

UMC *Connection*

Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church • Becoming fully alive in Christ and making a difference in a diverse and ever-changing world • www.bwcumc.org • Volume 26, Issue 11 • December 2015



Christians around the world will soon be celebrating Christmas. It is a time when our thoughts turn to gifts and giving. Many of us will open gifts on Christmas morning while others may open them Christmas Eve. And there are some that wait until a later date to open them, but every gift is given with one purpose, and that is that it will be opened by the one who receives it.

Giving gifts has been part of the Christmas celebration for many years. It expresses the love we have for each other. For some, searching for that special gift for that special person started months ago. You want to get that perfect gift. That gift the person can open and say, "Awesome!"

Let me ask you, have you ever received a gift that makes you say, "I'm speechless" or "what is this thing?" Or have you received a gift that is indescribable?

What is an indescribable gift?

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." – John 3:16*

This is an incredibly priceless gift. It is the most expensive gift you'll ever receive because Jesus paid for it with his life. It will last forever and it's practical. We can use it every day for all of our lives. Have you ever given such a wonderful gift?

In order to get such an indescribable gift, we must be open to receive it. Everyone can have it. God doesn't force it on anyone. We have to accept it as our own. Each of us has to make the decision to receive Jesus Christ into our lives.

*"Yet some people accepted him and put their faith in him.
So he gave them the right to be the children of God." – John 1:12.*

Begin a life of fellowship this Christmas with Jesus Christ:
a new life with a new heart;
a new spirit;
a new covenant;
a new beginning.

This is the last of four years as your bishop and spouse of the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church. It has been a wonderful privilege and journey as our ministry takes us into another season of life. We have been blessed to serve with extraordinarily committed and talented laity and clergy. The leadership of our Conference is exceptionally gifted.

We will keep each of you in prayer this Christmas and as we enter the New Year.

Peace, Joy and Love,

Bishop Marcus and Barbara Matthews

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... well said

(a chance to express what that word means to you.)

BY MANDY SAYERS
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

“AND THE ANGEL said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” Luke 2:10, KJV.

As I write this, the climate of the country seems to be fearful in the wake of terrorist attacks in Beirut, Nigeria and Paris. We are fearful about how vulnerable we feel. Is the stranger in our midst a threat to us? When will there be another tragedy, another breaking news story?

Meanwhile, there are candles to light and Advent studies to do. It feels like whistling Christmas carols in the dark, with joy on hold until we can get the world to get its act together. It's hardly tidings of comfort and joy around here. It's more like tidings of fear and fatigue, of desperation at how dark the world can seem in this season of light.

Maybe that word “joy” is more powerful in seasons like this one, where the cloud of fear seems to be thicker. Maybe the lights of Christmas shine brighter against a darker night sky. Maybe when Jesus comes to us, shivering and vulnerable, a refugee under threat, we see that Christmas was made for such a time as this. After all, in Bethlehem, God acted to do what we could not do for ourselves and to call us into a new relationship with God and each other.

We can have peace and joy, full-throated, robin-at-springtime joy, not because the world is free of darkness but because in the midst of darkness, God sent the Light of the world.

In the midst of all the darkness the world has to offer, there are angels coming, just over the horizon, calling us to come out from a place of fear and lift our voices with another sort of song, a song of joy that can be sung in any language, to bring all people together.

Of course we can have Christmas invade this crazy time we are in. That's what Christmas is all about — a word of joy in a time where there seemed to be none, a light on our darkest night.

Fear not, for angels bring good tidings of great joy for all the people. So, joy to the world, and joy to you, this Christmas.

... well said

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 DARYL WILLIAMS
PASTOR, ST. PAUL UMC, OXON HILL

JOY IS A complicated concept. I would like for it to be easy, but it remains something not quite easy to get a grasp on.

When I think of joy, the first thing that pops into my mind is happiness. The problem is, joy and happiness are not the same thing. Happiness is typically fleeting and a function of external circumstances. But Scripture tells me that, “the joy of the Lord is my strength.”

Typically, when I think of needing strength, it is not in times that are happy. Moreover, what do I do with James 1:2, when he reminds us “to count it all joy when I fall into various trials.” So in trials and in times that I need strength I am supposed to find and have joy?

It all seems so complicated.

Then I found this definition of joy from Pastor Rick Warren and suddenly it all made sense.

Warren argues, “Joy is the settled assurance that God is in control of all the details of my life, the quiet confidence that ultimately everything is going to be all right, and the determined choice to praise God in every situation.”

When I looked at that definition, joy made sense, became less complicated and gave me a new way to find true joy no matter what my circumstances were.

Warren also quotes Psalm 33, “our hearts brim with joy since we've taken for our own his holy name. Love us, God, with all you've got — that's what we're depending on.”

As we enter into Advent and the close of the year, I want to encourage you to find joy. Not fleeting happiness, but true joy.

I want you to find the type of joy that news reports can't change. I want you to have the type of joy that remains settled in your spirit no matter what happens around you.

So as we close out the year, when they light the Advent candle of Joy, don't think about your circumstances, don't think about your happiness; remember that God sent his Son into the world so that, come what may, you could have the confidence and assurance that everything is going to be all right and God is still in control.

... well said

EVENTS

Apportionment due date

Apportionments are those funds that United Methodists give to serve God beyond the local church. 2015 apportionment payments must be received by the BWC Treasurer by Jan. 12, 2016.

Resolutions due

Jan. 15, 2016.

Anyone wishing to submit a resolution to the BWC's 2016 Annual Conference Session should send it via e-mail to the Conference Secretary, the Rev. Mary Jo Sims, at mjsims@bwcumc.org. Information about submitting resolutions is on page 572 of the 2014 Conference Journal.

ROCK 2016

Convention Center, Ocean City, MD
Feb. 5-7, 2016

Learn more and register at <http://bwcumc.org/rock>.

Bishop's Farewell Gatherings

Districts will have the opportunity to honor Bishop Marcus Matthews next year, as he plans to retire in September 2016. Regional gatherings will be held from 3 to 5 p.m.:

- April 9 at Epworth Chapel UMC in Baltimore
- April 10 at Middletown UMC near

Frederick

- April 16 at Westphalia UMC in Upper Marlboro
- April 17 at Asbury UMC in Washington

BWC Annual Conference

June 1 - 4, 2016

Wardman Park Marriott Hotel, D.C.

Churches are advised to budget for attendance for their clergy and lay members. The cost for a three-night stay, including registration and parking but not including meals, is \$833. Breakfast at the hotel is \$26; lunch is \$35 and dinner is \$45. The Pre-Conference Session is scheduled for April 30, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at First UMC in Hyattsville.

Clarification

In the November *UMConnection*, the Rev. Sandi Johnson is quoted as saying that Christ Church of the Deaf UMC is the “only culturally deaf United Methodist Church in the United States.” In fact, Magothy UMC of the Deaf in Pasadena, Md., is also culturally deaf. The BWC is proud to have two Deaf churches in our conference. Hat tip – Sarah Yates.



UMConnection

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

BWC clergy explore leadership at Advent Day Apart

By MELISSA LAUBER AND ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

TWICE A YEAR, just before Advent and Lent, Bishop Marcus Matthews calls clergy of the Baltimore-Washington Conference together for a day of worship, praying, singing and fellowship.

This year's Advent "Day Apart," held Nov. 17 at First UMC in Hyattsville, featured the Rev. Dr. David McAllister-Wilson, president of Wesley Theological Seminary, as guest speaker. He challenged some deeply held assumptions as he urged clergy to become the leaders the church needs today.

The problem is, he said, "we do not know what kind of churches we are shaping leaders for."

Saying that he was lecturing to himself as much as to those in attendance, McAllister-Wilson offered some insights on solving the problem.

What is distinctive about Wesleyan theology, he said, is the "both/and."

First, he used lightning as an illustration. Noting that at any one moment on Earth there are about 2,000 active thunder storms, McAllister-Wilson pondered how lightning – with about 40 million strikes in the United States per year – is something that both John Wesley and Benjamin Franklin questioned.

Both men were fascinated by the power and energy of electricity, especially lightning. Wesley, he said, wondered how this power came from heaven to earth much along the same theological lines of how the Holy Spirit comes from heaven to earth.

"There is something about lightning," McAllister-Wilson said, "the power of it. A gathering storm is one of the most powerful things you can experience."

How, McAllister-Wilson asked, does that power from heaven reach us? Today, he said, we know that lightning occurs when there's a union between electrical forces on the ground and in the clouds. Lightning is only possible when it's both/and.

He illustrated this point by challenging the assumption that clergy have to be either Martha or Mary (Luke 10:38-42); either serving or listening and learning.

"We have to be both," McAllister-Wilson said. "We have to claim our 'Martha-ness': our commitment to the

institution, the fact that we show up and that we get things done."

At the same time, he said, "we have to be like Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus."

How do we do that? Again, he said, it's a both/and thing.

Explaining the difference between puzzles (analyzing data) and mysteries (where you can't get all the pieces), McAllister-Wilson said that being a "Mary" means working on both.

McAllister-Wilson also reminded the nearly 400 clergy about the "real key" to our faith goes back to Wesley's original requirement to be a Methodist: "An earnest desire to flee from the wrath to come."

McAllister-Wilson, who confessed that he once was not afraid of going to hell, said that we've gotten away from the idea that "salvation" means being saved from something and for something.

"We live in a time infused with fear and anxiety," he said, pointing out current-day events like the attacks in Paris. The biblical authors knew about this fear, too, he said.

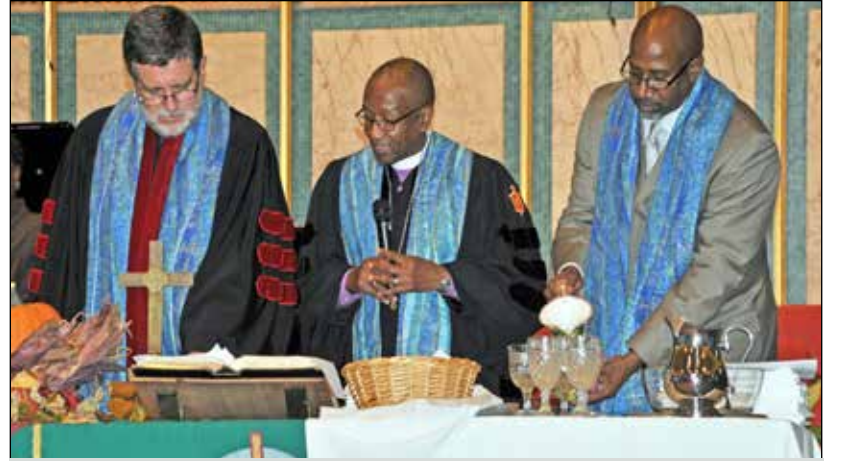
Matthew's Gospel, for example, speaks of hell as torments of fire, but also as "exterior darkness," McAllister-Wilson said. The meaning of "hell" is clear, he said: a condition as remote as possible from God.

"I think for many people our worst fear is not of a wrathful God or the consequences of our sins," he said. "Instead, our worst fear is that there is no God; that there is no meaning in the universe."

Asking aloud if there is a theological voice that can reach those depths of fear, McAllister-Wilson said that United Methodism is perfectly positioned to do just that. That's because, he said, United Methodists are, at their core, "progressive evangelicals."

Quoting from a sermon he gave at an ordination service for the BWC at the National Cathedral, McAllister-Wilson said the "both/and" of Methodism explains the need for "progressive evangelicals" to exist.

Progressives, he said, are actively engaged in the affairs of the world, working to make things better. Evangelicals,



The Rev. David McAllister-Wilson, left, Bishop Marcus Matthews, center, and the Rev. Joe Daniels, right, preside at Communion.

he said, believe in a personal God — who know Jesus as "friend" — who believe in the ever-present power of the Holy Spirit.

"Methodists believe in a God that wants no one left behind," he said, "and that means we don't just believe these things, we proclaim them. To be evangelical is to engage in a public display of affection for Christ because we believe in salvation."

McAllister-Wilson, a clergy member of the Virginia Conference, said that the BWC is "the best conference to lead in the 21st century."

That's because, he said, Methodism started in America in Baltimore; it's part of the genetic make-up of the conference. And, he said, it's because of the BWC's diversity across racial, ethnic and theological lines.

"You know as well as I that diversity is a liability as well as an asset," he said, "because we can easily be divided along all the lines that we are diverse. But our mission is to spread scriptural holiness, and scriptural holiness is Pentecostal. And that means we are called to repair those breaches and restore the community by the power of the Spirit."

"We are," he said, "Methodists: spirituality with an attitude."

Youth empowerment group given President's Award

By MITTIE QUINN*



IT ALL STARTED right here in (Dumbarton UMC) Sunday School."

So says Justin Eldridge Otero, the co-founder of OYE, the non-profit organization created to help youth in Honduras overcome the bounds of poverty and violence that exists in their country.

Just before Thanksgiving, OYE – which means "listen up" and stands for the Organization for Youth Empowerment – received the U.S. President's Arts and Humanities award, the only international organization so honored this year. Youth leaders of the organization accepted the award at a special White House ceremony, hosted by Michelle Obama.

Otero and Ana Luisa Ahern were teens when they first visited Honduras on a mission trip. Honduras has been identified as one of the poorest and most dangerous countries in the world, and El Progreso is just 30 minutes from San Pedro Sula, currently identified as the most violent city in the country.

El Progreso, a city of approximately 300,000 people, is located along the northern border where Mexican drug cartels routinely ply their wares and target youth as both workers and victims.

As volunteers in mission, Otero and Ahern supported the work of the COPPRE orphanage where they lived among the children, heard their stories and shared about their own lives. They discovered that when the children reached the age of majority (16), they were turned out on their own, usually without any training for what they would encounter in the real world. Many of the girls ended up on the streets, easy targets for drug lords.

Returning to the United States, the stories and memories continued to haunt the young teens. They began to think about ways to make a change for the children they met. They decided to ask their church family at Dumbarton for help.

One Sunday morning during sharing, they asked for donations to fund scholarships that would allow five young

women to go to school. They easily raised the modest sum, but pulled by their yearning to help and encouraged by Christ's teachings of helping the poor and seeking justice for the marginalized, they returned to El Progreso after college to spend a year volunteering.

Ahern and Otero continued to collect information, interview students and find out more about Honduran life. They realized that access to education was one of the biggest roadblocks to overcoming the cycles of poverty and violence. But more than scholarships, they knew that the youth needed training in basic life skills, leadership, public speaking and managing money. They envisioned a program that would empower the young people to help themselves. They thought that a non-profit organization might be the way to carry out that dream. OYE was born.

In the 10 years since its birth, OYE has expanded from a scholarship program to an organization that provides safe space, mentors for youth, job training, peer group discussions, recreational activities, and a wide range of life skills training to over 100 youth.

Over the years, it has changed the lives of hundreds

of young people from the El Progreso region of Honduras. This year alone, they awarded 75 scholarships that allowed more students to go to college.

Moving into the future, OYE is working to engage businesses and the government to support their mission and hopes to award 95 scholarships next year. Their latest campaign, #stayhome, encourages young Hondurans to plan a future in Honduras, working to turn the negative cycles around.

Find out more about OYE and what your \$600 can do to change the life of a young Honduran student at www.oyehonduras.org.

*Mittie Quinn is a member of Dumbarton UMC in Washington, D.C., and chair of the BWC Communication Commission.



Justin Otero, with microphone, speaks at Dumbarton UMC recently about OYE, the non-profit organization he created with Ana Luisa Ahern to help youth in Honduras.

Frederick

BY ERIK ALSGAARD, MELISSA LAUBER AND KAT CARE
UMConnection Staff

THE REGION THAT makes up the Frederick District has deep roots in Methodism and the United Brethren Church, the first truly American religion. It is a place of nostalgia, patriotism, industry and innovation. Neighbors know one another in Frederick.

In this District there are textile mills, orchards and colleges. MARC trains and a traffic-laden highway system make the region a transient bedroom community for

Washington, D.C., while just next door, families trace their roots back to before the Civil War. In one day, you can eat homemade pie for lunch at Barbara Fritchie's diner and sit down for dinner with visitors from around the world for five-star cuisine at Chef Brian Votaggio's flagship restaurant, Volt.

This same variety shows up in many of the District's 93 churches, said the Rev. Edgardo Rivera superintendent of the district. However, there are themes that draw the churches of Frederick together, Rivera noted. One of the most powerful, he noted, is the "hope and the grace factor."

For example, at New Hope UMC, the Rev. Katie Bishop

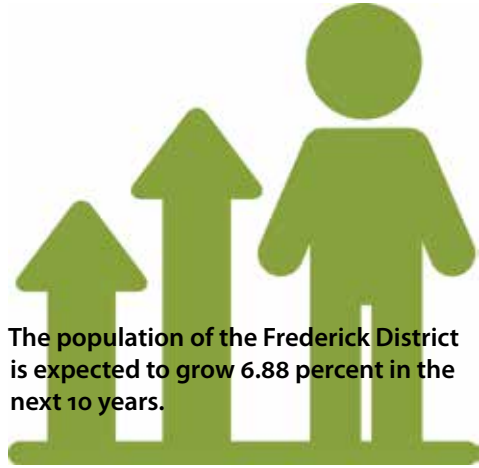
quotes her daughter, describing her faith community in Brunswick, as "a big God family." That same description could apply to the District as well.

"It is a microcosm of the nation — reflecting the diversity of United States in countless large and small ways. That's one of the district's greatest strengths," Rivera said. "It reflects the rich diversity of the Kingdom of God."

The *UMConnection* offers on these two pages, "Frederick District, at a glance." You'll want to read more at bwcumc.org/frederick-at-a-glance/.

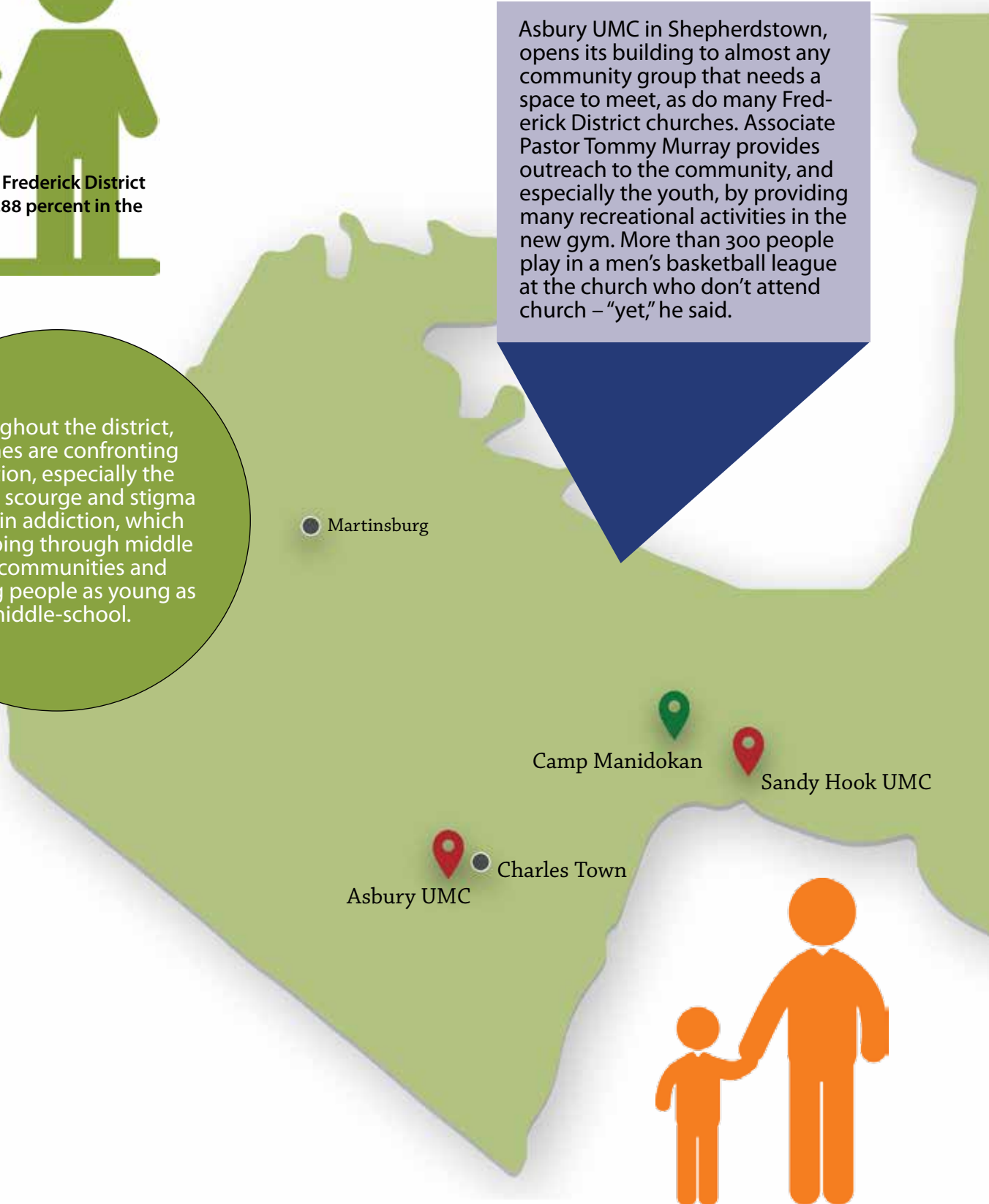


The average household income is \$87,461; 22 percent earn less than \$35,000 a year.



The population of the Frederick District is expected to grow 6.88 percent in the next 10 years.

Throughout the district, churches are confronting addiction, especially the growing scourge and stigma of heroin addiction, which is sweeping through middle class communities and affecting people as young as middle-school.



Asbury UMC in Shepherdstown, opens its building to almost any community group that needs a space to meet, as do many Frederick District churches. Associate Pastor Tommy Murray provides outreach to the community, and especially the youth, by providing many recreational activities in the new gym. More than 300 people play in a men's basketball league at the church who don't attend church — "yet," he said.

In families with children, 26 percent are led by single parents.

19%
believe it is important to attend religious services

46%
consider themselves spiritual people

15%
say their faith is important to them

The PEOPLE

It is the people who fill the pews and pulpits in the district's churches that are "the hope of glory." Along the way we heard about:

Kay Barkwill, who runs a therapy program for special-needs people called Horses with Hearts, a nonprofit to which Trinity UMC gave 40 acres of land.

Brittany Young, who today chairs the Missions Team her mother, Leslie, led for many years. Brittany went away for law school, but when she returned to Arden UMC the church was very intentional about encouraging her as an emerging leader.

Charles Henry is a local pastor, leading Inwood UMC. Believing passionately in "the ministry of all believers," he pursued the ministry after serving as a police captain for 25 year in Charlestown, W.Va.

Pastor Rex Bowen, a local pastor at Jackson Chapel in Bartonsville, also had an interesting call to ministry. He was 30 years old, had never been in a church, and was incarcerated for selling drugs when his grandmother fell ill. Bowen promised God that if God blessed his grandmother, he would serve Him the rest of his life. God answered his prayers.

Kayla Chuey, 11, loves to read Scripture and is a regular liturgist at New Hope UMC in Brunswick.

Junia Licea and the Rev. Alexis Pena are missionaries from Cuba starting a new Hispanic faith community for the District at Trinity UMC in Frederick. They have no car, speak little English and are responding to the physical and spiritual needs of a growing, and often poor, immigrant Latino community in the region.

District

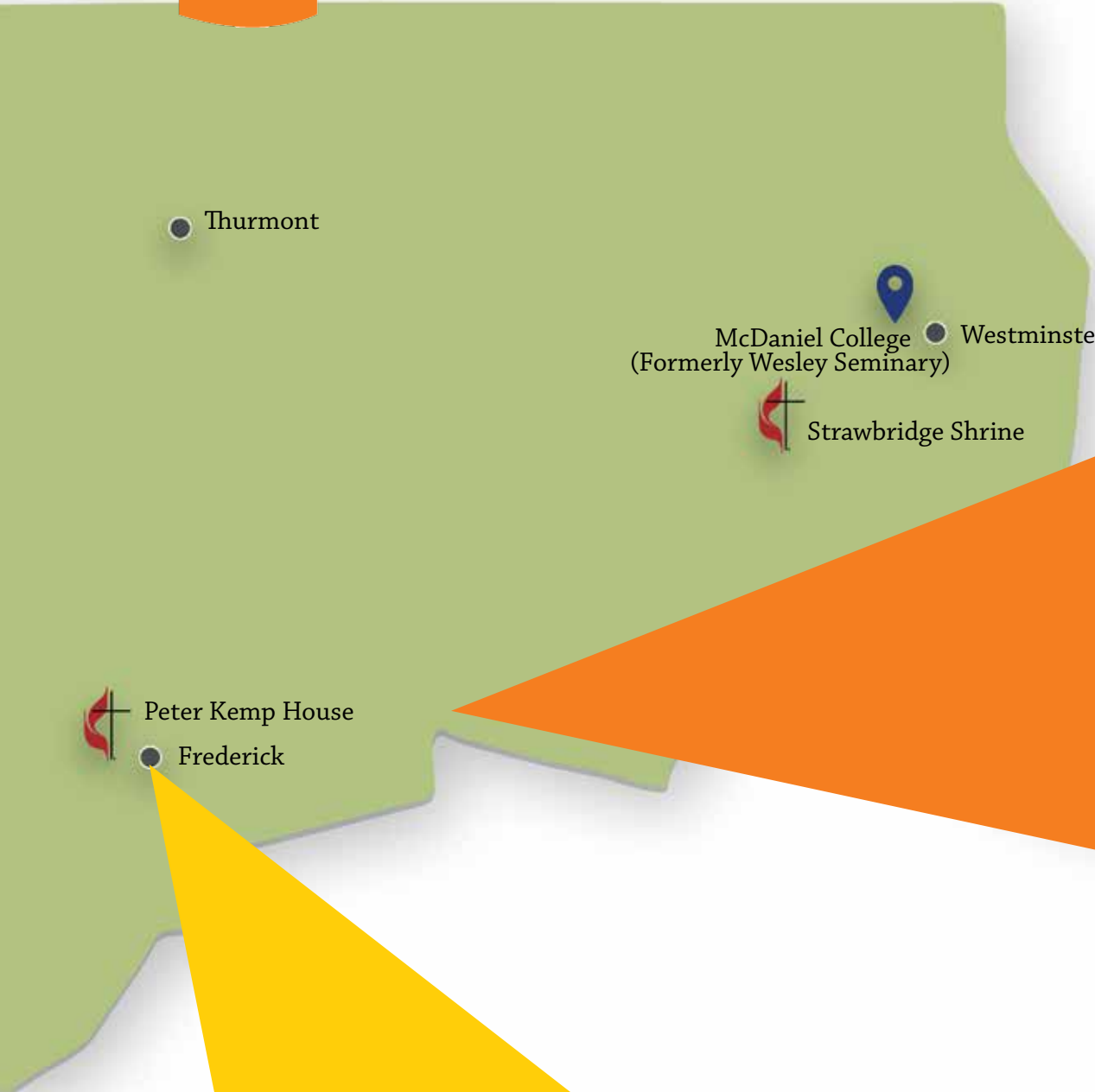
A Home of Hope and Grace



There are 475,818 people living in the bounds of the Frederick District. Their median age is 39; 55 percent of them are married.

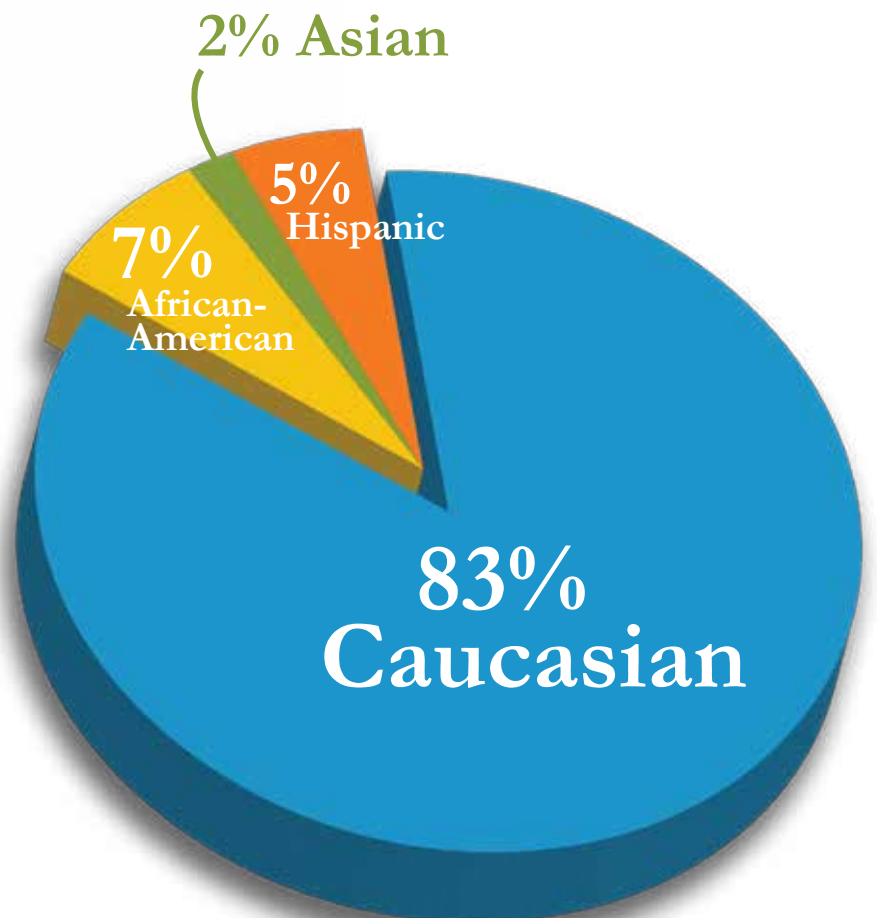


The Frederick District has 83 pastors serving 99 churches. Of those 83, **38 are Elders** in Full Connection; **10 are lay pastors**; **25 are Local Pastors**, and **10 are Associate Members, Deacons or Probationary Elders**.



At Mt. Carmel UMC in New Market, hope has such an important role that the word "hope" has become part of many ministries' names and the pastor, the Rev. Jenny Smith, sometimes has to stop and think about which "hope" is which. But one hope is clear – the church recently received a substantial grant from the federal government to offer an after school program at the church for 34 children. The program will focus on academic instruction, enrichment and holistic wellness.

Community engagement is also a cornerstone at Calvary/Centennial Memorial Cooperative Parish. Calvary began in 1770 and the building was intended to serve as a cathedral-like presence in downtown Frederick. The congregation has joined in mission and ministry with Centennial, right down the street, to provide a wide array of outreach programs, including community meals, substantial outreach to the poor and to local schools, and the Lord's laundry service.



Partnership of prayer and fasting spans an ocean

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

ALITTLE MORE THAN TWO years ago, the Rev. Rebecca Iannicelli, superintendent of the Washington East District, baptized then 21-year-old Ophélie Billiaux in a pool at West River Camp near Annapolis. Recently, the pair, shaken by the horrors of Nov. 13 terrorist attacks in Paris, began a partnership of prayer and fasting that spans the Atlantic Ocean.

This Advent, they want you to join them.

For much of her life, Billiaux, like most of her friends and family, thought of religion as nonsense. But back in her homeland of France after two years in the U.S., living as a new United Methodist, Billiaux's heart responded in an unexpected way to the assassination of 130 people in Paris and Saint-Denis.

"I knew God was with me," she said. "I knew this before the attack, but I hadn't really experienced God. Last week, when I heard about the attack I was very shocked. This world turned into darkness. Human beings were getting lost.

"But at this moment, I felt for the first time, that God was with me. I was not by myself," she said. "I needed community. We needed to send peace into this world. We need to be the light. It will not be



The Revs. Rebecca Iannicelli, left, and Lisa Marie Bandel, right, baptize Ophélie Billiaux.

easy, but I felt so much peace, hope and courage at the same time."

Billiaux turned to Iannicelli, who had taught her about God. Billiaux calls her "Mama Bekah."

With the first news reports of the ISIL suicide bombings at the Stade de France and the hostage standoff at the Bataclan Theater, Mama Bekah had been praying for her.

Together, the pair prayed and e-mailed.

"Prayer is part of my journey with Ophie," Iannicelli said. "We're together on this. We decided to fast on Wednesdays during lunch. We're praying together for the peace of God to be with all people around the world."

The two are also praying "to cast out the spiritual forces of evil that have a hold of people's hearts. ... It's hard to

pray for your enemies," said Iannicelli. "Ophie and I are of the same heart. Prayer, when combined with fasting, can change the world for the Kingdom of God."

Billiaux admits the terrorist attacks raised difficult faith questions for her, but it also prompted her to action.

"I struggle with why God is letting this happen. I got this as an answer," she said. "God made us free. We are unique. Our job as humans is to stay focused and committed to the good. Those people being bad have evil in them. We need to help them. Their eyes are blinded with darkness and anger. I know it's hard. I still don't have the answer

to how we'll save the world. I just know we can do it."

Iannicelli is moved by Billiaux's optimism.

"I think Ophie is tapping into the hope of the world that the work of Christ is still on-going through our prayer and our fasting, our love and our following what Jesus said, that we must love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us," she said.

Now connected by video conferencing via the Internet, the pair prays, sips tea together and remembers when Billiaux was working as an au pair in Davidsonville. She befriended Iannicelli's family, who was "a family trying to live Christ's way."

Billiaux was curious about why they chose to go to church and the two had some deep conversation about God and Jesus. On June 22, 2013, she asked to be baptized. The bacteria level of the water at West River was too high that day, so she was baptized in the camp's pool.

Iannicelli sometimes worries about her friend who is also her spiritual daughter. There are just a handful of United Methodist churches in France and the nearest is 100 miles away. But Billiaux is a member of Davidsonville UMC and the Baltimore-Washington Conference, and Iannicelli takes the baptism vow to uphold Billiaux in her faith to heart.

Together, the two hope the people of the BWC and those beyond will hear their story of prayer, fasting and hope that light can shine into the world's darkest places, and join them this Advent — fasting on Wednesdays at lunchtime and praying daily for peace for all people.

"Absolutely, we want as many people as possible to join us," Billiaux said. "The more people who are connected with prayer and the same heart the better. Our prayers lead us to action, and our actions will lead us to soon have an answer. ... Please join us to be free to send loving prayer in this world. Let us all be together to feel human again. Let us send love, take action and do it together in the spirit of love."

"Together," Iannicelli prayed, "let us bring glory to God's kingdom."

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Cora Jones, Sue Walker, Phyllis Dove and Clara Banks-Gant are shown with the mats made for the homeless.

Great way to recycle plastic bags

MARTINSBURG, W. VA. — Marvin Chapel UMC has a unique program for helping the homeless. Parishioners and friends crochet mats to keep those sleeping on the ground dryer and warmer. The mats are made from plastic grocery bags. It takes more than 500 bags to make each mat. To date, 25 mats have been made and donated to the homeless in Martinsburg. Directions for making the mats are on YouTube.



The Rev. Kirkland Reynolds blesses an animal at Chevy Chase UMC.

Blessing animals for a good cause

WASHINGTON - Many churches around the world hold celebrations for "blessing of the animals" in October, often held on the feast of St. Francis, to honor animals as an integral part of God's creation.

One such church was Chevy Chase UMC where people came on a bright Saturday morning with their pets, cats and dogs, birds and fish.

At the Methodist Building on Capitol Hill, on Oct. 22, people from the community surrounding the building, Congressional staffers and others brought their pets. Bishops and rabbis offered the blessings. Several exotic creatures were blessed, including goats, rabbits, chickens, frogs, turtles, bees and an alligator. The U.S. Capitol police brought a working K-9 to receive a blessing and National Park Police arrived with horses.

The Methodist Building event was to call attention to the importance of the Endangered Species Act and the protections it provides to species from bald eagles to wolves.

Red Tent Project supports homeless women

WASHINGTON — To help homeless women, the United Methodist Women at Metropolitan Memorial UMC initiated a special ministry. They call the mission "The Red Tent" and the project provides feminine sanitary products to homeless shelters.

The UMW first became aware of the need through their food delivery mission at Mt. Vernon UMC. "Many of us hadn't realized that this was a need for homeless and low income women, and we immediately identified with how dehumanizing and anxiety-producing the lack of feminine hygiene supplies could be," said Ellen Bachman. Like diapers, feminine products may not be purchased with food stamps.

The coordinator of the Campus Kitchen project at Mt. Vernon UMC was overwhelmed when Dottie Younger delivered the first round of supplies, which filled her vehicle. Word began to get around and one week, after Metropolitan's mail carrier saw the collection point in the lobby, she came in with three large shopping bags full of supplies for The Red Tent. She had told her colleagues at the post office about it.

For more information, contact Bachman at ellenbachman@comcast.net.

Veterans honored in celebrations

CHARLES TOWN, W. VA. — For Veterans Day, Asbury UMC honored the local Jefferson County veterans with dinner and a program on Nov. 8. Some 30 local Vets enjoyed a home-cooked meal with meatloaf and apple pie. The Men In Black Gospel Singers provided entertainment for the evening along with a new brass quintet, "The Brass Tacks." Chaplain James Pierce from the Martinsburg Veterans Hospital spoke. Boy Scout Troop 42 began the evening with a flag ceremony then later the Scouts served the vets their dinners as they enjoyed the program and music.

HANOVER - Veterans were also honored at St. Mark UMC, where women in the military were the focus of the evening. Worship leader Zelia DeLilly, MSG USA Ret., described similarities between the women in the military, the Bible and the Order of The Eastern Star. The veterans gave a special salute in honor of 110-year old Emma Didlake, USA WAAC, who until her death in August was the oldest living WWII veteran. Guest speaker John H. Hawkins Jr., LTC USA Ret., used the Bible and "The Warrior Ethos" to give a history lesson and show the Bible from a military perspective.

"It was an opportunity for us to learn and collectively say to our veterans 'we salute you and thank you for your service,'" said Hillary E. Brown, the church's communications chairperson.

Girls lead in ministry

SANDY SPRING - At Sharp Street UMC the teenage girls continue to provide leadership in worship and in fundraising, said the Rev. Kecia Ford. Singing at a nearby nursing home, maintaining a church garden, raising money with a walk-a-thon and car wash for the church's building fund, and serving as readers and liturgist on the fourth Sundays of each month, the girls are a spirited force. Their ministry was feature in the September *UMConnection*. (<http://bwcumc.org/teens-launch-building-campaign/>) Omitted from that story was Alexis Prather, who was away at school.



The Rev. Lee Ferrell.

Fifty years of church and service

SEVERNA PARK — Ninety people attended the first worship service of the now 2,000-member Severna Park UMC 50 years ago. They met in a house on the corner of Benfield and Holland roads as a temporary meeting place.

It was 40 years ago that the Rev. Lee Ferrell, Minister of Christian Education and Youth, first came to work at the church. She is well known today for bringing dozens of young people to summer service with the Appalachia Service Project, which was started 30 years ago. ASP is a home repair mission for low-income families of central Appalachia; church teens bring their skills, enthusiasm and energy to upgrade homes in need of fixing.

At the church's recent "Fabulous 5-0" celebration, the 230-plus attendees sang a rousing rendition of "Hammer Song," performed during mission trips.

The time is now to divest from fossil fuel investments

By MIKE KOOB*



CLIMATE CHANGE IS real, it is caused by human activity and it will have an increasingly and very negative impact on all life including human life.

God created and called creation very good. All of Creation derives its high value primarily because of our understanding of this gift we have from God the Creator.

Our climate and atmosphere has been very stable since before the emergence of human civilization about 10,000 years ago. The ocean levels and polar ice caps haven't changed much in this time. But with the advent of the industrial revolution, when people started burning fossil fuels in earnest, the situation changed.

Extracting, transporting and burning fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas) puts greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide, into the atmosphere. Cumulative addition of these gasses is like putting another blanket on when the temperature is already just about right.

Among the many disruptions caused by climate change is melting ice and sea rise. The world's coastal cities and low lying countries (Baltimore to Bangladesh) would flood, an epic disaster. With over seven billion people on the planet and hundreds of millions flooded out, population migration would be highly problematic. Mass migrations would dwarf the current Syria tragedy.

The gospel injunction is to love our neighbor, not drown them, not sicken them, not make it impossible for them to grow their crops, but to love them.

I honor the work of the coal miners, geologists, oil workers and others in giving us the electrical and mechanical power that has benefited humans for these past few centuries, but now it is clear that we cannot release all of the carbon still in the ground. If we did, it would be catastrophic to all living things.

We did not know before what we know now. What we have no excuse for ignoring now, however, is at odds

with the fossil fuel company's core business plan: business as usual. They are not equipped or motivated to build the technology needed for sustainable energy. In fact, the leaders of these companies through proxies continue to spread doubt about what their own scientists know to be true. These business people are profit savvy. They know that every day they can delay the rapid transition to renewable energy is another big payday for them. They are doing great harm to all of us.

Workers in these fossil industries, who through no fault of their own, are being displaced, need to be made whole. Job training in the new renewable energy industries ought to be provided and unemployment benefits extended. There are credible plans and visions of transitioning to 100 percent renewable energy for all purposes by 2050. A tremendous number of operations and construction jobs will be created in the new industries. (Google "Solutions Project 50 states/50 plans.")

The Baltimore-Washington Conference has considered Fossil Fuel Divestment for the last two years and the General Conference will consider divestment in May 2016 when it meets in Portland, Ore. Resolutions are being brought forward by 11 annual conferences and the General Board of Global Ministries. United Methodists believe and practice socially responsible investing (SRI). We align our investments with our values. We have provisions in our Book of Discipline and Book of Resolutions that prohibit investment in, among others, tobacco, alcoholic beverages, gambling and nuclear armaments. It's wrong to profit (or collect dividends) from companies in these activities.

It is also wrong to profit from wrecking the planet. Sometimes shareholder advocacy is a SRI response and sometimes divestment is a SRI response. If the core business of the company we consider investing in is not in alignment with our values then the SRI response is divestment.

Fossil fuel divestment has sprung up as a grass roots movement in Annual Conferences around the country. Lay and clergy advocates found each other and have

coordinated efforts going into the 2016 Annual Conference season. Although the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits has taken steps to divest from some coal companies, they have argued against the resolutions coming forward.

We have information at www.fossilfreeumc.org responding to their arguments and more. Check out our FAQ document and our Calling The United Methodist Church to Bold Leadership in Financial and Environmental Stewardship document under resources.

**Mike Koob is a Lay Member of Annual Conference from Middletown UMC, and Chair of the Environment Justice Group.*

Excerpt from the General Board of Pensions

(<http://www.gbophb.org/assets/1/7/4786.pdf>)

"We recognize that the fossil fuel divestment 'movement' is becoming increasingly active both within and outside the UMC. We fully share the movement's concern for the environment and the urgent need to act on climate change — however, we cannot and will not support its calls for GBPHB to divest from fossil fuel companies..."

Our position is based on the following important considerations:

- Prudent investment analysis and decision-making relies on multiple factors.
- Reliance on carbon-based fuels is deeply embedded in our society.
- Fossil fuels play a critical role in providing access to energy for the world's poorest citizens.
- There are geo-political ramifications inherent in transitioning from an economy reliant on fossil fuels— we must be cognizant of and address them.
- Fossil fuel companies must be part of the climate change solution.
- Divestment from fossil fuel companies means walking away from the climate challenge.

Young Adult Ministry: Campus Ministry confronts today's headlines

By REV. BRETT PINDER

Campus Minister, University of Maryland



AS I WRITE, it has been two days since the funeral service for the 300th person murdered in Baltimore City. I know this because as it began, I discovered I was in the church building where the funeral would happen.

That Saturday morning, students from the Wesley Foundation at the University of Maryland in College Park went to join in a day of service with students from the University of Delaware's Wesley Foundation. We arrived and began to help with work on the buildings of Unity UMC while another team worked at Metropolitan UMC. We only worked a short time before we learned we would need to break for the funeral service.

When we took our break, we waited downstairs from the sanctuary. The Rev. Melvin Bond asked if our work team wanted to attend the service. I did but I felt like attending the service, as someone who did not know the deceased, would be to view it as a spectacle. Bond assured us we were welcome. Many from the work team left the break room to attend the service.

The story we would hear in attending that service would not be offered anywhere else, even as the story of the 300th murder garnered media attention. I felt out of place at the service, partially because of the tremendous grief being expressed by family and friends. But the service also made me realize that our showing up to scrape walls and help repair the church was a good first step in showing compassion for, and connection, with our neighbor.

But it does not go far enough. We each have a commitment to face the collective responsibility for perpetuating systems that create society's ills of racism,

poverty, violence and more.

I recently witnessed the beginnings of taking this collective responsibility at the University of Maryland at College Park, when one of the campus ministry students led a group of the University of Maryland's Young Republicans to begin attending campus NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) meetings.

The Young Republicans hoped to have the opportunity to join with the students at the NAACP to face our collective responsibility for creating a society that creates wellbeing for everyone. The Young Republicans were warmly welcomed and continue to join with the NAACP on campus.

When students with the campus ministry talk about divisions in the U.S., they speak on the ways they have felt diminished because of religious, race and gender discriminations. They tell their own stories and those stories of their friends and loved ones. Students proclaim their own pain from both experiences of being given favor and being denied opportunity because of race, religion and gender.

They share stories about pain and confusion. The question for us, like for so many, is how to move from compassion to commitments to actions that create wellbeing for everyone.

Most recently, campus ministry students have worked on churches that are forces for wellbeing in Baltimore. With the Islam Chaplaincy, students will bake cookies to relieve a little final exam stress. In coming together with our neighbors, I hope we feel the urging of God to ever more boldly commit to making ways of

wellbeing.

As the holidays set in, students head home from campus. I'm not always sure what situations of family and friends await them. As students go with stories like these, I suspect that those around them will wind up with a broader concept of who our neighbors are and perhaps feeling the urging of God's call to face our collective responsibility.

Nancy Cantor, chancellor of Rutgers University, raises some interesting questions upon which we all should reflect. "Being a neighbor is not just a term. It's not a geographic term. It's a moral concept," she said. "What does that mean



Young adults met recently to explore race, culture and how #ourlivesmatter.

when we think about education? What if we really thought that being of a community, not just happenstance located in the community, was a moral construct about collective responsibility?"

Asbury Dwellings offers unique ministry to seniors

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

SOME AREA CHURCHES combat homelessness by making sure people are given beds to rest for a night, or food, or clothing. At Asbury UMC in Washington, D.C., they think bigger. The church created, and its members help oversee, an apartment building that ensures more than 174 lower income elderly people have a nice place to live.

“Asbury Dwellings is what happens when a person or a church has a vision and then is willing to take a leap of faith,” said Bishop Marcus Matthews. “It is impressive.”

Serving as president of the Board of Directors of Asbury Dwellings, Herman Thompson explained that the apartment building was created by the church in partnership with the U.S. Department of Housing and



Bishop Marcus Matthews, left, tours Asbury Dwellings with Herman Thompson, president of their Board of Directors.

Urban Development.

In 1981, the former Shaw Junior High School on the corner of Seventh Street and Rhode Island Ave., NW, was purchased. The first tenants moved in in June 1982.

Run by HUD, Asbury Dwellings now has 119 one-bedroom apartments, 24 efficiencies and four, two-bedroom units. It is a low-income, Section 8 facility. Residents, who must be at least 62-years-old and pay 30 percent of their income. This income cannot exceed \$38,000.

Over the years, Thompson explained, Asbury Dwellings went through many ups and downs. In 2005, in its annual HUD Real Estate Assessment Center inspection, meant to

ensure clean and safe living conditions, the facility received failing scores.

For legal reasons, the church and the Asbury Dwellings Board are distinct and separate entities. However, they are interwoven in the lives, prayers and commitment of people who serve both.

Realizing that things needed to change, Asbury members contributed \$200,000 as a down payment and a complete renovation of the facility was done. In 2009, then D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty hailed the church and the renovations that, in his words, “transformed this senior home into one of the grandest such residences in the District.”

This year, in the HUD inspection, Asbury Dwellings earned a score of 99 out of 100. “We figured they just didn’t want to give us that 1 percent,” Thompson joked.

Today he is retired, but Thompson remembers as a younger man watching his father and others in the church work to take Asbury Dwelling from being just a dream into a reality.

“We were fortunate at that time, we had members of the church who had every skill you could think of,” he said. One of them, an attorney, did all the legal work at no charge to the church.

“That’s just the way people did things then,” he said. “We were always looking for something else we could do for people.”

Thompson’s father was a caterer and had connections behind the scenes throughout the city. “The church didn’t think anything was too bold during that period of time,” he said. “They were pretty sure they were going to get done whatever they started to do.”

Thompson and many others in the congregation continue that sense of dedication and optimism, said the Rev. Ianther Mills, pastor of Asbury UMC.

Asbury UMC is an historic African-American Methodist church that traces its beginnings back to 1836. It raised up leaders during the anti-slavery movement throughout the 1800s and in the more recent Civil Rights Movement.

Today, its members offer a network of compassion ministries including a Neighbor-to-Neighbor breakfast once a month, a food pantry, and advocacy efforts to address human trafficking and mass incarceration.

Asbury Dwellings is another “expression of faith,” said Mills.

Two of Asbury UMC’s members live in the apartment building.

In addition to providing a “safe, lovely and comfortable” place to live, Asbury Dwellings also arranges for lunches to be provided for those in need, operates a beauty salon, a computer lab, community meeting spaces, laundry rooms on every floor and 24-hour security.

“Everything we do is based on the needs of the residents,” Thompson said.

“The city, and life itself, is not always kind to people when they get older,” said Thompson. “This place is important to them. For most of the people who live here this is home. They’ll tell you that in a minute. It’s home and it matters, of course it does.”

Increasingly in the city, it’s getting harder for the elderly with limited incomes to find housing. Asbury Dwellings currently has a waiting list of about 54 people.

The Shaw neighborhood, where the building is located, is undergoing gentrification. Across the street, a house recently sold for \$1.2 million. “I get about 10 letters a month from people wanting to buy this building,” Thompson said.

While things at Asbury Dwellings are going well, “we’re never satisfied. We can always do more, do better,” said Thompson. Recently, the foyer was completely renovated and plans are in the works to address the areas above the ceilings on each floor.

But the people of Asbury also have another dream.

Next door to Asbury Dwellings sits a brick building that holds a gymnasium, part of the old Shaw Middle School. Thompson, Mills and other church and community leaders envision that space being renovated and serving as a health and wellness center for the city’s seniors.

“That really is the dream of Asbury – to try to do whatever they can to help people. If we could get something like a health center going in that space – it’s something we hope for,” said Thompson. “If you want to talk about ‘the dream,’ that’s it.”

Bishop Matthews, who began his ministry as an associate pastor at Asbury, said he also sees potential in the dream. The Rev. Maidstone Mulenga, Assistant to the Bishop and Director of Connectional Ministries for the Baltimore-Washington Conference, envisions the connectional church pitching in to make the health and wellness center a reality.

Volunteer in Mission teams that can begin the renovation and giving to a Conference Advance Special are just a few ways people throughout the Conference can join to make this dream a reality, he said.

Denver-based ‘church-in-a-bar’ pastor visits BWC

By MELISSA LAUBER AND ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff



The Rev. Jerry Herships.

“WE SERVE OUR community and we ARE community. Those are two things we do well.”

That’s the Rev. Jerry Herships, pastor of AfterHours Denver, a congregation that meets on Monday nights in bars and pubs in downtown Denver, Colo., and that serves hundreds of free meals every day in a city park.

Herships spoke at the Mission Center Nov. 13, sponsored by the BWC’s Vibrant Congregations area, as part of a book tour he did in the Conference. “Last Call: From Serving Drinks to Serving Jesus,” is Herships’ story of how this former Roman Catholic who grew up in Michigan wanting to be the next Jay Leno, started AfterHours Denver, a church in a bar.

“We wanted to bring Jerry here because he’s a pastor who is authentic to his call and who is living out that call,” said the Rev. Tony Love, Director of Vibrant Communities. “Herships shows us that building on that authenticity helps to bear fruit in our ministry.”

AfterHours began, Herships said, when he was serving as an associate pastor at St. Andrews UMC, a large church in Denver. He and others in the church noticed that the church wasn’t reaching new people.

“We were missing the burned-out and the bored,” he said.

They started a 5 p.m. Sunday night service and that worked well for a while, he said, until they noticed that the folks attending that service were not new people; they were people who had slept in or gone skiing that morning and

missed the earlier services.

“The church has been great using the ‘attraction’ model,” he said, “where we bring in a great pastor, a great choir, and the church becomes a purveyor of religious goods and services. What we need more of is the ‘mission’ model of the church, where we go out into the world, love people, listen to them and let them tell us what they need.”

Herships knew they had to take the church outside the building to reach these new people, but where? They settled on a coffee shop, and St. Andrew’s put Herships in charge of this “outreach” ministry.

And it failed. The rent got too high so they tried another church’s fellowship hall. That didn’t work either.

So Herships decided to form a church without a building. Relying on his previous experience as a bartender, Herships knew that Monday nights were often the slowest business nights of the year. What if, he thought, what if he could promise a bar the business of 20 or 30 or 40 people on a Monday night?

AfterHours was born.

“It took months to find our first place,” he said. Finally, an Irish pub in a “sketchy part of Denver” agreed to the deal. That first service didn’t bring in 30, as promised; it brought in 87.

“Bar owners find Jesus right quick,” he said, “when you bring in 80 covers.”

Herships acknowledges that his church isn’t for everyone and that some people are concerned about drinking alcohol during church, especially since The United Methodist Church is officially a “dry” denomination.

Herships said that it isn’t the booze that brings people in. People, he said, can drink at any number of bars in Denver. Instead, it’s the community, the acceptance, the joy that bring people in and keeps them coming back.

“Drinking is allowed but not required,” Herships writes in his book. “We have a number of people who come to AfterHours because of the nonjudgmental attitude of our folks.”

It’s also the opportunity to give back. Since their first worship experiences at St. Andrews, the making of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the homeless has been a signature experience of AfterHours. Every day, more than 100 homeless people – many with jobs – are fed at Civic Center Park.

And with the PBJs, they also hand out the sacrament of



Visitors to the BWC Mission Center pray with and for the Rev. Jerry Herships.

Holy Communion.

“We don’t do it ‘by the book,’” he said. “The open table is a wonderful thing. We bless the elements first and set them out in our food line. One hundred guys will come through, and about 50 or 60 will take it. We simply tell them that this is a reminder of how much God loves you.”

When the church meets, the worship service is big on sharing stories, or what used to be called “testimonies,” Herships said. And, he added, the church is big on humor.

“I believe that joy is a vehicle for producing change,” Herships said. “Laughter is one of those changes, but it doesn’t stop there. Joy is addictive. People want more of it when they get it. Joy is like a drug.”