



# 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.bwcmc.org • Volume 27, Issue 06 • June 2016

## BWC hails God's power



**Bishop Marcus Matthews preaches at the opening worship service June 2 at the 232nd Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference Session. This was his final time preaching as an active bishop at Annual Conference as he is scheduled to retire on Aug. 31 after 42 years of ministry.**

By MELISSA LAUBER  
UMConnection Staff



**M**EETING UNDER THE theme “You Have the Power,” 1,701 lay and clergy members from 631 churches in the Baltimore-Washington Conference gathered at the 232nd annual session. The June 1-4 event at the Wardman Park Marriott Hotel in Washington, D.C., was a time of worship, fellowship and holy conferencing.

On the evening of June 3, and throughout the session, conference members bid farewell to Bishop Marcus Matthews, their episcopal leader, who is retiring after 42 years of ministry, all but eight of which were lived out in the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

Matthews was honored as a man of integrity, a leader with strong but gentle faith, a champion of prayer and learning, and a bishop of God by 10 other bishops and hundreds of friends and colleagues from throughout the church.

In an historic moment, the live streaming feeds from the Baltimore-Washington and Upper New York Annual Conferences were linked June 3 so that Bishop Mark Webb and others could deliver well wishes to Matthews. Matthews was the bishop who united four Annual Conferences and gaveled the new Upper New York Conference into existence in 2010.

In Baltimore-Washington, as an expression of their gratitude, members collected \$300,001 in a love offering to break ground on a fitness center at Africa University in Zimbabwe in Matthews’ name. The bishop, who championed the creation of the pan-African, Methodist-affiliated university, currently serves as the interim chair of its Board of Directors.

In another significant action, the BWC clergy, meeting in executive session, voted not to approve Tara “T.C.” Morrow for commissioning as a Deacon in The United Methodist Church. Morrow is married to a woman.

Morrow’s candidacy was recommended by the conference’s Board of Ordained Ministry, one of four

boards throughout the denomination that recently chose to not make the sexual practices of the candidates a determining factor in their decisions about ordination.

The denomination’s book of covenant, the Book of Discipline, says that, “The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore, self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.”

Morrow narrowly missed the two-thirds margin needed to be commissioned. The result of this vote echoed throughout the conference sessions.

During the Ordination Service on June 4, some of the members of Morrow’s commissioning class left an empty space for her at the kneeler and a rainbow stole hung on the altar railing where she would have knelt.

During the plenary session June 2, members endorsed the Rev. Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, superintendent of the Baltimore-Metropolitan District, to be a candidate for

*See Overview, page 8*

## Bishop Matthews honored for 42 years of service

By ERIK ALSGAARD  
UMConnection Staff



**I**N AN EVENING filled with tributes, music, thanksgiving, praise, and insights into Bishop Marcus Matthews (more in a moment), the Baltimore-Washington Conference said farewell to their episcopal leader for the past four years. Matthews is retiring Aug. 31 after 42 years in ministry.

Tributes flowed in from people at the podium and via video, from bishops around the connection to his own family members and grandchildren.

“I felt love, I felt faith” in the house I grew up in, said Marci Matthews, the daughter of Bishop and Barbara Matthews. “I have learned to trust God from my parents’ example.”

Bishop Woodie White, retired, and a close personal friend of Matthews, could not attend in person but sent a letter which was read by the Rev. Tony Love, who served as emcee for part of the festivities.

“Marcus, you have excelled at every task given you by the church,” Bishop White wrote. “I was privileged to

offer a charge at your installation in 2004, which charged you to be a good bishop. But above all else, be God’s bishop.”

Other tributes were offered by Bishops James King, Felton Edwin May, Sandra Steiner-Ball, Joseph Yeakel, and Gregory Palmer.

Raimon Jackson, chair of the Young Adult Council for the BWC, said that the best word to describe Bishop Matthews was “holy cool.” Noting that the bishop mandated young adults and youth be in the lead of ministry in the conference, Jackson said the legacy he will leave is one filled with support for these age groups. “You changed my whole outlook on what it means to be a bishop,” Jackson said. “Thank you for being a father, a hero, a man of God.”

A highlight of the evening was the news from Charlie Moore (who expressed surprise that one of the bishop’s guilty pleasures was watching “Dancing With the Stars”), who announced that the conference had raised \$300,001 in a love offering that will go to build a new health and fitness center at Africa University. The bishop



**Bishop Marcus Matthews and his wife, Barbara, enjoy a moment during his June 3 celebration.**

had asked that no personal gifts be given to him and Barbara on their retirement, but that any gifts go to the United Methodist-related school in Zimbabwe. Bishop Matthews, along with other leaders, departed for Africa University on June 7 for its commencement exercises, and

*See Farewell, page 3*

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

BY MANDY SAYERS  
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

“BUT JESUS CALLED them aside and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their superiors exercise authority over them. It shall not be this way among you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave — just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.’” — Matthew 20:25-28.

Power, my ethics professor was quick to point out, is a morally neutral thing. There’s nothing wrong, per se, with power. Power can do great good, and power can work great harm. After all, we affirm that we are to use the “freedom and power God gives” to resist evil, injustice and oppression “in whatever forms they present themselves.” (Baptismal Covenant) But what is the nature of the “power God gives?”

When we look at the power that Jesus wielded, and the power of the young church in Acts, we see that power shows itself in some unusual ways. Power is used by Jesus to cast out demons, to heal wounds, to free the oppressed, and to break down the dividing wall between those “in” and those “out.”

Jesus’ power could have looked very different; after all, Jesus is God’s Son. But Jesus used his power not with tanks and guns, but with liberation and love. Jesus lifted up humility as the standard for greatness, and love as the badge by which his followers would be known.

It is my prayer following Annual Conference that we would “use the freedom and power that God gives us” to work together for the sake of the transformation of the world. It is my prayer that I will be able to report back to my church about how well we listened to each other, how we loved our neighbors as ourselves and how we modeled for the larger church how to affirm unity, even without unanimity.

As John Wesley said, “Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences. These remaining as they are, they may forward one another in love and in good works.” (John Wesley, “Catholic Spirit”)

... well said

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

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

“BUT YOU SHALL receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you shall be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere — in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” — Acts 1:8

It is interesting that the last thing Jesus did before ascending into heaven was make a promise to his disciples. He didn’t give them a pep talk. He didn’t give a sappy goodbye speech. He made them a promise.

Just before he ascended from Earth and returned to heaven, Jesus told his disciples that they would receive power. It seems like an odd promise considering that Jesus was all-powerful. If he wanted the disciples to have power, why not just stay with them and let them tap into his power? Instead, he promises them that they will receive their own power.

True to his word, a short time later, when Pentecost had fully come and the disciples were of one accord, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit and gave the disciples power. Interestingly, when Jesus gave power to the disciples, they were given specific instructions — go tell everyone about me — and the power only comes at a specific time, when they are all of one accord.

You see, there is real danger to power that does not have a purpose or that comes at the wrong time. Power without purpose has the potential to do damage to others, and power out of timing has the potential to do damage to you.

As we come out of Annual Conference, remember the power of the Holy Spirit that was given to the first disciples on Pentecost was not just for them, but is available to each and every one of us today. Through the Holy Spirit, we have the power to be witnesses for Jesus Christ everywhere. We have the power to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Maryland, Washington, D.C., the panhandle of West Virginia, Bermuda, and everywhere in between. That is the purpose.

We must also remember that to receive this power we must be of one accord. No matter our differences of opinions, race, language or anything else, we are all disciples of Christ. So let us come together from this Annual Conference and we will receive power.

... well said



## EVENTS

### United Methodist Days at Kings Dominion

Tickets can be used June 18, 25 and July 2, and 9, and cost \$34. For more information, contact Deb Trowbridge at 410-290-7302.

### Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference

July 11-15  
Lancaster, Pa.

“Quilted by Connection” is the theme for this quadrennial meeting, which is responsible for electing new bishops and assigning all bishops to their respective Areas for the next four years. The BWC will have 24 delegates at the conference. More information is available at [nejumc.org/2016conference.html](http://nejumc.org/2016conference.html). Full coverage will be online at [bwcumc.org](http://bwcumc.org), and in the July/August issue of this newspaper.

### Mission u

July 29-31  
Bethesda Marriott Hotel

Join the Board of Global Ministries and United Methodist Women for spiritual growth and to expand your knowledge and concepts of mission. Studies include: The Bible and Human Sexuality; Latin America: People of Faith; and Climate Justice: Call

to Hope. A youth Mission u will run the same time. More information at [bwcumc.org/event/2016-mission-u/](http://bwcumc.org/event/2016-mission-u/)

### First Twelve, with Paul Nixon

August 8-9  
BWC Mission Center, Fulton

Designed for leaders and planters who are starting new faith communities, worship services, churches, fellowships, or small groups. Presented by the GBOD Path 1 team; sponsored by BWC Office of Vibrant Communities. Register at [bwcumc.org/event/first-twelve-with-paul-nixon/](http://bwcumc.org/event/first-twelve-with-paul-nixon/). Registration closes July 25.

### Lead Like a Woman, Not Like a Girl

September 16-17  
BWC Mission Center, Fulton

Presented by the GBOD Path 1 team. Women in leadership are encouraged to attend this workshop designed to sharpen their leadership and communication skills, and discover their unique “High Performance Pattern” as a leader. Brought to you by the BWC Office of Vibrant Communities. More information from Jo Chesson, [jchesson@bwcumc.org](mailto:jchesson@bwcumc.org).

## MORE CONFERENCE NEWS



Additional 2016 Annual Conference Session news and photos are available online.

For photos visit our flickr page at [flickr.com/photos/bwcumc/albums](http://flickr.com/photos/bwcumc/albums)

Additional photos are on our Facebook page, [Facebook.com/bwcumc](http://Facebook.com/bwcumc)

News and information can be found on our website, [bwcumc.org](http://bwcumc.org)

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# Clergy vote not to approve T.C. Morrow

BY ERIK ALSGAARD  
UMConnection Staff

**C**LERGY MEMBERS OF the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference, meeting June 1 in an Executive Session, did not approve Tara “T.C.” Morrow for commissioning as a Deacon in The United Methodist Church.

Morrow failed to receive the needed two-thirds vote for approval.

Morrow, a woman married to another woman, became a litmus test in a denomination struggling with the issue of ordaining and commissioning homosexuals.

The United Methodist Church, in its Book of Discipline, does not allow “self-avowed, practicing homosexuals” to be ordained.

The Rev. Charles Parker, chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry (BOOM) for the BWC, brought the report that recommended Morrow for commissioning. Earlier, Parker had released a statement on behalf of the Board, stating that the board did not inquire about sexual practice for any candidate.

Bishop Marcus Matthews called for United Methodists to be in a time of prayer following the clergy meeting. He called for prayers for Morrow, her family, for leaders of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, and for the unity of the church as it continues to seek God’s will.

Following the decision, Morrow issued a statement: “While I am saddened that the full clergy session did not affirm the BOOM’s recommendation, I appreciate the BOOM’s openness and transparency related to my candidacy. I hope such openness may be an example as the Council of Bishops moves forward with a commission to study and possibly offer revision of the parts of the United Methodist Book of Discipline related to ‘human sexuality.’ As we know well, discussions of how to work with LGBTQ clergy and clergy candidates are not abstract discussions. We are talking about real lives, real people who are called by God to leadership in the church.”

At the 2016 General Conference, which ended May 20, the church delayed any decisions on human sexuality at the invitation of the denomination’s Council of Bishops. Instead, a special committee will be established by the

bishops to study the issues and report back.

“The really unfortunate thing that struck me about the arguments and demonstrations at this year’s Annual Conference,” said the Rev. Robert Barnes, pastor at Glen Burnie UMC, “is that so many United Methodists have been taught to speak and act as if we are not an open and inclusive church, just because they don’t agree with one part of the covenant that governs our life together.”

The Rev. Steve Tillett, pastor of Asbury-Broadneck UMC

the church is a family.

“I grew up in The United Methodist Church,” she said. “To go from coming out to my parents in the late 90s to yesterday, where I got 61 percent of the vote, is an affirmation of my call to ministry.”

Morrow said she is feeling called to staying in the struggle for full inclusion of LGBTQ people in the church. “Part of my call is to be a voice for human rights,” she said. Morrow has worked at the National Religious Campaign



**Supporters of full inclusion for LGBTQ clergy wore rainbow-colored stoles throughout Annual Conference. Several gathered in the hotel’s main lobby area as a witness to their cause June 3.**

in Annapolis, said he was conflicted about the decision.

“On the one hand, I know what the Bible says and am well acquainted with what the Discipline has to say about homosexuality,” he said. “On the other hand, it seems to me that Morrow’s biggest ‘offense’ was being up front and completely candid with letting us know the totality of who she is.

“I think most of us are well aware that we have had (and still have) people who are homosexual serving at every level of ministry in this church both laity and ordained,” Tillett said. “And if we’re going to be honest, most of us also have friends and family and congregation members who are gay, as well. If nothing else, that reality should convince us that these people are NOT the devil, they are merely human beings, just like the rest of us, ‘going on to perfection’ by God’s grace.”

Speaking at the Baltimore-Washington Area Reconciling United Methodists (BWARM) dinner June 2, Morrow said that she is staying in the church, for now, because for her,

Against Torture for the past six years. She graduated from Wesley Theological Seminary 11 years ago.

Morrow said that she is always thinking about that “13 or 14-year old kid in Oklahoma, in a church, and what are they hearing,” so that they would know that there are people like her in the church, “at least somewhere.”

“Not everyone is called to this path,” she said. “But I’m staying to be a witness and a presence.”

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture issued a statement lamenting the decision. Other statements came from Foundry UMC, where Morrow is a member; BWARM, the Baltimore-Washington Area Reconciling Ministries network; 13 members of the 2016 ordination class; and several students who graduated with Morrow from Wesley Theological Seminary.

Following the ordination and commissioning service June 4, Morrow came forward in response to an invitation to those feeling a call for ordained ministry.



**Clergy members surround T.C. Morrow in prayer following the vote not to commission her.**

## Farewell: BWC thanks Bishop Marcus Matthews

From page 1

for the ground-breaking of the center on June 10.

The Rev. Maidstone Mulenga, the bishop’s assistant for

the past four years, thanked the bishop for first hiring him in the Upper New York Conference and bringing him here. “May the sun shine wherever you go,” he said.



**Bishop Marcus Matthews and his wife, Barbara, greet members of the Annual Conference Session Friday night, June 3.**

Bishop Matthews, speaking with Barbara by his side, thanked his family, his mother, his uncle and many others.

“All that I have done over these years,” the bishop said, “I wouldn’t have been able to do without Barbara. She has really freed me to do the things I needed to do.”

The bishop thanked his mother, who, when he was growing up, ran the house “like a drill sergeant,” managing seven children because Matthews’ father died when he was young.

“The way I get up early today,” he said, “I saw my mother do that. Even at age 92, she walked a mile a day and worked in her rose garden.”

His uncle, he said, was like a father to him. “He was a giant,” he said. “I plan to write about him in the book I plan to write in my retirement.

“Let me also thank this conference,” he said. “The BWC has been good to me. I never thought I had a bad appointment. Every appointment I had was the very best.”

The bishop thanked his staff and his Cabinet, especially the episcopal office staff of Debbie Albrecht, Joyce King, and Mulenga. “They have kept me in place in a good way.”

As the Rev. Edgardo Rivera played “Great is Thy Faithfulness,” conference members were left to bask in the glow of a celebration for a man of humility, deep faith and a passion for young people.

Thank you, Bishop Matthews. Thank you.

# BWC adopts 2017 budget of \$14.2 million

BY ERIK ALSGAARD  
UMConnection Staff



**B**Y A NEARLY unanimous vote June 2, members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference adopted a \$14.2 million apportionment budget for 2017. The budget represents a decrease of 0.8 percent from 2016 and is the fifth consecutive year the apportioned budget has been between \$14.1 and \$14.3 million, according to the Rev. Ann Laprade, chair of the Conference Council on Finance and Administration (CFA).

Laprade celebrated the outstanding giving by the conference in 2015, with a collection rate on apportionments of 91.7 percent, the highest in 15 years. “We believe the collection rate is a good indicator of the strength of our conference,” Laprade said.

The 2017 budget, however, will not be a typical budget, Laprade said. That’s because the Conference Board of Pensions and Health Benefits found it possible to implement a “significant strategic shift in how we can fund Retiree Medical expenses in 2017,” she said.

The BWC has a surplus of \$28.3 million in a fund created and set aside to pay for clergy who are under what is called the “Pre-82” retirement plan. Part of that surplus — \$1.5 million — will be used in several ways in the 2017 budget. Part of the \$1.5 million will be used to pay down debt on the loan for the BWC’s Mission Center in Fulton, and the new dining hall at West River Center.

“Four years of debt reduction at an average rate of \$700,000 per year will shorten our loan from 13 years to 6 years, save \$1 million in interest, and enable a 15 percent reduction in the budget at the end of the 6 years,” said Laprade.

The remainder of the \$1.5 million will go towards replenishing reserves, providing needed salary and benefit increases, including the creation of a new position for a new Center for Clergy Excellence, paying increases in General Church apportionments, and other budget expenses.

In response to a question from the Rev. Barry Hidey about how long the surplus might last, Laprade said that CFA is taking a “conservative approach” to using the pre-82 surplus.

“We will be monitoring the levels,” she said, “and if there’s any reason not to do this, then we are under no compulsion to continue.”

Participants in the Baltimore-Washington Conference’s HealthFlex health insurance plan will have more options to meet their health insurance needs in 2017 under new provisions adopted by the Conference Board of Pensions and Health Benefits. The Rev. Jackson Day, chair of the BWC’s Board of Pension and Health Benefits, outlined the changes.

“There will be six options to choose from,” Day said. “The plan you select in November will define the premium you pay in 2017.”

Day said that the current BWC plan will be offered in 2017, and urged participants to attend orientation sessions that will be held in the fall.

Following the Stewardship report, the Rev. Melissa Rudolph raised the issue of health insurance costs for clergy couples with children. Melissa is married to the Rev. John Rudolph, and together they serve the North Carroll Cooperative Parish in Hampstead.

The next day, June 3, John Rudolph spoke passionately about the concerns he faced in paying for health insurance. The Rev. Deborah Scott, pastor at Mill Creek Parish in Rockville, offered a substitute motion which was eventually adopted by the conference.

That motion called for an annual meeting between BWC staff and clergy couples to ensure that “all are enrolled” in the proper plan (read more, page 5).

In other action, conference members:

- Heard a report from Shannon Logan, representing the General Council on Finance and Administration, thanking the BWC for again contributing 100 percent apportionments to the general church.
- Voted to approve a 2 percent increase in minimum salary in 2017 for full-time clergy, to \$42,303. Housing allowance rates will remain the same.
- Voted unanimously to continue Paul Eichelberger as conference treasurer for the next four years.
- Elected Thomas Starnes as the conference chancellor for the next four years.



**The Rev. Ann Laprade, chair of CFA, presents the 2017 budget proposal June 2.**

# Diversity of BWC ministries highlighted

BY MELISSA LAUBER  
UMConnection Staff



“**HOW GREAT IS our God?**” asked Young Adult Council Chair Raimon Jackson as he sang to open the Connectional Ministries report at Annual Conference June 2.

Eleven-year-old Nora Meeks, of Silver Spring UMC, responded with her witness of traveling on her first mission trip with the BWC to Zimbabwe last summer.



**Raimon Jackson, chair of the Young Adult Council, leads members in song and praise.**

On the trip, she named the stray cats at Africa University and met the orphans at Fairfield Children’s Home. There, she played with an 18-month-old baby named Rejoice.

Rejoice called her “momma.”

“Africa was a real life changing experience I’ll never forget,” said Meeks, the daughter of the Rev. Rachel Cornwell, pastor at Silver Spring UMC. “I feel like now I have seen and touched the ends of the earth that not many people have seen or experienced. ... The trip to Zimbabwe is locked into my mind and will always be with me.”

This life-transformation is at the heart of United Methodist mission and ministry, said the Rev. Maidstone Mulenga, director of Connectional Ministries, in a presentation June 2.

During his presentation, Mulenga spoke on the defining missional power of United Methodists who are connected through the BWC’s 34 distinct ministry and mission teams, four campus ministries, three camping and retreat facilities, and 631 local churches.

During the presentation, members of the Conference Council on Youth Ministry shared their new mission of SEARR — supporting, educating, advocating, resourcing and representing youth. One component of doing this is helping youth struggle with and find meaningful answers to the questions “Who am I, do I matter, and where do I belong?”

Assisting youth in alleviating the stress in their lives is an important part of their ministry. “As Christians, we must all be willing to step out of our comfort zones, take another

person under our wing, and let them know that they matter in the Kingdom of God,” said one of the youth.

Another important part of Connectional Ministries, said Mulenga, is the creation of new, and the revitalization of existing, faith communities.

“We have the power to reach new people for Christ,” said the Rev. Tony Love, director of the Conference’s Vibrant Communities ministries. “We are reaching out to more people with the Gospel, with the Good News, and equipping people to love and serve God,” Love said.



**Conference Council on Youth Ministry members present a dramatic skit during their presentation.**

Love lifted up a number of congregations doing exciting ministries, like Community with a Cause in Lexington Park, which offers worship and Bible study to the disabled in their communities and their families; Faithpoint UMC near Frederick, which has taken to the Internet and provided a worship experience to all; Asbury UMC in Washington, D.C., which has renovated its fellowship hall to better serve the community; the Table Church and InspireDC, reaching out to young adults in Washington one conversation at a time; and Eastern UMC in Baltimore, which is partnering with others in new ways to reach new people for Christ.



**The Rev. Maidstone Mulenga, director of Connectional Ministries, gives his report.**

“As we become missional entrepreneurs, we’re envisioning what the Kingdom-future might look like,” Love said.

During the Connectional Ministries report, Logan Alley, a member of Foundry UMC who works with the homeless and is this conference’s newest Deaconess, was introduced.

Alley was commissioned as a Deaconess in May at General Conference, where she joined the order of lay women called to a full-time vocation in ministries of love, justice and service.

Also introduced were newly commissioned missionaries Mary and Aaron Vanderommers, who serve in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, ([www.umcmissoncongo.com](http://www.umcmissoncongo.com)) and Northeastern Jurisdiction Missionary Advocate, the Rev. John Calhoun ([www.umcmisson.org](http://www.umcmisson.org)).

## JOIN IN YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

The Young Adults are not just knocking on doors, they’re knocking down doors for faith and justice, said Raimon Jackson during the Connectional Ministries Report. “And we’re just getting started.”

Those interested in finding out more about young adult ministry for their local church, sharing ideas, seeking funding or being in ministry with others, can contact their Young Adult Council district representative.

Raimon Jackson, Chairperson (Washington East District)  
301-613-6165 — [emailmrjackson@gmail.com](mailto:emailmrjackson@gmail.com)

Rev. Mike Beiber (Cumberland-Hagerstown District)  
301-318-6073 — [beib185@verizon.net](mailto:beib185@verizon.net)

Meghan Blizzard (Frederick District)  
410-596-0696 — [megblizz@yahoo.com](mailto:megblizz@yahoo.com)

Pastor Darius K. Butler (Baltimore-Suburban District)  
443-370-6649 — [gospelpreacher7@aol.com](mailto:gospelpreacher7@aol.com)

Rev. Angela Flanagan (Central Maryland District)  
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# Policy and process focus of legislation

By MELISSA LAUBER  
UMConnection Staff



**H**OW WILL CONFERENCE members consider controversial social issues? What measures should a church take if its pastor dies? These were two of several policy and process questions the members of Baltimore-Washington wrestled with during the plenary session June 3.

At the direction of last year's Annual Conference, during the past year, the Conference Rules Committee drafted a set of policies that would allow conference members to consider some of the issues that come before them in small groups during a time of guided conversation and discernment. This process, used in 2014 and 2015, is called Circles of Grace.

The committee, chaired by Jen Ihlo, brought this codified process, hailed as an innovative method of holy conferencing that moves beyond the winners and losers of floor debate, to the body for inclusion in the conference rules.

However, members expressed concerns about the process, the same concerns that arose last year, which led to the petition being amended by Matt Sichel, a lay member from Wesley UMC in Hampstead.

Sichel's changes allowed for the Circles of Grace process to occur first and then added opportunities for discussion governed by parliamentary procedure and Robert's Rules of Order to allow the discussion to be shared by the full body.

The petition prompted more than an hour of debate. Some, fresh from what they viewed as a contentious General Conference, said they watched the church "struggle with parliamentary procedure in its weaponized form," and urged the conference members not to allow fear to take them away from this "exceptional new path for addressing difficult issues in new ways."

Others cautioned that parliamentary procedure was necessary "to protect the views of the minority." They also asserted that Circles of Grace limited conversation to the 10 or 12 people in the group and that parliamentary procedures, if done with courtesy and respect, could be a valuable tool for holy conferencing.

Because it was a change to the rules, the petition required a two-thirds vote to pass. The results of the vote were: 437

yes; 260 no; and so the petition failed, receiving only 62.7 percent support.

Members also debated guidelines brought forward by the Revs. Sarah Schlieckert and Deborah Scott that outlined a conference policy to be used upon the death of a clergy person who dies while serving as pastor of a local church.

Schlieckert shared how her clergy father, grandfather and brother all died during a relatively short period of time. This petition was intended to clarify policies and assist church leaders, family and conference staff.

After a substantial debate, the complexity of some of the issues, especially around confidentiality and electronic communications, led the members to refer the petition to the conference chancellor for review.



**Jen Ihlo, chair of the Rules Committee, presents a resolution on the Circles of Grace process.**

In other action, members voted:

- To amend the membership of the Nominations Committee so that it has a better balance of lay and clergy members;
- To create a policy that local BWC churches shall not loan or offer a financial arrangement that may be defined as an "excess benefit" by the Internal Revenue Service to any pastor, church staff member or volunteer.
- They also adopted a policy requiring the district superintendent to review a church's annual financial

statements with a church's incoming appointed pastor and to perform a periodic review, at least once every two years, with all continuing pastors.

Some of the members also expressed a sense of frustration and urgency about the scheduling of petitions to the Annual Conference Session. A motion from the floor passed that recommends the Sessions Committee place any resolutions on the agenda the day before the end of the Annual Conference or earlier.

The Rev. Deborah Scott also raised a motion, which passed, that all the Conference policies, rules and guidelines be gathered in one document, which will be posted on the Conference website.

Following a Stewardship report on June 2, the Rev. Melissa Rudolph brought a motion to the floor to support clergy couples addressing the rising costs of health care.

Her motion called for the creation of a policy that ensures a specific policy is created, and that annually called meetings are held for clergy couples with families.

Since 2014, clergy couples with children have been able to consolidate their coverage under a single Healthflex account. However, not everyone took advantage of this option.

Rudolph, her husband, the Rev. John Rudolph, and the Revs. Katie and Chris Bishop spoke passionately about the financial implications and difficulties facing families in which the parents were both clergy. They were strongly supported by the body.

However, because existing measures could be used to help alleviate some of their financial burden, the Rev. Deb Scott made a substitute motion, that was perfected by the body.

The final motion, which passed 653 to 9, read: "The Baltimore-Washington Conference Council on Finance and Administration and health representatives will host a meeting before Sept. 1, 2016, and annually thereafter, to address clergy couples' concerns surrounding health care and make sure all are properly enrolled in one health care plan. It shall remain the policy of the Annual Conference for clergy couples to have the option to remain in one policy."

The conference will also ensure its database is able to identify and track clergy couples. Currently, reports indicate the BWC has five clergy couples with children.

# Church must grow in spirituality, Cho says

By MELISSA LAUBER  
UMConnection Staff

**“YOU HAVE THE Power.”** When Bishop Young Jin Cho, of the Virginia Area, first heard that this was the theme of the 2016 Baltimore-Washington Conference, his first thought was simply, “Really?”

Bishop Cho had been invited to lead a two-part Bible study for the conference June 2 and 3.

“We may have many kinds of power, but do we really have the power,” he asked in an exploration of the rich young ruler in Luke 18:18-25. “This is a great promise. But what about our reality?”

The church is in a time of major challenge, and some even say, crisis. Leaders like the one in Luke 18, are wondering what can be done. But easy answers won't change the narrative of uncertainty and decline.

New plans and new programs may help the church to some degree, but putting new bandages on old wounds, or just working harder won't solve the problem, the bishop said. The key is rediscovering our spiritual depth and power.

Authentic and vital churches are led by God, the spirit of Christ is in charge of mission and ministry, and the congregation's life together is based on prayerful discernment of the mission of the Holy Spirit.

“Is our church led by the Holy Spirit,” Cho asked. “Do we truly honor the lordship of Jesus Christ?”

Too often, in our churches, rather than recognizing that salvation is God's business, we take over and allow for only brief consultations with God, the bishop said. Many churches today are also “pneumophobic,” allegoric to responding to the responding of the Holy Spirit.

“We are too confident in ourselves to rely on the help of the risen Christ. This is the fundamental problem – a lack of total trust and dependence on God. That's the one thing keeping us from having ‘the power.’”

This reliance on God can create new life, and spiritual and relational vitality, Cho said. “The risen Christ is still alive and leading our church through the Holy Spirit.”

To illustrate his point, the bishop shared the story of a young boy at a grocery store, picking out a pretty good size box of laundry detergent. The grocer walked over

and, trying to be friendly, asked the boy if he had a lot of laundry to do.

“Oh, no laundry,” the boy said. “I'm going to wash my dog.”

“But you shouldn't use this to wash your dog. It's very powerful and if you wash your dog in this, he'll get sick. In fact, it might even kill him,” the grocer said.

But the boy was not to be stopped and carried the detergent to the counter and paid for it, even as the grocer still tried to talk him out of washing his dog.

About a week later the boy was back in the store to buy some candy. The grocer asked the boy how his dog was doing. “Oh, he died,” the boy said.

The grocer, trying not to be an I-told-you-so, said he was sorry the dog died but added, “I tried to tell you not to use that detergent on your dog.”

“Well,” the boy replied, “I don't think it was the detergent that killed him.”

“Oh, what was it then?”

“I think it was the spin cycle.”

“The spin cycle of changes happening in today's world, has brought about more changes in the church than ever before,” said Cho.

Claiming the power to address the changes and grow deeper in spirituality and relevance, will require the church to turn it's face to God in prayer.

This was the theme of the second Bible study session the bishop led, exploring Luke 11.

When the disciples had an opportunity to request anything of Jesus, they asked, “Lord, teach us how to pray.”

Today, United Methodists need to be making a similar request in asking Jesus, before anything else, to teach us to pray, Cho said.

“Prayer is the essence and foundation of our faith. Being a Christian is more than becoming a good person. It is more than a culture. “Being a Christian means having a relationship with a living God. ... Faith as knowledge needs to be transformed into faith as relationship,” said Cho.

Prayer will also help create more vital churches.

“Our beloved church is at a crossroads,” Cho said. “We cannot do our ministry effectively and fruitfully with

our own strength only. We need to kneel down before the Lord and humbly seek the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Cho challenged those present to spend at least one hour a day in spiritual disciplines, like prayer. “Just saying hello to God a couple of times a day at the table is not enough,” he said. “Our prayer needs to go deeper.”

According to the bishop, the church is always looking for new methods, plans and organizations to advance the church. The church is looking for better methods. But God is looking for better men and women. The church needs men and women whom the Holy Spirit can use.

And for those who want to learn to pray deeper, the answer is simply eloquent, the bishop said: “We learn prayer by praying.” Just as one learns to swim by getting in the water, a person learns to pray by kneeling down before God, he said.

The excuse that we are too busy is ridiculous. “Are we busier than Jesus was? Probably not,” Cho said. “Day and night, Jesus prayed.”

“We need to pray deeper, harder and longer,” Cho said. “We need to ask Jesus: ‘Lord, teach us to pray’. ... If we are facing serious situations, we need serious prayer.”



**Bishop Young Jin Cho, Virginia Area, speaks during a morning Bible study.**

# 31 new clergy given 'holy habits' for ministry

By: LINDA WORTHINGTON  
UMConnection Staff



FAMILY AND FRIENDS filled the ballroom of the Wardman Marriott Hotel in Washington, D.C., for the worship service of ordination and commissioning that is the highlight of the Annual Conference Session for many people. The occasion is the culmination of years of preparation and a lot of prayer.

Noting a boxed Bible on the kneeler, the Rev. Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, co-chair of the worship committee, explained that it was the Bible that belonged to John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, in 1730.

First, Bishop Marcus Matthews presented the 11 to be commissioned as Elder or Deacon, the first phase of the program toward full membership.

He then named those to be ordained as full member Deacon or Elder.

"Those authorized by the Church ... have discerned that they are persons of sound learning and of Christian character, and possess the necessary signs of God's grace, and have demonstrated a profound commitment to serve Jesus Christ," the bishop said.

In an ordination liturgy, all the candidates were asked of their calling to ministry, their belief in God, Christ and Scriptures, their intentions to pray, to study and be loyal to The United Methodist Church.

To each question, the candidates together replied, "I will, with the help of God."

Bishop James R. King Jr., the episcopal leader of the South Georgia Conference, preached on what he called "Keep Moving," advising his hearers of the necessity, benefits and power from movement. His illustrations and anecdotes often brought laughter. "There is no place to park," he said. "You can't just pull over and say, 'I got it.'"

Keeping with the Annual Conference theme of "You Have the Power," King, quoting Jesus, said, "You will receive power when the Spirit comes upon you." Having your own mission is important, he said. "If God has not given you a mission, why do you need power? If God has given you a mission, God has given you power for the journey."

He listed and illustrated "holy habits" to follow to keep the Holy Spirit alive and enable the newly commissioned and ordained to live out their missions in God's service. These included:

- Prayer;
- Reading Scripture;
- Times of worship;
- Spending time with your family;
- Taking some moderate exercise;
- Taking care of yourself – eating fruits and vegetables and drinking plenty of water;
- Refresh everyday; de-stress.

After the ordination of two Deacons, the service for the full member Elder candidates began. Bishop Matthews described, as he had for the Deacons, the duties to fulfill their callings as Elders, and prayed for all of them,



**Bishop Marcus Matthews places a stole around the Rev. Lisa Ann Jordan, the second Deaf female Elder in the UMC. Bishop Peggy Johnson, right, interpreted for Jordan.**

which "we believe have been called by the Holy Spirit."

Each ordinand came forward when called, accompanied by clergy sponsors and knelt at a kneeler where evangelist E. Stanley Jones had his conversion experience. With the laying on of hands, each new clergyperson received a red stole, symbol of their office.

When Lisa Ann Jordan was called, she was accompanied by Bishops Yeakel and Peggy Johnson. Johnson signed the service for her. Another special sponsor was the Rev. Nancy Webb, a blind Elder, who came with Shannon Elizabeth Sullivan.

The Rev. Theresa Thames, who is credentialed in another denomination, was accepted as a full member, adding her to the 18 women and men who were ordained as Elders in 2016.

Following the final ordination, the bishop invited the laity to hear and respond to God's call to ordained ministry.

As they sang, "Here I Am Lord," several people came forward where they were met by the district superintendents who listened, accepted and prayed for each person.



**The Rev. Braulio Torres celebrates after being ordained an Elder during services Saturday morning, June 4.**

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

### Church breaks ground for new addition

LAPLATA – LaPlata UMC held a groundbreaking May 22 for a new 11,000 square-foot addition that will have seven classrooms, a music room, a dedicated youth room, restrooms and a 2,900-square-foot fellowship space.

District Superintendent, the Rev. Rebecca Iannicelli, led the ceremony following preaching at two morning services. Almost half of the \$2 million cost has been raised.

"The project will take approximately 10 months to complete," said the Rev. Bruce Jones, the church's pastor.

At the lunch following, a special surprise was unveiled: a cake that was a model of the church with the new addition, created by Terri Stancliff and her husband, Mark, who is a trustee.



**Terri Stancliff, left, and her husband, Mark, with their cake.**

### Ghana school named for 'Queen Mother'

HIGHLAND – Since 1995, Dorothy Moore's mission has been to the villages and people, particularly children, of Ghana in West Africa. The member of Hopkins UMC has gone back most years, except during the ebola epidemic.

One of her first projects was working with non-government organizations to bring water to the community of Asiagwa. For several years, she also focused on a Liberian Refugee Camp in Ghana to enable children in the camp to continue their education. In 2008, the Liberians were able to return home and the camp was closed.

So grateful are the people for her services and so respected is she that in 2001, the Breuto Clan in Asiakwa deemed her Queen Mother of the village, a title she continues to hold. And it was here she made her most recent trip in February for the dedication of a new four-room school, which includes a computer lab. The school is now called the Queen Mother Dottie Moore school.

Anyone who wishes to help with the projects may contact her at [dottimoore@verizon.net](mailto:dottimoore@verizon.net).

### Feeding the 5,000 – today

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Working with DC Central Kitchen, Metropolitan Memorial UMC's Campus Kitchens DC and St. Luke's Mission Center, and a dozen other non-profit organizations, offered free food to thousands at a site in downtown DC May 18. The event was organized by Feeding the 5000 DC, a non-profit organization, which said more than 6,000 people were fed.

The food was all donated from throw-away or discarded food from restaurants, wholesalers and grocery stores.

The goal of the event, held in conjunction with an Organic Waste Summit, was to help people "understand the value of food," said Mike Curtin, chief executive of DC Central Kitchen, which collects 2000 to 3000 pounds of food a day, either donated or purchased at a discounted price. Forty percent of the nation's food supply is thrown away each year, Curtin said.

### WTS honors slain pastor

WASHINGTON – At its commencement ceremony May 9, held at the Washington National Cathedral, Wesley



**Jennifer Pinckney, left, and her two daughters, receive her husband, Clementa's, doctoral degree.**

Theological Seminary awarded posthumously a doctor of ministry degree to the family of the Rev. Clementa Pinckney.

Pinckney was close to completing his final project when he was gunned down last June, along with eight of his parishioners, by a young white male who had been welcomed into the weekly Bible study.

Pinckney, 41, was pastor of the historic Emmanuel AME church in Charleston, S. C., and also served in the state Senate for 15 years.

His widow, Jennifer, and their two daughters, Eliana and Malana, accepted the diploma and hood for the Rev. Pinckney.

The Wesley faculty also established Pinckney Scholarships for the new Doctor in Ministry in Public Engagement in honor of its alum.

### 'Changing the Game' to 'HOHO'

DUNKIRK – David Bonney, a member of Smithville UMC, recently returned from Macheke, Zimbabwe, where he helped a secondary school begin a peer-led learning program called "Helping Others Help Others" (HOHO).

The UMC Mission School has 650 students, with 150 in the secondary school, led by six teachers for the grades eight through 11. "The school is in an extremely poor, remote area and has a very low pass rate for the O-level national exams," Bonney said.

The center of the program is the "Outernet Lighthouse," a satellite dish that can receive data via a global satellite network. It is dubbed "Humanity's Public Library," and has 30,000 volumes of Shona, English, math and science, in both visual and spoken lectures.

From the school's Lighthouse, the media can be downloaded onto laptops and mobile phones.

"We hope that as students receive extra and focused peer-led instruction, they will gain a better grasp of the subject matter," Bonney said.

Smithville UMC also provided a laptop, portable projector, satellite dish, projection screen, 600 exercise books (one for each subject), 150 pens, whiteboards, textbooks, team T-shirts and an e-reader.

# What good could you do with \$100?

By ALISON BURDETT  
UMConnection Staff



**Y**OUNG ADULTS WERE creating conversations and encouraging creative thinking at this year's Annual Conference Session. Through INSPIREDC's "Mission Possible" initiative, members and guests to Annual Conference were put to a challenge. Those who accepted the challenge were asked to pick an issue, draw two assets, and generate an idea that would cost no more than \$100.

**Inspiring Good: Mission Possible**

**Pick An Issue**  
What is the problem you are trying to solve? Food Insecurity, Education Inequality, Economic Disparity or Homelessness.

**STEP 01**

**Draw 2 Assets**  
What resources do you have? You have \$100 and two assets (pick 2 cards).

**STEP 02**

**Generate an Idea**  
What can you do with the assets to address an aspect of the problem you have identified. Go crazy! Push boundaries!

**STEP 03**

**Daily Winner**  
A panel of young adults selects the best idea each day. INSPIREDC will invest \$100 so that winners can implement impactful change in their context.

**STEP 04**

**Next Steps**  
Try this in your context and/or bring a team to a Mission Possible event on Saturday, October 1st in DC.

**STEP 05**

**INSPIREDC**

of homelessness. Hopefully by the end, it will be a building/wall/mural full of beautiful colors. The \$100 would purchase any needed food & music & flyers & advertising."

The second winner was David Gross of New Street Church in Shepherdstown, W.Va. Gross chose to tackle the problem of Food Insecurity. His randomly selected resources were "10 Go-Pros" and a "Graphic Design Student." Here is his winning idea:

"I would give a go-pro to one person/family in each ward (in Washington, D.C.) Each would make a mini documentary on their routine to shop for healthy, fresh, affordable food. Document the kind and numbers of plans, variety and appearance of foods, list of the food bill, edit into a larger video and show on tv to raise awareness or make each individual video into a video tour exhibit. Have a graphic artist make a giant map of D.C. wards. Put a video monitor in each ward and have participants walk through the map to witness the shopping experience of each family in different wards."

Other unique ideas included using popcorn as currency



to teach people about economic opportunity or using a coffee machine and 1 to 2 hours of community center space to start a program for young professionals called "Coffee with a CEO."

The entries were judged by the Young Adult Council. It's safe to say, reading the potential that participants could reach with just \$100, makes everyone involved a winner.



Members of the Young Adult Council review some of the entries for INSPIREDC's game at Annual Conference. Creative, 'out-of-the-box' ideas, were submitted for tackling current social issues.

INSPIREDC chose a daily winner that would receive \$100 towards impacting their own neighborhoods. The first winner was Suzanne Jones of Salem UMC in Keedysville. She chose to address the problem of homelessness. Through the game, she drew two resources: "trampoline" and "an artist willing to do something for you." Her winning idea was the following:

"Have an artist bring materials to paint a building or tall wall or mural. Have community members paint/write negative ideas about homelessness all over it. Then with paint-filled balloons, jump on the trampoline and throw the 'color bombs' to 'wipe out' the negative connotations

# 'Like the stars, let your light shine' bishop tells mourners

By: LINDA WORTHINGTON  
UMConnection Staff

**B**ISHOP JAMES KING of South Georgia preached Friday at the Memorial Service, a time to remember the 29 clergy, 27 clergy spouses and lay members of the BWC who have died since the last annual conference. He called his words of comfort, "Twinkle."

Family members, friends and pastors representing the deceased ones processed in to "God be the Glory" and "For All the Saints."

Leading the audience to recall the past, King asked them, "What would Jesus say to you today? Or to those we remember this day, what would Jesus say?"

"I don't know," he answered himself, "but I think Jesus would say, 'Twinkle.'"

He shared many laughs or smiles throughout his sermon. King grew up in Ashland, Ala., and as a child sometimes walked home from his father's dry cleaning business across a

cornfield after dark. His mother placed a light on the porch to guide him through.

"In the name of the saints who have gone before us, is your light shining bright so someone can see the way home?" he asked.

As is the tradition for the Memorial Service at Annual Conference, the Rev. Mary Jo Sims, conference secretary, read each name as a headshot of the deceased was shown on the screens. Family members or representatives came forward to light a candle as friends in the audience stood in silence.

"The saints were born to shine," King had said earlier, "and I believe they are shining and living on through the light in our faith community."

All sang "This little light of mine" as the guests departed.



**Bishops' spouses:**

Eunice Jones Mathews  
Julia Wilkie

Rev. Richard D. Thompson  
Rev. Jimmie Ward  
Rev. Robert "Bob" Zimmerman

**Clergy of BWC:**

Rev. Edwin Bang  
Rev. Milton Walter Benny Jr.  
Rev. Morris Bratton  
Pastor Carroll Brown  
Rev. David C. Casey  
Rev. David Cho  
Rev. Al Clipp  
Rev. Patti Smith Fenske  
Rev. Lillie Gray  
Rev. Peggy Groseclose  
Pastor Lester W. Hall  
Rev. Jessie Lee Griffith  
Rev. Dr. Bruce Haskins  
Rev. Ed Heydt  
Pastor Leonard Walter Hill  
Pastor Karen Jones Johnson  
Pastor Norman Kemmerer  
Pastor Marianne Lamark  
Rev. George M. Manhart  
Rev. Ellen Barnes Muller  
Rev. William Nelson  
Rev. William Peters  
Rev. Stephen Rettenmayer  
Rev. Betty Roche  
Pastor Thomas Scheel  
Rev. Donna C. Snodgrass

**Clergy spouses:**

Frances B. Allis  
Jean Barrett  
Mary Blair Buchheister  
Thomas "Tom" Busby  
Lillian Chuckla  
Robert Funk Dorsch  
Joy Smith Earp  
Virginia Lovella Evans  
Laura Jester  
Harriette Johnson  
Lucille E. Kemper  
Marlene King  
Kathryn Lewis  
Ronald Ellsworth Moon  
Ralph Morgan  
Maxine Mote  
Darryl Nelson  
Marlene Richardson  
Margaret Roper  
Mary Catherine "Mary Kay" Shannon  
Christine Umstead Sharpe  
Margaret "Peggy" Smith  
Belle W. Sunderland  
Virginia Varner  
Arlene E. Veith  
Bobbie Walker

# Overview: BWC sets course for the coming year

From page 1

the episcopacy. The election of two bishops will be held at the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference the week of July 11-15 in Lancaster, Pa.

A 24-member delegation, elected by last year's Annual Conference, will represent the BWC there, reported the delegation chair Delores Martin. The Rev. TR Chattin and Tom Price serve on the NEJ Episcopacy Committee, which will determine and announce, on July 15, who will serve as the next bishop of the Baltimore-Washington Conference.



Martin also reported on highlights of the May General Conference session held in Portland, Ore. At this global gathering, the members established a study commission, led by the Council of Bishops, to explore the church's stance on homosexuality. Delegates to General Conference also voted to begin the creation of a new, digital hymnal that can be personalized for each church; upheld guaranteed appointments for clergy; withdrew from the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice; celebrated the raising of \$75 million to help end deaths by malaria in sub-Saharan Africa; and set bold goals in the denomination's four areas of focus: creating new places for new people, leadership development, working with the poor, and global health.

At the BWC Annual Conference Session, members also adopted a \$14.2 million budget for 2017. The budget represents a decrease of 0.8 percent from 2016 and is the fifth consecutive year for this same level of spending.

In the stewardship report, the Rev. Ann Laprade, chair of the Conference Council on Finance and Administration, celebrated the outstanding giving by conference churches,



which resulted in a 91.7 percent collection rate on apportionments in 2015. This has been the highest level of giving in 15 years, she said.

In other actions, members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference:

- Witnessed the ordination of 18 Elders and one Deacon; saw 11 commissioned as provisional Elders; and recognized the Elders Orders of Theresa Thames;
- Commissioned Logan Alley and Jane Grays as Deaconesses in The United Methodist Church;
- Joined in a Bible Study by Bishop Young Jin Cho, who urged those present to focus at least an hour a day on spiritual renewal and prayer;
- Honored 31 retirees who, together, represent 559 years of service;
- Received an on-going challenge from Bishop Matthews in his opening sermon to pray each day, bring one person to Christ, and participate in a partnership with a local school;
- Welcomed Washington, D.C., Mayor Muriel Bowser, who encouraged churches to continue to partner with the city in addressing homelessness and economic disparities;
- Welcomed a six-member delegation from our partners in the South Conference of the Korean Methodist Church, and Jeanette Gralau Hernandez, the assistant to the bishop of the Methodist Church in Puerto Rico, another of our global partners.
- Greeted the Rev. Jeffrey S. Allen, executive director of the West Virginia Council of Churches;

- Learned about the conference's 34 distinct mission and ministry teams from the Rev. Maidstone Mulenga, conference director of Connectional Ministries;
- Were renewed by the testimony of Nora Meeks, 11, who told the story of meeting an orphan named Rejoice on a mission trip to an orphanage in Zimbabwe;
- Cheered the youth as they outlined their efforts to alleviate stress among young people and their mission of SEARR: supporting, educating, advocating, resourcing and representing youth;
- Met two of the church's newest missionaries: Mary and Aaron Vanderommers, who serve in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Rev. John Calhoun, the jurisdiction's missionary advocate;
- Prayed with the Rev. Scott Shumaker, who thanked the conference and its leaders as they supported him over the last few years in struggling with his son's drug addiction. His son, he reported, has been drug-free for a year;
- Sang along to sacred music performed by Stanley Thurston and singers from Foundry UMC;
- Cheered for the 85 churches of the Cumberland-Hagerstown District, which received the General Board of Discipleship's One Matters award;
- Approved a motion to assist clergy couples with children with the costs of health care coverage;
- Rejected a petition to codify the rules for the Circle of Grace, a small-group process for holy conferencing on social issues that had been used successfully at previous annual conferences;
- Referred to the chancellor new policies on how a church should respond following the death of its pastor;
- Wore orange on June 2 to witness against gun violence;
- Passed petitions that amended the membership of the Nominations Committee; created a policy asking churches not to give loans to their pastors; and called for superintendents to regularly review churches' financial records;
- Were introduced to three new conference staff members: Emma Escobar, the Hispanic ministries coordinator; the Rev. Stacey Cole Wilson, director of congregational excellence, who will work in connectional ministries in the areas of ministry with the poor and global health; and the Rev. John Nupp, director of clergy excellence, a new position that will support the Board of Ordained Ministry;
- Began to "twinkle," to be a light to those in need, at the urging of Bishop James King, who preached at the Memorial Service honoring the 29 clergy, 27 clergy spouses, the lay members and children of clergy who have died during the past year;
- Prayed for the 100 pastors who will be starting new appointments July 1. Prayers were also offered for the new Associate Lay Leader, Bill Weller; the new chair of the Discipleship Council, the Rev. Robert Clipp; the outgoing Conference Secretary, the Rev. Mary Jo Simms; the incoming secretary, Cynthia Taylor, as well as the many others named by the Nominations Committee to serve in positions of leadership.

Each year, when submitting the actions of the Annual Conference to the denomination, some statistics about that



conference are also requested. Statistics from 2015 include:

Membership stands at 164,801, down 3,441 from the previous year.

Worship attendance stands at 59,211, down 2,502 from the previous year.

Church school attendance stands at 17,253, down 1,048 from the previous year.

Professions or reaffirmations of faith for 2015 were 3,074, down 570 from 2014.

Adults and young adults in small groups for 2015 was 60,828, down 461 from 2014.

Worshippers engaged in mission for 2015 was 63,905, up 4,651 from 2014.



Addressing the members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, Bishop Matthews issued a simple and decisive challenge: "You have the power," he said. "Keep on loving people in Jesus' name, keep on tearing down walls that destroy people, and truly, love the hell out of each other."

The 2017 session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference is scheduled to be held May 31 – June 3 at the Wardman Park Marriot Hotel in Washington, D.C.

## PHOTOS FROM ANNUAL CONFERENCE

1. The Rev. JW Park breaks bread during opening worship, as Bishops Forrest Stith (left) and Marcus Matthews look on.
2. Dancers perform during opening worship.
3. Worshippers at Annual Conference.
4. New Deaconesses Logan Alley, left, and Jane Grays celebrate their commissioning.