

## 2018 Annual Conference Primer



### **Guide for First-Time Lay Members to the Baltimore-Washington Conference Download a print-friendly PDF of this article**

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BWC Communications Staff

There are 132 annual conferences around the world, with 56 in the United States. The Baltimore-Washington Conference, in the Northeastern Jurisdiction, is led by Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, who was elected as a bishop at the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference in 2016.

Bishops often serve for two consecutive four-year terms. Our conference has 628 churches or charges and approximately 160,000 members. Bishop Easterling presides over the Annual Conference Session

Every year, about one-third of Lay Members to the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference Session are new. We offer this short guide to help familiarize them – and remind others – of the nuts and bolts and ministry opportunities in holy conferencing.

The BWC offices are located at 11711 East Market Place, Fulton, MD 20759-2594, in the Maple Lawn community of Howard County. Conference staff includes the bishop; eight district superintendents and their respective district administrators; regional resource people; several program or discipleship staff;

and financial/operations and communications staff. Altogether, there are about 50 people on the conference staff.

The Baltimore-Washington Conference is made up of regions and districts. The BWC has four regions, and each region has two districts, presided over by a district superintendent.

#### Annapolis Southern Region

- Annapolis District – Rev. Evan Young
- Washington East District – Rev. Rebecca Iannicelli

#### Baltimore Region

- Baltimore Metropolitan – Rev. Wanda Duckett
- Baltimore Suburban – Rev. Ann LaPrade

#### Washington Region

- Central Maryland – Rev. JW Park
- Greater Washington – Rev. Gerry Green

#### Western Region

- Cumberland-Hagerstown – Rev. Conrad Link
- Frederick – Rev. Edgardo Rivera

Each local church and charge belongs to a district. Most churches or charges (two or more churches with one pastor) are presided over by either an ordained Elder or a probationary Elder; some smaller congregations are served by local pastors or student pastors.

#### **Who are members of annual conference?**



All clergy (Elders and Deacons) hold their membership in the Annual Conference, not in a local church. Diaconesses and diaconal ministers, both retired and active, are lay members of Annual Conference. The Book of Discipline requires an equal number of laity and clergy to be members of the Annual Conference Session. To be a voting member, a lay person must be elected by his or her local church through a nomination and voting process that is held at the annual Church Conference.

The Church Conference is to the local church what the Annual Conference Session is to the Conference; i.e., the annual business meeting. Church Conferences may happen more often, but they must happen at least once a year, under the rules of the Book of Discipline. A district superintendent or her/his designee presides. The laity are members of Annual Conference – not delegates. There are several “at-large” members to Annual Conference, who, by virtue of their district, conference or national positions, are also voting members of the Annual Conference.

## **234rd SESSION OF THE BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON CONFERENCE**

Theme: “We Are One: Beneath the Cross”

The Annual Conference Session is presided over by Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, who is the legal chairperson of the Annual Conference. Other officers include the Conference Secretary (Cynthia Taylor), elected for a four-year term at the beginning of the quadrennium; the Conference Treasurer (Paul Eichelberger); the Conference Lay Leader (Delores Martin); and the Chancellor (Thomas Starnes). The bishop’s decisions must conform to the Rules of Order. Under our rules, during debate, the bishop recognizes each person asking to speak, and allows three minutes, with no more than three speakers allowed to speak for, or three persons allowed to speak against a motion or amendment.

### **What is the business of Annual Conference Session?**



This year, members will be called upon to vote on several items including the 2019 annual budget and several resolutions, which are all presented on the conference website.

Annual Conference also includes many opportunities for inspirational worship, reports from the Discipleship and Stewardship areas of the conference; a memorial service recognizing those clergy, clergy spouses and lay members who died in the previous 12 months; recognition of clergy who are retiring, and the Ordination and Commissioning service. Worked in are celebrations of various kinds, Bible study and times of fellowship.



## Who can vote and how do I vote?



When you register, you are given a packet of materials, a name tag and a voting card that has a color-coded ribbon attached according to various categories. Laity cards have white ribbons. A reserve lay member has a green ribbon. Full clergy members, both Elders and Deacons, have blue ribbons. Probationary members, local pastors, retired local pastors and affiliate clergy (those from other denominations) have yellow ribbons. Anyone with a red ribbon is staff.

Early in the conference schedule, the bishop declares the boundaries of the bar. People who are not allowed to vote, i.e. guests and friends, staff and a few others, must sit "outside the bar." To be eligible and able to vote, you must sit "inside the bar." Marshalls and ushers monitor the doors carefully and direct people, according to the color of their badge ribbon, to the proper sections. Lay members vote. Clergy vote. Guests do not.

Any voter may speak from the floor to a motion, but no one person may speak more than twice on any given motion. The bishop controls who speaks, establishing that there can be three for and three against the motion before debate is cut off. Robert's Rules of Order are followed.

Reserve members, elected by each church, can only vote when they are substituting for the Lay Member and have officially been recognized by the Conference Secretary. Reserves may attend to hear the debate and procedures, but may not vote.

Someone speaking to a motion is asked to give his or her name and their church before beginning to speak to only one issue. If proposing an amendment, the speaker is asked to write out a statement and give a copy to the secretaries who are sitting in the front of the ballroom to assure that the words are recorded properly. The bishop tries to honor all sections of the room and to not let either gender dominate. Young people may get precedence.

Any member may "move for the question," which takes precedence over the debate going on. It requires two-thirds agreement. The Annual Conference Session follows its own "Rules of the Session." In any parliamentary situation not clearly covered by the Rules of the Session, the Conference is governed in its actions by the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order.



What if I have questions?

You'll find all staff friendly and willing to help; if the person you ask doesn't have the answer, he or she can probably point to someone who does. Here are some specific ones to contact:

**Highlighters:** Those volunteers in neon vests will point you to where you need to go, where the meetings, lunches, celebrations, exhibit room and prayer room are. That's their job. If they don't know the answer, they'll direct you to someone who does.

**Business office:** With questions of membership and who can vote, or questions of payments, go to the business office.

Ushers and marshals: The ushers and marshals can help with questions dealing with the seating in the ballroom, who can vote, etc.

Communications and press office: For questions dealing with the public, the videos being seen, subscriptions and the Daily Connection, go to the communications office.

UMConnection Daily: Read the daily newsletter produced by the Communications office and available by 8 a.m. each day. It includes the calendar for the day with the latest information, review of legislation passed (or turned down), introduction of special speakers and a recap of the previous day's business. Most people save their copies to take home to help with their reports to their congregations.

Website: The conference Website is at [www.bwcumc.org](http://www.bwcumc.org). A summary of the actions of annual conference will be posted on the website to assist you in reporting to your local church. As a leader in the conference, you want to also subscribe to the e-connection, a weekly electronic newsletter, which provides timely news and information about the church. You can subscribe online.

Also, don't miss the new BWC app.