



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 25, Issue 7 • July 2014

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Mizo community becomes UM church



Children from the new Mizo UMC choir sing hymns in their native language during the church's chartering service June 22 in Rockville.

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

WHEN THEY FIRST started meeting at Zuali Malsawma's house a decade ago, the 10 people gathered hoped they might grow to be a fellowship of 25 people.

"But God worked," Malsawma said.

On June 22, exactly 179 people became members of the new Mizo United Methodist Church in Rockville.

"God is indeed good," said the Rev. Joseph Daniels, superintendent of the Greater Washington District, as he handed the church's charter to the Rev. Biak Chhunga. "We can't wait to see the good things that continue to happen as this church continues to flourish in the name of Jesus."

Many of the members, including Lal Dika, said they felt the chartering of the new congregation was like a rite of passage – that they were moving, in faith, from a kind of childhood to adulthood. Over the past decade they had grown up.

In a slide presentation, Chhunga shared the growth of the church with images of members meeting first in a house, then at Ager Road UMC in Hyattsville, and then at Faith UMC in Rockville, where they now gather for worship on Sunday afternoons.

Chhunga expressed pride in his members. He praised the prayer team of older adults who are always ready to pray for the church and its people. He thanked the lay people who provide leadership to the congregation and community, and he shared many stories

of how the church is alive in mission, sending more than \$12,000 a year to ministries in Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) and surrounding countries.

Much of that money goes to support other churches' evangelism efforts and has resulted in many baptisms.

"We thank God for everything," Chhunga said. "God uses us. God inspires us. Above all we depend on the grace of God."

The congregation is united by language. Most speak Mizo or *Mizo tawng*. Many are immigrants from Burma and the Mizoram state of India. A large percentage of the congregation is made up of young adults. Preserving their culture is important to them. Mizo is spoken and sung during worship and the many children who attend Sunday School can also take Mizo language classes from the congregation.

During the chartering service, the Rev. Ed DeLong preached. DeLong was the conference staff person, who, following the inspiration and leadership of Bishop Felton May, consecrated the Mizo fellowship in 2004.

Standing in the pulpit, preaching on the theme "Always Room for One More," DeLong remembered back years before, when he was also present at the start of Faith UMC in the 1960s.

Our Wesleyan heritage teaches us that every congregation is to start a new congregation, he said. "The church has gotten away from that." But the Mizo fellowship, now Mizo UMC, deeply

See Mizo, page 8

D.C. church celebrates first baptism in 20 years

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

YAASMEEN SPENCER WAS shopping at Costco in Washington, D.C., last fall with her three-month old son, Rhys, in tow. A nice man struck up a conversation with her, and out of the blue asked if the baby had been baptized.

"It was kind of crazy," Spencer said. "We had just been talking about that as a family."

When she replied "no," the man – the Rev. John Warren, pastor of Ryland Epworth UMC in

Washington, D.C. – handed her his business card. "I can take care of that," he said.

Nine months later, on the last Sunday in June, the now one-year old Rhys William Spencer came to be baptized at the church.

It was the first baptism at Ryland Epworth in more than 20 years. The small church, located near the corner of Branch and Pennsylvania avenues in Washington, D.C., has been in ministry for more than 175 years. After falling on some hard times, signs of new life are beginning to emerge.

Rhys' baptism is just the latest one.

Yaasmeen Spencer grew up in the Methodist church. "I wanted Rhys to be baptized," she said, "not a baby dedication. Pastor Warren told me to give him a call to talk about it and set up an appointment. We did, and I was like, 'This is great.'"

Family and friends from Texas, Georgia and Tennessee joined in the celebration of the baptism, as 20 people crowded around the baptismal font.

"Rhys did very well during the baptism," said his mother. "He likes water, so that was good."

Warren said the church had to create a custom-made

See Baptism, page 8

... well said

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

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

BY MANDY SAYERS
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

AS I WRITE this, I'm watching the sun rise over the ocean while my vacationing family sleeps. As July rolls on, I'm asked to reflect on independence. My first thought, after 20 years of marriage is, it's overrated. Relationships are very quickly about interdependence, in my experience, or they don't last very long.

I remember counseling a newly married person and being asked, "Do you mean I have to just give up being RIGHT?" Her quarrel with her husband was about something tiny, like, when he put the dishes away, he didn't stack the bowls in the manner that she wanted. "Oh, baby girl," I wanted to say, "this good man here loves you and wants God's best for you, and you are screaming at him over bowls?" Of course you have to give up "being right" all the time. There are more important things than being "independent."

Our life with God is certainly about freedom from bondage. Our God is the God of the Exodus, and the God of Christian freedom. In our baptisms, we promise to use the freedom and power God gives us to resist evil, injustice and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves. But all of the freedom we have is a gift that is designed to help us choose God.

Independence exists so that we can have the chance to choose to be dependent on the right things and so that we can choose to love God and each other. What if we shot off fireworks at baptisms? OK, too scary for the babies. There should be sparklers at every church meeting where folks choose Jesus over being right, where they listen and disagree and love one another anyway. Let's have a parade down Main Street because people who are hungry are being fed and the oppressed are being set free.

I hope you had a happy Independence Day, church. May God bless us all so that we love Jesus and each other, and all our neighbors, more than just "independence."

BY DARYL WILLIAMS
Pastor, New Hope Fellowship UMC, Upper Marlboro

THE DESIRE TO be independent is hardwired into who we are as humans. From the time we are born, we work to become free from outside control and not having to depend on anyone for our being.

Many of the big milestones in our lives are steps toward independence. Our first steps freed us from the necessity of being carried by someone. By our teen years we are looking forward to the freedom and independence that come with driver's licenses and first apartments. All of these things mark our independence.

The problem is that independence is a tricky thing. As much as we want to be independent, we often miss that we will never be fully independent. There is always someone that is standing in the background helping us or serving as the wind beneath our wings. No matter how much we achieve, or how high we climb, independence is an illusion.

All of us need other people to survive. We need people to help us up for those first steps. We need people to push us along and tell us to try again when we fail. We need people to love us no matter how good or bad things are. No matter how independent we become, we are still interdependent, needing each other to survive and thrive.

Even when the 13 British Colonies declared their independence from King George in July 1776, they did it together. They declared that they were the United States. There were differences among them, but they knew that their survival, even independently, would be based on their ability to depend on one another.

More than 200 years later we are a nation of conservatives and liberals, straight and gay, young and old, rich and poor, but "one nation, under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all."

As we celebrate Independence Day this month, we should all remember, no matter our differences, no matter our need for independence, we are all dependent on each other and on God.



JOIN THE CONVERSATION



... well said

... well said

EVENTS

Music Festival and Showcase

West River Camp, Churchton
Saturday, Aug. 2

This celebration of area United Methodist music groups will include games, a 5K walk/run and more. \$10 for adults, \$5 for ages 10-17, free to those under 10 and for the musical performers. Proceeds will go to United Methodist Community Services and for camperships. Contact Bonnie Booth at palbgh@verizon.net or 410-757-2017.

Mission u

Bethesda Marriott
Aug. 8-10

The Roma of Europe, people with disabilities, and balancing inner and outer dimensions of the Christian life are the classes of the 2014 Mission u. The event is sponsored by the Board of Global Ministries and United Methodist Women. Cost ranges from \$160 to \$385. A youth session is also available. For registration information, contact Darlynn McCrae at darmccrae@yahoo.com.

Childhood Educators Conference

Wesley Freedom UMC, Sykesville
August 14, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Childcare providers in local churches may obtain the necessary certification for their MSDE Credentials. The keynote address, "Reflect, Not Deflect," will be given by the Rev. Michelle Holmes Chaney. Eighteen workshops are available. Cost is \$55, includes workshops and lunch. Register

before July 15 at www.bwcumc.org/resources/cef/earlyeducatorsconf.

School of Congregational Development

LiveCast to your church or home
or at St. Paul UMC in Oxon Hill
August 16, 10 a.m.

One day webcast features Washington District Superintendent Joe Daniels and Washington Region Missional Strategist Christie Latona on Real Transformation. Visit <http://scdscholarships2014.com/>

ROCK in September

Towson UMC, Towson
Friday, Sept. 12, 7 p.m.

Preston Centuolo, the keynote speaker at ROCK 2014, and the band "Urban Street Level," will come together with the youth of the Baltimore-Washington Conference to raise money for the rebuilding of Northwood-Appold UMC. The church was destroyed in a fire last December. \$20. Register at www.bwcumc.org/events/rock_benefit_rebuilding_northwood_appold_umc.

Bishop's Dinner for Scouting

BWC Mission Center, Fulton
Sept. 22, 6:30 p.m.

For those wishing to learn more about Scouting programs. Larry Coppack, Director of Scouting Ministries for the denomination, will speak.

BE IT RESOLVED: At the 2014 Annual Conference, members passed five resolutions having to do with human sexuality.

But questions remain.

See a Q&A on these resolutions at www.bwcumc.org/resolutionsQ&A.



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UMConnection

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UMConnection is the newspaper of the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church, whose vision is to become fully alive in Christ and make a difference in a diverse and ever-changing world

The UMConnection (ISSN 005386) is owned and published by the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church, 11711 East Market Place, Fulton, MD 20759-2594.

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Subscriptions are \$15 per year. The UMConnection is published monthly.

To subscribe, email kspears@bwcumc.org.
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REGION NAME CHANGE: *The former Annapolis Southern Region has been renamed the Southern Region. The Southern Region is made up of churches from the Annapolis and Washington East districts.*

Bishop upholds resolution and process in two rulings of law

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON CONFERENCE RESIDENT Bishop Marcus Matthews has ruled on two questions of law that were presented at the 2014 Annual Conference.

The first, by the Rev. Stephen Ricketts of Providence-Fort Washington Charge in Fort Washington, was a request for a ruling regarding the conference's voting procedures and process on five resolutions on human sexuality.

The conference voted, with a two-thirds majority, to suspend its rules so that it could use a holy conferencing process, called circles of grace, to discuss and vote upon the resolutions.

Ricketts questioned if the voting "was legal and in compliance with the Book of Discipline since we did not have the chance to offer amendments." He also claimed the "structure did not provide protection against discrimination."

Bishop Matthews ruled that "the procedure and process used by the Annual Conference to vote on the five human sexuality resolutions was lawful and did not violate the Discipline."

In his analysis, he noted that General Conference has empowered each annual conference to adopt rules and regulations for its own government so long as they are not in conflict with the Discipline.

"Nothing in the Discipline precludes an annual conference from adopting the commonplace parliamentary practice of allowing two-thirds of all members voting to suspend their own rules for a particular purpose, including obtaining conference action on resolutions of the type that were being presented for the body's consideration in this instance," the bishop said.

He also noted that every member of the annual conference who was present was given a chance to vote on all the resolutions, and so the circle of grace process was consistent with the United Methodist policy on the elimination of discrimination.

The second request for a ruling of law came from Matthew Sichel, a lay member from Wesley UMC in Hampstead, who asked if the resolution, "Agree to Disagree on Issues Pertaining to Gender and Sexual Minorities," violated the Discipline or conflicted with the decisions of the Judicial Council.

Conference members had passed this resolution with a vote of 549 in favor and 304 opposed.

Sichel specifically questioned if the resolution was in compliance with paras. 2702.1(b), 2704.2(a) and 324.13 of the 2012 Book of Discipline and Judicial Council Decisions 1111, 1115, 1120 and 1218.

Bishop Matthews ruled that the Resolution "Agree to Disagree on Issues Pertaining to Gender and Sexual Minorities," does not violate the Discipline, nor does it conflict with the decisions of the Judicial Council.

This resolution, the bishop pointed out, is aspirational. It uses such qualifying words as "encouraged to support" or "consider refraining" and does not have prescriptive force.

In addition, Bishop Matthew said, "the Judicial Council's admonition against resolutions that 'negate, ignore or violate the Discipline' does not mean that an annual conference must stand silent when it decides, as a body, that its collective conscience is calling it to speak out, including by announcing its disagreement with provisions adopted by the General Conference, by advocating that the Discipline be changed, and by encouraging all Conference members, in the meantime, to be in ministry with all of God's children."

On June 26, Bishop Matthews submitted his ruling to the United Methodist Judicial Council for review, as required by the Discipline.

Complete copies of his two Rulings of Law can be found at www.bwcumc.org/news/rulings_law.



Tony Richards

Frank Schaefer regains credentials following appeal

BY KATHY L. GILBERT & ERIK ALSGAARD

THE REV. FRANK Schaefer had his ministerial credentials reinstated by a United Methodist regional appeals committee June 23, three days after a hearing held near Baltimore.

The denomination's Northeastern Jurisdictional Committee on Appeals restored his credentials and ordered the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference to compensate Schaefer for all lost salary and benefits dating from Dec. 19, 2013.

The former pastor of Iona UMC in Pennsylvania, Schaefer was defrocked after a November 2013 church trial found him guilty of violating The church's Book of Discipline, the denomination's law book, by conducting a same-sex marriage ceremony for his son. He also was found guilty of violating the church's order and discipline.

In the penalty stage of the trial, the court suspended Schaefer from his ministerial duties for 30 days and declared that if he could not "uphold the Discipline in its entirety" at the end of the suspension, he would surrender his credentials. He refused to do that and, on Dec. 19, the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference Board of Ordained Ministry asked him to give up his credentials.

In a statement immediately after the decision was released, Schaefer expressed happiness over his "re-frocking" by the committee.

"I never did understand the severity of my punishment for an act of love for my son Tim," Schaefer said. "The committee of appeals understood that my defrocking sought to penalize me not for what I did but for what I might do in the future."

The committee's ruling said "errors of church law vitiate the penalty imposed by the Trial Court," including "the mixing and matching of penalties that are designed to be distinct" and predicating the imposition of a penalty on "a future possibility, which may or may not occur, rather than a past or present act."

Jen Ihlo, chair of the Appeals Committee, said she wished the decision-making process could have been more public. Ihlo, a federal prosecutor who works for the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., is a member of Dumbarton UMC in the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

"How we held our conversations could be a model for the church," she said. "We ought to be able to have loving, respectful conversations about hard subjects and still part as friends."



Rev. Frank Schaefer responds to questions from the media.

Melissa Lauber

How the committee got to that point took time and effort of everyone on the committee.

In March, the committee met with a representative from JustPeace leading them through a process to help them stay focused and centered on their work. JustPeace was created in 1999 by the General Council on Finance and Administration to help find new ways of dealing with church conflict. Since 2004, it has worked as a separate entity in Washington, D.C.

"In hindsight," said Ihlo, "this helped the committee bond together. It helped us build trust and respect for

each other. I really appreciate the way our committee worked and how seriously we took our task."

Ihlo said doing that groundwork was important as the committee moved forward. They became clear what their job was: to decide whether the penalty given Schaefer was in violation of church law.

In its written decision, the committee was unanimous that the defrocking penalty was, in fact, a violation of church law. Schaefer received that penalty for not being able to uphold the Book of Discipline "in its entirety."

"You can't punish someone for future behavior," Ihlo said. Ihlo said there were no "Twelve Angry Men" moments during the committee's discussion, referring to the 1957 movie starring Henry Fonda. "The committee members were saying, 'Help me understand where you're coming from,'" said Ihlo. "At the end of the day, we parted ways saying, gosh, we hate to leave."

The lessons learned, Ihlo said, were that it's important to build trust and respect for one another before entering into hard conversations. "We spent a lot of time trying to understand each other, to know each other, as well as the matter before us," she said.

Ihlo said she entered into the process having no idea what to expect.

"These committees don't meet that often," she said. "There was really no prototype to follow."

Schaefer called the decision "a hopeful sign for our LGBTQ community" because the committee "recognized that I was wrongfully punished for standing with those who are discriminated against." LGBTQ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning individuals.

Many in the church already have been "moving toward love over legalism," he pointed out.

"Indeed, people throughout The United Methodist Church, who invited me into their pulpits, sat with me at their dinner tables and supported my family with their donations, have re-frocked me already. Their movement of love embraced me and together we are moving forward to bring about that day when our denomination no longer excludes any of God's beloved children. And I will continue to work toward that goal."

Gilbert is a multimedia reporter for United Methodist News Service in Nashville, Tenn. Alsgaard is the BWC's managing editor.

Take a tour of Sacred Art in Washington, D.C.

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

Art, Pablo Picasso says, “washes the daily dust of living off of our souls.” It enlivens, provokes, stirs, enrages, soothes and allows the spirit within us to be nudged into new ways of seeing, thinking and being.

Art can draw us into the presence of God. Unfortunately, art is also something the church today understands little of, and embraces even less, says Catherine Kapikian, founder and director emerita of the Henry Luce III Center for Art at Religion at Wesley Theological Seminary and a distinguished artist-in-residence at the seminary.

Addressing this monumental oversight, Kapikian has become a nationally recognized prophet and a quiet crusader seeking to awaken the church to the transformative power and possibilities of art.

Although she’d never take on those titles, Kapikian, a working site-specific, textile artist, began an academic program for religion and the arts at Wesley Seminary in Washington in 1979.

The unique program seeks to weave art throughout the seminary experience, training church leaders to allow art to shape their ministries and the life of a congregation.

In June, Kapikian offered a course to nine students on the Holy in Washington D.C. Art.

Only one or two of the students in the class considered themselves artists. The others were curious,

seeking to broaden their understanding of creativity and the sacred.

Kapikian dove straight in with a definition of art (“the articulated metaphor of an engaged perception”) and then challenged the students, through a visual survey of religious art throughout history, to define for themselves the relationship between art and theology.

Repeatedly, she stressed the idea that both are “architectures of meaning, fragile structures through whose doors and windows we glimpse the mystery of our being.”

The church must reject the ornamental, decorative and easy, sentimental illustrations – focusing instead on “awakening the imagination in an encounter of meaning-making possibility,” Kapikian said.

The class then took to the road on an academic pilgrimage, using the nonverbal vocabulary of art that includes line, shape, color, value and texture and more, to examine the spiritual meaning of art throughout the city of Washington.

Before every piece, Kapikian encouraged the students to immerse themselves in a reciprocal, contemplative encounter with the art. “Stop, see and be,” she said.

The artwork became inspirational as well, pointing students to their own ability to create art and to recognize that the act of creation is sacramental. “Art is less a product and more a process,” said Kapikian. She encouraged the students to draw on the “radical particularity” of their own experiences to create art of

their own.

Too often, she explained, churches tend to think of art as the product, the picture they hang in the narthex. But, like an iceberg, the product is that which is above water. The process is 70 percent. “The church needs to embrace the process of creating art. With that understanding will come transformation.”

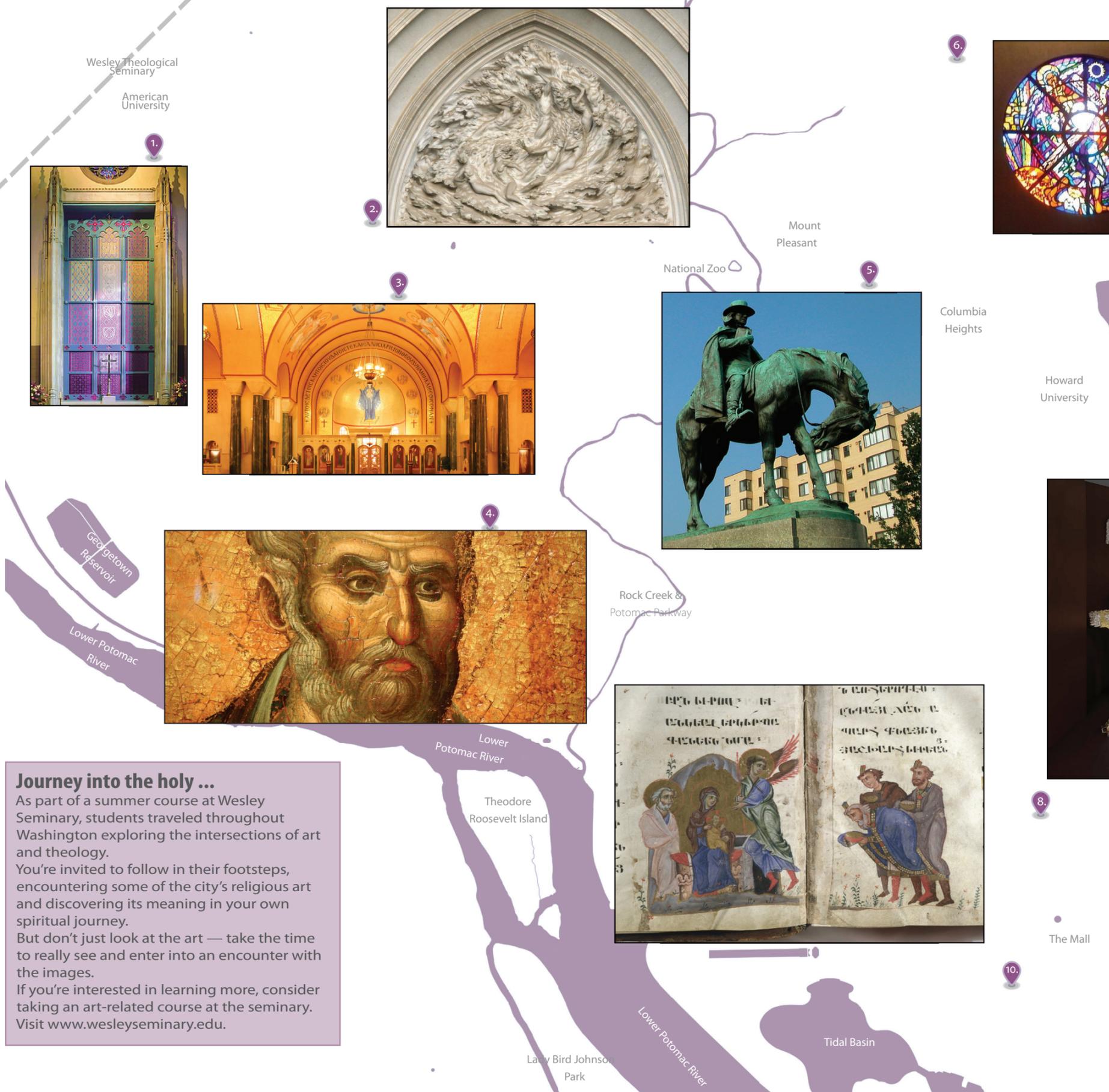
As a working artist, Kapikian has a deep understanding of process. “The process has dominion over me,” she said.

Her experiences as an artist, with installations in a variety of settings across the country, lends authenticity to her teaching, leading of workshops and her consulting work with local churches, Kapikian said.

She has designed more than 80 large-scale installations in such places as Metropolitan Memorial UMC, George Washington University Medical Center, the National Naval Medical Center and Constitution Hall. She designed the presidential kneeler to honor Gerald R. Ford at the National Cathedral. Among her latest projects is a wood and needlepointed tapestry Tree of Life in the chapel of the University of Maryland.

Images of much of her work can be found on her website <http://catherinekapikian.com>.

All of her work is site-specific, designed for a particular community in a specific space. Most make visual theological proclamations. Discerning the context of the community and the intention of the artwork is an essential part of her process. “It’s about ‘I am because we



Journey into the holy ...
 As part of a summer course at Wesley Seminary, students traveled throughout Washington exploring the intersections of art and theology. You're invited to follow in their footsteps, encountering some of the city's religious art and discovering its meaning in your own spiritual journey. But don't just look at the art — take the time to really see and enter into an encounter with the images. If you're interested in learning more, consider taking an art-related course at the seminary. Visit www.wesleyseminary.edu.

are,” she said. “It’s a different way of working.”

At the start of the class, Kapikian introduced herself to the students by talking about her creative process. But she also shared a personal tragedy that has been coloring her days. In February, her husband Albert died. He was a prominent virologist at the National Institutes of Health. They had been married 54 years. “He was “heroic and expansive,” she said. “Learning to live without him has been difficult beyond measure.”

But she is now beginning to re-enter her life of teaching and making art, even venturing into a new, challenging and intricate art form, making woven tapestries. She is trying to adopt the idea that “life is reverberating with new possibilities. If you don’t take risks, you never usher in new meaning in life,” she said.

This philosophy is one that often guides her. It led her in 1979, upon graduating with a Master’s degree in Theological Studies from Wesley, to march into the dean’s office and tell him that theological education at the seminary was truncated by a lack of the presence of the arts. She challenged them to start an artist in residence program. They initially turned her down, but she persevered.

Gradually, she was given a studio space and a course to teach. Her enthusiasm and “a conceptually correct idea” that the arts make an essential difference in the church ignited the spark of a program that has made Wesley Seminary the leading institution for arts and religion in the nation.

The Luce Center for Arts and Religion is an innovative and sacred space at Wesley Seminary in Washington, D.C. Its mission is to explore the intersection of art and faith; to encourage dialogue between artists and theologians; to help artists find ways to join their faith and their art; to help local churches discover ways to include the arts as a medium of transformation and hope; and to remind the Church Universal that the arts are intrinsic to the full expression of what it means to be created in the image of God. Learn more at www.wesleyseminary.edu/lcar.

Catherine Kapikian’s website is at <http://catherinekapikian.com>.



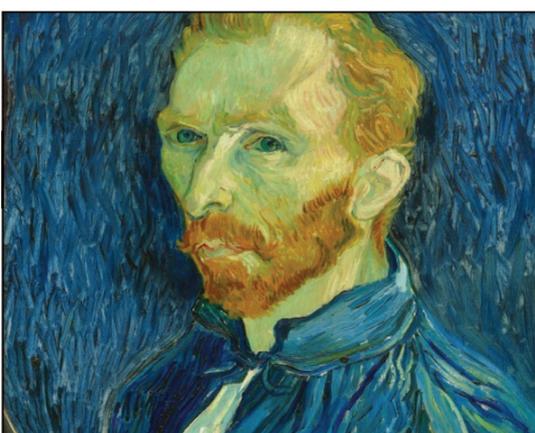
In 2001, Henry Luce endowed the Center for \$1.7 million. It’s a remarkable story but it doesn’t surprise Kapikian, who constantly stresses the idea of Imago Dei – that we are made in the Image of God – to her students. “We have the capacity to create because we are a reflection of our creator,” she said. “We should not truncate possibility by averting risk.”

As the former director of the Center, Kapikian kept a sign on the studio door. It read: “An artist is not a special kind of person, every person is a special kind of artist.” That’s the lesson the students this June learned firsthand. It’s a cornerstone of the seminary’s identity.

The arts community is a new mission field for the church, said Kapikian. “We intone a sense of the divine and help people engage in the deepening of their own lives.”

Legend

1. Metropolitan Memorial UMC
Reredos behind the altar table by Catherine Kapikian
<http://www.nationalchurch.org/>
3401 Nebraska Ave. NW,
Washington, DC 20016
2. Washington National Cathedral
Among the vast array of artistic treasures, spend time with the Creation sculptures and the tympanum over the front doors.
<http://www.nationalcathedral.org>
3101 Wisconsin Ave. NW,
Washington, DC 20016
3. St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral
Soak in the grandeur of *Christ the Pantokrator* in the ceiling and other icons.
<http://www.saintsophiadc.com/>
2815 36th St. NW, Washington, DC 20007
4. Dumbarton Oaks
A prestigious collection of Byzantine art
www.doaks.org
1703 32nd St. NW, Washington, DC 20007
5. Francis Asbury Statue
“The prophet of the open road”
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Asbury_\(Lukeman\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Asbury_(Lukeman))
16th Street and Mt. Pleasant Street,
Northwest, Washington, D.C.
6. Stained glass window at People’s Congregational United Church of Christ
See the magnificent work of African-American artist David Driskell.
<http://peopleschurchucc.org/>
4704 13th Street NW Washington, DC
7. Franciscan Monastery
Explore a replica of the ancient Christian catacombs in Rome.
<http://www.myfranciscan.org/>
1400 Quincy St. NE, Washington, DC 20017
8. Smithsonian American Art Museum
See James Hampton’s folk art “Throne,” Bill Viola’s video installation of “The Fall into Paradise.”
<http://americanart.si.edu/>
8th and F, NW, Washington, DC 20004
9. National Gallery of Art
Vincent Van Gogh’s work started a radical shift in religious art. See his work and a thousand other masterpieces.
www.nga.gov
6th and Constitution Ave. NW,
Washington, DC 20565
10. Freer Gallery of Art
One of the most important collection of Biblical manuscripts outside of Europe.
<http://www.asia.si.edu/>
1050 Independence Ave. SW,
Washington, DC 20560



9.



*"Lift every
voice & sing."*

150th Anniversary of the former
Washington Conference
October 18 – 1 p.m.
Martin's West in Woodlawn

Remember. Rejoice. Renew.

*Celebrating 150 years
of the former
Washington Conference*



For more details visit
[http://www.bwcumc.org/
events/remember_rejoice_renew](http://www.bwcumc.org/events/remember_rejoice_renew)

WHY ME?

Discover ways to find answers

10.03.14

[www.bwcumc.org/events/
risking_connection_faith_communities](http://www.bwcumc.org/events/risking_connection_faith_communities)

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Christine Kumar, left, and the Rev. Rebecca Iannicelli work on the herb garden at Camp Manidokan near Harpers Ferry, W.Va. Staff members of the BWC spent a day in June at the camp, prepping it for summer campers.

'Best Community Organization' award to church

REISTERSTOWN – On June 11, the Baltimore County Revitalization Award was given to Reisterstown UMC as the "Best Community Organization" in the county.

The award recognized the church's involvement in the community in many ways. Perhaps the most unusual is hosting the Main Street Spooktacular, which begins with a costume contest on the church's front lawn; and its Peeps Show, a contest to create a sculpture, diorama, tableau or art project made mostly from marshmallow Peeps and inspired by news events.

The congregation's community service also includes operating a food pantry, hosting Maryland Sings, the Kiwanis and a Christmas Tree Lighting. The church stays open during town events "so that people walking along Main Street when there is a community event, like the Reisterstown Festival, can use the rest rooms," said the Rev. Vivian McCarthy.

"(Reisterstown UMC is) always available and eager to be a member of the community," the award says.

Young adult intern serves in rape center

FREDERICK – Six young adults, ages 19-21, began work in early June as Ethnic Minority Young Adult interns, to serve for two months in nonprofit and nongovernmental social justice organizations in the U.S. capital for two months. Among them was Daniel Morales, a Hispanic/Latino American, who attends

Calvary UMC. He is a senior at McDaniel College with a double major in English and Theatre Performance.

The General Board of Church and Society conducts the internship program every summer and applicants come from all over the world. To qualify, applicants must be passionate about social justice and active in the denomination. The 2014 interns include three persons of African-American ethnicity, two Hispanic/Latino and one Pacific Islander.

Morales' placement is with Men Can Stop Rape, which empowers male youths and the institutions that serve them to work as allies with women in preventing rape and other forms of men's violence.

Pastor publishes from years of experience

SEVERNA PARK – The Rev. Byron P. Brought, a retired Elder, has recently published a book, "Offerings: Thoughts on What Matters Most." In the 180-page book of short reflections on dozens of topics, Brought shares his philosophical thoughts and ideologies on the nature of the universe and God.

The book, which includes 97 writings of half-page length to three pages, is intended for personal use or small group discussions. It incorporates religious faith with scientific theories that the author believes are compatible with the Bible.

"It is my hope to bring faith to non-believers, restore faith in those who have lost it and strengthen faith in those who now believe," Brought wrote.

Pastoral transition not as normal

ROCKVILLE – This is the time of year when pastors begin their new appointments, and this year that includes 124 changes announced by the end of May. For most transitioning pastors, there's a certain ritual to follow: say farewell to your "old" congregation in mid-June, pack and move and prepare a great first sermon as you begin learning the names of congregants and culture in the "new" church.

Not so for the Rev. Debbie Scott, as she took over as senior pastor at Mill Creek Parish, the church served by interim pastor, the Rev. Kay Barger, retired, since last July when its minister, the Rev. Rick Andrews, died suddenly. "It (was) not usually the way new pastors are introduced to a congregation," said the Rev. Martha Maxham. Barger and Scott worked together on a "Hail

and Farewell" service.

Barger preached on "Get out of the Huddle," encouraging the congregation to become involved in the ministries of Mill Creek Parish and look to the future. Barger and Scott together performed a baptism, symbolizing the past and future working together. At the end of the service, the lay leader, chair of the church council, District Superintendent JW Park and a layperson led a liturgy especially for the occasion, Maxham reported. "Our church choir also sang a wonderful anthem, 'Give Me Jesus,'" she said.

Happy Anniversary



On July 12 Bishop Marcus & Barbara Matthews celebrate 40 years of marriage. The staff and leaders of the Baltimore-Washington Conference wish them the happiest of anniversaries. May their lives continue to be rich in love, joy, health and God's abundant blessings.

Police invite UMs to pray for Baltimore neighborhood

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

“LET US PRAY.” It’s an invocation used in churches throughout the world. But the Rev. Cynthia Moore-Koikoi is now using these three simple words to transform the city of Baltimore.

Moore-Koikoi, superintendent of the Baltimore-Metropolitan District, joins with United Methodists each Tuesday morning for prayer walks throughout different areas of the city.



A Baltimore police officer escorts and prays with Methodists.

Moving through Baltimore’s 65 neighborhoods, a handful of people from that neighborhood’s churches and others from throughout the district, walk along the city’s sidewalks and stop where the spirit moves

them, offering prayer for the people and places before them.

In May, a group of about a dozen people were escorted by three Baltimore City police officers around the streets along North Avenue. The police had requested prayer for the neighborhood, where there was a homicide.

As they gathered on the street corner, two men introduced themselves to the group, wondering what was going on. As they walked, others from the neighborhood joined them, asking for prayer for specific homes and people they knew.

“The kids here grow up knowing they won’t grow old,” said Jamal, one of the people who joined the walking prayer group. “There’s drugs here. There’s shootings. These days, people don’t even look up when the police show up. That’s just the way things are here.”

The Rev. LaReesa Smith-Horn of Christ UMC in Baltimore, isn’t sure if or how the neighborhood will change. But she is certain of the power of prayer and of showing up. “The church must be present,” she said.

It was originally a surprise for Moore-Koikoi that people from the community so eagerly joined them.

“We listen,” she said. “And people have been, by and large, affirming. They say, ‘you guys keep doing what you’re doing.’ They also clearly articulate their needs to us. Some are trapped in addictions, one lady had gotten a bad report from her mammogram. Their message is we need you, the church, to be who you are. We’re all searching after wholeness.”

The variety of the city sometimes surprises the walkers. “We’ll pass a block of boarded up buildings and vacant lots and nothing but poverty, and five blocks up the road will be a cultural mecca. That’s what I love about Baltimore,” Moore-Koikoi said.

But more than learning about the city, the walkers



Darlyn McCrae, a regional Guide, right, joins neighbors in prayer every Tuesday in Baltimore.

learn about faith.

That’s especially true when people are willing to slow down, not talk as much, and allow God to reveal who God is. “We become open to what God wants us to see and feel,” said the superintendent. “I believe there are spiritual forces out there. When we speak words into the air, it makes a difference to the Holy Spirit. When we gather to pray we’ve been experiencing God.”

One of Moore-Koikoi’s favorite walks was on a snowy morning near the Inner Harbor, when she and the Rev. Dan Gleckler were the only two to come out. They stood together and prayed, watching the snow fall.

Moore-Koikoi also prays on the walks and countless other times during the day, for the churches she leads.

“My prayer for the churches of Baltimore is that they would be able to see their true potential,” she said. She prays each church and its members would know intellectually and on an emotional level what God has called them to do, and that they have all they need to accomplish that.

“We’re open to the Spirit,” she concluded, “whatever God puts in our path.”

To learn more about the prayer walks and how you can join, contact Darlyn McCrae, the Baltimore Region Guide, at dmccrae@bwumc.org or 410-309-3307.

Jane Grays begins ministry as a Deaconess

By LINDA WORTHINGTON
UMConnection Staff

IT MAY HAVE been a path she was taking most of her life, but only now realized. Jane Grays was consecrated as a Deaconess by The United Methodist Church during the closing plenary worship of the United Methodist Women’s Assembly in Louisville, Ky., April 27. Bishop Marcus Matthews commissioned her as a Deaconess to a lifetime of service as a lay person at the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference May 30.

By answering God’s call, Grays said, she made the journey to becoming a Deaconess, “to a commitment of cutting-edge ministry of love, justice and service.” She, like the Deaconess covenant community, is rooted in Scripture, informed by history, driven by mission, ecumenical in scope, and global in outreach.

Grays’ commissioning as a Deaconess caps a life of service and study. She took classes required by the Deaconess Movement from the New York Theological Seminary, but this was after years as a devoted United Methodist Woman, being certified a lay servant, serving in both district and conference positions and serving through the Women’s Division of the General Board of Global Ministries as Dean of the Upper Atlantic Regional School (of Christian Mission).

She is a retired banker and worked for the Prince Georges County School system for several years. She has just finished her term as conference chair of the Commission on the Status and Role of Women.

In 2013, deaconesses celebrated a 125-year-long history, dating back to 1888, when they provided hospitality and kindness to those living on the margins. Deaconesses welcomed immigrants arriving in the United States in the early 1900s and they stood in solidarity with those who fought for Civil Rights in the 1960s, said Becky Louter, a deaconess and the executive for the Deaconess and Home Missioner administrative

office with the national United Methodist Women.

The male equivalent of Deaconess is Lay Missioner, laymen who, like the women, are dedicated to a lifetime of service in lay ministry. The Office of Lay Missioner was created in 2004.

Deaconesses and lay missioners are trained professionals approved through a process established by United Methodist Women and are consecrated, commissioned and appointed by a bishop. Today nearly 200 active service deaconesses and home missioners fill important roles in the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church.

For her ministry as a deaconess, Gray serves with the women in the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women (MCI-W) in Jessup. She is also on the MCI-W and Kairos advisory boards.



Deaconess Jane Grays

Her road to ministry “inside” a prison began in 2010 with a UMW request to lead a class, then attending a breakout session at Mission U, led by the Rev. Brian Jackson, followed by his “Healing Ministries” session. “I really felt excited,” she said as she pursued the topic through Kairos Prison Ministry.

“When I first went inside with Kairos,” as part of a 38-women group paired with 35 women prisoners, “It felt like such a spiritual high.” After additional training from the institution, she became a weekly visitor. “I knew it was my ministry when I became uplifted as the doors clanged shut behind me.”

“Training as a deaconess has helped me understand theology and to answer God’s call to be obedient,” she said. Though she’d heard the call, she said she was “reluctant to respond because I’m a senior citizen.” She had a psychological review as part of the deaconess process. “I kept waiting for the psychologist to say I was too old.” It didn’t happen. “God is still calling me and I have to be obedient,” she said.

Grays is joined by two other deaconesses in the Conference. A long time conference deaconess, Shelly Owens recently returned to her home state of Oklahoma. But still in the conference are Gertrude Dailey of Metropolitan UMC in Annapolis and Carolyn Anderson, a program director at Emory UMC in Washington, D.C. Logan Alley from Foundry UMC is in training.

Grays was born and raised in New York and moved to Maryland in the 1970s. She is a widow with two children, three grandchildren and one great-grand child.

“I didn’t think I’d be doing any of this ... I’m humbled that God is still using me,” she said.

For information on becoming a deaconess or home missioner, visit www.dhmumc.org.

Mizo: Newest church increases conference's diversity

From page 1

embraces the spirit of evangelism and has already started a satellite fellowship for Mizo people in Moorefield, W.Va.

"You inspire us to think globally about our annual conference," DeLong said, "so that all of us can be richer in our understanding of God."

Celebrating the newest church in the Baltimore-Washington Conference, Daniels praised the congregation for all they have done and all they will do.

"You believed God wanted to do something in your midst," he said. "In recognizing you as a full-blown church, I pray that you will keep before you that there are still

multitudes of souls who do not know Jesus Christ. They are waiting for us to share our story of Good News out of our context, our culture, our language and our very being. ... You are a part of Christ's holy church. Let us dedicate ourselves to this purpose."

Baptism: Radical hospitality makes a difference

From page 1

baptismal certificate for Rhys. "All the certificates in the office," said Warren, "had '19__' printed on them."



The Rev. John Warren holds Rhys Spencer at his baptism.

Spencer had never met Warren prior to that day in Costco. Warren said that these kinds of encounters are just part of his ministry.

Whenever he sees a small child in the community, Warren said, if he can, he strikes up a conversation with the parents and simply asks if the child has been baptized.

"If the answer is no, I say I can take care of that and give them my business card," he said.

Warren's infectious good-nature is hard not to notice. He carries that spirit with him, even to the point of standing on the street corner Sunday mornings at 8:30 to simply wave and greet passersby.

As recorded carillon music spills out of loudspeakers mounted on the church, Warren – dressed in full liturgical garb, including green chasuble, surplice, robe and pectoral cross – waves at vehicles as they go by,

often giving people two "thumbs-up" with a large smile.

"I've been doing this since Easter," Warren said. "I've had people honk at me and wave back at me. I've even had a woman wave at me then drive past me, turn around and come back. She said thanks and that she may just surprise me one day" and show up in church, he said.



The Rev. John Warren stands outside Ryland Epworth UMC to greet passersby every Sunday morning.

Photos by Erik Alsgaard

Log Meeting House at Strawbridge Shrine turns 250

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

IN 1764, ROBERT Strawbridge and his fledgling Methodist Society built a Meeting House in the fields of Maryland in what was then eastern Frederick County. Made of logs, the Meeting House became the first place of worship for Methodists in America.

Last month, 250 years later, United Methodists gathered near the site of that Meeting House to celebrate and remember a proud heritage. As a men's barbershop chorus serenaded guests and the smells of fried chicken and fish wafted over a large tent, people listened and learned about United Methodist history that's right in their back yard.

"What did it take to travel an ocean and come to what was then a frontier land and build a meeting house by hand," said John Strawbridge, a sixth or seventh great-grandson of Robert. As the communications coordinator for the Shrine and a member on the Board of Directors, he was present at the celebration to give tours and the history of the Shrine to guests.

"The cathedral of Methodism is a farm house or a log house," he said. "That's the image of Methodism that I want people to leave here with. It's a sleeves rolled up, get your hands dirty and get out in the field kind of denomination."

Strawbridge and his wife, Elizabeth, immigrated to the Colonies from Ireland in 1760. How they ended up in what is now Carroll County, Maryland, is somewhat of a mystery.

The Strawbridge's rented 50 acres from John England. Records indicate that he had business interests in Annapolis at the time. Records also show that the Strawbridge's landed in Annapolis when they arrived.

"It was not a denomination when they came here," said Helen Kemp, Curator of the Shrine. "It was a movement."

Robert Strawbridge preached throughout the

Colonies, she said, from New Jersey to what is now West Virginia, from the Eastern Shore of Maryland to central Virginia, all of it ridden on horseback. While he was out preaching, Elizabeth tended the home, which visitors can walk through today.

Elizabeth Strawbridge is credited with the first Methodist convert in America. Kemp said that Elizabeth would share the Gospel with workers who came to help out on the farm. One of the workers, John Evans, a Quaker, heard Elizabeth and gave his life to Jesus and embraced the Methodist movement. John England, the landowner, converted to Methodism under the hand of Robert Strawbridge, who is also credited with the first Methodist baptism in America, even though he was not ordained.

"He was the only one out there in the wilderness, preaching the Gospel," said Kemp. "He knew that people also needed Holy Communion and baptism."

Kemp said that an ordained person couldn't be counted on in those days, since the only ordained Protestants were Church of England priests and anti-England sentiments were running high. Strawbridge took it upon himself to administer the sacraments, even though, technically, he wasn't supposed to.

"He saw the need and did it," Kemp said. "Francis Asbury wrote to John Wesley about this, and Wesley replied to tell him to stop, now. Asbury did; Robert did not. He just went on doing what he did."

Eventually, Methodism being nothing if not a movement of compromise, especially in its early days, Asbury wrote



Helen Kemp

that Strawbridge was the only lay person authorized to administer the sacraments.

Robert Strawbridge died in Baltimore in 1781, at the age of 49, which Kemp said was old for a Circuit Rider. Elizabeth died in 1791, and they are both buried at Mt. Olivet cemetery in Baltimore in what is called the Bishop's Lot.

"It's remarkable to be at a place that you know your relatives lived in and worked in and raised a family," said John Strawbridge as he stood in front of the house his great-great-great-great-great-grandparents lived in. "It's a place where you can trace your roots directly back."

The site reminds him that the people of The United Methodist Church are all the spiritual descendants of Robert Strawbridge. As he sees confirmation classes come through the site, the visitors and guests and how they connect with it, he's keenly aware of the importance of this place.

"It really makes you appreciate, as a descendant, that it's not just my history, it's all of our histories," he said. "It's the thing that connects us as Methodists."



John Strawbridge, a descendant of Robert, at the shrine.