The Rev. Conrad Link, right, Dean of the Baltimore-Washington Cabinet, joins Bishop LaTrelle Easterling and the Rev. Joseph Daniels in celebrating the successful partnership that created the 2017 Pastors’ School in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe Pastors’ School broadens partnership

By Melissa Lauber
UMConnection Staff

When the Rev. Gladman Kapfumvuti was a young pastor in Marange, Zimbabwe, he lived humbly, traveling a circuit, preaching the Word of God. “Little did I know there were diamonds, literally diamonds, in the dirt beneath my feet,” he said. “I was walking on diamonds.”

Last month, after a 20-year absence, Kapfumvuti, of Asbury UMC in Brandywine, returned to his homeland with a 30-member delegation from the Baltimore-Washington Conference for a Pastors’ School in Zimbabwe, which he helped to launch two decades ago. He was moved by all The United Methodist Church has become, and all the possibilities the school presents.

“There is great richness here,” he said. “The church is sitting on diamonds and we don’t know it.”

More than 400 clergy attended the Pastors’ School at Africa University in Old Mutare, July 17 – July 21. About 300 of them do not have seminary degrees, explained the Rev. Joseph Daniels, leader of the BWC’s Zimbabwe Partnership. Many are young. Many also serve several-point circuits, constantly on-the-move, sometimes traveling by bicycle or on foot. They face unique challenges.

Daniels helped write the original covenant for the partnership, imagining a school that would provide training in practical theology and ministry best-practices. Over the years, the school has evolved, with leaders in Zimbabwe taking a larger role in the planning and execution of the schools.

For more on BWC’s mission efforts in Zimbabwe, see the story on page 5.

BWC gets grant for Change Makers

By Erik Alsgaard
UMConnection Staff

To “think outside the box,” you must first know the box is there. Members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference are starting a project for people who don’t even know the box exists.

Called the Change Maker Project, the goal is to create a “sustainable ecosystem of Christian innovation with and for college-aged students and young adults (ages 18 to 30) that will increase the number of young clergy.”

That, however, is not the only goal, according to Christie Latona, Director of Connectional Ministries for the Baltimore-Washington Conference. She said the Change Makers Project will create “fresh expressions of church,” using mentoring, design thinking, cohorts and immersion experiences that will foster not just growth, but innovation. In short, it’s connecting people who want to make a difference with

Christie Latona

Churches enable UM legacy in city

By Melissa Lauber
UMConnection Staff

Established 245 years ago, Centennial Caroline Street UMC was the oldest African-American Church in the Baltimore-Washington Conference. But for United Methodists, who build their faith on resurrection, the closing of this 245-year-old congregation has opened up a legacy of new ministry in Baltimore.

In November 2016, a faithful remnant of members chose to close the church and began worshipping with St. Matthews-New Life UMC. The month of December was designated as a time of mourning, and the Rev. Andrew Briscoe Jr. honored the accomplishments of this historic congregation.

The church was formed on June 22, 1772, the same day as Lovely Lane UMC, which is often called the Mother Church of Methodism. Centennial UMC formed as a black congregation, under the original name of Dallas Street Methodist Episcopal Church. It merged with the historic bi-racial Caroline Street UMC in 1876, under the leadership of the Rev. Mamie Williams.

As part of remembering, the 26 Centennial-Caroline Street members brought artifacts, like a baptismal font, Bible, and candlesticks from their sanctuary to place in their new church home. Since the new year, 23 of them have

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**Quality of Life retreats**

Quality of Life Retreats are a BWC ministry that reaches out to people living with HIV/AIDS. The next retreat is scheduled for Aug. 17-20 at Camp Manidokan. The ministry’s next retreat is scheduled for Aug. 30th.

**Retirement seminar**

Friday, Sept. 15, 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. BW Mission Center, Fulton

The Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church is holding a retirement seminar. The event will feature guest preacher Bishop LaTrelle Easterling.

**Special Session of General Conference**

February 23-26, 2019 St. Louis, Mo.

The United Methodist Council of Bishops has called a Special Session of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church to be held Feb. 23-26, 2019, in St. Louis, Mo. The purpose of the Special Session will be to receive and act on a report from the Council of Bishops based on the recommendations of the Commission on a Way Forward.

**Connectional Table meets**

Saturday, Oct. 14, 9 a.m. to noon BW Mission Center in Fulton

A planning meeting for Conference ministry leaders.

**Commission on the Way Forward**

Commission on the Way Forward: See the status report on the important work being done on behalf of the church at bwcumc.org/news-and-views/commission-on-a-way-forward-issues-status-report/

**Make a commitment to end racism**

React against racism. Do something to end racism in your community. For more information, visit bwcumc.org/umconnection

**Web Highlights**

- **Bishop LaTrelle Easterling**
  - Director of Communications
  - Managing Editor
  - Multimedia Producer
  - Marketing Strategist
  - Communications Associate

- **Linda Worthington**
  - Resident Bishop
  - Director of Communications
  - Managing Editor
  - Multimedia Producer
  - Web Manager
  - Marketing Strategist
  - Communications Associate

**UConnection**

Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church

August 2017

**By Mary Sayers**
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

By Daryl Williams
Pastor, St. Paul UMC, Oxon Hill
modern day circuit riders travel on gas-fed horses

Modern day circuit riders travel on gas-fed horses

By Alston Bondrey
UMConnection Staff

IN SUNDAY, July 26, motorcycle riders met at Wesley Chapel in Frederick for worship, followed by Maryland’s first United Methodist Motorcycle Association (UMMA) “Steeple Chase.” The National UMMA, which lists 148 members in 18 states, was founded in 2012 by Eddie and Patty Gill, who delivered a message during the morning worship before the ride. As experienced Lay Speakers, they enjoy sharing their story of what God has done in their lives.

Patty has Multiple Sclerosis and doesn’t get out much. Eddie, trying to find a way to get Patty out of the house, heard that horseback riding was good therapy for MS patients. However, after a scary weekend of horseback riding, Eddie was afraid Patty’s poor sense of balance would cause her to fall and break her neck.

While driving home from the weekend on horseback, Eddie said to Patty, “Let’s get a ‘Hog.” To which Patty replied, “You ain’t gonna run on no pig!”

The motorcycle was easier to get Patty on and she felt more secure. Eddie strapped Patty’s walker on the back of their Ultra Classic and off they went.

Eddie planned a trip through Estes Park, Colo. On the second day over the Rocky Mountain Park, Eddie heard, “Put Me on the front of your bike, get a motor home, organize the Methodists and go a million miles for Me.”

“You can’t make that up,” was a phrase repeated several times throughout their testimony.

Eddie placed an image of Jesus on the front of their bike, and they set out to ride a million miles for Christ. To date, the UMMA has ridden about 400,000 miles.

“Meeting and ministering to people right by the side of the road, get a motor home, pray at opening and closing activities, and supporting them through prayer.”

By Dave Bonney
Special to UMConnection

IN GHANA, a Christian artist by the name of Francis Nunoo had a vision of helping children find their God given talents so they could express themselves. Sir Nunoo, as he is called by the children, believes that every child has creative talents, given by God, waiting to be discovered. Nunoo went into the grottos of Accra and set up boards covered with plain white paper. With containers of colorful acrylic paints he started painting landscape scenes. Groups of street children gathered around him to watch. He soon had dozens of children painting.

On one of these occasions, the headmaster of the Ejegy Primary School in Tema offered Nunoo an unpaid position at the school to develop art programs. The Ejegy School is in a very poor area and most of the families survive by fishing. While on a mission trip to Ghana in 2015, I met Nunoo and was impressed with his program. Smithville UMC provided a small donation to the program and many needed supplies were made available to the school.

In August 2016, I was invited as a representative of Smithville to speak at an art festival in Ghana. The purpose of the festival was to show the parents and the community what could happen when God-given talents were found and expressed. As I approached the school, I found the area very depressing. It looked as if God-given talents were not only shown great excitement about painting, but once they had found the spark of creativity that God had blessed them with, they were able to find new means to express themselves. The students also became more observant of the world around them and improved in all subjects at the school and raised the school pass rate.

Donations from Smithville provided a laptop, digital camera and funds to supply the art program for a year. This poorest of schools with a very poor school not only showed great excitement about art, but once they had found the spark of creativity that God had blessed them with, they were able to find new means to express themselves. The students also became more observant of the world around them and improved in all subjects at the school and raised the school pass rate.

In May, I visited four primary schools in Ghana and as a missionary for Smithville UMC was allowed to speak to a number of classrooms. I spoke about different ways to worship and to show appreciation for what God is doing for us. I also talked about the creative passions and skills that God has given each of us and how it is our responsibility to develop and share our talent.

On May 20, the event was held. The actual attendance was 200 to 300, but the actual attendance was closer to 500 parents and children. There were games and face painting and demonstrations of technological inventions and crafts. They saw beautiful art, woven baskets and other crafts, poetry recitations, dance performances and speakers praising the presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of these children. The dance crew performed very energetic dances, all choreographed to contemporary Christian music.

Smithville UMC supported the program with paint supplies and a donation of a slide projector. The number of children, both Muslim and Christian, attending Masterminded and Technology is increasing. Please pray that these art programs continue to help children find the gifts and talents provided by God and more importantly how they can use their individual talents to bring beauty to a chaotic world.

Smithville UMC sponsors creative ministry in Ghana

By Dave Bonney
Special to UMConnection

Fairview Chapel, New Market

The ride concluded at this historic and beautiful stone church. It remains as it was in early America — no electricity and no heat. It also has no permanent pastor. Area pastors take turns leading Sunday worship every week at 7 p.m.

UMMA members are introduced to the community and find opportunities to serve. They have special meals to the homeless and have delivered items for food banks, gifts to area food banks, using their motorcycles for transportation.

If you are interested in joining UMMA, contact Rod Fry at circuтирider.rodfr@gmail.com.
Legacy: St. Matthews–New Life creates vibrant future

From page 1

joined St. Matthew’s-New Life. St. Matthew’s-New Life was chosen as Centennial-Caroline’s landing place, in part, because Briscoe had a relationship with them. As a student at Wesley Theological Seminary, he did his practice of ministry program at Centennial Caroline.

Briscoe and Conference leaders made sure the people’s “futures were not being planned for them,” he said, and that they were participants in shaping a living legacy of ministry.

“We didn’t read them in as members,” Briscoe said. “We gave them the right hand of fellowship, creating a new level that so our body would welcome them in a way that was not belittling to them. We did not want to make them feel ‘other.’ We welcomed them as family.”

Part of this welcome included grafting the leadership structures of the two churches together. Briscoe told those coming into St. Matthew’s-New Life, “You’re not a new member. Don’t sit on the side and figure out how to do things. Your voice counts. … They’re starting to embrace that,” he said.

Some from Centennial-Caroline Street have told him, “We didn’t know we were living so much until coming here and being a part of this vibrant life.”

Part of that vibrancy, Briscoe and other church members said, stems from the fact that St. Matthew’s and New Life were both

to do so that something new and vibrant could be created in its place.

But that’s not even the origin of the legacy of creating possibility and growth out of decline: New Life, an innovative African-American faith community, was created in 1996 from the closing of Parkside UMC, a predominantly white church that lost members as the demographics of Baltimore City changed.

“This is a model that only God can create,” Briscoe said.

Denise Washington, a lay leader, attaches the vibrancy of a church choosing ministry over history and buildings to the fact that “the Word is being taught and preached.” There is noon-day and evening Bible study, she said. “People’s relationships with God change. They begin to think and handle themselves differently.”

In the halibay outside his office, a boy named Herman approaches Briscoe and asks, “Does the Bible really have the essence of everything?”

It’s a random question, but Briscoe makes a note to have a deeper conversation with Herman when he finds time. “There’s something to this,” Briscoe said.

Young adults, children and youth, middle age people and seniors are all present, in just about proportional numbers, as everyone finds their place at Centennial Caroline. For Anthony Howard, who graduated from high school last spring, many of the youth members

during worship.

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church is a place to go “to get off the streets, I live in a bad neighborhood—Greenmount Avenue,” he said. “There’s violence, fighting, people arguing.”

At the church, Howard works with the audio-visual and technological aspects of worship.

Briscoe is familiar with the church as a place of refuge. He grew up at Eastern UMC, which recently sold its building. “There, in the mid 1990s, he experienced Bishop Felton May’s Saving Stations project to “impact investors” who will

venture with a goal of starting 10 Christian

ministries like Hotdog for a Handshake, which Moore participates in.

“IT’s a wonderful feeling to give back some of what God has given me,” he said.

Having outgrown their current facility, Briscoe and the Board of Trustees are considering what ministries might be done with the former Pikeside UMC building, which has 18 classrooms, three offices and a sanctuary that seats 500.

The building has been assessed at $1.7 million, out of the range of some interested buyers. Briscoe envisions it as a community center and second worship site. The congregation at Centennial-Caroline is exploring how this building might be its own longer-term solution. Briscoe isn’t certain what the future might hold, but possibilities keep coming, he said.

“We’ve got to be flexible and keep being honestly concerned about the community. That’s what grows a church.”

From page 1

the focus of the Change Makers Project is young adults exploring their call through innovation. Potential change makers, Latona said, could be those who want to apply design thinking for Gospel-driven social change, or others who love Jesus but who can’t imagine inviting their friends or neighbors to current expressions of church.

“There are those young adults who say, ‘There’s gotta be a different way to do church,’” Latona said. “They may be potential change makers. It comes out of a sense of purpose; it comes out of the sense that I am being called to make a difference.”

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry provided a $302,350 grant for a period of 3 years for the project as part of their Young Clergy Initiative. Latona sees part of the Change Makers Project as an innovative way for people to explore their call while they’re making a difference.

“That’s a really different way of doing things,” she said. “It’s not just a program, it’s this whole system and process of experience, learning and dialogue, but also actually doing something different in the world informed by those experiences and relationships.”

If you or someone you know might be a candidate for the Change Makers Project, a series of three events, called “Taste and See,” are being offered. The Taste and See events, open to all, are a way for people to get a small experience of what it might look like to do ministry differently, Latona said. She described the Taste and See events as one part inspiration, one part application and one part research, designed to encourage and support people in taking innovative yet practical next steps so that they and their friends can start new communities with new people to do good with God.

The first Taste and See will be held at American University in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 21. Two other Taste and See events will be held in Baltimore and Frostburg early in 2018.

“It provides a way for people to get hands-on experience with these ideas that we will explore further in the Change Maker project,” Latona said about Taste and See. “But also, it’s available for people of all ages to take these concepts back to their local church and do ministry differently.”

Latona urged United Methodists throughout the BWC who know young adults between the ages of 18 and 30, who they’ve seen as always trying to figure out what they could do next to make a difference as a follower of Jesus, to send them to Taste and See.

At the Taste and See events, participants will be encouraged to commit to a next step. Participating in the Change Makers Project is one of three options.

Latona said they are looking for roughly 90 young adults to be part of the initial Change Makers cohort. Each cohort will

be formed geographically, focusing on accountability and spiritual growth while also integrating the best thinking about Christian social innovation.

Cohort members will be invited to visit London, England, for a week-long immersive training experience in a part of the world with deep Methodist roots that has been experiencing a downturn in traditional Christian expressions for longer than we have in the U.S. As part of their learning about vision casting and fundraising, cohorts will raise half of their travel expenses through both traditional (i.e., church offerings) and newer (i.e., GoFundMe) means. The grant covers the other half.

A Missional Entrepreneurship week concludes the project in the summer of 2019. Change Makers will work with coaches and potential investors to fine tune their ministry models and find potential resources and collaborators. At the end of the week, participants will “pitch” their project to “impact investors” who will have the opportunity to help fund the new venture with a goal of starting 10 Christian social innovation projects (a.k.a., faith communities) by Fall 2019.

For more information on Taste and See events coming near you, visit www.tasteandseedm.com.
Zimbabwe Mission offers thought-provoking paradoxes

By Rev. Tim Warner
Special to UMConnection

ZIMBABWE is a place of paradox. It is a country that, while rich in natural resources, exhibits some of the most pronounced poverty most Americans have ever seen. Four years ago, I was a part of the Baltimore-Washington Conference – Zimbabwe Episcopal Area Pastors’ School and had the opportunity to visit Gwese UMC in the Mutare District of the Zimbabwe East Annual Conference.

I found there a gracious people, my United Methodist sisters and brothers, who were trying (like many of us) to make a difference in their community in the name of Jesus. This was my kind of church! They worshiped God with such great joy and intensity, yet they were situated in a community where there was no electricity or water, and had nearly nothing by American standards. We were there as a part of the Baltimore-Washington Conference’s strategic partnership as partners in ministry with the Zimbabwe Episcopal Area to join them in the spirit of “chochakoda,” a Shona word meaning a partnership in which a passerby stops to help another person already at work.

They had already begun to build a sanctuary in which to worship, and the BWC team was there to put in some sweat equity and financial gifts to help finish the work.

Seeing their continuing need, and knowing our relative abundance, I immediately led Emory Grove UMC (which did not have a deep history in foreign mission work) into a partner-in-ministry relationship with them to help them drill a well. We were excited that the sacrificial giving enabled the people at Gwese to have access to clean water without having to walk a mile down the river.

People at Gwese were excited to see how water helped them be more even-tempered in the community, and that they had sisters and brothers 6,000 miles away who were willing to walk side-by-side with them. Since then, Emory Grove has partnered to help them build a parsonage for their young pastor and his family.

This year, at Bishop Easterling’s invitation, I joined the Pastors’ School team again. When I led a group of people in our delegation to visit some projects that were ongoing and assess needs in other places in rural Mutare, I found a whole new Gwese.

The livestock were thriving, the pump was set up for irrigation, and the parsonage is complete. They had also begun the work of setting up a trust for the children who were orphaned because of HIV/AIDS, and, as part of it, had begun to set up a community garden for the orphan.

They were started that I brought another gift from our partner church to help them expand their prophetic work with the orphan.

Instead of patting the orphan children on the head and telling them how unfortunate they are, they have chosen another model of care. Each child has someone from the congregation come to visit them as often as they need help or assistance. The children stay in their own houses in their own communities. They are given a she-goat to bear young goats as a food source and as a way to provide income. Each child is also given a plot of land to farm in the garden, which they work for their sustenance.

Emory Grove’s latest gift to support the Orphan’s Trust is now helping the church build self-sufficient Christian leaders, rather than a permanent “mission-class,” through providing for school fees and uniforms.

Another of the churches that I serve, Mill Creek Parish UMC, out of an initiative begun by the Vacation Bible School a year ago, has worked with the District Superintendent of the Mutare District to partner with the West Zhinyuu Circuit of churches. We, too, have helped them drill a well that is used by three churches and a community.

One of Mill Creek’s members, Kim Berger, joined me as we visited the well. The church (pastor and people) and the community Head Man and neighbors greeted us with a celebration where we were welcomed and nourished by the community.

Colleen Catsa, a direction of national NUMAW, speaks at Mission u.

They were just a few of the 200 people, mostly women, from throughout the Baltimore-Washington Conference who attended “to (team) together for the transformation of the world,” the defining statement of Mission u.

The theme “We are One: Connected in Covenant,” was conceptualized in three study areas: Living as a Covenant Community; three separate classes on Climate Justice: Call to Hope and Action; and three separate groups to study Missionary Conferences in the United States.

Mission u is designed to bring many opportunities to attendees to grow in their discipleship through looking in depth at the topic areas and to grow spiritually through the plenary sessions on the theme.

The Rev. Neal Christie, Assistant General Secretary for Education and Leadership Formation at the General Board of Church and Society in Washington, D.C., led the sessions on covenant. He offered an in-depth analysis of the traditional covenants throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and between God and humankind.

In this paradox, I am thankful that God who deserves worship, honor and praise regardless of circumstance. Perhaps we have forgotten that the Kingdom of God comes against poverty, compelling those of us who purport to be Kingdom-citizens to do something to relieve it wherever we see it, particularly when two-thirds of the world is so poor precisely because we have so much.

In this paradox, I am thankful that God is at work in many ways to bless both partners in the work. I pray that we will receive what we need from our sisters and brothers who are rich in obedience to the will of God and zeal for the Land, even though (and perhaps precisely because) they don’t have as many things.

The Rev. Tim Warner is pastor of Emory Grove UMC and Mill Creek Parish.

Mission u participants explore covenant, transformation

By Linda Worthington
UMConnection Staff

The Rev. Tim Warner talks with an orphan following her exams at the United Methodist Fairfield Children’s Home in Old Mutare.

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The Rev. Tim Warner is pastor of Emory Grove UMC and Mill Creek Parish.

While the adults were meeting in plenaries and classes, 87 youths from the conference were holding their own Mission u in another part of the hotel. Their dean, the Rev. Alexis Brown, campus minister at Howard University, was in South Korea on a mission/study tour, and assistant dean, the Rev. Matthew Tate, pastor of Emmanuel UMC in Huntington, took the reins.

The main topic was “We are Called Out: Project to deal with self-esteem and low self-image.” The group was hosted by the Jerusalem Deacon, serving at Lincoln Park UMC on Capitol Hill, led the plenaries. Martin, a full-time missioner who works for Whitmer-Walker Health, said that art and art therapy are her passion. She led the youth to discover new ways to deal with their “God- identity” through art therapy.

Several focus groups were held, optional programs of both substance and fun. These informal groups heard from pastors and experts in the field. On one mass incarceration explored race history, the conditions in prisons, especially for young people, and women’s needs. At least two carloads of personal items were collected from the churches to deliver to the women’s prison.
Young, a retired infectious disease specialist Terri Rae Chattin; the first one, in 1987, was 10 of them coming to a QLR for the first gay men meeting at West River Camp University, with 32 years of research and Quality of Life Retreat. She has planned varied in age from the 20s to the 60s, with retired local pastor Nancy Green said of the First all-women’s QLR held member Ella Curry, an RN with 28 years in care of women. She stressed the importance coming to Congress this year; and Dr. Mary time. They learned from each other through the field, who shared key-HIV legislation featured medical professionals: QLR board and Retreat Center. The 23 women attending this latest retreat Washington, D.C. – “We wanted making a difference. They were started 30 years ago by the Rev. Terri Rae Chattin; the first one, in 1987, was 12 gay men meeting at West River Camp and Retreat Center. The 23 women attending this latest retreat varied in age from the 20s to the 60s, with 10 of them coming to a QLR for the first time. They learned from each other through small group discussions and from two featured medical professionals: QLR board member Ella Curry, an RN with 28 years in the field, who shared key-HIV legislation coming to Congress this year; and Dr. Mary Young, a retired infectious disease specialist and Professor of Medicine at Georgetown University, with 32 years of research and care of women. She stressed the importance of taking their meds consistently. The retreat was on the theme “You are Beautiful,” which was carried out everywhere, from the Communion service, to the table decorations, gift bags, straw hat competition, and in the handmade fleece blankets given by women of Linden-Linthicum UMC. UMM told God expects more FULTON – Twenty-six men from Annapolis, Baltimore-Metropolitan, Balti- more-Suburban, Central Maryland, Greater Washington and Washington East districts representing 11 UMCs attended the 22th National Gathering of United Methodist Men at St. Luke’s UMC in Indianapolis in early July. Among them were a millen- nial and two Generation X men, helped by full scholarships from three of their older brothers. More than 600 men spent a day-and-a-half worshipping, praying, and staffing the Upper Room Prayer LIne, loading and unloading 22,000 pounds of food for the community’s hungry, building wheelchair ramps, and assembling Personal Energy Transportation (PET) carts, hand-cranked vehicles that serve as power wheelchairs in developing countries. “(I was) truly blessed that I was able to meet so many new friends with a love for men’s ministry, the exhibitors gave me new re- sources to reach men in my community and church,” one participant said, and added, “(This) saddened that more men from my district and my church did not make this trip as they truly missed an opportunity to hear from other men how to reach out to all age groups uniting men’s ministry.” School offers rewarding work HAMPSTEAD – Shiloh UMC on the Shiloh-Fauquier Charge received an award from the Carroll County Public Schools in appreciation of the Community Outreach and Partnership they have with the Hampstead Elementary School and community. The awards ceremony was held at Best Western Conference Center in Westminster. “We are very grateful for the opportunities to be of service in the schools, the communities and the world,” said Pastor Barbara M. Allen, who is an African- American woman serving two older white congregations. Worship in the Park WEST RIVER – The end of May, the congregations of Ward’s Memorial UMC of Owings and Cockeem Memorial of Temple Hills, joined together at the West River Camp and Retreat Center for worship and fellowship. Pastor Lesley Newman-Bell of Cockeem Memorial, preached on “I Got the Keys.” Everyone sang, read Scripture and prayed together. The men of Ward’s Memorial greeted each arriving worshipper, youth and elders together, some with walkers or canes, some in strollers. They had the grill already fired up and smoking. “The rain could not stop us from enjoying God’s creation,” one of them said. When it started, many stayed on and enjoyed each other in conversation and laughter. Many are already planning for next year’s gathering.

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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

First all-women’s QLR held

WASHINGTON, D.C. – “We wanted them ... to know someone cared for them,” retired local pastor Nancy Green said of the women who attended the first all-women’s Quality of Life Retreat. She has planned many of the QLRs.

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Worship in the Park

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Rev. Solomon Lloyd, a military chaplain on extension ministry in the BWCC, left, baptized 25 people in the Jordan River recently. He was on a port visit in Israel from the USS George H W Bush.
In sexuality debate, pastor asks: What Middle Am I In?

By Ginger Gaines-Cirelli

N early 10 years ago, at a dinner in New York City, I was stunned when someone at my table declared clearly that there is really no point in dialogue or relationship with those whose beliefs will not be conformed to your own. I didn’t accept such a claim then and, as a pastor, have deepened my Wesleyan way, I don’t accept that claim now.

Even so, during the recent Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference Session, I learned some of my colleagues were confused to find my name listed among the individuals who recently initiated a movement described as part of the “Methodist middle.” United Methodist News Service cited this movement as evidence that “The United Methodist Church has a ‘vibrant’ center that can keep the denomination strong despite the damaging debates around division.” Over the issue of the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals in the life and clergy of the United Methodist Church.

On more than one occasion, a colleague said to me, “What ‘middle’ are you in?” My first response is, “I am in the middle of a tradition that nurtured my roots and supported my growth for the more than four decades of my life. It’s where I live. It’s not ‘mushy’ nor does it force me to give up on siblings to my right or to my left. Rather, the Wesleyan way allows me — with all my convictions and conscience — to stay in the struggle even as seemingly intractable and deeply broken persons, some of my deeply respected colleagues would prefer separation from the UMC system. I am sympathetic to that pragmatic, and missional reasons — and inspired by my LGBTQ+ colleagues and friends — I will at least try to do the ‘harder thing.’”

For the sake of justice for LGBTQ+ persons, some of my deeply respected colleagues would prefer separation from the seemingly intractable and deeply broken UMC system. I am sympathetic to that perspective. However, I am also prey to the extraordinary witness of LGBTQ+ persons in my congregation who love Jesus and love The United Methodist Church and are determined to stay in the struggle even as they are on the receiving end of so much indignity and injustice. They strengthen my resolve to do what I have often called “the hard thing” required of us by the gospel: to stay connected as one Body and to try to offer the world an alternative vision to the polarizing and warring ways of the world. (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:17)

A dismembered body can’t breathe, can’t speak words. A dismembered body can’t reach out to touch and care for the wounds of others. A dismembered body can’t speak words of justice. A dismembered body won’t have the capacity to engage in the struggle against racism, poverty, addiction, unemployment, homelessness, xenophobia, and lack of adequate healthcare. A dismembered body can’t walk, much less “run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfector of our faith.” (Hebrews 12:2-3)

The Body of Christ called The United Methodist Church is already weakened by cutting off the full participation of LGBTQ+ people. Further severing of the body through division, while tempting, would be the ultimate capitulation to a culture overwhelmingly characterized by “us” versus “them.” For biblical, evangelical, pragmatic, and missional reasons — and inspired by my LGBTQ+ colleagues and friends — I will at least try to do the “harder thing.”

Luther at 500 Theologian, Musician, Preacher, Changemaker

August 2017 Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church UMConnection 7

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Luther and the Reformation at 500 Years

WEDNESDAYS 7:30-9:30 PM
OC 5 • NOV 16
WESLEY DOWN TOWN
@ MOUNT VERNON PLACE UMC
Pastors from the BWC are invited to teach and share their expertise. This year, they led classes about the United Methodist Book of Discipline, stewardship, young adult ministries, church school project management, and disciplined Bible study.

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, presiding bishop of the BWC, had high praise for the work of the BWC delegation in the week before. She had led a Laity School at Africa University Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference and a meeting of the Commission on the Way to Let Nothing Stand in Their Way of Living among the clergy.

Both Easterling and Daniels noted the need to train the laity, too. “We have to let nothing stand in their way of supporting our clergy,” Daniels said. “The church’s sustenance has been put in the hands of the laity.”

In a private, informal session, Easterling spoke to the conference’s clergy women, urging them to consider to what ministries they are called, and when they are certain, to let nothing stand in their way of living our God's plan for them.

Daniels has played a significant role in the development of the pastorate’s School. She is Corinthians School for the West Annual Conference. He found many of the sessions “thought-provoking,” she said. “We were very helpful to me. I especially appreciated that they put the material in our context.”

Daniels chairs the conference’s Board of Discipleship and said he would also like to see more information provided about how to train the laity. He noted that the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference had led a Laity School at Africa University the week before.

Shepherds don’t create sheep; sheep create shepherds,” he said. “Indeed, the church is growing. But we need to grow more ministries at the local church level. We need to train the laity, too.”

After each hour-long teaching session, the pastors broke into 10 groups for discussion and then reported back with a time of question and answer.

The conversation was lively and many of the pastors said the teaching spurred ideas they are looking forward to implementing in their churches. Others said they were “transformed” and moved by how “vivid” the preaching and teaching was.

“When they weren’t teaching, many of the BWC delegation members explored churches and ministries in the Mavura area,” Pastor Razo said, adding, “We hope to be able to bring some of those ideas to our church as well.”

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, left, meets with Vice Chancellor Munahe Furusa, leader of Africa University.

“Unemployment is up to 90 percent, driven by a shrinking economy and hyperinflation,” he said. Some pastors are not receiving salaries, or are being paid in-kind. Other pastors are forced to grow and sell vegetables or do other work to make ends meet.

Each church pays 55 percent of its income to the annual conferences’ common pool, which ensures every pastor gets some compensation. For some smaller churches, this 55 percent totals only $100 a month. “The church's sustenance has been put to the test because people no longer have disposable income for tithes and offerings,” Razo said.

Part of the teaching of the Pastors’ School was to help churches develop the means, within their own context, to "become beacons of hope and promise," the Rev. Paul Mashumba says. "The church’s sustenance has been put to the test because people no longer have disposable income for tithes and offerings," Razo said.

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