

A Lenten Journey to the Cross



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 28, Issue 3 • March 2017



Pastor Mary Robinson, kneeling, gives ashes to Danny Cornett at the Table of Grace at Essex UMC in Essex. Robinson and church volunteers, see inset, view the homeless that eat at the Table as a congregation. Pictured with the pair are Pinky Johnson, Ray Oates and Carol Wehner. Our Lenten coverage begins on pg 7.

BWC mourns loss of Bishop May

By SAM HODGES
United Methodist News Service

BISHOP FELTON E. May often spoke of the need for “holy boldness” — and his admirers said he lived the phrase.

He was a forceful preacher and a force away from the pulpit.

“You did not have to ask him to enter the fray,” said James H. Salley, associate vice chancellor for Institutional Advancement for Africa University, a United Methodist School. “If he saw it and felt it was wrong, he opposed it. If he felt it was right and something he needed to support, he did it.”

May died Feb. 27 at age 81, at his home in Ellicott City. He had been under hospice care for pancreatic cancer.

Survivors include Phyllis Henry May, his wife of 53 years.

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling of the Baltimore-Washington Conference announced May’s passing and called him “a giant of The United Methodist Church.”



Courtesy of the Council of Bishops

“I urge us all to actively keep his family and all those who loved him in our prayers,” she said. “The blessings of Bishop May’s service with the Baltimore-Washington Conference are still evident. He touched more lives here than we will ever fully know.”

During five decades of ministry, May led United Methodist churches, conferences and agencies. He was the first African-American bishop of the Baltimore-Washington Conference. He helped start both Africa University and the denomination’s Communities of Shalom movement.

May made church-related visits to the White House, but also accepted a first-ever “set-aside” episcopal assignment to the streets of Washington, during a spike in drug-related violence.

Through his ministry, he acted on a deep concern for those on the margins.

“What I saw was a person who showed bold leadership, a person who was visionary and a person who didn’t mind taking risks on behalf of those who tended to be left outside,” said Bishop Marcus Matthews, who was a district superintendent under May. Matthews retired as bishop of the Baltimore-Washington Conference in 2016.

See Bishop May, page 3

Area musician tops Billboard jazz chart

By ERK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

KAYLA WATERS GREW up in two worlds, and we’re all better for it.

The daughter of acclaimed jazz saxophonist Kim Waters, Kayla often attended her father’s concerts with her twin sister, Kimberly. Kayla knew, when she was 15 years-old, that she wanted to perform, too.

She grew up in the church, too, in an African Methodist Episcopal Church in Havre de Grace, Md. At age 9, she was saved. Church, she said, has always been a part of her life.

Today, at age 26, Kayla Waters moves seamlessly between the worlds of jazz and church. She’s the director of music and worship at Mt. Vernon Place UMC in Washington, D.C.



Courtesy of Kayla Waters

See Jazz, page 7

New mission redefines a church

By ERK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

THIS IS A story of how community outreach is helping to re-birth a church. This is a story of how partnerships between churches and other organizations are helping to re-build a sacred space. This is the story of the Four Corners Mission

Center.

The Center, located in what was Marvin Memorial UMC at the busy intersection of Colesville Road and University Boulevard, is the second campus of Silver Spring UMC. According to the church’s lead pastor, the Rev. Rachel Cornwell, the Center is where the church does mission and outreach,

while the downtown location, on Georgia Ave., is where they do worship and discipleship.

On the second and fourth Saturday of every month since last November, the Center runs a choice food pantry where people come in and choose the food items they want, Cornwell said. The model of a choice food pantry,

she said, gives people more dignity and helps eliminate food waste since people choose the foods they want, rather than what is simply given to them.

It’s also a more hands-on form of ministry, Cornwell said, because volunteers are needed to walk through the pantry with every guest, talking and building relationships along the way.

See Four Corners, page 3

... well said

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

BY MANDY SAYERS
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN directionally challenged if left to my own instincts.

My husband, an Oklahoman, says that it's because as an East Coast person I can't see the horizon. He's always talking about directions like "On the north side of the intersection" and then I have to say, "You know not to use that sort of language around me..."

If he were to say, "Next to the Chick-Fil-A" or "across from California Tortilla," I'd understand. But directions that don't involve places I already know? I'm lost.

I don't have to have a good sense of direction, though, because I've got my GPS. My GPS reminds me I can always make a U-Turn and I'm never really lost.

As we enter into Lent, a season of directional "recalculating" and repentance, I'm reminded that we are always able to repent, to turn around, to seek forgiveness and start again.

To take advantage of that, we first have to admit we need to turn. We have to realize that we are on the wrong path or that there is a rupture of relationship that needs to be fixed. We have to be humble enough to make the turn, to realize that to keep going in the wrong direction is NOT going to make things better. And then, we have to make the turn, and act.

We have to take steps in our new direction. What paths are you staying on just because they are familiar that are not getting you where God needs you to be?

To repent, to have the chance to repent, is a great gift that God offers us, especially during Lent. Isn't it great to have a chance on the busy highway of life to pull over and check the map, and if needed, to turn around?

The hymnal is totally on my side: "In Christ there is no East or West, in Him no South or North."

God's GPS is calling.... go ahead. Make the turn. Repent.



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

WHEN I WAS a little boy I really enjoyed watching one of the commercials in the after school specials. It was the one about fire safety.

It was the commercial that told you, if you find yourself in a fire there are three things you must do, Stop, Drop and Roll.

I was thinking about that commercial the other day, and I realized that Stop, Drop and Roll is not only good in a fire, it is also what a believer does when they decide to repent.

Many times when we think of repenting, we think it is as simple as saying sorry to God for a sin or mistake. But it is not quite that simple. True repentance goes much deeper than just a sorry, it requires you to Stop, Drop and Roll.

When we truly repent the first thing we have to do is STOP. True repentance always requires that you stop doing what you have been doing. It is not enough to say sorry you actually have to stop doing the deed.

The second step in repentance is to DROP. When we want to repent we have to drop to our knees and pray to God for his forgiveness. Often times, it is the dropping that is most difficult, but we have to drop and confess what we have done we know that God is faithful and just and will forgive us of our sins.

Finally, true repentance requires that we ROLL. After we STOP what we are doing and DROP to our knees to ask for forgiveness the only thing left is to ROLL away from the past.

True repentance requires that we make a commitment to roll away from the things that we are stopping and are sorry for. Unless we roll we have the possibility to only have a temporary stop and an empty apology, not true repentance.

So this Lenten season, don't just give up coffee or sweets for 40 days. Take a moment to Stop, Drop and Roll. It will make all the difference in the world.

... well said

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CORRECTION:

In the apportionment listings in the February UMConnection, it was reported that Bells UMC in Camp Springs paid only 92 percent of its apportionments. The congregation paid 100 percent. We praise God for their faithful stewardship efforts. Also, New Hope Christian Fellowship in Edgewood was incorrectly listed as an apportionment-paying church. NHCf does not pay apportionments because of its status as a Mission Church. We regret any misunderstanding.

Just as no two women will be wearing the same shoes at this conference, no two women lead in the same way.

April 21-22, 2017
Register online at bwcumc.org

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Maidstone Mulenga

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Assistant to the Bishop,
Director of Connectional Ministries

Melissa Lauber
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Bishop May: 'Giant of the church' noted for boldness

From page 1

May was born in Chicago in 1935. He grew up in an apartment on the South Side and regularly attending a Baptist church with his mother and siblings.

While a student at local Judson College, May worked part-time at a reform synagogue. Rabbi Louis Leopold Mann recommended that he become a part of St. James Methodist Church, which had a commitment to integration.

"I think God has called you to be a minister," May, speaking in 2009 at Wesley Theological Seminary, recalled the rabbi saying.

May also remembered being incredulous at the rabbi's assertion, but was soon involved in leading Sunday school and youth programs at St. James.

"And then I began to read Methodist literature and its social witness, and it made sense to me. I felt I was called by God to do that," he told the Baltimore Sun for a 2001 profile.

May was active as a young adult in civil rights work, including Operation Breadbasket. He was ordained as a deacon in the Northern Illinois Conference in 1962 and served two pastoral appointments in Chicago, one of them a church start.

To get Maple Park Methodist going, May and his wife knocked on doors, started a children's ministry and held worship services. The church was chartered with fifteen families and grew to 300 in weekly attendance during May's time. It also was active in civil rights and other social justice advocacy.

In 1968, May transferred to the Peninsula Conference and became associate executive director of the Methodist Action Program in Wilmington, Delaware. After earning his master of divinity degree from Crozer Theological Seminary, he was ordained a United Methodist elder in 1970.

May would again serve as a church pastor, then as a district superintendent and as director of the Conference Council of Ministries.

In 1984, he was elected bishop and assigned to the Harrisburg Episcopal Area.

The Rev. Dean Snyder, now retired, worked on May's staff in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Snyder said some top church leaders buckle under the responsibility, and complain about all the decisions they're supposed to make.

Not May.

"Felton never felt sorry for himself, and he never apologized for exercising his responsibility and authority," Snyder said.

Snyder added that May could be intimidating, but also strongly backed those under him who took a risk in social justice ministry.

"He'd say, 'I'll be with you all the way,' and that was true," Snyder said. "If people took a prophetic stance, no matter what, Felton was with them."

May, as a bishop and as president of the General Council on Ministries, was one of those successfully pushing for the 1988 General Conference to establish Africa University. He would later serve as vice president of its board of directors.

"He was there from the beginning, and there are a number of students who have graduated because of his personal intervention in providing funding," Salley said.

people where they were," said Stephen Drachler, who worked with May on the Washington assignment.

Drachler recalled that May heard another pastor refer to churches as "saving stations," and seized on that term. May and clergy colleagues borrowed tents and erected them on the street, where they held revival-style worship services but also invited drug counselors in to help people battling addictions.

"We must mount a holy war against drugs and reclaim our streets," May told *The New York Times*.

May would reprise the strategy in

"He gave birth to that," Matthews said, who also would lead the Baltimore-Washington Conference. "I'm proud to say it's still going."

In 2004, May retired from the episcopacy, but his work pace hardly let up. He served as dean of the Harry R. Kendall Science and Health Mission Center at United Methodist-affiliated Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas.

From 2007-2008, May served as interim top executive of the Board of Global Ministries. During his tenure at the agency, May and three other general secretaries presented four new areas of focus to the denomination at the 2008 General Conference in Fort Worth, Texas. The Four Areas of Focus were celebrated by the delegates and have guided much of the church's work since then.

Late in life, May became a church pastor again, serving both Turning Point United Methodist in Trenton, New Jersey, and Theresa Hoover Memorial United Methodist in Little Rock.

"He was more than willing to come," said New England Conference Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar, who as Greater New Jersey Conference leader asked May to take on the Trenton church. "He was always a pastor, always a prophet and always a great colleague."

Devadhar noted May didn't work alone. "One cannot speak about his ministry without mentioning Phyllis, who was his loyal supporter and true partner," he said.

May's indefatigable efforts in social outreach were guided by an unapologetic evangelical fervor.

"Programs have had their day," he said in his 2009 address at Wesley Theological Seminary. "The power of Christ must rest upon us and our institutions."

May is survived by his wife; two children, Daphne May Brown and Felton May II, and eight grandchildren.

CONDOLENCES AND MEMORIALS

Condolences can be sent to the May family at 3315 Oak West Drive, Apt. 123, Ellicott City, MD 21043. Emails can be directed to Daphne May Brown at ddajaj512345@gmail.com.

The family asks that memorial donations be made to either Project H.O.P.E. or the Africa University Development Fund. Donations to Project H.O.P.E., Feeding Hungry Children, can be sent to Theresa Hoover United Methodist Women, C/O Dr. Etta Carter, 6403 Shirley Drive, Little Rock, Arkansas 72204. Donations to the Africa University Development Fund can be made online or mailed to the Africa University Development Fund, Post Office Box 340007, Nashville, TN 37203.



Bishop Felton Edwin May speaks at a press conference outside the 2004 General Conference in Pittsburgh. Bishop May died February 27.

May also had a key role in forming Communities of Shalom, which the 1992 General Conference started in response to race riots in Los Angeles. Later he successfully pushed for expanding the program into Africa.

"He was the organizing bishop and brought it out internationally," said the Rev. Michael Christensen, director of the Shalom Initiative for Prophetic Leadership and Community Development at Drew University.

Perhaps May's highest-profile role came in 1990-91, when he served on special assignment, leading the United Methodist Bishops' Initiative on Drug and Alcohol Abuse and Violence in Washington. No other bishop has been asked by the Council of Bishops to leave an episcopal area for a special assignment on its behalf, and then return to active service.

In Washington, May and his wife took an apartment in The United Methodist Building, but he spent much of his time working with pastors in the toughest neighborhoods.

"He would be on the street, meeting

Baltimore during his final episcopal assignment, leading the Baltimore-Washington Conference. The saving stations idea would be adopted elsewhere and would help lead to the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries' Special Program on Substance Abuse and Related Violence.

All along as bishop, May showed a deep interest in combatting poverty and other social ills in the United States and worldwide.

In 1994, he visited Rwandan refugee camps as part of a United Methodist fact-finding team. He returned two years later to help dedicate a tent village for orphans provided by United Methodists, a change he called a "miracle" compared to lethal conditions he'd seen earlier.

May also served on a White House Presidential Commission on AIDS, travelling across southern Africa in 1999. The trip helped increase U.S. spending on AIDS worldwide by \$100 million.

Under May, the Baltimore-Washington Conference formed a partnership with the Zimbabwe Conference.

Four Corners: Churches partner to feed the hungry

From page 1

On Feb. 25, during an Open House at the Center, Cornwell helped lead tours of the pantry, explaining its purpose and how it works. The food pantry is done in partnership with Manna Food Center, which supplies most of the food items. Manna's mission is to eliminate hunger in Montgomery County.

"This food pantry requires a lot more volunteers," Cornwell said. "People have really stepped up. We have students from Blair High School and folks from Hughes-El Buen Samaritano come to help, so we're developing a community of volunteers, starting to develop friendships. It's becoming church for people."

Silver Spring UMC has long been active

in outreach and mission, Cornwell said, and when they saw that they were doing so many feeding ministries, "and it was something people were really committed to, we made it our mission statement. Our mission is to feed all of God's children — body, mind, and spirit — so that no one goes hungry."

One of the key volunteers is Lisa Middleton, the Food Ministry Coordinator at the church. It was her vision that helped birth the choice pantry.

"A choice food pantry is where folks can come in and have more of a shopping experience," Middleton said. Since they've opened, they've more than doubled their clientele, she said, to where on this day, 42 families were expected.

The process of creating the choice food

pantry took about a year, Middleton said. What got her through it was her faith.

"At times, it was overwhelming, at the beginning," she said. "It was, 'Wow, we need this many volunteers, and we need this much space,' but we're here because we believed in the vision. When God is calling you to do something, there's not going to be anything that stands in the way."

Pastor Evelyn Rivera is associate pastor for Hughes-El Buen Samaritano, and, since January 2016, also the Community Outreach worker for Silver Spring UMC, which allows for both congregations to enter into a partner relationship, she said. The open house was an opportunity, she said, to celebrate the partnership between the two congregations but also to celebrate the service to the community.

"What's unique about this program," Rivera said, "is the mission of the church. Our mission is to share the love of Christ and we do that by looking at the person as a whole. Not only are we feeding them spiritually, we're taking into account their physical needs as well. The fact that we're able to partner together allows for more people to be invested in this mission."

Rivera, who is fluent in Spanish and English, also serves as a language bridge for many of the guests of the food pantry.

"I'm excited that we, as United Methodists, can partake in an experience such as this," Rivera said, "and I look forward to seeing what else God has in mind for us to do in this community."

Is your congregation ready for public violence?

By JIM SKILLINGTON*

IT'S SATURDAY NIGHT, the sermon is prepared, the bulletin is printed and in the narthex. The pastor is about to go to sleep for the night when a parishioner calls and asks if she has heard about the shooting at the local shopping center. Several people have been killed, the caller says, and his son was there when it happened. His son wasn't injured, he adds, but can the pastor arrange something for the youth on Sunday?

Will the pastor stay up most of the night, tear up her prepared sermon and write a new one, create a new bulletin and call pastoral counselors she knows, hoping one of them can be at church the next day? Or does she go to bed and just add a prayer for those impacted by the violence?

One clergyman described this situation as his "worst pastoral nightmare."

Public violence — when a random violent incident traumatizes a community — is occurring more than once a day in the United States. No community should expect to be exempted.

When an incident of public violence occurs, churches report inactive members and an influx of visitors attend the next

day of worship. Whether the visitors return the following week often depends on their experience that day.

While a new sermon and worship service can be created overnight, it is better to be prepared for the inevitable day when public violence occurs in the community.

Creating a plan for the first worship following an incident of public violence should not just be a task for the pastor; members of the leadership team should also participate. It's better to have leaders agree ahead of time that no matter what special music or service features had been previously announced, the entire worship experience may be changed when violence occurs.

The message for the day should also be outlined in advance. All incidents of trauma have some commonalities that can be used to prepare a generic message; fill in the details when the incident of public violence occurs.

The same is true for the actual service. If printed bulletins are used, produce extras of an undated bulletin and keep the copies offsite in case worship has to be moved. Don't forget the children's message if one is normally prepared; make sure it is appropriate and consider providing trauma

resource suggestions for families.

A key component of the plan must focus on communication to members and the general public. Who will update the Website, the Facebook page, Twitter feed, and email list? Who will write and who will approve the message, and how quickly can it be distributed? Following the Saturday nightclub shooting in Orlando last year, just two local houses of worship included anything on their website and less than five had anything on their Facebook page in time for worship the following day.

Also, decide ahead of time who will speak to the press and be sure that person knows the right information and what to say — and not to say. This is not the time to get into a political debate.

Know where the worship service will be held if the building is within police lines or threatened by a local disaster. Develop a plan ahead of time with another religious community or another appropriate location that is available with little notice.

By definition, public violence causes trauma. As many as 60 percent of community members will need professional help to navigate through the trauma in the coming weeks and months. Identify credentialed professionals trained in crisis

and spiritual care counseling to whom congregation members may be referred when an incident occurs. Include a plan for care for clergy and other staff, who can easily suffer Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) while caring for everyone else.

Finally, plan for the future. Topical workshops, future services of remembrance, and ongoing trauma counseling should all be part of ongoing care following the first worship service. Lives and places are forever changed following public violence, and working through the recovery phases will take years even for the best prepared communities. Be open to offering or participating in new ministries as the community heals.

This article first appeared in MinistryMatters.

**The Rev. Jim Skillington is appointed to extension ministry in the Baltimore-Washington Conference. He is the executive director of the Center for Public Violence Recovery (www.publicviolencerecovery.org) in Columbia.*

'Straight talk on racism'

By Helen Stafford Fleming*

Racism, whether institutionalized or legislated, is being practiced in some form of discrimination that segregates us today. Our nation is still the product of hatred, bigotry and prejudices. How do we overcome these negative forces of hatred and racist dialogue, such as, blaming and disrespecting each other that has been embedded in the mind and behavior of our people for centuries?

We must stop putting bandages on racism and face the truth by recognizing the trickery of Satan's plan and realize that God has given us authority over the enemy. White Supremacy or Black Nationalism represent hatred and division that has deceived this country for decades, but the Word of God says, "Resist the devil and he will flee." Our warfare is not against flesh and blood, but against the powers of darkness. We must realize that all power is in our hand, because, God gave us power and dominion over this earth.

We are charged to love one another and to forgive one another, and then we become more than a conqueror in Christ Jesus. A house divided against itself cannot stand and that is the present state of America. Remember, if we have not love, we have not God.

Let's unveil the wounds of racism and its injustices so that the pain that has bound us for centuries can be healed. We must come to understand that slavery was never about God's people hating each other, slavery was about greed, self-absorption and power. However, it has always been the choice of the people to be vessels for Satan's game in every race.

Let's continue to review the past and take authority over the future on God's terms.

**Fleming is a retired Local Pastor. A full version of this commentary is available online at <http://www.bwcumc.org/news-and-views/straight-talk-on-racism/>.*

A Place Called Eastern: How one church saved a life

By MICHAEL ANTHONY CARRINGTON, JR.
Pastor, St. Luke's UMC, Reisterstown

Michael Carrington is the BWC's youngest pastor. The church that "adopted" him, Eastern UMC in Baltimore, recently sold its building. He felt called to write a tribute to the church that fed, clothed and loved him and his sisters.

DEAR EASTERN,
You were not a church to me. Instead, you were a home, a place orphans yearn for, a place the homeless only dream of finding. A place called Eastern!

You carried me for 204 months, the hardest 204 months of your life. Bad as hell, but you found it not a crime to cuff and rock a stranger in your arms. You adopted me from a drug-infected neighborhood, a drug addicted mother, a workaholic father, a drug-dealing sister and an absent older brother.

See, you weren't just anybody, you were sent from upstairs to stand on Baltimore's blood-shedding corners to knock on the chambers of my heart.

You stood tall, with conviction mixed with boldness, in the hood, and knocked on 2416 only to invite three kids, whose parents were not home, whose older sister was bagging up crack and cocaine, while smoking Mary Jane. You kindly invited me to a huge bright-white tent entitled, "Saving Station."

It was an Eastern outreach to recruit the lost, speak to the mute, feed the hungry, mother the motherless, father the fatherless, invite one boy and two girls to a place called "sanctuary," a place called Eastern!

You invited me into your home, which was paved with red carpet. You sat me down on your hardwood pews and taught me about the grace that preceded my human circumstances.

For 17 years, four days and 24 hours, you birthed me in Scripture, saturated me in tradition, protected me in reason, then sent me on my way with experience.

You drove me to school, visited me at home, fed me, clothed me, taught me, tutored me and then you married me.

This Place Called Eastern!

It was a place of discipline, a place of comfort, a place of love. a place of knowledge, ministry, grace and mercy.

It was a place for orphans; a place for widows; a place for justice. It was the Motherland for those robbed of life, seeking to find their way.

It was a home for the corners of North Avenue and Caroline Street; a home full of ministry; the birth place for evangelism; a house of hope and prophetic voices. A place called Eastern!

It was a home for me. I am its prodigy. Here, I raise my Ebenezer.



ROCK offers new hope

BY LAUREN STITZLEIN

Lauren Stitzlein first attended ROCK as a middle schooler. Today, she works in full-time ministry bringing the Gospel to college students.

WHAT CAN WE rely on in an ever-changing world? Who can we turn to in the brokenness and craziness that seems to be all around us? These are questions that people, especially youth, feel pressed to know the answers to.

But on Feb. 3-5, about 4,500 youth and their leaders were pointed to the answer. God, The Rock, is the steadfast source of the hope and redemption we and our world need. For a weekend, the Roland Powell Convention Center in Ocean City, MD was a sacred space for people to encounter God.

It's impossible to know all 4,500 life stories that ROCK has the opportunity to impact each year, but one can imagine a few of the common burdens that they carry into the convention center on Friday night.

There are burdens of doubt, anger, fear of forgiving, shame, evil, inexperience, and a thousand other emotions and experiences youth carry with them through their day.

But at ROCK, youth can give these burdens to the Lord and experience confidence that can only come from the Rock. Whether in a main session, a seminar, or the time spent in discussions with their youth groups, youth who come to ROCK



will experience their hearts being engaged with the message of hope found only in Jesus Christ in the exact ways that their hearts need to hear it.

I say this with confidence about ROCK because 13 years ago, as a seventh grader, my heart was engaged with the Gospel for the first time that I remember at ROCK. I left Ocean City on Jan. 25, 2004, changed by the message that God loved me, had a plan for me, and sent Jesus Christ to live the life I could not live and die the death that I deserved, so that I could be free to live for him and with him forever.

When the message of ROCK intersected with my life as an insecure pre-teen who doubted God and doubted herself even more, he changed the course of my life to follow him in confidence of his love, and empowered to go share that news with others — from starting with a Bible study in my middle school to currently serving in a full-time ministry role dedicated to sharing the Gospel on every college campus in the world.

For 24 years, God has used ROCK to change the stories of youth by drawing people to himself and sending them back to their families, schools and towns excited about the Good News. ROCK 2017 was no exception.

Immigration Thoughts

BY RICHARD MITCHELL
Pleasant Hill UMC

Editor's Note: United Methodists are "called to live the Gospel we proclaim," says Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, resident bishop of the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

On Jan. 27, President Trump issued an executive order enacting a 30-day suspension of all visas for nationals from Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. This measure and the new administration's views on immigration have stirred up conversation and advocacy efforts in the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

The United Methodist Church, in its official stance, upholds a theology that welcomes the stranger, and advocates a witness that stands with the marginalized and oppressed. For thoughts and resources on immigration ministries, visit www.bwumc.org/ministries/advocacy/immigration-resources.

But not all United Methodists are of one mind on this issue, as a member from Pleasant Hill UMC in Owings Mills explains in the commentary at right.

OUR NATION IS a nation of immigrants who passed through Ellis Island long ago. We took in millions from Ireland, Germany, Scotland, England, etc., and we will take in more than a million immigrants per year, more than any other country. But those people were not seeking to do us harm. They were of like mind to build and cherish our laws and systems of government.

The President is charged with the duty to follow the Constitution and protect us from all enemies foreign and domestic. The seven counties in the temporary ban don't have functioning governments like ours, and there have been 93 instances so far of terrorism from these countries.

It has been stated by Imams that we cannot defeat America in a land war, but we can infiltrate them and produce children and establish Islam to spread and take them from within. This course is well underway in Detroit and some areas of Texas, which is establishing Sharia (sic) law in their communities. President Trump has been briefed on this situation and he knows the dangers. God establishes government and leaders.

Working to end gun violence

BY SUSAN BENDER
Bethesda UMC

Members from Bethesda UMC have been working on the issue of gun violence with education and advocacy. In April, they will begin the Bible Study, "Kingdom Dreams and Violent Realities" (https://umc-gbcs.org/content/general/Kingdom_Dreams_GVP_Bible_Study.pdf), as they work on gun violence prevention from a faith perspective.

Did you know?

- On an average day, 91 Americans are killed with guns; seven are children and teenagers.
- Nearly two-thirds of firearm deaths are suicides.
- In an average month, 51 women are shot to death by intimate partners.
- America's gun murder rate is more than 25 times the average of other developed countries.
- Black men are 10 times more likely than white men to be murdered with guns.

For more information on these statistics visit everytownresearch.org/gun-violence-by-the-numbers

We understand that some church members may be hesitant to discuss guns, but if we are to follow the call of Jesus to be peacemakers, we must address our gun violence epidemic here in the United States. We encourage dialogue and conversation about gun violence based on our faith values. We are all concerned, so we must work to find the common ground with those who may disagree on policy. There actually is a lot of agreement. Studies show that the majority of gun owners agree that people who may pose a danger to themselves or to others should not have easy access to guns. We encourage everyone to have respectful conversations

about this issue.

So what's happening and what can be done to help?

National organizations are working on different aspects of gun violence prevention. The biggest national policy proposal of concern right now is Concealed Carry Reciprocity. The proposed legislation would override individual states' laws regarding who is allowed to "carry" concealed, loaded guns. D.C. and Maryland would be required to honor permits from other states that have much looser gun laws. We will be contacting members of Congress to oppose this legislation.

Although Washington, D.C., has some strong gun laws, they are being challenged by members of Congress. Senator Marco Rubio is working on legislation that would repeal many of D.C.'s gun laws. Those of us who live in the District can work with elected officials to oppose these efforts.

City Councilmember McDuffie has a bill, "The Neighborhood Engagement and Safe Response to Violence in our Society Act," which is based on a violence intervention model that has worked very successfully to prevent gun violence in other parts of our country. You're invited to work with the Washington Interfaith Network to advocate for the bill and funding. Contact Ryane Nickens (rbnickens@hotmail.com) to be a part.

Residents of Maryland can show your support for bills to prevent gun violence that are moving through the 2017 General Assembly, by calling or writing our legislators. Go to www.mdelect.net to find out who your legislators are. Show your support for the Disqualifying Crime Gun Forfeiture Bill (SB 727 & HB 1424) and Weapon-Free College Campuses (SB 946 & HB 159). Contact Susan Bender (susanbender@comcast.net) to learn more.

We suggest that each congregation select a contact person who can gather and share information. E-mail Beth Reilly (breilly@umc-gbcs.org) to be a part of this advocacy ministry.

Please join us in our work to prevent gun violence.



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MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Rev. Kevin Slayton leads United Methodists at Advocacy Days.

UMs advocate in Annapolis

ANNAPOLIS – About 70 members of the conference gathered in Annapolis Feb. 15 to advocate with legislators about paid sick leave, fracking, and prescription drug affordability. The annual Legislative Day in Annapolis is sponsored by the BWC's Board of Church and Society and the United Methodist Women.

Maryland Lt. Gov. Boyd Rutherford spoke to the group. "In all of its years, this was the first year the Board was able to land a leader from the State House second floor to be Keynote speaker" said the Rev. K.A. Slayton Sr., Advocacy coordinator. Slayton is pastor of New Waverly UMC in Baltimore.

He invited supporters of the Health Community and Prescription Drug bills to a press conference. Baltimore Health Commissioner Wen, Attorney General

Brian Frosh, Baltimore County Executive Kevin Kamenetz and Prince George's County Executive Rushern Baker all participated.

Church celebrates 240 years

REISTERSTOWN – Reisterstown UMC celebrated its 240th Anniversary Feb. 12. Bishop LaTrelle Easterling was there and delivered an inspiring message based on the book of Hebrews.

RUMC traces its beginnings back to Feb. 6, 1777, when Francis Asbury spoke to a group of Methodists in Reister's Town.

The congregation celebrated with music by the Praise Band, Cherub Choir, Chancel Singers, brass, Joyful Noise Handbell Choir, organ and piano. Marion Yohn from the RUMC Prayer Shawl Ministry gave the bishop a prayer shawl in the New England Patriots' team colors.

Cabinet serves at Manna House



Bishop LaTrelle Easterling serves breakfast in Baltimore.

BALTIMORE – For 50 years, Manna House has served Baltimore's poor and homeless. Started by St. John's UMC, it serves breakfast seven days a week,

some 60,000 meals this past year. On Jan. 22, the nine members of the BWC Cabinet saw that everyone had breakfast. Organized by Baltimore Suburban District Superintendent, the Rev. Laura Easto, they served several hundred people.

Manna House is seeking businesses, churches and individuals to join the Breakfast Club, committing to serving breakfast once a year. Six volunteers and \$500 covers a day's breakfast for more than 200 people.

Mural unveiled to bring hope

FREDERICK – Asbury UMC provides food and clothing for those in need. Now they're offering the community an answer to a different kind of need.

Many hands have gone into completing a three-year project, offered to anyone who passes by. The "Mural of Hope" was recently unveiled with a service of thanks for the many hands that went into completing the project. It is mounted on the side of the red brick building housing the church's food and clothing services.

The project was directed by Rose Chaney, a former art teacher and chair of the Asbury outreach ministry. With help from former colleagues, they created the mural showing rays of sunlight shining down from a blue sky on five very different people staring from windows toward the sky.

"This church has served the city of Frederick a lot," said Mayor Randy McClement, "and we, the city of Frederick, appreciate everything that this church has done."

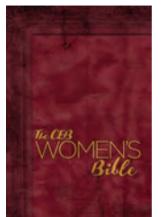
"The 'Mural of Hope' was created to remind people that hope allows us to face the many difficulties and trials that we have to endure," said the Rev. Mark Groover.

BWC pastor edits Women's Bible

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Common English Women's Bible has recently been published. Helping to make the three-year project happen was the Rev. Ginger Gaines-Cirrelli, senior pastor at Foundry UMC, one of five women editors. All 80 commentator contributors are also women.

"I think the vast, inclusive number of women's voices that we have represented in the writing is beautiful and wonderful," Gaines-Cirrelli said.

The CEB specialty edition, sold and distributed by Abingdon Press, includes an index of all women, named and unnamed, mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments.



Height honored on stamp

WASHINGTON— Dorothy Height, who died in 2010, a United Methodist laywoman who became a civil rights and women's rights icon over a long career, is the subject of a U.S. Postal Service Forever stamp. It was introduced by the U.S. Postal Service at a ceremony Feb. 1 at Howard University.



**Making a Difference is written and compiled each month by Linda Worthington. Send your news to lworthington@bwcumc.org.*

Clergy take 'Day Apart' with bishop to prepare for Lent

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

THE SEASON OF Lent is one of the busiest times of the year for local church pastors. In the Baltimore-Washington Conference, there is a tradition of clergy gathering just before Lent to help prepare for what lays ahead.



Rev. Zina Jacque speaks on rest, rise and walk as Lenten disciplines at the Bishop's Day Apart with Clergy at Queen's Chapel UMC.

On Feb. 22, more than 200 clergy met with Bishop LaTrelle Easterling at Queen's Chapel UMC in Beltsville to spend time together in worship, fellowship and learning.

"I love Lent," the bishop said. "It is an opportunity for us to do what we often don't spend a lot of time doing, and that's some introspective analysis."

Lent is the time, Bishop Easterling said, that if we're doing it right, we don't spend more time looking at other people and wonder "who else the pastor's talking about," but it's a time when we truly stand before God and say, "It's me, it's me O Lord, standing in the need of prayer."

The bishop introduced the guest speaker for the day, the Rev. Zina Jacque. The

daughter of two sharecroppers, Jacque spoke in three separate sessions on "Lent and Other Four-Letter Words."

The first session, Jacque focused on "Rest." Rest is a four-letter word, she said, something we don't talk about in polite company.

"We begin our journey thinking how we

God is serious about rest. When I don't rest, I am killing myself, my spirit."

The second session focused on another four-letter word, "Rise."

After we rest, there is work for us to do, she said. It's in our nature to rise, but there's a caveat – we must rise in our season.

As an illustration, Jacque showed a photo of some budding flowers in her yard, taken during a warm spell in February.

"In their season - spring - they're small, fragile, strong but still young," she said. "If you're in your spring, you're tender. This has nothing to do with age. Where you are in your spirit time?"

"Here's the thing about rising," Jacque continued. "We are able to rise if we've rested. We're able to rise because God's mercies are new every morning. Rise gently, caring for yourself; nothing is more important to God than are you."

And after we've rested and risen, Jacque said, comes the third four-letter word: "Walk."

"To walk," she said, "is a way of life, not perambulation. For we walk by faith, not sight."

Noting several instances in the Bible where God called people to walk into unknown places, Jacque said that God is in unknown place with us.

"Unknown places transform us," she said. "Every garden in the text gets us in trouble. Every wilderness is redemptive, transformative. In the garden, we think we're in control. In the wilderness, we stretch out on God."

The most unknown place we can point to, Jacque said, is the tomb. But we don't have to fear that; Jesus rose with all power. "We don't have to fear unknown places, because they are not unknown to God."

During the journey we're all on, Jacque said, it is one filled with purpose and promise. "God says, 'I won't leave you or forsake you.' There's provision, and that means God is with us. This day away is to remind us we're so precious to God."

will rest," Jacque said. "The word of God tells us - even the land rested (Leviticus 25:1-7). God rested. Even Jesus rested."

Jacque reminded the clergy that God has called them, not their work, adding that "work" has become the number one approved addiction in this country.

"It's counter-cultural to rest," she said. "Our humanity requires us to rest. Your systems won't work if you won't rest. But rest is associated with being lazy."

Jacque, who serves as pastor of Community Church in Barrington, Ill., turned her attention to Exodus 31:12-17, where God gave instruction about Sabbath.

"In three verses," she said, "God tells Moses twice I'm going to kill you and put you out.



More than 200 clergy gathered for the traditional Lenten Day Apart.

VIEWPOINTS

As we prepare for Easter, what are you giving up for Lent?

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

THAT QUESTION IS one that has haunted me for as long as I can remember. Growing up Catholic, giving something up for Lent was a given. It usually involved the removal of sweets or chocolate when I was a child. As an adult, it now involves giving up my favorite food: French fries. (Seriously.)

I know it's trendy these days to add something during Lent instead of giving something up. For example, adding to your life the sending of a thank you card every day, or trying to make your prayer life stronger by adding 15 minutes a day, or taking more time to read your Bible. You get the idea.

But some recent research troubles me. It says that, more and more, what Christians are giving up for Lent... is Lent.

LifeWay Research, an arm of LifeWay Christian Resources (think the Southern Baptist version of Cokesbury), recently published findings from a late 2016 survey that show 3 out of 4 Americans do not observe Lent.

Quoting from the article, Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research, said that unlike other Christian traditions such as celebrating Easter or Christmas, "Lent seems to lack crossover appeal."

So, apparently, Lent needs a good marketing campaign? Lent needs a Super Bowl commercial to make it popular again?

But I digress.

Why are Americans giving up Lent for Lent? The article notes that Lent focuses on giving things up in order to gain spiritual benefits in preparation for Easter.

"There's no social benefit like giving gifts or getting together with family," the article states. "It's a religious tradition that remains focused on personal devotion."

"Lent is not about having your best life now," McConnell said. "Those who observe it believe they are giving up things they want in order to focus on what God wants. There's little popular appeal in that."

Let's let that last thought sink in for a minute.

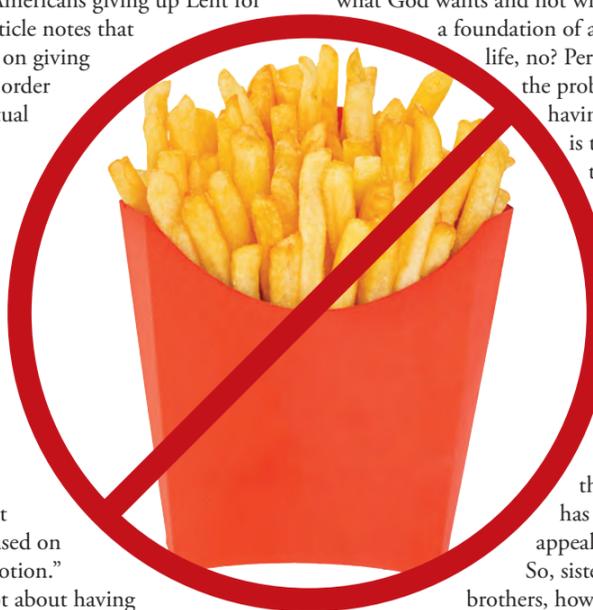
Focusing on what God wants, instead of what WE want, has "little popular appeal."

Ouch.

I thought that the idea of focusing on what God wants and not what I want was a foundation of a Christian life, no? Perhaps part of the problem(s) we are having as a society is the very fact that focusing on God – or, heaven forbid, focusing on the poor, the immigrant, the refugee, the shunned, the addicted, the "other" – has "little popular appeal."

So, sisters and brothers, how do we fix this? How do we get Lent more "popular appeal"? I wish I had the answer. I'm just asking the question and I'm open to suggestions. (Send ideas to me at ealsgaard@bwcumc.org, and I'll publish the best ideas later.)

Lent begins March 1 and ends during



Holy Week. It is traditionally seen as a 40-day period of preparation for Easter (Sundays don't count during Lent; each one is considered a "mini-Easter").

According to LifeWay Research, Catholics lead the way in observing Lent, at 61 percent. Protestants are only at 20 percent. This must come as bad news for Christian retailers marketing Lenten products to mainline Protestants (like Cokesbury and LifeWay), but that doesn't stop people and organizations from publishing those resources.

Take, for example, this excellent resource from the United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race. They have produced a six-part series, "Roll Down, Justice!" that is perfect for Lent. The series is based on the collection of social justice hymns recently published by Mark Miller of Drew University School of Theology, and includes a study guide written by Dr. Faye Wilson. Each of the six parts has a short video that you can watch with a group, your partner, your family, or on your own.

I encourage you to join the minority who practice a holy Lent. I urge you to buck the downward trend of Americans giving up Lent for Lent. You may not be "glad" that you did, but you'll find a more joyous Easter at the end.

And you'll be a better disciple of Jesus Christ, too.

Church opens new horizons for one man's future

By DAVID BONNEY
Smithville United Methodist Church

SOMETIMES, IT'S THE everyday miracles that surprise you.

In 2013, I went on a Volunteer in Mission trip to a school named Mashambanhaka in Zimbabwe. The school was a Methodist Mission school and had a primary school of over 1,100 students and a newly started secondary school with over 400 students. There were no classrooms, books or supplies for the secondary school students. It was amazing to see hundreds of boys and girls sitting under trees, listening to lectures.

I noticed four boys who were not part of any of the outside lectures. The boys sat a little distance from the classes. After a couple of days, one of the boys approached me and told me their story. They were orphans and each had been turned away from school because they could not pay the \$35 school fee.

They always worked together in fields and herded cattle trying to earn money for school, but it was never enough. They supported and cared for each other. I had compassion for the boys and asked the school headmaster about them and I stated that each of the boys were talented and hardworking students. With the help of some of the VIM team, we paid the past due and present fees for the boys.

One of the boys was Albert Mashambanhaka. He was a very skinny, sad-looking boy, and a little shy. As soon as he learned that he was back in school his whole demeanor changed and he had a permanent smile and a walk of confidence. We made an agreement with the boys that if they helped the pastor every week and kept the school grounds litter free, that the school fees would be paid each term.

The ZIM VIM team finished the school block and provided 80 desks and benches as well as school supplies and, thanks to UNICEF, textbooks were supplied for the

secondary students.

With the help of members of the Smithville UMC in Dunkirk, Md., the four boys were provided with school uniforms, shoes and novels. During the school holidays the boys were also provided with tutors and extra lessons thanks to the generosity of SUMC.

Albert worked hard and was a walking testimony to the love of Jesus Christ. When asked why he was so happy and how he was able to afford school, he stated that it was because of the grace of God and his Methodist family in the USA.

In 2014, Albert continued to work very

things in my life. I am going to write my final exam for form four on the 23rd of October. I am studying very hard because I know education is going to move me from being an orphan. I would also wish to help some of the orphans in our village. I never thought one day I was going to sit for my exams. I had no money for fees and no school uniforms. I sometimes work for other people so in return they offered me money for school fees. You helped me a lot. You removed me from being a slave. I love you and God bless you."

The results of the exams were released in early 2015. There were only three students

team. Albert and I looked to find a high school placement so he could complete high school. One of the only good schools with an available spot was a prestigious boarding school called Nyamuzuwe High School. It is a Methodist Mission School.

Albert applied to the school but because his O level results did not meet their minimum requirements, they would not consider him. Nyamuzuwe is in the top 10 percent of boarding schools in Zimbabwe. He struggled to be admitted to the school, but was allowed in and then surprised us all.

Albert was selected as the head boy for 2016 school year. He was also the lay leader in the chaplain's office, the youth fellowship ministries treasurer, member of the entertainment committee and a member of the school debate club.

During the two years at boarding school there was a transformation of a very skinny and shy boy to a robust and confident young man. With support from his Smithville UMC family and strong faith in Christ, he continued to be a walking testimony to the power of faith and love of Christ.

Three meals a day, clean water, electricity and a bed changed this boy.

In November, Albert graduated from high school and sat for the Advanced Level exams. On Jan. 23, the results were published and the top student at Nyamizue was Albert Mashambanhaka. Albert was also in the top 5 percent for the entire country.

This skinny boy, sitting under a tree, starving for knowledge, had overcome all odds and surpassed all expectations.

The story is not over.

During a ZIM VIM trip in 2016, a member of the team from Texas became intrigued with Albert's story. Even before his results were known, she had committed to support him through for years of university. Albert has now been accepted to the University of Zimbabwe and is preparing for this new chapter in his life.



Dave Bonney of Smithville UMC, left, talks with Albert Mashambanhaka in Zimbabwe.

hard and his SUMC family paid for his very important Ordinary Level exams. This was the first time any students from the new secondary school would sit for these important exams. The results would determine if a student could continue to Forms 5 and 6 (the last two years of high school).

In early September, Albert wrote this note to Smithville UMC.

"The Lord is doing many wonderful

from Mashambanhaka who passed the exams. Albert was the top student at the school. Even though he was the top at the school, his results were not outstanding. But considering that this boy was hungry, had no electricity, walked miles to school, had no reading materials for years and a school with no educational materials, I was very impressed with his results.

I was blessed to be in Zimbabwe with Charlie Moore and the ZIM VIM 2015

Jazz: Waters thanks God with ministry of music

From page 1

She also just happens to have the #4 single on Billboard's Smooth Jazz chart.

"Kayla is an extraordinary person who lives with a faithful desire to serve God with all she has," said the Rev. Donna Claycomb-Sokol, the church's pastor. "When she first interviewed for this position, our organist quickly said, 'I'm not sure our piano has ever been played that well.' And yet, Kayla is amazingly humble and always gives glory to God."

Claycomb-Sokol said that Waters has brought not only her talents to MVP, but life and joy to their worship. "It's a delight to watch her gifts being recognized by a wider audience," she said, "and I cannot wait to see where she continues to fly."

Waters has been director of music at MVP for two years. She said it has been a

blessing to her to be there.

"I think I'm one of the youngest directors of music they've ever had there," she said. "When I came in, I had very little experience with choral directing, so I've kind of had to learn as I go along."

Her recent single – her first ever – "I Am," is steadily climbing the Billboard charts after making its debut in January at #17. Her new album, "Apogee," was released Feb. 24 on Trippin 'N' Rhythm Records.

"I'm ecstatic and overwhelmed that my single is doing so well," Waters said in a phone interview. "It's only been out for five weeks. I'm really excited."

And she quickly added, "It's rolling, and I'm like, 'Okay God, you got this.'"

Her dad, Kim Waters, has been in the jazz music world for more than 30 years, Kayla Waters said. "I kind of picked up on his traits," she said. Kim Waters wrote and

produced the single for his daughter, but all the other songs on the album were written by Kayla.

Waters began taking piano lessons at age 6. In her junior and senior years of high school, she attended the Nathan Carter School of Music in Baltimore to study classical piano, where she still studies classical piano today.

She then was accepted at Howard University as a piano major, studying with Karen Walwyn, and she received her bachelor's degree in 2013. Waters lists Walwyn as one of her primary mentors, helping her develop her style in composing and writing. Her other mentor is Kim Jordan, who served as music director for the late Gil Scott Heron for 30 years.

The combination of classical and jazz piano is unique, Waters said, and she's proud of her ability to seamlessly float

between the two worlds.

"I kind of taken from them and worked from their experience," Waters said. "They've told me stories and I've learned a lot from them."

The first song on her iPhone, she said, was her own music, perhaps not surprisingly as she anticipated the release of her debut album.

What's next for Waters is getting tour dates lined up, she said, including a couple of dates playing with her dad. "We're getting some calls for solo shows," she said, "and for doing the daddy-daughter thing." Upcoming shows are listed at www.iamkaylawaters.com.

"I thank God for every step of the way," Waters said. "This is not just me, but it's God who gives me my gift. I give him all the praise for the music that he's given me."

