

STRAWBRIDGE SHRINE ASSOCIATION

The officers, directors and members of the Strawbridge Shrine Association are saddened to report the death of our President, the Rev. James F.W. Talley, on Dec. 31, 2016. Talley was stalwart in his support of the Strawbridge Shrine in both his service and his giving. He was unfailingly committed to the Shrine as a place of spiritual celebration and education, and took great joy in receiving the many visitors and confirmation classes who make pilgrimages to the “First Home of American Methodism.”

In his Annual Report to the Members of the Association, Talley said:

“My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness;

I dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus’ name.

On Christ the solid rock I stand; All other ground is sinking sand.’

“That was the message of Robert and Elizabeth and it was so powerful that it transformed a movement into an equally powerful global Church and it is powerful enough to keep our beloved Shrine effective and strong in this age.”

“Effective and Strong” are good words to describe the Strawbridge Shrine Association in 2016. Talley’s report continues:

“We have a full Board of folk who offer expertise in United Methodist history, knowledge and experience—not just knowledge of buildings and structure, but of the theology and scriptural teaching of those saints who formed the vibrant Methodist movement beginning with the Wesley’s and continuing to this day.

“We created a petition, signed by 19 Board members, calling for the General Conference to maintain the current Commission structure and location and we forwarded copies to each Baltimore-Washington Conference delegate to the 2016 General Conference. I am pleased that legislation to alter the Commission structure and location did not survive action at the Committee level.

“Our Shrine exists in real time in a real world. We succumbed to the new reality of real time surveillance of our precious buildings and artifacts and have installed three constantly operating surveillance cameras.

“Planned and executed by our talented Program Committee, our early summer event evolved into a ‘Colonial Day’ event and was very successful. We enjoyed our best attendance and attendees were treated to a variety of historical exhibits and craft demonstrations, musical and speaking events, tours, and, of course, good food.

“We now have a large entrance sign which welcomes folk to our site with pertinent information including a listing of the hours which the site is open and staffed.

“The welcome spirit continues just beyond the sign with the addition of a Gazebo [donated by Talley and his wife, Kim, in memory of their parents]. The Gazebo adds even more to our welcoming tone as it houses art carvings of Robert and Elizabeth Strawbridge in full color and seated on a bench reminding visitors of the original benches in the Log Meeting House. These beautiful wood art statuarys were donated, by Kit and Dan Hartzler and Mary-West and Paul Ensor.

“[The heart] of our site is the group of buildings which are old and require a lot of hard work and money to keep them looking good without deteriorating. Our work days are greatly successful and people work very hard to keep our buildings clean, safe, and structurally sound. [Among other jobs this year] the roof of the Evans House was sealed and coated and the interior was completely painted.

“The Shrine Endowment Fund is now invested with the Mid-Atlantic United Methodist Foundation. Seeing this Fund grow out of nothingness just a few years ago is gratifying and serves as a vehicle for future growth in many ways to contribute to the Shrine.

“But we must end where we began and offer thanks and praise to our Lord Jesus Christ who gives us the all the spirit, the energy, the strength, and all things necessary to keep this enterprise going and going and going...”

Jim Talley first became involved with the Shrine Association at the time of the acquisition of the Shrine property, when he was Conference Program Council Director. This was well before his ordination and he was the first layperson to hold that position in the church. Reporting to this conference’s 188th Session he wrote a passage we believe to be as true today as it was then: “Sometimes I wish I were a theologian so that I could have the benefit of a thorough and enriched search of the Scriptures, but I do know that I believe and trust in Jesus and that he will use the United Methodists of this area to be sensitive to the needs of people wherever they are and wherever they may be. This is our heritage.”

John M. Strawbridge, Communication Coordinator