



“I want you to get out there and walk—better yet, run!—on the road God called you to travel.” – Ephesians 4

Walk/Run opportunity at AC. See pg. 8

UMC Connection

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Church forms partnerships for mission

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

“ASK AND YOU shall receive” is a simple Gospel promise, but at Mt. Olive UMC in Randallstown, it’s opening up new possibilities for mission and partnership.

It started last year, when Houston, Florida and Puerto Rico were slammed by hurricanes. The Rev. Sheridan Allmond, pastor at Mt. Olive, asked the youth leader, Cynthia Taylor, about the church’s youth group assembling and contributing cleaning buckets to the disaster victims through the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

The supplies totaled more than \$65 per bucket, so Cynthia stopped by her local Home Depot store and asked if they would be interested in donating large orange buckets.

That store gave her a gift card. She then asked at another nearby Home Depot,

See Partnership, page 5



Mt. Olive UMC in Randallstown partnered with Home Depot and other retailers to create flood relief buckets, which they sent forth with a blessing.

Bishop’s gift creates new pool at A.U.

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

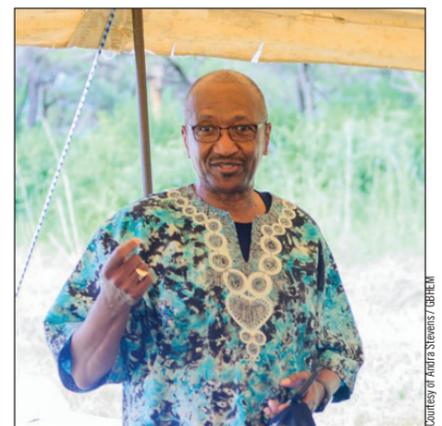
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN the Baltimore-Washington Conference and Africa University stretches back decades, even to the point before it actually existed. That relationship went a little deeper recently with the groundbreaking of a new swimming pool at Africa University, the first piece of a new Sports Complex on campus.

The money for the pool comes from the BWC through the gifts given in honor of Bishop Marcus Matthews’ 2016 retirement. Members made a splash by raising more than \$330,000.

“I will always be indebted to the laity and clergy of the Baltimore-Washington Conference for our ministry together,” said Bishop Matthews. “I cherish those days I served among you as pastor, district superintendent, council director and bishop. Your gift to Barbara and me through the funds raised for a fitness/sports complex at Africa University will always be dear to my heart. We praise God that a swimming pool — as the first stage of that process — is now becoming a reality. Thank you for your support of Africa University and our global church. May God continue to be glorified through your ministry.”

Africa University, created by the 1988 General Conference of The United Methodist Church, opened its doors four years later, with the first graduates coming in 1994.

In 2007, the Baltimore-Washington Conference joined in a partnership with United Methodists in the Zimbabwe Episcopal Area, the location of Africa University. One of the cornerstones of the partnership is the Pastors’ School,



Bishop Marcus Matthews

held every two years at Africa University, with BWC leaders providing most of the

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BWC set to meet beneath the cross

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff



MORE THAN 300 United Methodists from throughout the Baltimore-Washington Conference did just that April 21, attending one of two Pre-Conference Briefings to prepare for the upcoming Annual Conference Session.

Meeting first at Jackson Chapel UMC in Frederick, and then at St. John United Church in Columbia, members learned about resolutions coming to the 234th Session, the proposed budget, special guests and speakers, and more. An opportunity for questions was also offered at both.

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling will preside over her second Annual Conference Session, which meets May 30-June 1, in Baltimore. The theme for this year: “We Are One: Beneath the Cross.”

“Beneath the cross, the ground is level,” said Bishop Easterling. She said her prayer for the Session was that we would remember United Methodists are “Easter people,” and she invited all to gather in Baltimore in that spirit.

“The time we come together is a time of holy conferencing,” the bishop said. “It’s a time not to do our work, but God’s work. This is not a prolonged and protracted business meeting, although we will do the church’s business. It’s out time of holy conferencing. We’re coming together as children of God to pray our way together into the future.”

Bishop Easterling noted that the Rev. Shively T.J. Smith will lead the Bible study on Thursday and Friday mornings. Smith is on the faculty at Wesley Theological Seminary as a professor of New Testament. Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey will speak at the Ordination Service, scheduled for Thursday night, May 31. Harvey is the episcopal leader of the Louisiana Area. The Rev. Craig McLaughlin will preach at the Memorial Service, June 1, at 10 a.m. He is the pastor at Mt. Zion UMC in Bel Air. And, Bishop Forrest Stith, retired, is scheduled to speak at the clergy retiree lunch, she said.

Delores Martin, Lay Leader for the BWC, said that the laity session this year will feature addresses from three district lay leaders: Ophelia Brown Carter, Baltimore Metropolitan; Kim Carr, Annapolis; and Rosalind Pinkney, Washington East. Barbara Lemmel will lead the session through a time on effective leadership, and Rick Vance, the national director of United Methodist Men’s ministry, will discuss domestic violence.

“Invite as many lay people from your church to come,” Martin said, adding that a person does not have to be an elected lay member to Annual Conference to attend the laity session. The laity session will be held May 30, starting at 2 p.m.

The BWC’s new Director of Connectional Ministries, Christie Latona, gave a preview of proposed changes for how the conference will be structured for effective disciple-making. After finding

See Pre-Con, page 3

As news unfolds
As this issue goes to press, we are awaiting news from the Council of Bishops on a new way forward on the issue of homosexuality and the church. Keep up to date on this important work by going to bwcumc.org, and by visiting facebook.com/bwcumc.



Ancient church mothers and fathers often greeted one another with the phrase, "Give me a word." This greeting led to the sharing of insights and wisdom. Today we continue this tradition with this monthly column.

By MANDY SAYERS
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

"Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." (1 Cor. 11:1)

IT SEEMS AT first that Paul is being conceited. Oh really, Paul? Imitate you? What happened to humility? Yet in the church, we learn to be disciples by following the examples of others. Like an apprentice learning a craft on the job, we follow in the footsteps of folks with more experience. We follow their example. Ask a leader in your church how they became a leader and you will hear names of folks who brought them along, taught them, and helped them grow into believers and followers of Christ.

Particularly in the current political climate, people are looking to us, whether we like it or not, to see what a Christian looks like. How does a Christian walk and talk? What sorts of choices do Christians make? How do we behave when we disagree? Very quickly, we see that we move from outsider/seeker/visitor to being an example to someone else, both inside and outside the church.

Our son, Nathan, is a junior in high school who runs cross-country. When I read Paul's words to him, he said, "Oh no, Paul isn't being conceited." He said that when he was at his first practice, he thought he was going to die from fatigue. He wanted to stop running and collapse. Suddenly next to him, there was Alexei, an upperclassman. He said, "Don't stop running. It's actually easier to run this than to walk it. Run with me. Match my pace, do what I do."

Now, Nathan is the upperclassman who helps folks at the back of the pack during practice. Nathan said, "Paul is being a good teammate. He's bringing folks along. I couldn't follow the lead guy — he was too fast; I could hardly see him. But I could follow Alexei. And eventually, I got better, by following his example."

Christ is the ultimate perfect example, but we are all examples too. Let us be so connected to Jesus that we can come alongside folks in the struggle and say, "Don't give up. Match my steps. Imitate me."

EXAMPLE

By DARYL WILLIAMS
Pastor, St. Paul UMC, Oxon Hill

THE MOST TERRIFYING words that an elementary school student could hear in my day were, "I'm going to make an example out of you." Those words typically meant that you had done something wrong, you had gotten caught, and your punishment was going to be bad enough to deter anybody else from committing the same atrocity that you had committed.

There were no circumstances under which you wanted to be made an example. It wasn't until years later, after finding out what the word "example" actually meant, that I overcame my fear and realized that being an example was not something to be feared, but could be something to be embraced.

By definition, an example is something or someone that serves as a pattern to be imitated or not to be imitated. I always thought being an example was a bad thing, until I realized you (as an example) could be a good thing showing others what to do.

Paul wrote to Timothy saying, "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity." Paul was telling Timothy, and all of us, that we can be an example not of what not to do, but rather of a better way of living.

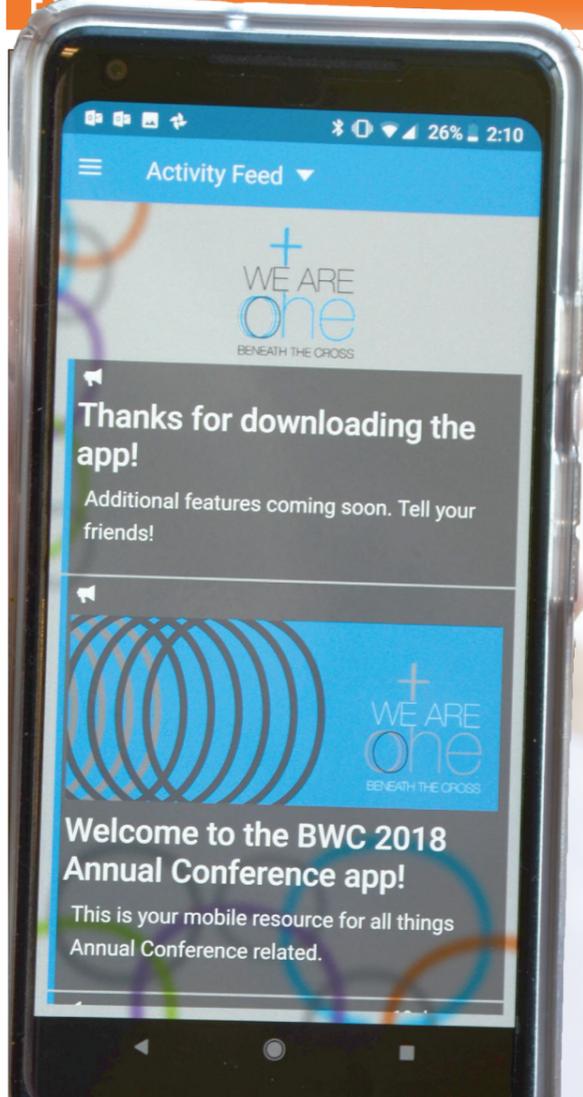
When we proclaim ourselves to be Christians, we must remember that people are always watching. They want to see what kind of example we are going to set.

When we go into our places of business, what kind of example are we setting? When we face hard times, what kind of example are we setting? When we face difficult decisions, what kind of example are we setting?

As believers, it is our job to be an example of the blessings of God. It is our duty to let our light so shine so that all the world can see what faith in action and belief in the Almighty looks like.

So as you go day to day, remember God has set you up to be an example. Be a good one.

EVENTS



The BWC has teamed up with GCFA to bring you an exciting new app for the Annual Conference Session. Before you arrive at the session, you'll want to download it.

- Search the App or Google Play stores for UMCMeet.
- Click "Get" or "Install;" then click open.
- Click "Allow Notifications." (We promise not to annoy you.)
- Select BWC 2018 Annual Conference
- Enter the password: bwc2018
- The three lines in the top left corner (the "hamburger") hold your menu
- Explore, share, learn, and app-solutely let us know if there's any information you don't see that would be helpful (see what we did there?).



SAVE THE DATE

Come to the re-Call summit for courageous conversation on race and justice.

October 26-27, 2018

Keynote speakers: the Revs. Jim Wallis & Marvin McMickle



UMConnection

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This symbol appears with stories that show your apportionment dollars at work, making a difference in people's lives.

Pre-Con: Members get preview of upcoming AC session

From page 1

that most of the 17 Discipleship Agencies in the BWC were not meeting regularly or functioning at all, Latona sought to “connect the dots” for doing discipleship.

“We are moving to clarify our work into five areas: Leadership development; young people’s ministry; abundant health; advocacy and action; and new faith expressions,” Latona said. “Clarifying and simplifying will help people find their place in ministry.”

In money matters, Phil Potter, chair of the BWC’s Council on Finance and Administration (CFA), highlighted the proposed 2019 budget. However, he first thanked local churches for their strong stewardship and support in 2017.

“We’re celebrating the faithfulness and dedication of local churches and their efforts last year,” Potter said. “Last year was a record year for giving, with apportionment receipts coming in at 92.25 percent, an all-time record.”

Potter noted that total church income also grew significantly last year, showing that the BWC is, as he put it, “a financially healthy conference.”

For 2019, the proposed budget reflects a slight increase in apportionment income,

from \$14.26 million to \$14.29 million. This would be the seventh year in a row that income expectations stayed flat, Potter said. Expenses would match income, Potter said. The benevolence factor – a percentage used by the conference to help determine apportionment amounts – would be reduced in 2019, from 17.725 percent to 17.600 percent.

The proposed budget also aligns with the five areas of Discipleship Ministries, outlined by Latona.

CFA is charged by the Book of Discipline to “develop, maintain, and administer a comprehensive and coordinated plan of fiscal and administrative policies, procedures, and management services for the annual conference.” (§612.1) As such,

Potter outlined potential risks CFA sees down the road. One of those risks is the change in current tax law and how that might affect charitable giving. Potter said that CFA doesn’t expect much difference because of this change, because “people give not to reduce taxes, but to support the ministry of the church.”

The other risk, Potter said, is in anticipation of what may happen at the 2019 Special Session of General Conference. Once that session is over, it is possible that some churches may leave the denomination. CFA is prepared, he said, if apportionment income drops 10, 15, or even 25 percent. Contingency plans have been drawn up, including using reserves, reducing grants to local churches, reducing staff, and reducing amounts paid to the general church.

Presenters of each of the six resolutions coming to Annual Conference had five minutes to talk about their proposals. The resolutions are online at www.bwcmc.org/events/annual-conference/annual-conference-2018-resolutions/.

All the slides shown at the Pre-Conference Briefings are available online, at www.bwcmc.org.



Delores Martin, BWC Lay Leader, shares information about the Laity Session for the upcoming Annual Conference Session later this month.



Bishop LaTrelle Easterling prays for the member of the BWC at the Pre-Conference Briefing at Jackson Chapel UMC in Frederick.



More than 300 members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference attended the Pre-Conference Briefings. Above, finance leaders sing at Jackson Chapel.

Pool: First phase of Sports Complex at Africa U. begins

From page 1

support in resources and instructors. The most recent school occurred in 2017.

James Salley, Associate Vice-Chancellor for Institutional Advancement in the Africa University Development Office, said that the new pool is an important step in the advancement of the school.

“When you come to Africa University,” Salley said, “you’re going to get a world-class academic and learning experience, but we’re

also working on our students’ sports and social experiences.”

With the latter in mind, Salley said, the Sports Complex was begun. The pool is the first phase. As additional resources are received, the complex will take shape. The pool is expected to be completed by the end of July.

Salley said that Vice Chancellor Munashe Furusa talked with students at the school and asked them what they wanted today on campus regarding sports. The consensus answer was a swimming pool. Africa

University already has soccer and rugby fields, and tennis and basketball courts.

An outdoor pool for now, it is 25 by 22 meters, Salley said, but can be expanded to Olympic standards (50 meters long) later. Groundbreaking for the pool took place on March 24, with Bishop Matthews and Carol and Charlie Moore, among others, present to represent the BWC.

The pool will help Africa University recruit new students, Salley said. The school already hosts national and regional soccer and rugby

competitions, and the new pool will boost their ability to host those kinds of activities.

“People in the BWC need to know how thankful we are and how blessed we feel by their investments in enhancing the student’s life on the campus,” said Salley. “They are helping us help the students have a quality, whole, wonderful and enjoyable and healthful experience as they matriculate at Africa University.”



Bishop Marcus Matthews (center) is joined by others from the BWC and Africa University at the groundbreaking for the new pool.



Construction has already begun on the new swimming pool at Africa University.

Photos by Melissa Lanier

Memphis sojourn commemorates King's death

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff



ON APRIL 4, 1968, an assassin's bullet cut short the life of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. King was in Memphis, Tenn., when he was murdered, lending his voice and his cause to African Americans involved in a sanitation worker's strike in that city.

Fifty years later, people around the world paused to remember and reflect on King's tragic death. Among them were a group of clergy and laity from the Baltimore-Washington Conference who made a sojourn to Memphis the first week of April.

The creation of the Rev. Claire Matheny, the trip was designed to offer participants an opportunity to learn more about King's life, racial justice, racism, and to see a little bit of Memphis on the side. Matheny serves as associate pastor at St. Paul's UMC in Kensington.

A "double PK" (Pastor's Kid), Matheny is a fourth-generation United Methodist who was born and raised in Memphis. She knew she wanted to attend the events surrounding the 50th anniversary of King's death, but after being in Mississippi last summer after

her grandmother's death, she kept hearing the Holy Spirit saying, "Don't go alone."

"I didn't have a great sense of what that meant," Matheny said. "Certainly, it meant I could take a group from St. Paul's, but I was getting the sense to draw the net wider."

She shared that thought at last fall's "Re-Call Summit," and from there, the trip took off. The BWC helped support the planning and execution of the trip.

The Rev. Stacey Cole Wilson helped support the trip and became a participant herself. The Executive Minister of Justice and Service for the BWC, Cole Wilson said her parents were married the week King was killed. She has heard many stories from her parents about the climate of America during those days, she said.

"For me, it was an opportunity to understand the depth and gravity of what happened that week from a 21st century perspective," Cole Wilson said.

One of the most powerful moments for Cole Wilson was when the group visited the Lorraine Motel and National Civil Rights Museum on April 4. At exactly 6:01 p.m., a bell tolled 39 times, one for each year of King's life.



The Rev. Jesse Jackson, left, Terri Lee Freeman, president of the National Civil Rights Museum, and the Rev. Michael Pflieger, a Catholic priest from Chicago, place a wreath outside room 306 at the Lorraine Motel and National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tenn., April 4. Members of the BWC were present as part of a week-long sojourn to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

"The crowd was so noisy up to that moment," Cole Wilson said. "But when the bells started, the entire crowd went silent. That moment was sad for me, incredibly sad. To just think about why he died. He was calling out the sin of racism, and he got killed for it. That was sobering."

A hopeful moment for her was listening to Al Green sing one of King's favorite hymns, "Precious Lord."

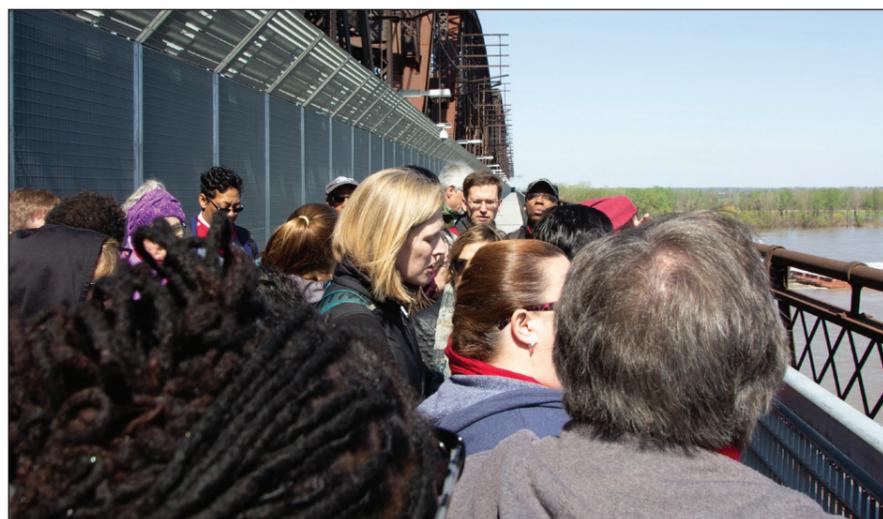
"That's when the life came back (to the crowd)," Cole Wilson said. "It was an infusion of hope."

Matheny said she was inspired to create the trip as part of her response to the "Call to Action," a pledge made by the 2016 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference. That pledge was made after the conference unanimously approved a resolution that called for the church to do more to fight discrimination and to confront racism.

More than 30 people went on the journey, ranging in age from 20 to 72. It was important, Matheny said, that this trip not become a tourist trip; that people had the chance to see "beyond the surface of what Memphis could offer."

"My home town has its ups and downs," Matheny said. "But what I know of Memphis, I felt like it could be a real place where people could not only experience the anniversary and the legacy of King, but also learn something about the historical context of the sanitation strike, and ask the question we're all wrestling with: 'Where do we go now?'"

"The future for us, as local churches (working for racial justice) is combining our efforts," Matheny said. "We need to create space, to have conversation and repentance, and to educate one another."



The Rev. Claire Matheny, center, leads a prayer with BWC members on the recent sojourn to Memphis.

Christ Deaf UMC runs on a ministry-focused road

BY SANDI JOHNSON*

SINCE 1895, CHRIST Deaf UMC has been the place where hearing people could connect with their Deaf, deaf-blind and hearing-impaired sisters and brothers. Now, we are actively responding to the challenge from Ephesians 4 issued at last year's Annual Conference: "I want you to get out there and walk — better yet, run! — on the road God called you to travel. I don't want any of you sitting around on your hands."

The people of Christ Deaf UMC are taking this biblical command to heart and reaching out to creatively engage the greater community.

Deaf and deaf-blind people live in a minority culture set apart from others by barriers to effective communication. As the neighborhood around the church began to have more residents who have recently moved to Baltimore from Myanmar (Burma), it was natural for the people of Christ Deaf UMC to participate in ministries to help their new neighbors learn to communicate.

The church opened its arms and its doors to provide a variety of ministries including English classes, worship and Girl Scouts. Case Workers from the Deaf Shalom Zone began to help with issues ranging from immigration questions to healthcare access.

Another way Christ Deaf UMC engages the community is by providing internship opportunities for hearing students from

several local universities. Every year, 35 or more students build one-on-one relationships with Deaf and deaf-blind people who help them polish their American Sign Language (ASL) skills and learn about the difficulties Deaf and deaf-blind people face in navigating obstacles in employment, health care and the legal system.

Translation: Providing Person-Centered Care to Linguistic Minorities."

This paper concluded: "Pastor Sandi has learned a way to communicate necessary information to her congregants, and the effectiveness of these communication strategies are not limited to the Deaf community. Health care providers must avail themselves of the language services

The full article can be found at: <https://www.healthinnovation.org/news/blog/post?page=lost-in-translation-providing-person-centered-care-to-linguistic-minorities>

Last Fall, two students from St. Timothy's School in Stevenson decided that for their senior project they would learn American Sign Language. When they determined that YouTube videos were not sufficient, they contacted Christ Deaf UMC.

For weeks, the students attended Sign Choir practice and Bible study. As they gained proficiency and confidence, the students began to teach their high school choir to sign along with several songs.

In April, the Sign Choir from Christ Deaf UMC traveled to St. Timothy's School to perform two songs with the student choir. A YouTube video of the final rehearsal can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YrSGQPgYrVw&list=PLCFks31voTeFvuHfbFxDamwtnzsydTEnk&index=87>

"The Message" version of Ephesians 4 warns Christians not to "sit on their hands." Far from sitting on their hands, the people of Christ Deaf UMC are using their hands in American Sign Language to build relationships and share the good news of Jesus Christ with their neighbors and others.

*Sandi Johnson is pastor of Christ Deaf UMC in Magothy.



Members of the Christ Deaf UMC choir perform during worship at the church.

For the past semester, as pastor of Christ Deaf UMC, I've been cooperating with Health Care for All in supervising an intern from the School of Social Work at the University of Maryland. The intern gained experience in working with the congregation and used her learnings to co-author a paper entitled "Lost In

that already exist to provide linguistically appropriate care. But providers can go further by altering their methods of communication to best meet the needs of individuals. Adapting some of the communication strategies used by Pastor Sandi might help providers move toward providing more person-centered, culturally appropriate care."

Casting new visions for new faith expressions

BY RODNEY SMOTHERS*



New Places for New People

In a recent article by Barna Research, they cited the fact that 51 percent of churchgoers don't know the Great Commission. What surprised me in the article is that this stat was not taken from people who don't attend church. Rather Matthew 28:18-20 (The Great Commission) is unfamiliar to 51 percent of churchgoers. If you are interested in learning more about that research you can locate the information in the new Barna report, "Translating the Great Commission."

Creating New Discipleship Pathways

The Conference Lay Leader, Delores Martin and I are developing a new workshop for our congregations that focuses on developing discipleship pathways for our churches. One of the additional resources that we are recommending prior to the training is Mike Schreiner and Ken Willard's new book, "Stride: Creating A New Discipleship Pathway for Your Church." This useful resource outlines a pathway that begins with prayer, reshapes mission, creates workable systems for churches of all sizes, and inspires leadership teams to coach congregations to measure and celebrate making disciples for Jesus Christ.

Partnering for Purpose

As we approach Annual Conference and prepare to refocus and realign our work as skilled servant workers, the five foci — Leadership Development, New

Faith Expressions, Young People's Ministry, Abundant Health, and Advocacy and Action — share a common goal to reach people for Christ through our prayers, engagement and witness.

Programs alone won't change lives. Information by itself will not make a lasting difference. Our goal is to create a culture of transformation where we individually and as congregations ask a compelling question, "Who will do this with me?"

Our strategic focus in creating vital faith communities is dependent upon us moving beyond our silos and creating larger community through shared ministry and mission. "We Are One" is more than a phrase; it's an attitude that renews in us the gift of partnerships and teamwork.

New Faith Communities

The Biblical model for creating new faith communities doesn't begin with a grant or loan, it begins with a vision for creating new places where people can encounter Christ. We have in the past used traditional models for new church development. The future invites us to consider: a-church-within-a-church, spiritual enterprise (coffeehouse, dinner church, etc.); on-line communities; fresh expressions; lay led, part-time planters; and missional churches.

With growing Hispanic populations within our Conference, we must also invest in creating strategic pathways to create new self-sustaining Hispanic ministries.

Collaborative Coaching Cohort

We are blessed in the Baltimore-Washington Conference to have large numbers of trained coaches among our clergy and laity. Look forward to an upcoming invitation to join me in creating a peer collaborative coaching group within the Baltimore-Washington Conference. Together, I believe we have the expertise and gifting to create a coaching culture in our Annual Conference that will significantly assist our pastors and congregations in meaningful ways. If this concept excites you and you would like to be a part of the design team for this cohort, please reach out to me by email: rsmother@bwcumc.org; cell: 443.896.3417; or let's find some time during Annual Conference to have a conversation.

My summer reading list includes re-reading, "Failing Boldly: How Falling Down In Ministry Can Be the Start of Rising Up" by Christian Coon; "Flipping Church: How Successful Church Planters Are Turing Conventional Wisdom Upside-Down" by Michael Baughman; and Bob Crossman's new book, "New Church Handbook: Nuts & Bolts for Planting New Churches in The Wesleyan Tradition."

*Rodney Thomas Smothers is the Director of Leadership and Congregational Development at the Baltimore-Washington Conference.



For more information on Congregational Development, visit bwcumc.org/ministries/congregational-development/



Partnership: 'Always asking' is key to moving forward

From page 1

in Owings Mills, and that's when all her expectations began to be exceeded.

The manager, Mike Weaver, said he could provide 100 buckets. He also was curious about what more the church might need. Taylor shared about how Mt. Olive's feeding programs could benefit from a self-defrosting freezer. The manager came out to the church to learn more.

He helped Taylor fill out a grant application and a relationship started. The grant included LED lights and closets to replace the cabinets in the food pantry.

In keeping with their corporate philosophy, the Home Depot Foundation also suggested that some of their employees could assist with the work in the pantry.

"We began to realize when you're doing something positive, there are people who want to help you do it," Taylor said.

The grant was approved in about three weeks and

Allmond and Taylor headed to Home Depot to pick out the new freezer.

Allmond said that this contribution and new partnership will enhance the church's Loaves and Fishes ministry, which serves about 50 individuals and families each month, and its Community Meal.

The meal, which is held each month, serves an average of 100 children and adults.

Home Depot "challenged us to look beyond our goals to see what is possible with their assistance. Our collaboration with them is continuing and their impact will be felt for many years to come," Allmond said.

But the impact is not just felt on the receiving end, the pastor noted. It also brings to the church members and others who volunteer a "sense of gratitude and the grace of God that comes with being of service that cannot be measured."

Watching people awaken to the spiritual gifts that come with giving emboldened Taylor to continue to ask.

To fill the buckets, she completed online grant applications for Wegmans and other area stores. Wegmans contributed a gift card that was used to purchase needed items.

Monahan's Pub, a local restaurant, pledged to provide lunch food for future projects.

The Rev. Fred Sipes,

who chairs the Baltimore-Washington Conference Disaster Response Team, came to Mt. Olive to teach the church about the connectional system and how they are in partnership with thousands of other United Methodists responding to natural disasters.

The youth had the supplies to complete 21 buckets, with almost all of the \$1,300 in the required supplies donated by local stores, church members and other individuals. The remainder of the buckets and supplies were donated to Sipes, who will use them at one of the BWC's three disaster relief supply hubs.

While the church is very mission-minded, these partnerships are beginning to expand their ideas of what is possible, said Taylor, who also serves as the secretary of the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

From their experiences, Taylor and Allmond offer several words of advice to others seeking to create partnerships.

Most important, said Taylor, is to ask in person. Don't rely on letters or email. She learned that many companies have online grant applications.

Also, Allmond advised, "Don't limit the number of organizations or businesses you reach out to. You never know who will be willing

to assist. Some organizations require more information and time to respond than others. Consider collaborations that bear long-term fruit, not just your immediate needs."

"When I'm working with a purpose," Taylor said, "especially a purpose like serving God, it emboldens you. Just ask."



ABOVE: Cynthia Taylor admires the new freezer. LEFT: Rev. Ann Laprade helped pack a flood bucket.

Photos by Melissa Lanier

Did You Know?

Manna House grew out of the United Methodist Church and is now in its 53rd year of service.

What Can You Do?

Manna House needs churches that will feed the homeless one meal per year.

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Visit www.mannahouseinc.org

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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Church offers bikers respite

EMMITSBURG - Tom's Creek UMC on April 29, suspended Sunday school and worship in order to welcome bikers from around the nation. The church sort of fell into the ministry.

Originally, as the bikers passed by the area, the congregants and community cheered them on. The riders include veterans who were wounded and ride specialty bikes that allow them to bike even though they have no arms or no legs. Then a couple years ago, their leader asked if they could use the property as a rest stop on the long journey from Arlington, Va., to Gettysburg, Pa. They asked for volunteers to help feed and care for them.

Done! "This was the best rest stop on their entire journey," said the Rev. Heath Wilson, "so after last year we are considered a sponsor of the event." The event is held at the church's Promised Land property off Rt. 140 about three miles from Emmitsburg.

In addition to food and bathrooms, the church provided a blue grass/gospel band from Calvert County to play patriotic music.

Congregations 'rise against hunger'

GLEN BURNIE - Ninety people from a variety of congregations gathered at Glen Burnie UMC April 14, to "Rise Against Hunger" and work together to package more than 10,000 meals. They did it in a record time of 90 minutes. Rise Against Hunger is an international hunger relief organization that ships meal packages to needed areas around the world.

The packaging process is run like an assembly line, with volunteers at each station combining rice, soy, dehydrated vegetables and a vitamin-enhanced flavoring mix into packages that will feed a family of six.

With no prior experience and after minimal directions, teams of all ages were working like well-oiled machines, said Richard Campbell. Everyone left with a feeling of accomplishment as they learned that their packages, enough to feed 60,912 hungry people, would probably be delivered to Puerto Rico and St. Martinique, both devastated by hurricanes.



Candidates prepare for ministry

CAMP MANIDOKAN - Several leaders in the BWC recently participated in the annual License to Preach School. Each year, the training is provided to candidates who are in the early stages of preparing for ordained ministry, or are serving local churches. The course requires 80 hours of classes.



Pictured (from L to R) are the instructors and students: Rev. Frances Stewart, Rev. S. Jerry Colbert (Dean), Rev. Walt Edmonds, Rev. Michael Beiber, Mark Eyer, Ralph Saunders, Kevin Beall, Rev. John Nupp; center, Debbie Mooney, Vernona Colbert and Marvene Young; and seated, Taeron Flemming and Lucinda. Photo was taken April 13 at Vesper Point.

Dean of this year's course was Jerry Colbert, a part-time local pastor serving John Wesley UMC in Annapolis. Faculty included the Revs. Frances Stewart, Walt Edmonds, Michael Beiber and John Nupp.

Missing man's body is found

WALDORF - Missing for more than seven weeks, Dr. Tim Cunningham's body was found drowned in the Chattahoochee River in northwest Atlanta, not far from his home, according to the April 7 Chattanooga Times Free Press.

Cunningham, 35, was the son of Terrell and Tia Cunningham who are long-time members of The Journey of Faith UMC in Waldorf. He grew up in Washington East

District churches. After Morehouse and Harvard degrees, he began his career as an epidemiologist at the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control. Cunningham had received an "exceptional proficiency promotion" July 1 to the position of commander.

He disappeared Feb. 12 and his family reported him missing Feb. 16. An intensive search came up blank until a fisherman discovered his decomposed body in a remote area not easily accessible in early April. The Fulton County, Ga., chief medical examiner said the cause of death was drowning and there were no signs of foul play.

\$100 in your pocket?

A camera in your hand could equal \$100 in your pocket. Three \$100 prizes will be given to the winner of "Light," the BWC's photo contest. Jesus said, "You are the light of the world." How do you see his words being lived out today in your life and your church?

No age limit. No limit on number of entries. Submit your contest entries, before May 15, to mflauber@bwcumc.org. Winners will be announced at the Annual Conference Session.

COMMENTARY: Responses to new BOOM policy vary

BY ELLEN BACHMAN*

I AM GRATEFUL FOR the recent announcement of the Baltimore-Washington Conference's Board of Ordained Ministry (BOOM), that they "do not view race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status or age" as barriers to ministry, and further stating that they "will not consider or evaluate sexual orientation or gender identity, nor see them to be sufficient reasons to deny a candidate's ability to live up to our United Methodist standards."

As a member of Baltimore Washington Area Reconciling Methodists (BWARM), I have worked, for many years, for a more complete acceptance of LGBTQIA+ people in our denomination, that we might fully live up to our motto of "Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors." In my view, the BOOM's policy on consideration of candidates for ordained ministry amplifies our denomination's witness to God's inclusive Love and Grace.

The Bible tells a story of the long journey of God's people through history to learn that God was not limited to one tribe, or one place, or one country, or even one religion. God revealed in Scripture is the God who has compassion even for those who are alienated from God, and who calls us to embody that compassion in our own lives.

Christ proclaimed that he was sent to preach good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captive, recovery of sight to the blind, set at liberty those who are oppressed and proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4: 18-19) It is in response to that injunction that our Baptismal vows call on us to "resist evil, injustice and oppression in whatever forms they present

themselves."

Our denominational rules that define the practice of homosexuality as contrary to Christian Teaching have caused harm. That harm is expressed in the enhanced risk of suicide among LGBTQIA+ youth who have experienced rejection by their families, have been subjected to discredited conversion therapies, or even been told by pastors and members of the faith community that they and their parents are damned if they don't give up their innate identity, as has happened to members of my family.

It is manifested in the challenge experienced by those already ordained, who are enjoined from revealing their full authentic selves to their congregations. And it is seen in the rejection of gifted candidates for ministry who are rejected on the basis of who they are, rather than on the integrity of their lives and their call to ministry.

The Board of Ordained Ministry has a sacred responsibility to assess the validity of a candidate's call to ministry. The announced policy simply affirms that, like other immutable aspects of personhood, sexual identity and orientation are not sufficient in and of themselves to disqualify a candidate for ministry. The ways in which our polity has so often reduced LGBTQIA+ identity to a matter of "practice" negates the sacred worth and personhood of individual children of God. I celebrate that this new BOOM policy sees candidates for ministry as their full selves, beautifully and wonderfully made in the image of God, each with unique gifts, graces and calling.

**Ellen Bachman is a member of National UMC in Washington, D.C.*

BY CHRIS OWENS*

RIGHT NOW, THE clergy and laity of the Baltimore-Washington Conference are digesting and interpreting our Board of Ordained Ministry's October 2017 policy change to "not consider or evaluate sexual orientation or gender identity nor see them as sufficient reasons to deny a candidate's ability to live up to our United Methodist standards." To their credit, they have been fully transparent while acknowledging that, to a significant degree, they are operating outside of church law established by the Book of Discipline and interpreted by the Judicial Council of The United Methodist Church.

The question for me, however, is not so much over the substance of their policy but its timing.

On the one hand, we Christians come from a long tradition of civil disobedience. We began our life together proclaiming, "Jesus is Lord" — both a Christological and a subversive political pronouncement, as in "Jesus is Lord... (and Caesar is not)."

Time and again, we have defied subsequent incarnations of Caesar-like injustice by sacrificially, prophetically and lovingly standing against unjust laws and powers, both civil and ecclesiastical, in order to advance the Kingdom of God.

On the other hand, we are awaiting the Commission on a Way Forward's recommendations to the Council of Bishops, leading up to the February 2019 General Conference session. Their work is a delicate, precarious process that needs space and time if it has any hope of success. Given that our United Methodist connection sits on a knife's edge, one could

argue that moves like the one taken by the Board of Ordained Ministry deepens the breach, imperiling whatever hope we have of unity by adding to our structural chaos.

While I agree with BOOM's biblical and theological conviction that sexual orientation and gender identity should not be a barrier to commissioning and ordination, I also believe their move drives a further wedge into the heart of the unity we're trying to preserve. Admittedly, one could argue that a unity which prolongs injustice is a false unity. However, if that long arc of the moral universe that bends towards justice is forcibly bent and unintentionally crimped by ill-timed action, then the fully inclusive church we want — one that includes all United Methodists — could be snapped and shattered.

For the sake of the whole church, we must take a longer view that supersedes the crisis of the moment to realize that a year from now, with God's help, we could be a part of a more inclusive, undivided United Methodist Church. That is a fragile dream that could be easily snuffed out by rash action.

As much as I respect and admire our BOOM and share their heart for a more inclusive church, their policy change at this time in our history is a perilously rash, short-sighted action that will only throw our Conference and General Church into further complication, endangering the Commission on a Way Forward's work and heating up our institutional friction leading up to next year's General Conference session.

**Rev. Chris Owens is pastor of Trinity UMC in Annapolis.*

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

JUST AS THE Commission on a Way Forward (COWF) is completing its work, and before the Council of Bishops (COB) has had a chance to review and discuss their report, the BWC Board of Ordained Ministry (BOOM) has taken it upon itself to toss a Baby Ruth candy bar into the proverbial swimming pool.

An April 6 news article revealed the Board of Ordained Ministry couldn't wait for the COWF process to be completed, and (BOOM) issued a revised policy

which does not comply with the Book of Discipline, about the highly sensitive matters The United Methodist Church has been struggling with.

In so doing, BOOM has demonstrated it has no confidence in the work of the COWF, the leadership of the COB, and does not trust the Special General Conference scheduled for February 2019. This action by BOOM will complicate already difficult conversations.

BOOM should immediately withdraw

the new policy and wait like the rest of us for the COWF process to play out. If BOOM refuses to withdraw the new policy, Bishop Easterling should exercise her authority and rescind the policy. Silence by UMC leaders about this decision will be construed as pre-emptive support for the view espoused by the BOOM and poisons the COWF and special General Conference processes.

If this policy revision stands, how can anyone be expected to take the COWF or

anything else in the Book of Discipline seriously? If the BOOM and BWC couldn't wait for the conclusion of the COWF process, why should anyone else?

Xavier Ascanio
Trinity UMC, Germantown

BOOM Policy on Human Sexuality

The work of the Baltimore-Washington Conference Board of Ordained Ministry includes serving as stewards of the process of supporting, evaluating and examining persons who have offered themselves as candidates for ordained ministry as Deacons and Elders.

In October 2017, a proposal from the Board's Task Force on Human Sexuality was approved by the full Board, which has served as a framework for the evaluation of candidates for ordained ministry. BOOM's over-arching goals have remained to discern ways that together the people of the Baltimore-Washington Conference can continue to engage in ministry that is faithful and fruitful toward the end of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of our communities and the world.

Read the new BOOM policy at <http://www.bwcumc.org/boom-policy-on-human-sexuality/>

See an FAQ on the policy at <http://www.bwcumc.org/news-and-views/q-a-on-the-new-board-of-ordained-ministry-policy-on-examining-candidates/>

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Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi
The United Methodist Church
Western Pennsylvania Conference
D. Min. Anticipated 2019



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Back on My Feet recruits members at homeless and residential facilities and begins with a commitment to run three days a week. After 30 days in the program, members with 90 percent attendance earn the opportunity to move into the second phase of the program called Next Steps, which provides educational support, job training programs, employment partnership referrals and housing resources.

back on my feet!



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AT ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Bring your gently used shoes to Annual Conference to recycle to your SoleMate! Back on My Feet accepts all types of wearable pairs of men's, women's and kids shoes in all shapes, sizes and colors, including athletic shoes, cleats, work boots, dress shoes, casual shoes, sandals, heels, flats, cowboy boots.

AT A NEARBY LOCATION

Don't want to haul your dozens of shoes to Annual Conference? Drop off your donation to the Conference Center or any other approved drop off site in your area. For a full listing of drop-off locations, visit, bwcumc.org/back-on-my-feet/

WHAT TO AVOID

*They do not accept: ski boots, heavy winter boots, roller skates/blades, ice skates, flip-flops/crocs, bedroom slippers and single shoes.

Missionaries McCurdy and Mairena to serve in Mexico

By NAN MCCURDY*



AS MISSIONARIES WITH the General Board of Global Ministries, we've had covenant relationships with churches in the Baltimore-Washington Conference since the 1980's. We're excited about sharing news of our new missionary assignment in Mexico.



Beginning in July we will be serving with Give Ye Them to Eat (GYTTE), a Methodist development organization that works with the marginalized population of the state of Puebla. Puebla's capital is also named Puebla. It is a beautiful, colonial city two hours from Mexico City in the heart of Mexico.

The purpose of Give Ye Them to Eat is "to strengthen the capabilities of marginalized people and communities to meet their basic needs, and to determine and sustain a just and integrated development process." They provide training on different kinds of appropriate technologies, sustainable agriculture and health so that people can improve their lives. GYTTE wants all people to have an abundant life, spiritually and materially.

Give Ye Them to Eat hosts Methodist groups from the US and from Mexico

through their nine-day AWARE work-study experience. We hope that many of our Covenant churches will send groups to learn and work alongside Mexican friends.

This is a work/study week full of learning about the Mexican reality, working, faith-deepening and tourism. One of the learning experiences is to get to know Mexicans who have gone to work in the US and returned -- why did they go? We hope and pray that

GYTTE supports "the spiritual growth of the Methodist congregations through training events and retreats." To read more, their website is: www.gytte.org

We are excited about this new opportunity. Some of you will remember that Miguel is Nicaraguan, was raised with 10 siblings and farmed on an island from age five. "I didn't get to start first grade until age 20," he said. "But once I started

missionaries and Mission Advocates for the eight conferences of the Western Jurisdiction. We helped churches understand that part of their apportionments fund Global Ministries which also funds mission programs around the globe. And we encouraged churches to begin a Covenant relationship with a missionary. United Methodist missionaries now come from all over the world and serve all over the world. Through a relationship with a missionary, you support a better life for people someplace else.

We worked for many years in Nicaragua with women, youth and children in an impoverished area of the countryside. We saw cultural changes take place in human rights, education and health. Young people are delaying reproduction and focusing more on developing themselves. There is more respect for women and equality in relationships. The ministries we began are all facilitated by local women and youth.

In part of 1996 and 1997, while Miguel attended Wesley Seminary, I was serving as the Peace with Justice Educator for the Conference -- it was a missionary position. With others, we designed justice education seminars on many topics. And we developed a 22-hour seminar attended by more than a hundred pastors and laypersons on "How to Act Against Racism."

We welcome being in touch with you and hope to see you here in the future or in Mexico.

Nan McCurdy ADVANCE #10801Z, nanmig@yahoo.com, Miguel Mairena ADVANCE #12887Z; 949-397-4729; phone numbers will change in July.



Give Ye Them to Eat serves the marginalized residents of Puebla in Mexico.

many of our Covenant Churches will send groups in the future.

GYTTE's small farm and training center is near Tlancualpican which was at the center of the last earthquake. Many homes in the area were damaged or lost. The staff trains people to make straw-bale homes that are more earthquake resistant than homes built with blocks.

I never stopped!" Miguel has a law degree, a master in Criminal Law and Christian Education from Wesley.

On going to work with GYTTE Miguel said, "I'm like a fish out of water that is going back into the water." He loves working with and encouraging people who are in situations like he was in his youth. We worked the last three years as