Taste & See redefines possibilities of church

By Melissa Lauber
UMConnection Staff

In his way to the Taste & See event at American University on Sept. 24, the Rev. Rodney Smothers found himself wondering about the purpose, "the why," of the event. But his thoughts were soon sidetracked by his GPS, which insisted he go a strange, more indirect path. The route didn't make sense, but his GPS insisted the new "off-the-beaten-path" was preferable, and would help him arrive at his destination in a better way.


His drive to the event, he noted, was a metaphor for the event itself. "The why" was the importance of Church taking new roads, traveling different, and sometimes uncomfortable, paths to arrive at a new distinctive discipleship destination.

Taste & See was an innovative, interactive training event designed to enable participants to better understand and begin to practice "missional entrepreneurship." It provided a new road map for doing ministry and being church.

Its purpose, said Christie Laton, the conference Director of Connectional Ministries, was to "launch a missional innovation revolution in the BWC so that more people, more diverse people and more young people love God and their neighbors well."

Following the day of learning, the more than 60 participants were invited to apply for grants and partnerships that would allow them to put their inventions and innovations into action.

The event was a collaborative effort of Wesley Seminary, Inspire DC, and the BWC’s Connectional Ministries and Congregational Development areas. It featured the Rev. Kenda Creasy Dean, a professor at Princeton University and founder of Ministry Incubators (MinistryIncubators.com), and Shannon Hopkins, founder of Matryoshka Haus, an incubator of new social justice initiatives in London that provides resources for innovation (www.matryoshkahaus.com/).

Creasy Dean explained how mission entrepreneurship has the potential to re-define the church.

"An entrepreneur creates undertakings between what is already there," she said. Missional entrepreneurship "embodies Christ to solve a community problem in a way that is aligned spiritually, relationally and financially."

However, Creasy Dean stressed, "entrepreneurship doesn't fund ministry, entrepreneurship is ministry."

Statistics indicate that "worship is no longer the way most people enter into Christian community in the United States," Creasy Dean said. Rather, people encounter God and the faith community through mission and creative outreach in the community in what social commentators are calling "whole life evangelism."

To illustrate missional entrepreneurship, Creasy Dean shared the stories of more than 18 ministries. (See page 3.) She lifted up the dramatic outreach of the Rev. Gregory Boyle, a Catholic priest who opened a bakery to address a lack of hope among gang members in Los Angeles. Today, Homeboy Industries provides services to 15,000 men and women. Her story is told in the best-selling book: "Tattoos of the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion."

Creasy Dean also shared how the Rev. Richard Joyner in Conetoe, N.C. was "literally exhausted from officiating weddings" and began to practice "missional entrepreneurship.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. - Philippians 4:13

BWM Immigration ministry aids DACA recipients

By Erik Alsgaard
UMConnection Staff

When the U.S. government announced in early September a proposal to end DACA, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, hundreds of thousands of people suddenly faced the possibility of deportation. DACA is a program started in 2012 where undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States before they turned 16, and who have lived here since June 15, 2007, were eligible to apply for drivers’ licenses, enroll in college, and get a job, depending on the state where they lived. An estimated 800,000 people are DACA recipients.

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling spoke out against repealing DACA at a rally in front of the White House Sept. 5. The bishop said that DACA “really is an issue that tears at the fabric of who we are and who we say we are as Americans.”

The bishop said that the United States is a nation of immigrants and that the children affected by DACA are some of the most vulnerable.

“Those individuals protected by DACA were brought here under no control of their own, and no fault of their own,” Bishop Easterling said. “I think it would be a travesty if this country, if this administration, turns its back on these young people now.”

CNN quoted President Donald Trump shortly after the repeal was announced. “We will resolve the DACA issue with heart and compassion – but through the lawful Democratic process – while at the same time ensuring that any immigration reform we adopt provides enduring benefits for the American citizens we elected to serve,” the president said. “We must also have heart and compassion for unemployed, struggling and forgotten Americans.”

One critical way the church is responding to this immigration crisis is through JFON, or Justice For Our Neighbors. JFON provides free immigration legal services to low-income immigrants throughout the Washington, D.C., metro region.
This spring, many United Methodists in the Western Region will have the opportunity to participate in *Taste & See: Change-makers called to reinvigorate church*. The purpose of this event is to help churches recognize the truth that while many may have lost the fire of their ministry over time, there are still many who are ready and eager to help. During the fall of 2017, Bishop Bickel approved the creation of a new pilot program, *Taste & See*, to encourage local churches to apply for grants that would bring their ideas to life, including a_paltry that would include time in London training with Hopkins and his cohort.

*“Things thinking is an iterative process, but we as the church sometimes think it in terms of events, instead of process.”* Lauter said. From the first moment we talked about this event, the team had many things in mind that in the end, it was following their hearts that wants to have a bigger impact for God to bring them to the idea of supporting the Thriving of the church. Given that, we are currently12 investing, experimenting with processes with potential elemental interventions. We are a12 a congregational church. We want to invest in mission-focused innovations ministry. “

Taste & See: Change-makers called to reinvigorate church

**What does a change-maker do?**

A change-maker is someone who is able to 12 12:*Taste & See:* a program established by the Western Region of the United Methodist Church in 2015 to bring creative ministry ideas to life, through grants, training, and support. This program is designed to help local churches bring their creative ideas to life, and to provide the resources needed to make that happen. The program is open to all United Methodist churches in the Western Region, and applications are now being accepted for the 122018 cycle. For more information, visit [www.tasteandseedmv.com](http://www.tasteandseedmv.com).

**What is a change-maker?**

A change-maker is someone who is able to bring new ideas to life in a church or community setting. This can include developing new programs, reviving old ones, or finding new ways to reach people with the message of Jesus. Change-makers are typically creative, energetic, and willing to take risks to make a difference. They often have a strong desire to make an impact on the world, and are willing to put in the extra effort needed to make their ideas a reality.

**Who is eligible to apply?**

Any United Methodist church in the Western Region is eligible to apply for a grant through *Taste & See*. Churches do not have to have a specific idea in mind before applying, as the program is designed to help them develop and refine their ideas.

**What is the application process?**

The application process for *Taste & See* is simple and straightforward. Churches interested in applying should visit the [Taste & See website](http://www.tasteandseedmv.com) for more information, and then complete the online application form. Once the application is submitted, it will be reviewed by a panel of judges, who will select the final grantees.

**How much money is available?**

The amount of money available for grants through *Taste & See* varies each year, depending on funding. In 2018, the program provided a total of $20,000 in grants to 12 churches across the Western Region.

**What are some examples of past changes?**

Some examples of past changes include starting a new ministry program, reviving an old ministry program, or finding new ways to reach people with the message of Jesus. For example, one church started a new youth ministry program that included weekly gatherings, a service project, and a weekly Bible study. Another church started a new food pantry that was open to the public and provided food to those in need.

**What are the benefits of being a change-maker?**

Being a change-maker offers many benefits, including the opportunity to bring new ideas to life, make a positive impact on the world, and be part of a community of change-makers. Change-makers also have the opportunity to develop new skills and connect with others who are passionate about making a difference.
Twen...
A word from the bishop

The Most Dangerous Week

Dear Bishop LeRhoads

Our conversations following last week’s meeting raise issues that are central to the life of The United Methodist Church.

The need to find the balance between the right to hold a personal opinion or freely express a viewpoint and the responsibility to consider the impact a statement might have on others. Theological liberalism is affecting not only the church’s mission and shared values but also our personal interactions.

We must listen for the call. We must be open to new and diverse interpretations. The same is true in our work and play. We need to be open to the call for us to be our best selves.

We need to listen and listen again. What are we hearing? What are we saying? What are we teaching? What are we missing?

We are called to be collaborators with God.

Bishop Rick LeRhoads

How can we trust our own spiritual perspectives? It is easy to go from all or nothing, to see the world in black and white.

In the last year, we have experienced the loss of so many people. We have experienced pain and suffering. We have experienced illness and death. We have experienced joy and love. We have experienced hope and despair. We have experienced success and failure. We have experienced the good and the bad.

We are called to be collaborators with God.

Bishop Rick LeRhoads

We ask: What is doctrine, what is law, and what is right?

Viewpoints

The Hurdle of Time

Everyone has their own way of understanding the past. Some see it as a series of events that led to the present. Others see it as a series of lessons that taught us something. Still others see it as a series of mistakes that we can learn from.

Our understanding of history is shaped by the perspectives of those who tell it. Sometimes, these perspectives are biased or incomplete. Sometimes, they are distorted or manipulated. Sometimes, they are simply wrong.

We must be careful to avoid seeing history as a series of black-and-white events. Rather, we must see it as a complex web of relationships and interactions. We must see it as a series of lessons that we can learn from. We must see it as a series of mistakes that we can learn from.

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By Erik Alsgaard  
UMConnection Staff

**To Sat: That Emory Fellowship, a United Methodist congregation on the Georgia Ave. corridor in Washington, D.C., is undergoing change would be an understatement. 

Over years of dreaming and casting of vision, and after at least seven tries at getting started, the church, through its ministry Emory Beacon of Light, Inc. (EBOL), is in the middle of a $55.5 million renovation that will create affordable housing units, homeless units, and more. 

Created in 1996, EBOL is the mission arm of the church, said the Rev. Joe Daniels, pastor at Emory Fellowship. The historic church, which has roots in Washington going back to 1831, has found a dramatic way to make a difference in their neighborhood and beyond. 

The nonprofit, which has its own board of directors, partners with several area service agencies to bring hope and healing to people in D.C. “That outreach, when the renovation is done, will be greatly expanded. 

With the issues we had in the community at that time, including housing, drug addiction and alcoholism, . . . in order for us to help people become whole, we needed to have an entity that could access greater funding to address these huge needs,” Daniels said about the creation of EBOL. 

The issues are still present, Daniels said. To address them the Beacon Center, scheduled to open late next year, will have 99 units, 90 of which are designated as affordability (60 percent of Area Median Income), with eight units of permanent supportive housing for the homeless; 20,484 square feet of multipurpose facility and office space (church and EBOL; 3,476 square feet of recreation and community program space; a business center, fitness center, bicycle parking, resident lounges, outdoor courtyard area, resident and community programs, and 87 precious parking spaces. 

“We will start the leasing process and marketing for tenants in the next six months,” said Hazel Broadnax, a member of the church who is the president of the non-profit Emory Beacon of Light. She has overseen the renovation for the past 10 years, she said, “from the start.” 

A one-bedroom unit, Broadnax said, is giving for $602 per month. “You can’t get anything in this city for that,” she said. 

Of the $55.5 million for the construction project, Broadnax said, almost $20 million is to renovate the church and church office space. That money, she said, is coming from two sources: a loan from the United Methodist Development Fund, and a leasing agreement between the church and EBOL. Roughly $4 million is being used for the residential program, with about $20 million coming from the District of Columbia’s Housing Production Trust Fund, and the remaining coming from the Four Percent Low-income Housing Tax credits, a program of the Federal Government. 

Broadnax, who volunteers at EBOL, is a CPA with experience at both the city and federal levels, said she is used to working with big numbers. At one point, she said, she was the controller for Human Services in D.C., with a budget of $2.4 billion. 

“Maybe if I didn’t have the background that I have, I would have been afraid to do some of these deals we’ve had to do,” Broadnax said. “There were times when we were looking for, like, $2 million to close gaps, and I said, ‘This is nothing, we can do this.’” 

Throughout construction, Daniels said the book of Nehemiah, chapters one through six (restoring Jerusalem’s walls), has accompanied him on the journey. In addition, John 12:20 and John 5:1-9 have been foundational Scriptures for him. “We need to be concerned and we need to be caring, compassionate fighters for justice for people who live on the margins,” Daniels said. 

One piece of the problem, Daniels said, is that people who serve in the infrastructure of the city – teachers, police officers, hotel workers – can’t afford to live in the city. “The housing we’re providing is not only helping people moving from homelessness to residency,” he said, “it is also helping people who are the working poor.” 

Daniels said he is extremely proud of his congregation, who has had to worship in a nearby school for the past three years. “They have had to weather many storms during this whole construction process,” Daniels said. “We’ve had delays, we’ve had times when we thought the project was stopped, we’ve had times when we thought the vision was erased.” 

Three principles, Daniels said, have helped the congregation: patience, persistence, and prayer. “Those three things have held us together and gotten us through,” he said. “But the good news is, the best is yet to come.”