

## COMMISSION ON ARCHIVES & HISTORY

The Commission is also grateful to the Conference and to its Board of Trustees, in particular, for their generous support of our work in this past year. As always, we are grateful to members and supporters of the Conference Historical Society for their continuing generosity, and to members and supporters of the Strawbridge Shrine Association for their generosity toward our Conference's premiere Heritage Landmark.

### ANNIVERSARIES

Last year marked the Bicentennial of Bishop Asbury's death. The archival component of the commemoration involved conservation of two manuscripts from the collection mentioned above. The manuscripts were the Ordination Certificate of Francis Asbury signed and sealed by Thomas Coke, and an 1800 letter to Francis Asbury from his mother, Elizabeth.

The original documents were expertly conserved and good quality facsimiles created by the Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts in Philadelphia, work costing \$8,500. In addition, a framed facsimile of the Charles Peale Polk portrait of Bishop Asbury was created locally and, along with the manuscripts, shipped to England for commemorations there at an additional cost of \$1,680.

The cost of this conservation and replication work was funded by our Conference Historical Society, which also pledged \$6,000 toward the conservation of the Bishop's Lot at Mt. Olivet Cemetery, and incurred additional expenses related to the commemoration.

We are indebted to the Conference Trustees for paying the major portion of the improvements at Mt. Olivet and to Lovely Lane Church which owns and maintains this cemetery. We are also most grateful to the Tegeler Monument Co. for their generosity and expertise which enabled this project to be completed in time for the commemoration which is detailed in the separate United Methodist Historical Society report.

This year, 2017, congratulations are in order for Morgan State University, which was founded 150 years ago by the Washington Conference as the Centenary Biblical Institute. The Sesquicentennial observance was launched with services Sunday, December 11, 2016, at the Sharp Street Memorial Church. A Christmas Day meeting convened by Bishop Levi Scott in 1866 began the work of organizing the institute established the next year in the Sharp Street Church. The institute was rechristened Morgan College in 1890, became a state institution in 1939, and a university in 1975.

Rev. Lyttleton F. Morgan, for whom the college was named, was a member of the Baltimore Conference assigned to Baltimore City Station (the once and future Lovely Lane Church) in 1866, and would become the chair of the Centenary Trustees and a great benefactor of the Institute 10 years later. The Baltimore Conference, influenced by Morgan and his successor in the chair, the Rev. John F. Goucher, would offer financial support to this Washington Conference institution. During the service at Sharp Street Memorial, University President David Wilson observed that "Morgan owes its very existence to this church," and expressed the university's gratitude to "our Sharp Street antecedents, many of them unnamed and unsung, and to those supporters and leaders at Lovely Lane Church, most of whose names we know, who committed to this endeavor the resources that our ancestors lacked."

The Rev. Bernard Keels, University Chaplain, remembered that "the Centenary Biblical Institute took those inaugural steps that have led into the door of the Sesquicentennial celebration of a world-class institution known by all as Morgan State University. How the hearts of those founding fathers and mothers must leap for joy on this sacred morning as we approach the dawn of a 150-year legacy!"

### HISTORIC SITES AND LANDMARKS

We are grateful that last year's General Conference approved the nomination of the United Methodist Building on Capitol Hill as a Heritage Landmark of The United Methodist Church. You may recall that this was approved by the 2015 Annual Conference as a United Methodist Historic Site (reg. no. 503). It is unusual that a site advances to Landmark status the year after it is designated a historic site and we thank the General Commission on Archives and History for expediting this process.

The United Methodist Building is the first Heritage Landmark in the District of Columbia and the sixth within the bounds of our conference. Three were designated before church unification in 1968: the Strawbridge Shrine (Methodist), Old Otterbein Church (Evangelical United Brethren), and the Lovely Lane Meetinghouse site (Methodist). The Cokesbury College site was later advanced from Historic Site status (reg. no. 125), but the first new Landmark designated in our conference was the United Brethren Founding Sites Cluster (reg. no. 33).

This "Cluster" consists of two clusters related to Philip William Otterbein's ministry and the founding of the United Brethren

Church. In Frederick are Otterbein's Trinity Chapel (UCC) and the commemorative Centennial Church nearby, as well as the private home where the United Brethren Church was organized in 1800. In the vicinity of Keedysville in Washington County are the Old Mt. Hebron Churchyard, site of the colonial Geeting Meetinghouse, along with three private homes. Because of its historic significance, the property containing the Geeting Meetinghouse site was the subject of archaeological survey in 1950 and was later acquired by the Susquehanna Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church and transferred to this Conference after church unification. The property is on an unimproved road inaccessible by car at times, but was maintained by Salem Church, Keedysville, until last year when that local church informed the Conference Trustees that it could no longer carry out this responsibility.

George Adam Geeting immigrated from Prussia about 1760 and opened a school in colonial Frederick County (Washington County after 1776). He was commissioned a local lay preacher during Otterbein's Reformed Church pastorate in Frederick. By 1774, according to the minutes of Otterbein's Pipe Creek conferences of evangelical reformed preachers, Geeting's Schoolhouse had been replaced by a "church," the meetinghouse.

The status of both Geeting and this church within the Reformed Church is debated. In 1783 Otterbein came from Baltimore to ordain Geeting but that ordination was not recognized by the Reformed Church which, five years later, grudgingly re-ordained him at Otterbein's request "for reason that he might render assistance to Dr. Otterbein as well as to the congregation since, on account of the distance of the locality [from Baltimore], Otterbein can not go there often." Pastor Geeting attended the Reformed Synods of 1794 and 1797 but did not submit pastoral reports from Keedysville and did not report his activity in forming another "Society of United Christians," later St. Paul's United Brethren Church, at Hagerstown in 1790. He was expelled from the Reformed Church ministry after participating in the formation of the United Brethren Church in 1800 and is sometimes cited as that Church's first minister and his meetinghouse as its first house of worship.

The Commission commends this history to the attention of the Conference and the Board of Trustees in hopes that this Heritage Landmark can be preserved, and we offer whatever assistance might help in that effort. This is the only Heritage Landmark owned by the Conference; all others are the responsibility of local churches, with exception of the United Methodist Building, owned by the General Board of Church and Society, and the Strawbridge Shrine.

The Strawbridge Shrine Association suffered a grievous loss on the last day of 2016 with the sudden death of its president, the Rev. James F.W. Talley. Pastor Talley had been active in the Shrine since his service as Conference Program Director in the 1970's and lived next to the site in retirement. His presence and ministry among us will be greatly missed. His final report on the Shrine appears in the separate report of the Strawbridge Shrine Association.

## ARCHIVES

Last spring, the Conference Trustees pledged up to \$11,000 toward the renovation of the archival vault at Lovely Lane. This allowed us to replace shelving which had corroded and rusted with new laminated shelving which can be double-loaded, thereby improving the climate and increasing the capacity of the existing vault. In addition, the lighting in the vault was replaced with energy efficient light-emitting diode (LED) fixtures. We hope to purchase additional cabinets and art racks for the vault as we clear floor space for them.

The archives and the museum at Lovely Lane were closed for 90 days this past summer as we emptied the vault during the renovation. Last August (on possibly the hottest day of the year), volunteers from Lovely Lane Church and the Historical Society helped to move this material, the rusted shelving and other surplus material out of the vault and the catacombs under the church.

At the end of 2016, we accessioned the records of the closed Centennial-Caroline Street Church. This church is the last remnant of several churches in Fells Point and Oldtown, Baltimore. They trace their origin to the Methodist society organized by Joseph Pilmore at Fells Point in 1772, on the same day that he organized the first Methodist society across the basin (the harbor) in Baltimore. As the custodian of the history of these churches in Fells Point and Oldtown, Baltimore, we hope to highlight their history at next year's Annual Conference which meets in that section of Baltimore.

*Robert Shindle, Conference Archivist & Director of Archives & History*