people quoting Scripture to her that "women should be silent in church." She has also witnessed biblical obedience, she said, in response to those issues.

"There used to be 'kneel-ins' at my home church," she said. People seeking for full racial inclusion in Capital Street Methodist Church in Jackson, Miss., she said, used to simply walk into the sanctuary at the beginning of worship and kneel at the Communion rail. There they would stay for the whole service, a silent witness, she said.

Swenson said she learned at an early age that "Christ has set us free, and those who are children of God in Christ are heirs" of the Kingdom. That helped form her life, she said, and her belief that "all means all."

"God doesn't want us to put limits on God's love and when it should be shared," Bishop Swenson said. "(This movement) has helped me love the church again. Love one another. Practice it. Amen."

At a celebration of marriage equality worship service

Sunday night, Metropolitan Memorial UMC's full sanctuary bore witness to the importance of this issue for many United Methodists.

The Rev. Dean Snyder, pastor at Foundry UMC in Washington, D.C., estimated that 25 members of his church were present.

"This is an opportunity to connect with people committed to a just and equitable stance in our church," he said. Snyder and a cohort from his church are working at drafting legislation yet again for the 2016 General Conference, seeking to overturn the church's current stance on homosexuality and same-gender marriage.

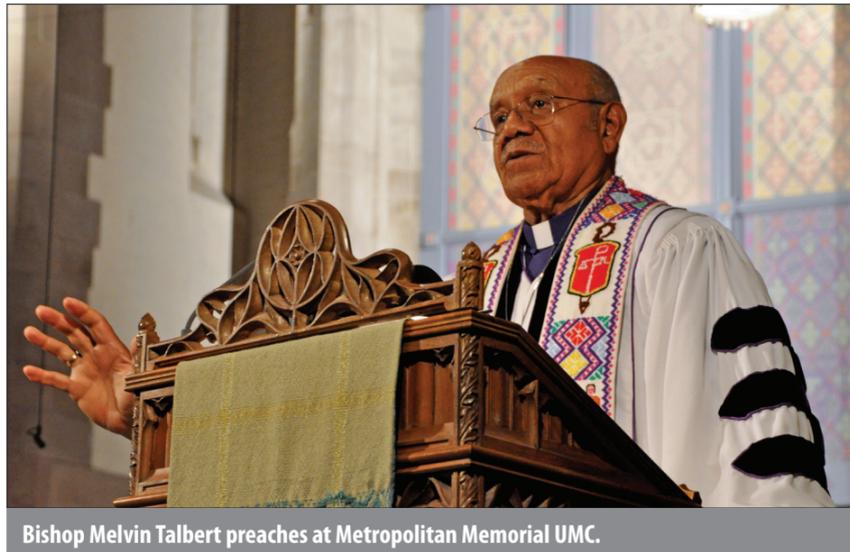
The Rev. Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, superintendent of the Baltimore Metropolitan District, was present at the worship service. "We say that we are a church of 'Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors,'" she said. "We are still working towards that as a denomination. As Bishop Talbert has called us to biblical obedience, it is time to let go of the last vestiges of segregation."

For the Rev. Mary Kay Totty, pastor at Dumbarton UMC, the worship service was important to her.

"The Celebration of Marriage Equality worship service lifted up the growing justice for same-sex couples as more and more places in our country and world embrace the justice of marriage equality," she said. "I long for the day when our own beloved United Methodist Church will also embrace the justice of marriage equality."

Totty served as part of the design team for the service, and said that one of the hopes in planning the service was to witness to the fact that more and more same-sex couples are getting married and more and more United Methodist clergy are willing to officiate at same-gender weddings.

"For me, it was important to be a part of a team creating worship which acknowledged and affirmed the value of same-sex marriages. I believe that God was delighted with us on Sunday evening as we celebrated



Bishop Melvin Talbert preaches at Metropolitan Memorial UMC.

marriage equality," she said.

During his sermon, Bishop Talbert repeated his calls for biblical obedience, and a call to live "as if the beloved community is already here, now."

The bishop said that the current, active bishops of the church "have failed us. If they say, 'We will no longer enforce your unjust laws,' this matter will be over with."

The bishop also warned his hearers that "we dare not surrender the Bible to the Religious Right. We believe God is still revealing God's self every day."

He called on clergy, again, to "do the right thing," and added that part of this is the refusal to convict anyone charged for violating church law.

"It is in the midst of struggle that our faith is tested," he said. "We celebrate tonight how blessed we are to be the vessel through which those who are hurting have the love of God made known to them."

Those aren't just words, he added, noting that with the current statistical decline of United Methodism in the United States, "something's gotta happen."

The bishop then observed that many young adults are joining in the movement, something not seen in most parts of the church.

"Maybe God has called the Reconciling Ministries Network to be the vessel through which the church becomes who God wants it to be."

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The March continues

WASHINGTON, D.C. – United Methodists from across the country helped observe the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a Dream" speech Aug. 28. The Methodist Federation for Social Action hosted learning and worship events at Mt. Vernon Place and Asbury United Methodist churches. Christ UMC offered



Rev. Rod Miller rings a bell to commemorate the D.C. March.

hospitality to the marchers, and those involved in the denominational training at Lake Junaluska paused on Aug. 28 at 3 p.m. to ring a bell in memory of the March 50 years ago.

Two missionaries with BWC ties commissioned

WASHINGTON – Twenty-nine young adults between the ages of 20 and 30 answered God's call on their lives and were commissioned by the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries as US-2s and mission interns at the Interchurch Center Chapel in New York Aug. 12.

Two of the new missionaries are related to the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

Andrew Millman, born in Virginia Beach, Va., is a member of Metropolitan Memorial Cooperative Parish and is off to Russia as Program Associate at the Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy in Moscow. "In my service as part of a Racism and Xenophobia Task Force, I want to 'tell them about the dream' (Mahalia Jackson's words in 1963) that has been seen and felt by so many brave men and women. As I walk alongside people on the margins of society, I want to amplify their voices in order to dismantle systems of ethnocentrism and nationalism, but I want to do so in an effort to make the beloved community a reality," Millman wrote in a blog.

David Johnson is from the Detroit Annual Conference and has been assigned to the General Board of Church and Society in Washington to serve as Seminar Program Associate. He will assist in the design and implementation of the seminars for youth, young adults and adults in a broad range of social, economic and political issues.

Learn more about these two young men at www.umcmission.org. Click on Missionaries in Service.



Andrew Millman



David Johnson

20 years volunteering in Central America

BALTIMORE – In 1993, Hiss UMC sent its first Volunteers in Mission to Costa Rica. Since then, they have made yearly trips to Mexico and Belize, Panama and the Dominican Republic. They've also worked on eight projects in the U.S. Many of their efforts have focused on water.

Though there are hundreds of rivers in the Central American region, "the availability of clean water to the population is missing," said Don Wiley.

The first three missions – to Costa Rica and Mexico – focused on church construction. But, Wiley said, "We learned that it was not new, bigger and more elaborate churches that the people required. It was, and remains, decent housing, health services, access to clean water and educational opportunities."

Consequently the Hiss VIM teams have built earthquake-resistant housing in El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua and a water project in Nicaragua. In Honduras they helped a local agency distribute vitamin A and deworming medication to school children. In recent years they have provided medical services to several rural villages.

"(We've) learned two principle lessons from the 20-year experience," Wiley said, "first, and this is directed mainly to the volunteers themselves, 'Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape.'" The second is about the relationship to those being served: "The project is the people."

In Brief

KENSINGTON – Mike McCurry, an active member of St. Paul's UMC, a member of Wesley Seminary's board of governors, and known in Washington as President Clinton's White House press secretary, is taking on a new role. He and Kristopher Norris will be interim co-directors of the Wesley National Capitol Semester for Seminarians (NCSS) intensive program. He and Norris replace Professor Shaun Casey who is on extended leave to serve at the State Department.

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Stones of Hope – Reflections on the March on Washington

BY THE REV. C. ANTHONY HUNT, PASTOR
Epworth Chapel UMC, Baltimore

ON AUGUST 24, thousands of people from around the nation and the world gathered in Washington, D.C., for the 50th year anniversary and celebration of the historic March on Washington. Deemed in 1963 as “The March for Jobs and Freedom,” it came at the height of the American Civil Rights movement as more than 200,000 people gathered to call the nation to action as it regarded the rights of all people to opportunity, equality and justice.

Among those who spoke at the Lincoln Memorial on that sunlit day in 1963 was the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. King shared with the crowd, the nation and the world a compelling dream — a vision — of “Beloved Community” and a world where every “child would be judged not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.” He articulated a hope that America would heed the true meaning of its creed as found in the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all (people) are created equal.”

For the masses who gathered this year, this was a time of remembering, celebrating and renewing a commitment to King’s (and others’) dream of peace, justice and equality among us.

Theologian Jurgen Moltmann articulated in his book, “Theology of Hope,” that “Hope alone is to be called ‘realistic,’ because it alone takes seriously the possibilities with which all reality is fraught.”

One of the things that King intimated in his 1963 speech was a hope that God would “hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope.” The despair that he was alluding to then was capsulated in what he deemed to be the “triplets of evil:” racism, poverty (classism) and war (militarism). In King’s estimation, these were the major categories of the social disease that afflicted America then, and thus there was the need for the struggle for Civil Rights, human rights, equal rights and the March on Washington, and a renewed call/commitment to action.

For King, Christian hope served as the foundation for his vision of Beloved Community. In one of his later sermons, “The Meaning of Hope,” he defined hope as that quality which is “necessary for life.” King asserted that hope was to be viewed as “animated and undergirded by faith and love.” In his mind, if you had hope, you had faith in something. Thus, for King, hope shares the belief that “all reality hinges on moral foundations.” It was, for King, the refusal to give up “despite overwhelming odds.”

Today, many would agree that a great deal of progress has been made in light of King’s dream and the call to action in 1963. With the passing of the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act in 1964 and 1965 respectively,

greater opportunities for many women and persons of color in our society, the election in 2008 of the first president of African descent, and expanding engagement of persons across cultures and classes in some cases, we have seen signs of the realization of King’s dream.

Yet, as thousands gathered, there is much that continues to ail our nation and the world: persistent and widespread poverty and a shrinking middle class; ongoing wars and international conflict with seemingly little or no justification for them; ongoing street violence and gun violence; an American prison industrial complex that continues to expand; and disparities in educational achievement across race and class lines. And thus, the need to renew our commitment to King’s dream and heed a call to action.

Every few years, I have the privilege of leading a group of scholars from Wesley Theological Seminary in a doctoral course that retraces many of the steps of the Civil Rights movement in Alabama. The group that journeyed together last summer was very typical of others over the years. We reflected much of the diversity of society today. We were Hispanic, Native American,



A step on the Lincoln Memorial is engraved to mark the spot where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his now-famous speech.

white and black, female and male, Baptist, Episcopalian, African Methodist Episcopal and United Methodist. We prayed, sang and shared our thoughts together as we traveled.

And as we traveled, my memory harkened back to one of our earlier trips, where Dr. Eileen Guenther, a professor at Wesley Seminary who was a part of that study group, offered that it was a spiritual sung by many choirs, “I’m Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table,” that played in her head throughout our experience (see “The American Organist,” November 2008). Guenther said that she thought about the variety of tables that we encountered as we traveled through Alabama:

- Lunch counters of restaurants where all had not been welcome (in the past);

- The dining room table in the parsonage of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, where we were told the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was formed;

- The kitchen table of the same parsonage where Dr. King searched his soul and felt God telling him to press on with his work;

- The tables at which the people at 16th Street Baptist Church served us lunch, tables placed adjacent to the site of the tragic bombing on Sept. 15, 1963, that killed four young girls;

- The tables around which members of our group gathered to share stories as victims of discrimination, of their courageous work in the Civil Rights movement (and other freedom movements), and their lament over a lack of awareness of what was going on at that time in our country’s history.

For me, these are stones of hope hewn out of the mountains of despair among us.

And so, each year, we journey with the confirmation class from Epworth Chapel UMC, the church where I serve as pastor, to the site of the Martin Luther King Memorial in Washington, D.C. Although the crowd is always much smaller than the one that recently gathered, I sense that our young people and all who journey to the King Memorial day-by-day glean a sense of what King meant when he dreamt of such stones of hope.

This hope beckons us to love everybody – both our enemies and allies. This hope helps us to see that we can resist giving up on one another because our lives together are animated by the belief that God is present in each and every one of us. It is a hope that all of us might realize and live, and one that can move us ever closer toward Beloved Community.

Rev. C. Anthony Hunt is pastor of Epworth Chapel UMC in Baltimore and author of six books, including “Blessed are the Peacemakers: A Theological Analysis of the Thought of Howard Thurman and Martin Luther King, Jr.”

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Offering grace to LGBTQ people

BY REV. BETSY L. HALSEY, PSY.D., M.DIV.
Licensed Psychologist, Silver Spring, Md.

Grace abounds! Sometimes, in spite of the church. The State of Maryland now permits marriage of same-sex couples. The Supreme Court’s striking down key parts of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) enables gay spouses to receive the same federal benefits that heterosexual spouses receive. God can use any means for grace – in this case, the ballot and the Supreme Court.

The UMC sends mixed messages. While our UM Social Principles declare, “Sexuality is God’s good gift to all persons,” and commit us “to be in ministry for and with all persons,” our church law prohibits the ordination or appointment of “self-avowed, practicing homosexuals,” and prohibits pastors from marrying same-gender couples. We claim to offer “Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors,” but our actions speak much more loudly. Committed, Christian, same-gendered couples are getting married all around us, but not in our churches.

We are called to follow Christ -- the one who broke down barriers and taught that what is most important is to “Love the Lord your God, with all your heart, and soul and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself.” We have not lived up to our calling or our roots as United Methodists to champion social justice. We have not opened the table to all. The UMC has not been the means of grace for LGBTQ people. It is time to catch up to where grace has come. We are inherently irrelevant as a church unless we are relevant in the world in which we live.

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>.

Unexpected learnings in Kenya

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

CAROL DEEL RECEIVED an unexpected learning experience on a recent trip to Kenya.

Working on a Habitat For Humanity Project last July, the member of Centre United Methodist Church in Forest Hill was scheduled to head home when the airport in Nairobi caught fire. The incident made headlines around the world because of the possibility of terrorism.



Working in Kisii, Kenya, the Habitat group worked on building a new house. “When we got there the site was a plot of

grass, nothing had been started,” she said.

Deel shared her experience via e-mail.

“On the morning of the day that we were to leave the Nairobi airport, we woke to the news that Nairobi International Arrival Terminal at the airport was on fire. As a result of that we stayed in Kenya four additional days.

“The authorities determined that the fire was a result of an electrical problem in the terminal. I am not fully sure why we needed to stay in Kenya from a Kingdom perspective, but I learned a great deal about myself; some of the things I learned included:

1. ...being in a luxury hotel with nothing to do is not all bad;
2. ...I can veg out in front of the television;
3. ...down-time is not the enemy;
4. ...not being in charge is easier than I thought;
5. ...being an encourager when all is going well is easy; the hard part starts when inconvenience sets in;
6. ...The Lord needs to hear from me, not just when it’s all good or all bad;
7. ...friends who care about you check on you when they know things are amiss and don’t assume that I’ll do all the touching base;
8. ...waiting can be a gift;
9. ...my Mom and Dad are strong individuals and when things are tough they just want to be kept informed;
10. ...my sister Catharine is an encourager;
11. ...I can go without texting for two weeks;
12. ...maybe I need to open a Facebook account as that is how most of the team corresponded with people at home;
13. ...I can know contentment in all things;
14. ...there is a difference between doing and being;
15. ...we cannot look at the circumstances only; we need to look at the underlying lesson the Lord is teaching us.

“I am home now and when I look back on my time in Kenya I realize that the Lord kept me safe, secure, comfortable and content. He helped me see that His love for me is infinite and even if I was still in Kenya, His grace would be sufficient for me. I know that He loves me and is always watching out for me, here in the U.S., in Kenya or anywhere else in the world.”

UMW and UMM join forces to address domestic violence

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

THE HORRIFYING IMPACT of domestic violence has drawn together the United Methodist Men (UMM) and the United Methodist Women (UMW) of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, for the first time ever.

While their three-hour meeting to announce this partnership was being held Aug. 11, 800 women in the United States were beaten in their homes by a spouse or partner, reported United Methodist Men President Richard Campbell.

"The statistics are staggering," Campbell said. "Every nine seconds a woman is beaten. Every 35 seconds a man falls prey to domestic violence; and each year, more than 3 million children witness domestic violence in their homes.

"We need to let people know that God and the people of this church do care and will stand up for them as a matter of justice," said Campbell.

Nancy Randers-Pehrson, president of the BWC's United Methodist Women, agreed. Educating area United Methodists about domestic violence being perpetrated all around them is essential, she said.

But so is empathy and action.

"With this new initiative we are attempting to provide paths of healing," she said. "Our churches need to become shelters in a time of storm. To experience freedom as whole people in Jesus Christ, we need to live in safe homes."

To undergird the conference's new initiative, Julie Taylor from the General Board of Global Ministries is offering a number of resources to area churches.

Domestic violence, Taylor explained, is a pattern of behavior in which one family member willfully intimidates or assaults another. This violence transcends all economic, educational, geographic, racial and cultural boundaries.

But it's a problem the church tends to sweep under the rug, uncertain of how to respond in the midst of family dynamics.

Two statistics stand out for Taylor – one because it defines the scope of the problem, the other because it

illuminates society's response.

Every day in the United States, she said, more than three women and one man are murdered by their intimate partners. Also in the United States, there are 1,500 shelters for battered women and 3,800 shelters for animals.

The statistics surrounding domestic violence can bring you to tears, Campbell said. But within the Baltimore-Washington Conference the response must be one of hope.



UMM President Richard Campbell offers his appreciation to Julie Taylor.

"We must choose hope," said Taylor.

To encourage the 100 people in attendance at the Aug. 11 meeting to find hope and a path toward action, several people shared their own personal stories of abuse. Iola Stemley, a vice president of the UMW, asked that those present "receive these stories as though we're talking to Jesus."

One woman shared stories of being hit in the face with a hammer; a man told of being burned, cut, hit in the head with a baseball bat and poisoned. Both now consider themselves survivors. They say they "owe everything to God."

Another held up a photo of his niece, who was murdered Feb. 9. "I didn't know anything about domestic violence," he said. "Jenny put a face on it for me." He often considers what the church can do. "We need to be aware. We need to listen and have our eyes open. We need to be ready to understand."

Still another man told about being abused by an older

brother when he was 8-years-old. "As a child I lived in constant fear," he said. "Belts, ropes, whatever he could get around my neck, he used and I would wake up on the floor. Your house is where you're supposed to learn about love and trust."

This man, a pastor, encourages the church to "name the demon," and to listen to the victims instead of "pushing them back deeper into closets of shame and mistrust."

Jeanne Hitchcock, a member of Sharp Street UMC in Baltimore, works with the State of Maryland to address domestic violence.

It's painful to hear these stories and these statistics, she said. But what you don't know you can't address.

Hitchcock applauds the 40 percent reduction in crime and violence in Maryland since 2007. But, she said, 49 people died as a result of domestic violence last year. "There's still a lot left to do."

Churches that want to do advocacy ministries, can begin lobbying to strengthen protective orders, and expand hospital-based programs. Currently, there are seven hospital-based programs in Maryland and that's not enough, Hitchcock said. "Each of us needs to stand up, speak out and stop domestic violence."

This fall, the UMM and UMW will begin implementing their action plan in local churches.

The plan has four main objectives:

- Increase awareness of domestic violence and resources available to address it;
- Make the church's position on this issue clear, while using language of responsibility and healing rather than blame and punishment;
- Promote clear policies that address sexual abuse committed by pastors and other church leadership;
- Develop a long-term vision of hope for victims of domestic violence and abuse.

"For victims of domestic violence, who often get trapped in the darkness of abuse, it's often hard to see a light of hope. As the men and women of the Baltimore-Washington Conference come together, we can be that light, said Director of Connectional Ministries Sandy Ferguson. "It is my prayer that all of our churches will begin to participate in this important initiative. Lives depend on it."

VIM Trips by area churches accomplish God's mission

BY TWANDA PRIOLEAU

This summer, churches throughout the Baltimore-Washington Conference participated in Volunteer in Mission trips at home and abroad. The Rev. Twanda Prioleau of John Wesley UMC in Baltimore shares her experience.

FOR A WEEK this summer, Wesley Freedom UMC in Sykesville and John Wesley UMC in Baltimore journeyed on a mission trip to Belize together.

The trip, which included 42 people from the two churches, was under the leadership of Bob Jacoby, the youth pastor at Wesley Freedom UMC. Wesley Freedom has been doing global missions for years. However, this was the first time John Wesley UMC participated in hands-on global missions out of the country.



Two BWC churches came together for a VIM trip to Belize.

This connection between the two churches started more than 10 years ago when Wesley Freedom began bringing their confirmation class to John Wesley every January, a tradition that continues today.

We believe that this is the beginning of two churches doing missions together, but it was definitely a risk for us. We took a risk financially asking family, friends and our congregation to support us, and we took a risk by coming out of our comfort zones engaging in ministry with a different culture and individuals we would not ordinarily come in contact with in our day-to-day interactions.

We believe this has opened the door to doing greater things for the Kingdom of God.

We arrived in Belize excited, but yet uncertain about what this journey had in store for us. On Sunday, I had an opportunity to preach during morning worship at the Succotz Church of the Nazarene. We prayed that God would open the hearts and minds of the people we would come in contact with and, after worship, our group walked through the community praying for families and inviting the children to Vacation Bible School. One team came back with the report that a woman in the community had given her life to Christ.



VBS had more than 200 students from the community.

We started our week expecting to see "God sightings" and ended our week with an abundance of testimonies of what we had experienced. It was a life changing experience for all.

Brenda Zalitto and Myra Stokes of John Wesley started a women's ministry of crocheting with more than 20 women in attendance. Because of the impact of this ministry, John Wesley will continue to send crochet supplies to Belize for the women.

We ran a week-long Vacation Bible School with more than 200 children from the community in attendance. It was awesome to see our youth and young adults interact and connect with the kids in the community. The smiles on the kids' faces were priceless. We ran a

sports camp and realized you do not always have to be working; we can play and serve the Lord. We painted the exterior of a church, installed windows, a ceiling and a roof, and waterproofed a jungle gym.



Volunteers help to repair a building.

We also did food distribution in the community. The projects were financially supported by Wesley Freedom.

After we left Belize, we received an e-mail from Pastor Eric Reyes, the pastor of the Succotz Church of the Nazarene. I believe this e-mail is a testament of God's work in Belize.

He wrote, "Please join with me to give thanks to God for his mercy and love. What you did here is still giving fruits. Tuesday night we had the Hernandez family, a family you also shared food with, where the head of the household had suffered an accident and hurt his spine, both husband and wife gave their life to the Lord. Alleluia.....Amen."

This is a witness to what God can do when we bring two churches together to accomplish one mission -- God's mission.



'God sightings' were abundant during the VIM trip.