



UM Connection

Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church • Equipping Disciples to Transform the World • www.bwcumc.org • Volume 25, Issue 1 • January 15, 2014

Church vows to rise again following four-alarm fire

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The Baltimore Sun / Jeffrey F. Bill

Smoke rises from the Northwood-Appold UMC in Baltimore on Dec. 27. No cause had been determined as this issue went to press.

BY ERIK ALSGAARD & MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

A FOUR-ALARM FIRE, WHICH took more than 100 firefighters seven hours to extinguish, gutted the interior of Northwood-Appold UMC in Baltimore Dec. 27, but the cross atop the church remained standing.

In the aftermath of the blaze, the firefighters who took down the cross and steeple marveled at how the cross defied the odds to remain undamaged. That same spirit of survival also spread through the congregation and community as church members and community leaders vowed to "rebuild and rise again."

On the Sunday morning two days after the fire, more than 100 people gathered at the education building across the street from the burned out brick sanctuary. The church's pastor, the Rev. Cecil Gray, called the steeple's survival a miracle. He told those present that the church will rebuild and that, even in their grief, the congregation will only grow stronger. "Resurrection is occurring even now," he said.

Baltimore City Councilwoman, Mary Pat Clark of District 14, stopped by to visit the church and to make a contribution to the offering plate. "This church is a light at the crossroads of its community. Nothing will deter it from rising again," she said.

The Rev. Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, superintendent of the

Baltimore Metropolitan District, assured church members that they are loved and will be taken care of. "The flames did destroy the building, but the flames don't have the power to destroy what that building represents," she said. "There isn't any flame on earth or in hell that can destroy what that building represents."

One of the things that makes Northwood-Appold so special, pointed out Bishop Marcus Matthews, is that it hosts and operates a public charter school for 332 students in grades K-5. Their impact in the community is significant, said the bishop.

The church's focus on youth was especially apparent during worship, when half of the congregation came forward for the message to the young members. The youth talked about the fire and their sadness and decided together that "a church is a bunch of people who are Christ-like and Christ-minded. They come together to receive a word so they can go out and live out that word during the week."

"Our church didn't burn," said Nick Poole, one of the young adult members who served last year as president of the conference Council on Youth Ministries. "We are still here. We are still a church without a church building."

Such feelings seemed to span the generations. On the morning of the fire, two of the church's older members, Warren and Janice Teeple, stood at the intersection of Loch Raven Boulevard and

See Fire, page 4

UM clergy sign letter urging removal of DC mascot

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

A GROUP OF RELIGIOUS leaders around the Washington, D.C., area have signed a letter urging the National Football League and current Washington team owner, Daniel Snyder, to change the team's name.

"The derogatory term 'redskin' offends many Native Americans and others in

this country," the letter states. Dated Dec. 5, 2013, the letter was sent to Snyder and Roger Goodell, Commissioner of the NFL.

This past October, Snyder sent a letter to season ticket holders, explaining why the name of the team would not change. According to published reports, Snyder's letter read, in part: "As some of you may know, our team began 81 years ago – in 1932 – with the name 'Boston Braves.'

The following year, the franchise name was changed to the 'Boston Redskins.' On that inaugural



Redskins team, four players and our Head Coach were Native Americans. The name was never a label. It was, and continues to be, a badge of honor," he said.

"After 81 years, the team name 'Redskins' continues to hold the memories and meaning of where we came from, who we are and who we want to be in the years to come," Snyder declared.

The religious leaders' letter, however, states that "just because something was acceptable 80 years ago does not make it so today."

The Rev. Ianther Mills was one of four United

See Redskins, page 4

... well said

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

BY MANDY SAYERS
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

HAPPY NEW YEAR! It's the time for resolutions and a renewed commitment to things like diet, weight loss and giving up bad habits and taking on new healthier ones. We make a familiar pilgrimage to the gym and the salad bar. We restrict our spending and perhaps our complex carbs. The new year usually involves a visit to the altar of health and change and possibility rooted in our own potential.

But the season of Epiphany calls us to a different altar — it calls us to bend our knee before the Christ child, and to live differently because of what God has done for us in Christ. What if, like the magi, we emptied our treasure store at the feet of Jesus? What if we dedicated 2014 to worshipping the One who is worthy of our praise, setting aside all the other idols that so quickly claim us?

In a world that hungers for a "clean slate" and a "new beginning," the answer is not found, primarily at the gym. It is found by kneeling at the altar of Christ. John Wesley's Covenant Service—and many Watch Night services—recognize this, as they call us to spend a New Year's Eve recommitting to Christian discipleship.

My prayer for 2014 isn't new or improved, but it's what my soul needs. Perhaps it is what your soul needs too. It's Wesley's Covenant Prayer:

I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, thou art mine and I am thine. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

Meet me at the gym. And the salad bar. But first, beloved, meet me at the altar. Happy New Year!

... well said

EVENTS

Benefit concert & silent auction

Friday, Jan. 18, 7 p.m.
Milford Mill UMC
915 Milford Mill Road, Pikesville
Saturday, Jan. 18, 7 p.m.
A benefit concert and silent auction will raise money for Northwood-Appold UMC, which was destroyed in a fire.

Volunteers in Mission training

Saturday, Jan. 18, 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Conference Mission Center
Register online for the United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) Leadership Training Seminar. Cost is \$15. For more information, contact BWC VIM Coordinator Dennis Schulze at dschulze423@comcast.net or 443-324-7861, or Nancy McCarthy at nmccarthy@bwcumc.org.

Annual Conf. resolution deadline

Jan. 20

For more information on how to submit a resolution to annual conference, visit www.bwcumc.org/news/format_resolutions_2014_annual_conference.

ROCK 2014

Friday, Jan. 31, through Sunday, Feb. 2
Convention Center, Ocean City
"Got Love?" More than 6,000 youth and their leaders will explore that theme at the ROCK retreat with speaker Preston Centuolo and music by Mandissa and Unsearchable Riches. Learn more at www.bwcumc.org/rock.

Leadership Days

Baltimore Region
Saturday, Jan. 18, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
at Pleasant Hill UMC, Owings Mills;
Saturday, Jan. 25, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Towson UMC

Workshops are offered for training in a variety of ministries. Visit www.bwcumc.org/leadershipdays2014/baltimoreregion.

Washington Region

Saturday, Jan. 25, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Blake High School, Silver Spring
Enthusiastic Leadership will be the focus of this vibrant training event. In addition to a morning plenary, participants will enroll in two 90-minute workshops or one 180-minute track. Registration is closed, but for a complete event guide, visit www.bwcumc.org/leadershipdays2014/washingtonregion.

Western Region

Saturday, Jan. 25, 9 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.
Otterbein UMC, Hagerstown

Hagerstown

Participants can choose between 14 workshops to help them grow as church leaders. Online registration, due Jan. 15, is \$20; registration by paper is \$30. Visit www.bwcumc.org/leadershipdays2014/westregion.

"Not your parents' offering plate"

Tuesday, Feb. 25
Glen Mar UMC, Ellicott City

Clif Christopher will lead a workshop on stewardship. Cost is \$50. Learn more at www.maumflegacy.org.

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, New Hope Fellowship UMC, Upper Marlboro

I AM THE FIRST person to admit, I am not terribly handy. I have always been amazed at the people that I see in Home Depot who seem to know exactly what they are doing. They seem to know where everything is without asking. They have this look about them that says, "I am going to build or fix something today, buddy." That has never been the look that I have had while in any home improvement store. I am typically the guy wandering around looking lost trying to get a copy of a key made. Sad, but true.

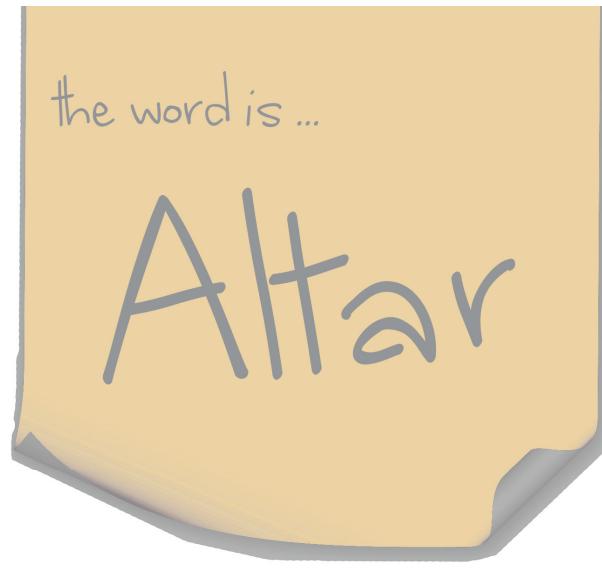
I decided that 2014 is going to be different. I was not going to be the lost guy wandering around the home improvement store anymore. I was going to be a builder. I decided that I am going to build something awesome this year. I wasn't sure what to build so I did some checking. Abraham built one, then Issac built one and even Jacob built one, so I decided to build an altar. I did some more checking and found that early altars were built of stone or wood so I figured that with a little research I'd have it built in a short Saturday afternoon.

Then at the store it occurred to me, I could have all the stone and wood in the world and I was not going to get an altar built. So I took some time to think. An altar is a sacred space to connect with God. A place to meet, commune, talk, worship, pray and sacrifice. I didn't need tools or lumber, I just needed space. Some special space dedicated to time with God.

So I decided that I would clear space for my own personal altar. I would clear space in my home that was dedicated to being with God, a space where I did nothing else but meet God there. I decided I would also clear space on my calendar. Space that was dedicated to going to that private place where I could connect with and commune with God.

Finally, I decided to clear space in my heart. There needed to be a dedicated space where I could be filled with God's presence after casting my worries, cares and concerns away. So without a tool, without a class and without a tree being harmed I became a builder. I built an altar and now it builds me.

... well said



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Correction:

In the Oct. 9 UMConnection, we incorrectly attributed the quote, "Unite the pair so long disjoined, knowledge and vital piety," to John Wesley. It is, in fact, from his brother Charles, who used the phrase in a poem he wrote at the opening of the Wesleys' Kingswood School. It is also the basis for the motto of Duke University, "Eruditio et Religio," as pointed out by the Rev. Ed Moore.

Clarification:

In a commentary in the Dec. 11, 2013, UMConnection, Jim Richards writes that the Book of Discipline says that "homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching." However, para. 161 states "The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching." (Emphasis added.)

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Building Bridges

Be Love

230th Session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church • 2014

Annual Conference 2014 to focus on creative 'bridge-building'

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

IN PREVIOUS YEARS, members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference at the annual session have placed approximately \$15,000 in the collection plate for a special offering. But this year, conference leaders are expecting to receive 100 times that amount as they collect \$1.5 million in local church donations and pledges for Imagine No Malaria.

Celebrating the BWC's campaign to eradicate deaths by malaria will be one of the highlights of this year's annual conference session, which will be held from Thursday, May 29, beginning at 2 p.m., until Saturday, May 31, at 4 p.m. The session will be held at the Marriott Waterfront Hotel at Baltimore's Inner Harbor.

The annual conference draws clergy and lay members from 642 churches in Maryland, Washington, D.C., the panhandle of West Virginia and Bermuda. The theme of this year's conference is "Building Bridges: Be Love."

There will be three worship services at the session. The scriptural focus will be the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-35. Bishop Marcus Matthews will preach at the opening service at 7:30 p.m. May 29. Bishop Kenneth H. Carter Jr. of the Florida Conference will preach at the Memorial Service May 30 at 10 a.m., and at the Service

of Ordination May 31 at 2 p.m. Carter is author of eight books, including "Pray for Me: the Power of Praying for Others."

These worship services and the morning Bible studies are open to the public, and will be broadcast live on the conference website.

The Bible study, held at 8 a.m. May 30 and 31, will be led by Dr. James Salley, associate vice-chancellor for Institutional Advancement for Africa University, the United Methodist-affiliated university in Old Mutare, Zimbabwe. Salley has been working for 22 years interpreting the mission and dreams of this "School of Dreams."

Plans are currently underway to bring the choir from Africa University to perform and share in worship at the May session. Worship music will also be provided by the "No Other Name" Latino choir, and the choirs from Eden Korean UMC in Baltimore and First UMC in Hyattsville.

In addition to setting the 2015 conference budget, members will learn about the ongoing conference ministries and vote on resolutions submitted by individuals and groups in the conference. The deadline for these resolutions to be submitted has been extended to Jan. 20. Copies of the resolutions will be posted

at www.bwcumc.org before Jan. 31 and published in the PreConference Journal, which will be mailed to all members at the beginning of April.

To ensure delivery, church administrators should log into Gateway (on the conference website) to check and update mailing addresses for their active lay members to Annual Conference as soon as possible.

To assist members in fully understanding and discerning the business coming before them, two preconference briefing sessions will be held – one for clergy and one for laity.

The clergy session, which will also include the official Clergy Executive Session, will be held Thursday, May 15, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., at Towson UMC in Towson.

The laity session will be held Saturday, May 17, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., at John Wesley UMC in Hagerstown.

Also this May, a luncheon is set for Tuesday, May 13, at the BWC Mission Center in Fulton, to honor those clergy who are retiring this year.

Online registration for the annual conference session (and the Preconference Briefings) opens Wed., Feb. 12.

For more information, visit www.bwcumc.org/events/annual_conference_2014.

BMCR leaders encouraged to live without regrets

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

STANDING BEFORE A banquet room full of members of Black Methodists for Church Renewal with a monkey literally tied to his back, the Rev. Rudy Rasmus encouraged United Methodists to cast off shame and regret and begin to live wholeheartedly.

Rasmus carried the stuffed monkey during the keynote address on Dec. 13, when BMCR members from the Baltimore-Washington Conference hosted members from throughout the Northeastern Jurisdiction for their annual meeting at Queens Chapel UMC in Beltsville.

The pastor of St. John's UMC in Houston, Texas, Rasmus grew his church from nine members into more than 9,000 today. Many of his members were homeless and struggled with severe challenges. "The people I'm called to serve don't need an explanation of hell," he said. "They can give you dates and times."

The Bible mentions "Sheol" 65 times; it speaks of "Hades" 12 times, and it talks of "Gehenna, the place of the lost."

"Do you know some lost people?" asked Rasmus. "Hell may be closer than you think."

But the church today tends to intellectualize hell, he said, which is unfortunate, because "during this season we have

the opportunity to liberate people from hell."

He then shared a story from Matthew 12 in which Jesus confronts a man living through hell. The man is mute and Jesus casts out the demon within him.

The man was mute, Rasmus emphasized. Is there opportunity to respond with holy disgust and righteous rage that the church misses because we are mute, he asked.

Rasmus encouraged those present to stop paying lip service to change and find their voices. He challenged them to throw the monkeys of blame and shame off their backs and to live wholeheartedly.

He also challenged them to live without the idea of falling back on second chances and saying or doing things differently in the future. "I live without regret," Rasmus said. "It raises the bar on every human interaction."

Rasmus' remarks opened the two day annual meeting of the Northeastern BMCR, which featured opportunities for fellowship, learning and conducting business.

During the meeting, the local conference chapter of BMCR elected leaders for the coming year. They include Willa Kynard, BMCR Coordinator; Rev. Tony Love, Vice Coordinator; Eddimae Tisdale, secretary; and Colleen Cates, treasurer.

In addition several members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference were elected to serve as leaders of the NEJ BMCR chapter. They include the Rev. Dred Scott, coordinator; Larry McCrae, treasurer; Daryln McCrae, publicity; Valerie Barnes, by-laws and the Rev. Herbert Brisbon, Young People.

For more information, visit www.bwcbmcr.webs.com.



Rev. Scott, elected to lead.



Rev. Rudy Rasmus talks about the "monkey on his back" at the NEJ Black Methodists for Church Renewal meeting.

Fire: A reminder that church is more than a building

From page 1

Cold Spring Road. The crystal clear winter's day allowed them to see right through the church building, where they have been members since 1947. Now both in their early 90s, the Teebles couldn't believe what they were seeing. "I'm very sad," said Janis.

The Teebles' four children grew up in the church, she said, and she had cooked hundreds of meals in the church's kitchen. Both Janis and Warren were Scout leaders, she said, and they both sang in the choir.

"This church is just part of you," Janis said. "I've been up since 3 o'clock. I heard the roar of the fire trucks and I looked out my front window. I couldn't see the church, but when I walked outside, I just went 'oh, it's the church.'"

The Rev. Raphael Koikoi, associate pastor at Emory UMC in Washington, D.C., received his call to ministry in 1990, while he was a member of Northwood-Appold. He was at the church, taking photographs.

"The church has always been a beacon in this community," he said. "Since 2002, the vision has been one of excellence in education."

The fire "tore down a place that I call home, a place of lots of memories: first sermon, first youth ministry position, my first experience of a female pastor," said Koikoi. In the wake of the fire, he said he's "been reminded that the church is family."

In the hours and days that followed the fire, many members of that "family" checked in via social media. On Sunday morning before worship, Michel Parker printed out 12 pages of messages to them via Facebook.



Firefighters fought for seven hours to contain the blaze.

In the messages, people shared memories of being baptized, confirmed or married at the church. Others remembered how the church was a fixture in the community and how its bells, which chimed at 6 p.m. each day, called the neighborhood kids to their homes for dinner. Everyone pledged to pray for the church.

Sandy Ferguson, director of connectional ministries for

the Baltimore-Washington Conference, is expecting that churches around the conference will join in these prayers and in the rebuilding. Just hours after the fire had been put out, the BWC's disaster response team and Volunteers in Mission were considering how they might provide assistance.

"This is what the connectional system does, we support each other in times of crisis with prayer, resources and hands-on help," Ferguson said.

"I know you have to grieve. I know there will be more tears," Moore-Koikoi told the congregation. "But I promise you, we will be here with you until the day we all march back into that building and consecrate it to the glory of God."

The cause of the fire is under investigation.



Rev. Cecil and Sonya Gray greet Rev. Cynthia Moore-Koikoi.

Young adults discover value of relationship while serving

BY DEBORAH CAREY

YOU SHOULD GO! exclaimed Gordon as he placed the sign-up sheet in front of me. That was all I needed. As a Presbyterian freshman desperate for a Christian community, I was immediately working my homework assignments around our weekend away. I am so glad that I went — it was a weekend of valuable service, community and time with God.

We first arrived at Bethany St. John's UMC in Pleasantville, N.J., and went to work. We were assigned to a house right on the water that had been gutted after holding four feet of water during Hurricane Sandy. Its owner was rebuilding the entire thing by hand — we were there to do whatever he needed.

By the end of the day we had painted his future guest room, assisted him in putting up drywall, and eaten a lot of his homemade meatballs. The most poignant memory, I think, we all share of that day, though, is lunch. We walked down to the beach, and he met us there. On the

walk back, he shook hands with neighbors, told us the story of his town and gave life-advice to us students in need of a perspective as finals emerge. When a passer-by asked who we were, he answered, "friends of the family."



Members of a Metropolitan Memorial VIM team helped to rebuild a home in New Jersey.

While many of us in the afternoon wanted to go to a different site, (since only a few of us were needed) God used our resident's interactions with his neighbors to remind us to be less like Martha and more like Mary.

Instead of being focused on doing for our resident, he reminded us of the importance of simply being with him during this tiring process of rebuilding.

I knew Pleasantville would leave an impact on me greater than I could possibly return, just as every service project does. But I could not have imagined the extent to which it did so. That is a funny paradox — we always go in wanting to be God's hands and feet, and end up realizing that God completely blessed every aspect of the project.

Thank you, Metropolitan United Methodist Church, for supporting this trip in prayer, partnership and finances. I can say with confidence that everyone involved was truly blessed.

The BWC Young Adult Council is sponsoring a mission trip to N.J. in April. Want to go? Details at <http://www.bwcumc.org/ministries/youngadult>.

Redskins: Resolution lapses regarding Native mascot names

From page 1

Methodist clergy to sign the letter. Pastor at Asbury UMC in Washington, D.C., Mills said she signed the letter because it was the right thing to do.

"I am personally troubled by the racial overtones in the team's name," she said. "It's racist. I feel it's the equivalent of naming a team after African-Americans the 'N*****s' or the 'Jiggaaboos.'"

Mills' church is part of a downtown cluster of churches, a loose-knit ecumenical group, she said. She was invited to sign the letter last October through that group's efforts.

The associate pastor at Asbury UMC, the Rev. Adam Briddell, also signed the letter. He views this moment in history as an opportunity for Snyder to make an impact on society.

"This is a gift for Mr. Snyder," he said. "The Washington team is such a cultural landmark in this region. It's not every day that an opportunity to make change like this comes around."

Briddell said he signed the letter out of his understanding and belief in the United Methodist tradition that all people are created in the image of God.

"All people are of sacred worth," he said. "That word 'redskin' is inconsistent with our understanding of this. I can't reconcile the team name and my faith."

Briddell — who, unlike Mills, professes a healthy love of football — said he also signed the letter as a fan. He is part of a group of people at the church who invite "un-housed neighbors" from the Asbury community into the church on Sunday afternoons to watch football. Briddell said that at the start of the 2013 season, about

20 or 30 people came in to watch the game and eat chips and drink soda. On a Sunday in mid-December, with the team suffering through a 3-10 season, six people attended.

Until 2012, The United Methodist Church had an official opposition to holding meetings in cities where team names/mascots used Native American names or symbols. Resolution 3327, "Respecting the

"I am personally troubled by the racial overtones in the team's name. It's racist."
— Rev. Ianther Mills

Native American Legacy and Tradition," was adopted in 2004 and appeared in the 2004 and 2008 Books of Resolutions. It does not appear in the 2012 BOR.

The resolution read, in part: "... the General Conference calls upon all the general agencies, annual conferences, and United Methodist Church-related organizations and institutions..., to hold meetings and events in cities that do not sponsor sport teams using Native American names and symbols."

In the Baltimore-Washington Conference, the Committee on Native American Concerns (CONAM) has been working on the mascot issue for years, according to Bob Willsach, chair of the committee.

"This mascot issue is just the tip of the iceberg," he said. "This issue has been around since the days of King George."

Willsach, a member of Mays Chapel UMC in Timonium, said that in the 1700s, the Massachusetts colony offered bounties for the scalps of Native

Americans. The term "redskin" was used in a derogatory way as far back as the early 1800s.

Willsach said that CONAM has quietly advocated for the team's name to change, but that it was difficult to accomplish when the vast majority of the city's residents are fans of the team.

"When you have a society that operates under the idea of getting as much money as it can, as quick as you can, and for as long as you can, why change?" he said. "For Daniel Snyder, he's making a lot of money (off the team)."

The Rev. Robert Barnes, pastor at Glen Burnie UMC, did not sign the letter but offered a comment when asked about changing the team's name.

"The plight of Native Americans is one of the great social justice issues that our country must one day holistically address," he said. "Ironically, complaining about sports nicknames like the 'Redskins' is actually counterproductive. The thing to remember is that although many sports nicknames are stereotypes that do not do justice to various groups of people, we only name our teams for peoples who we in some way respect. So when we root for Redskins, Braves or Seminoles, we are reminded that there are peoples who we have mistreated and yet admire, and that one day we must put things right with them."

Barnes added that this viewpoint only makes sense if one believes that America is a great nation precisely because we were founded on high ideas which we have always struggled to live up to. If one reduces our history to white racism and exploitation then probably we should rename not only the football team but the city they play in as well."

Defrocked pastor joins Foundry UMC in Washington, D.C.

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

FRANK SCHAEFER, THE United Methodist clergyman who was defrocked Dec. 19, is now a member of Foundry United Methodist Church and mulling over an offer from a United Methodist bishop to move west.

Schaefer, his wife, Brigitte, and two of his four children – sons Kevin and Jordan – were received into membership by the Washington congregation, with dozens of people surrounding the family on the platform during the installation.

“Frank needed to be in a United Methodist church this Sunday (Dec. 22) that would love him and affirm him,” said the Rev. Dean Snyder, Foundry’s senior pastor, in remarks introducing Schaefer. Snyder acknowledged that when he learned the news of the defrocking, he felt sick to his stomach and that he had been discouraged. “I wanted him (Frank) to come and encourage us.”

Snyder noted that a “love offering” would be taken for the Schaefer family during the worship services. An online portal had been opened 48 hours previous, he said, and in the first eight hours, more than \$5,000 had been contributed. As of Jan. 7, that total had reached more than \$30,000, according to the church.

Schaefer was found guilty in a Nov. 18-19 church trial for violating The United Methodist Church’s rules against performing same-gender weddings. He had performed the wedding of his son to another man in 2007. The board of ordained ministry in the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference met with Schaefer Dec. 19 and ordered him to surrender his credentials. Schaefer said he intends to appeal.

Snyder told the Foundry congregation that in the defrocking process, Schaefer not only lost his ministerial credentials but any United Methodist connections because ordained Elders do not have membership in a local church but in an annual conference. He was, in effect, a Christian without a church, Snyder said.

Schaefer, who still resides in Lebanon, Pa., gave the sermon at both morning worship services, receiving several standing ovations. He said he and his family are in a time of discerning whether to accept an offer from Bishop Minerva Carcaño of the denomination’s California-Pacific Annual Conference. She had issued a statement Dec. 20 inviting Schaefer to join in ministry in her conference, though noting that only a conference board of ordained ministry could reinstate his credentials.

“I was in New York,” Schaefer said, “between doing interviews, and feeling kind of depressed. My phone

rang, and for some reason, I answered it. It was a bishop!”

Schaefer said he told Bishop Carcaño, “You made my day.”

“As much as I felt rejected by what had happened on Thursday, I felt welcomed and accepted by this (phone call),” he said. At a news conference in the Foundry sanctuary after the morning worship services, he said the phone call “strangely warmed my heart. I am leaning towards taking the offer, but I need more time for



Members of Foundry UMC lay hands on and pray for Frank Schaefer as he joins the church.

discernment and prayer.”

Schaefer spoke on the lectionary text for the Fourth Sunday in Advent, Matthew 1:18-25, and offered Joseph as a model of love and biblical obedience.

When Joseph learned Mary was pregnant, he was going to quietly dismiss her, rather than subject her to public disgrace. “He was a righteous man,” Schaefer said. “No public trial; no stoning.”

Joseph showed grace and love, even amid great pressure, he said. “That’s what God wants us to do: act in love and grace.”

Sometimes, showing those acts is impossible, Schaefer said. When people find themselves in such a position, “they’re in good company,” he said.

“When I went through my church trial,” Schaefer said, “I had hoped the church would be more like Joseph. I had violated one of their rules, yes, but I was

disappointed to be found guilty. I was devastated last Thursday (when he was defrocked).”

The denomination’s Book of Discipline forbids United Methodist clergy from performing same-gender weddings, and it forbids such services from being performed in United Methodist sanctuaries. The denomination officially states the practice of homosexuality is “incompatible with Christian teaching” and that marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman. The church also affirms that all people are of sacred worth, that all are in need of the ministry of the church and that God’s grace is available to all. It implores congregations and families not to reject gay and lesbian members and friends.

Schaefer said that being a United Methodist is the only way he knows how to be in ministry, but that he doesn’t blame the entire church for what happened.

“There are people who stand for inclusion and grace in this church,” he said. “You (Foundry) are a part of that tradition.”

Schaefer pointed out to the congregation the stained glass window over the balcony in the sanctuary, which shows Jesus with outstretched, welcoming arms. “You are following this example,” he said.

He told the congregation that he has received hundreds of e-mails, most of them supportive. He said some of the notes were from people who said they were going to leave the church because they were fed up.

His response to those people: “Don’t. We need you in our fight. If you’ve left, come back. I am committed to doing whatever it is in my power to take back my church.”

Schaefer said The United Methodist Church has been in “homophobic captivity” for more than 40 years, and he senses that change is on the horizon.

“Things are happening,” he said. “It is time to intensify the fight for inclusion. This is not about doctrine, not about theology; this is about lives. We need to start to listen to the pain of our LGBT brothers and sisters. This is about life and death.”

Will this fight lead to a split in the church?

“I think we’re already split,” he said in response to a reporter’s question. “I’m hoping for a change in the Book of Discipline. Something has to change, something has to give. We’re at a moment of great tension.”

Foundry webcast its second morning worship service, and an audio version of Schaefer’s sermon is available online at www.foundryumc.org.

Erik Alsgaard is editor of the UMConnection. Sheila George contributed to this article.

From spirituals to classical organ, musician enthralls audiences

BY LINDA WORTHINGTON
UMConnection Staff

EVER SINCE SHE was a young child, Eileen Guenther wanted to make music. She has achieved her music goals superbly. Over a month this fall, she was featured in two very different concerts, one in a local church, one at the Kennedy Center.



Guenther, an associate professor of music at Wesley Theological Seminary, for 30 years was minister of music and liturgy at Foundry UMC in Washington, D.C. She has recently become the Director of Music, Organist and Pianist at First Congregational UCC in Washington. With peer recognition of her talent, as well as her administrative skills, she is serving a third term as president of the American Guild of Organists.

Guenther is an internationally recognized recitalist and has played organs in Europe, Asia, Africa and South

America. South Africa holds a special place in her heart; in December she led her seventh group of students from Wesley Seminary on an immersion trip.

In addition to performances, Guenther teaches music and worship at both Wesley Seminary and George Washington University, as well as around the world. She has been a visiting lecturer at Africa University in Zimbabwe, and taught music and worship in Uganda for the East Africa Conference.

The concert at the Kennedy Center Oct. 30 was a good venue to show off her accomplishment as an organist. Playing on the new Rubenstein organ, with its near 5,000 pipes, her feet flew on the pedals and her fingers on the four keyboards as she played compositions by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) and Marcel Dupré (1886-1971), and more contemporary composers, Emma Lou Diemer (b. 1927) and Joe Utterback (b. 1944).

“The carillon at the end of the Bach piece expresses the joy I feel about the evening,” she said.

She praised the organ, saying “It’s a gift to all of us.” The organ is indeed a “gift,” due in part to the generosity of Kennedy Center Board Chairman, David M. Rubenstein, on the occasion of the Center’s 40th anniversary. It replaced the Filene organ, which Guenther had played on its debut. Sixty-one pipes from the Filene organ were put in the new organ.

At Woodside UMC in the Silver Spring Cooperative Parish a month earlier, Guenther exhibited her dramatic and academic talent, as well as her musical gifts. She narrated a program she wrote called “The Power of Spirituals: in Word and Song.” It took the audience along the painful path slaves trod in America, from their arrival in 1619 to their arduous journey to freedom in 1863. Various choir members read the spoken parts, often in the

first person, sometimes through letters sent, sometimes as story-telling.

“I hope (the spirituals) will connect with your soul,” Guenther said. “Spirituals are personal and communal. They speak to the heart from the heart.”

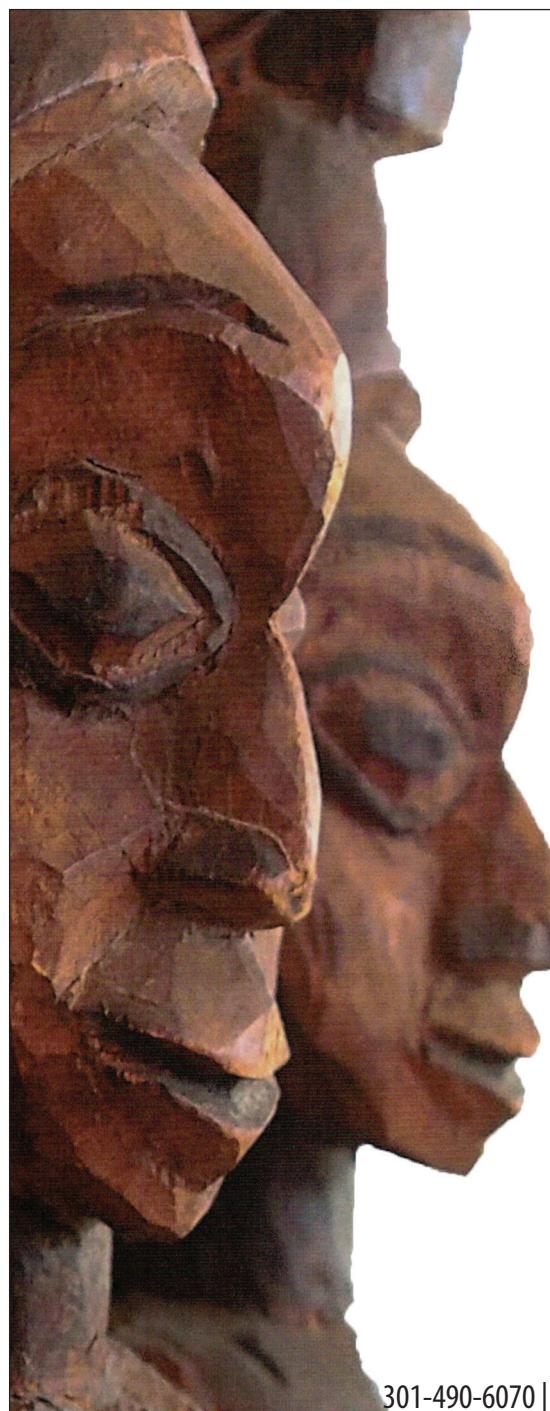
Two spirituals were woven into the Kennedy Center concert: “Swing Low Sweet Chariot,” and “There is a Balm in Gilead” from Utterback’s “Two Spirituals for Organ in Jazz Styles.” “Balm in Gilead” at the Woodside concert was a choral piece sung by soloists from Silver Spring’s St. Luke Lutheran Church Schola Cantorum.

Also at the Kennedy Center concert, Guenther repeated from the spirituals concert an African-rooted traditional Nigerian melody, “Yoruba Lament.” Guenther said she’d chosen the piece to include in her repertoire because she wanted something that reflected another culture and people. “I wanted to show that organ music didn’t all have to have Western or European roots,” she said.

Part of the inspiration for the Woodside performance and for Guenther’s forthcoming book, “The Power of Spirituals,” was her trips to South Africa. Guenther’s “Rival or a Team: Clergy-Musician Relationships in the 21st Century,” was published in 2012.

Choirs and soloists from Woodside UMC, Colesville UMC, and Good Shepherd UMC were joined by St. Luke Lutheran Church Schola Cantorum and Christ Congregational Church UCC, all of Silver Spring. From the minute the five choirs processed in together singing “O Freedom,” until after each had performed, the audience, filling the church, was enthralled.

“I was so moved when all those choir members marched down the aisle singing “O Freedom”, said Lianna Simons, a member of St. Luke’s Lutheran. “It made my heart flutter.”



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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Serving the wider parish

SMITH'S PARISH, BERMUDA – The Revs. Richard Stetler from Centenary UMC and Joseph Whalen from Marsden UMC welcomed Greater Washington District Superintendent Joe Daniels with eight officers of the Greater Washington District United Methodist Women's mission team to lead the installation of UMW units in each church.

These two churches, whose history goes back to 1835, became part of the Baltimore-Washington Conference in 2008.

"We gave them a lot of information that will help them to build their units," said Gertrude White, president of the Greater Washington UMW.

Church spruces up teacher's lounge

SEVERN – The teachers at Van Bokkelen Elementary School of 481 students, have a newly renovated lounge, thanks to volunteers from Delmont and Severn UMCs, served by the Rev. Wendy van Vliet.

The students at the school carry more than books in their backpacks, she said. "They carry hunger and frustration and fear. So teachers have a lot to deal with even before they start teaching."

Delmont's women's ministry spent time and resources to provide new cabinets, refinish dining tables and reupholster sofa cushions in the lounge. Severn members also pitched in.

"I am so appreciative of the changes," said Selecia Hardy, the school's principal.

"It's warm and inviting," agreed teacher Chante Small.

"It is my strong belief that when these community partnerships come together, we can form one powerful group," Hardy said.

Severn UMC also hosted breakfast with Santa, providing everything including breakfast, games, crafts and a snowball hunt.

Taste-testing healthy recipes

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Volunteers from Brighter Day UMC (the former AP Shaw and Congress Heights UMCs) keep their food pantry and clothing bank at Congress Heights open three days a week, as cuts in government aid increase the need for their services.

A main source of foods that churches in D.C. and

Maryland distribute in their communities is the Capitol Area Food Bank. Recently the bank has taken on an effort to help the food recipients remedy the unhealthy diets that often accompany poverty. With the aid of volunteer cooks and a chef, they are making healthy recipes that will feed a family of four on less than \$8.

Among those testing the recipes is Arvis Powell, the Mission and Outreach team leader at Brighter Day.

Those cooking and testing the recipes were required to follow exactly the recipes prepared by the chef, to be sure they're not too time-consuming, complicated or bland.

Powell took issue with a recipe for collard greens and potatoes, which called for chopping the collards. "In my home, we never chopped collard greens, we pulled them," she said.

Once the recipes are approved by the 10-person test



Arvis Powell, left, a Brighter Day Ministries volunteer, and chef Kate Sherwood discuss a test recipe.

group, they are placed in an online data base, printed in English and Spanish and distributed to more than 500 social service agencies in the area.

Vacation Bible School during Advent

EDGEWATER – While many churches hold Vacation Bible School during the summer, Mayo UMC's numbers attending their small church VBS were dwindling, so instead, for the past two years, it has offered VBS during Advent.

Parents were pleased since the evening provided dinner, music, lessons and crafts, setting parents free to shop, wrap presents or have a "date night," said the Rev. Kathy Altman.

The week-long program culminated in a Christmas pageant held during worship. Parents and families were invited. Some of the 17 participants, half of whom were not church attendees, had never heard the story of Christ's birth.

This year's VBS focused on Christmas customs around



Children enact the Christmas story at the Advent VBS.

the world and dinner each night featured a theme from a different country.

Conference staff give to nearby school

FULTON – As part of Bishop Matthews' directions to the annual conference membership to form partnerships with local schools, the staff at the BWC Mission Center decided to make part of their mission to partner with Cedar Lane school, a stone's throw away.

Staff contributed to a collection of toys for the students, 90+ special needs children, some with severe or multiple disabilities. It took a truck to move the mound of toys across the parking lots Dec. 13.

"What a spectacular group of people!" wrote Lois T. Pommer, the school psychologist, to Pat Thomas, the staff member who leads the collaboration with Cedar Lane. Pommer and Paul Owens, the principal, attended a staff Christmas party at which the toys were presented.

"It is rare to find so many people with such joy and passion for what they do. In this way, you are much like the Cedar Lane staff," Pommer said. "The emphasis on acceptance, compassion and diversity are traits that we share."

The toys went to nine families with a total of 22 children.

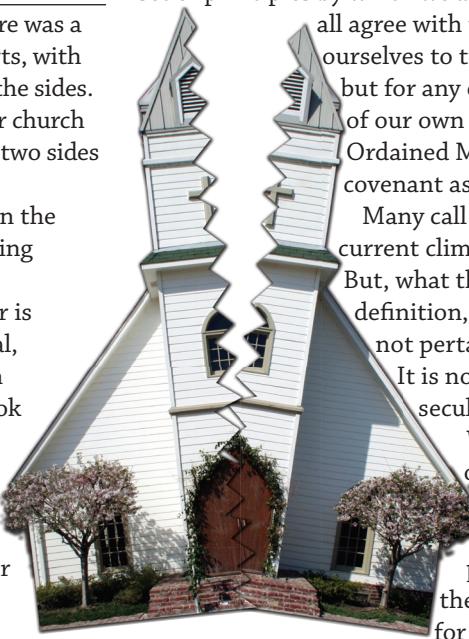
Viewpoint: Church can unite in connection and discipline

BY MELISSA RUDOLPH
Pastor, North Carroll Cooperative Parish

IN THE LAST edition of the UMConnection, there was a graphic depicting the church torn into two parts, with commentary from representatives on each of the sides. But this is not an accurate picture of where our church stands right now. The truth is that there are not two sides in this debate: there is at least one more.

I consider myself to be part of a large group in the middle that is not for status quo and not for being lukewarm or choosing not to take a stand.

Rather, what many of us in the middle are for is the entire body of United Methodists as a global, connectional church. Our Book of Discipline, in part II, is headed by the description "Global Book of Discipline." It states: "The Book of Discipline reflects our Wesleyan way of serving Christ through doctrine and disciplined Christian life. We are a worldwide denomination united by doctrine, discipline, and mission through our connectional covenant. The Book of Discipline expresses that unity." (¶101)



Through Holy Conferencing, we come to agree on a set of principles by which we are governed. We may not all agree with them and we may commit ourselves to trying to change them, but for any of us to sidestep the work of our own bishops and Boards of Ordained Ministry is a breach of our covenant as a people.

Many call acts of defiance in this current climate "civil disobedience." But, what they miss is that by definition, "civil" disobedience does not pertain to ecclesiastical life. It is not for the church, but for secular society.

What I value most about our United Methodist Church is that there is no one group, faction or person able to speak on the Church's behalf, except for the General Conference.

If we ignore items that arise within that body because they simply don't fit our own agendas, then we are forcing the issues in a way that is no more than cultural imperialism.

I do not side with any polarizing faction within our church. I am part of the global, connectional, United Methodist Church and stand to honor the voice and contributions of all our ministry partners around the world, not just a vocal minority in the United States.

As the apostle Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians, "Brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: Agree with each other and don't be divided into rival groups. Instead, be restored with the same mind and the same purpose." (1 Corinthians 1:10, CEB)

We die to ourselves in order to be united in the body that holds us accountable: that is what we do to be part of this movement called Methodism. We humble ourselves before the God who uses each of us in unique ways and in different seasons.

Connection. Discipline. These matter if we are going to be a force in the world. When these are broken, then we are impotent.

'To-do' blessings offered to enhance clergy well-being

THE REV. JENNY Smith, pastor of Mt. Carmel UMC in New Market, is facilitating a small group for area clergy focusing on learning about and developing strategies that enhance holistic health. In preparation for the twice a month meetings, she developed a list of 12 "to-do" blessings for people in ministry, which focus on health and wholeness.

1. Put yourself back in perspective. Jesus the Savior has come and is returning. In the meantime, you cannot save the world. Remember who you are called to be and enjoy being that person.
2. Enjoy a Sabbath day each week and a Sabbath moment each day. Don't just "keep a Sabbath."

3. Eat a meal or serve in a soup kitchen among the poor. Give thanks for all the hands that serve.
4. Place something that stirs your senses in your workspace.
5. Exercise. It can help shake off the winter blues.
6. Find a devotional that brings you close to the heart of God. Consider re-reading the Gospels like you did when you first came into a relationship with the Lord.
7. Start a fire or light a single candle; watch the flames and just be still for as long as you can.

8. Center yourself with your favorite music.
9. Create something beautiful. Do something that connects your love and your gifts.
10. Play. Let go and play like you did "back in the day," or try something new.
11. Touch nature. Breathe it in.
12. Simplify everything you can. Ask yourself, "Is this necessary? Is this life-bringing? What makes me obligated to repeat this?" Pay attention to the answers and respond accordingly.

If you have any comments or would like to learn more about the group she's starting, contact Smith at crazymethodists@comcast.net.



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United Methodist doctor cited for pioneering health efforts

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

DR. HENRY PERRY has a small office with a large view. Located in the John's Hopkins medical complex, the office of this world leader in community-based, impact-oriented health care has just enough room for a desk and a window with an expansive view of the city.

But Perry sees more than just Baltimore. He sees lives changed forever around the world.

The small office suits Perry, a member of Grace UMC in Baltimore, who for more than three decades has focused on vision and new ways of seeing medical care as he seeks to deliver "hope through health."

The founder of Curamericas Global, Perry was honored Nov. 9 by Ronald McDonald Charities with their 2013 Medical Award of Excellence. At the \$1,000 a plate award dinner in Chicago, he was presented with an award of \$100,000, which he donated to Curamericas Global.

At the banquet, Dr. David Herman, a member of the Ronald McDonald House Global Board of Trustees, hailed Perry as a "physician, surgeon, researcher, writer, educator, innovator and thought leader," whose life's work "has been that all people, everywhere, deserve access to primary health care."

Accepting the award, Perry's thoughts turned to the almost 7 million children around the world who die each year of mostly preventable and treatable conditions; 99 percent of them in poor countries.

"I love these children," he said. "Their suffering has kept me going – and so has their determination, grace and dignity. We need to hear their voices and understand their plight."

Now 66, Perry has been listening to these children since he first met them in 1969, when he and other students from Duke University spent the summer in a rural village in Bolivia. The group vaccinated 10,000 Aymara Native-American children against measles that summer.

"It was a life-changing experience for me," he said.

The village where they worked had no schools or health care facilities. "The Methodist Church was the only organization out there serving these people. It was inspiring to see," he said.

Perry had given some serious thought to spending his life as a Methodist medical missionary.

"I grew up in a Methodist church in Greensboro, N.C. I had a strong faith orientation, a heart for service and a sense of compassion for people who didn't have medical care. I thought if I could make some sacrifice, some impact, that would be a life well spent."

Returning home, his life took a different course as he trained in general surgery and received a PhD in sociology and anthropology. The threads of practicing medicine and serving the poor continued to be intertwined in his life.

Thirty-five years ago, in Bolivia, he founded the NGO, Curamericas Global, with the mission to partner with underserved communities to make measurable and sustainable improvements in people's health and well-being.

Curamericas Global is now active in Bolivia, Guatemala, Haiti and Liberia. Perry's career has taken him to Bangladesh and Haiti to live and he has provided on-the-ground assistance to programs in 15 countries around the world. During this time, he also authored or co-authored more than 100 publications about primary health care and community-based approaches to health improvement.

The transition from surgeon to consultant and administrator was not without its challenges. "There's a difference between knowing what your hands did for someone who needed surgery and believing that your efforts in public health, program leadership and teaching will reach more than you could ever imagine as a surgeon," he said.

However, concerns like those faded when he and his team demonstrated that Curamericas' program in Bolivia reduced the mortality rates of children younger than 5 years old by half.

The work in community health that Perry and others pioneered is becoming much more mainstream as people around the world realize the importance of household visitation and making people active participants in their own well being.

In receiving the award and in his work teaching and mentoring young health professionals, Perry issued a challenge for all people, even churches, "to become

fully engaged in the emerging global movement to end preventable maternal and child death in only two decades, – by the year 2035."

This campaign, spearheaded by UNICEF and the World Health Organization, if it is successful, "will be one of the greatest achievements in history," Perry said.

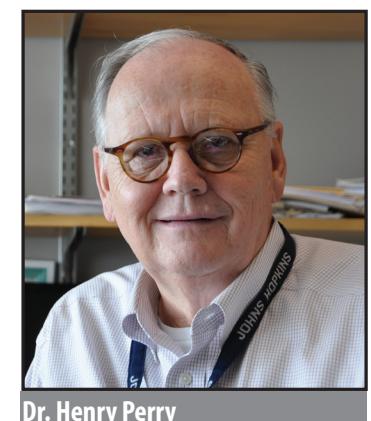
He hopes that United Methodists will not hesitate, or wait for an invitation, to act and make a difference in the health of children in their communities and around the world.

For those who want to be involved in health ministries, he advises: "Keep struggling with the issues. If it's pulling at your heart, listen to it. It takes time to work things out. Be persistent. Don't be afraid to grasp at an opportunity if it comes along. There is always risk. In this kind of work there are all kinds of complications. There is a cost to doing this kind of stuff. But saving the lives of people is a great way of serving and following in Christian discipleship."

Looking out his window in Baltimore, Perry looks forward to the opportunities for expanding and strengthening programs that will save the lives of mothers and children. He is now engaged with the United Methodist Committee on Relief, which is collaborating with Curamericas Global to advance this model of health care in Liberia and (in the near future) in Sierra Leone.

Perry will be continuing this work to which he feels called because, like Woodrow Wilson, he believes that "there is no higher religion than human service." His heart still resonates with the sentiments of Dr. Albert Schweitzer, who said, "the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve."

"I still feel like I'm doing the Lord's work," said Perry. "I still feel like a medical missionary at heart."



Dr. Henry Perry

What is a Methodist? A re-writing of Wesley's wisdom

BY MICHAEL BIEBER*

'M A METHODIST nerd, how about that? Specifically, I'm a John Wesley nerd. I think that Methodism, at its very core, has incredible things to offer this world. Our way of understanding the Gospel and sharing the love of God is incredibly applicable to the world we find ourselves in.

Alas, so many United Methodists do not know what it means to have inherited this rich heritage.

I've begun a new member class at my church and have opened it to current members as well. The whole point is to teach people about what Methodist Christians believe and how we live this out, or at least how we should.

To help spread my Methodistness (Methodisticity? Methodisticalescence?), I wrote a newsletter article that went through some of the 16 points John Wesley made about Methodist identity in his address, "The Character of Methodist."

So here it is. My understanding of how John Wesley understood what it means to be Methodist.

1. We are not defined by our opinions.

We believe in the authority of Scripture, we believe that Jesus Christ is Lord. But any other opinions, whether religious, social or political – that aren't at the root of Christianity – are just opinions.

2. We are not defined by our words.

We don't use super-religious words or phrases. We speak plainly and truly in ordinary conversation and when we speak of God.

3. We do not engage in any freaky religious actions or customs,

or abstain from anything – unless it is said so in Scripture.

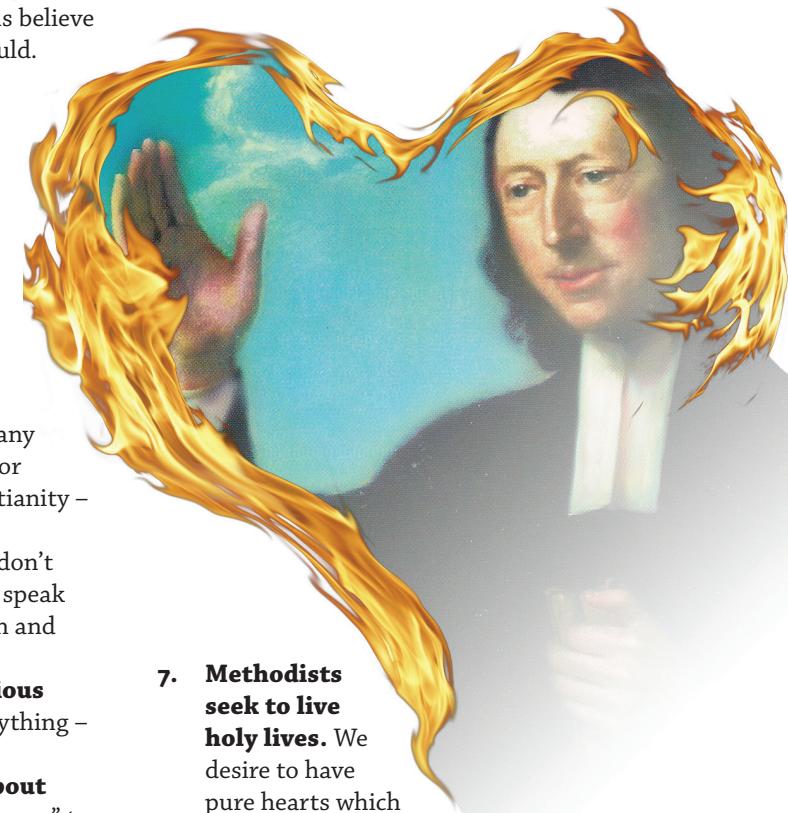
4. We don't believe in religion that is about ideas

that ends with us saying "yes and amen" to a set of doctrines. We believe that we are saved by God through faith alone, but faith means we live in relationship with God, in the depths of our

hearts and in the ways we live out our faith.

5. Methodists are filled with joy. Methodists pray.

6. Methodists express love for God in the way they respect and serve their fellow human beings. We believe what the Bible says when we read, "Those who claim to love God ought to love their brother and sister also." (1 John 4:21) We also know and are challenged by the fact that God's call to love and serve everyone means everyone, even the unmentionables of society and our enemies, because God loves them too.



7. Methodists seek to live holy lives.

We desire to have pure hearts which are filled only with compassion, kindness, mercy and love for God and others. We also desire to have our hearts set

on God alone, and to not want for anything of this world, casting aside greed, envy, lust and hate.

8. Methodists surrender their will.

We want to do what God wants us to do instead.

9. Methodists know that "trees are known by their fruits."

And that the genuineness of our faith is revealed by our words, our actions and our attitudes.

10. Methodists devote everything they have and everything they are to God.

11. The ways of this world will not drag a Methodist down.

When worldly wisdom says "buy more stuff for yourself," we give to others. When it says "gossip and speak badly of others," we only encourage and speak well of people. When the world says "it's okay to indulge a little bit in fleshly desires," we reject lust and excess and greed. Methodists focus on "whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—anything excellent or praiseworthy." (Philippians 4:8)

12. Lastly, Methodists do as much good as they can to as many people as they can as often as they can.

So, when you look at this list, how do you fare? Are you a Methodist? I think I can check off maybe one or two; the rest I could work on a bit.

But that's the point. This is why we are METHODist. We have a method of living lives of love for God and neighbor, devoted and holy lives. The whole point of being Methodist is to grow as a Methodist.

Methodism was never supposed to be a denomination, it was/is meant to be a movement. We are meant to grow in holiness and, together, to move and change things in this world for the glory of God.

That is why I am a Methodist. How about you?

*The Rev. Michael Beiber is pastor of Cheltenham UMC.