



DARE TO BELIEVE

231st Session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church – 2015

UMConnection DAILY

The Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church • Becoming fully alive in Christ and making a difference in a diverse and ever-changing world • Saturday, May 30, 2015

Rules Debate Provides Moment of Grace

BY ERIK ALSGAARD

IN A MOMENT that drew a standing ovation, the Baltimore-Washington Conference again showed its leadership in the denomination by coming to an agreement outside the normal way of doing business.

Jen Ihlo, chair of the BWC’s Rules

Committee, made a motion that sought to incorporate the Circles of Grace process – a method of “holy conferencing” that the BWC has used for two years – into the conference’s rules. Currently, to utilize the Circles of Grace, conference members have to vote to suspend the rules.

Matt Sichel, a lay member from Wesley

UMC in the Baltimore Suburban District, moved to amend the Rules Committee’s resolution, seeking to incorporate a way to “perfect” the Circles of Grace process in the resolution.

“I like the process of the Circles of Grace,” Sichel said from the floor, “but I don’t see any way to perfect the

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Tony Richards

Bob Willasch performs a flute solo during a Service of Repentance Friday night, led by the Conference Committee on Native American Ministries. The 2012 General Conference called each Annual Conference to conduct such a service as a demonstration toward reconciliation between indigenous people and The United Methodist Church.

Remember whose you are, bishop says

BY LINDA WORTHINGTON

AT THE SERVICE of the Saints Friday morning, Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, the presiding bishop of the South Carolina Conference, brought a message of hope and challenge to the families and friends of those clergy and clergy spouses who had died in the past year.

Despite the somberness of the occasion, there were many times of singing, praying and light-heartedness,

as well as poignancy and remembrance of times past.

Preaching on “An Offer You Cannot Refuse,” Holston used as his text Matthew 6:12-23, the calling of the disciples from their fishing boat.

Those remembered gave themselves to God and to ministry in ways which we pay homage to today, the bishop said.

“Your loved ones’ lives are calling you to follow Christ,” he said. “When Jesus

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Resolutions: An Example of Holy Conferencing

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resolutions. We're Wesleyan; we're always moving on to perfection."

Sichel added that he was frustrated by reading resolutions he would like to support if they were amended in some fashion. "We had no chance to do that" in the Circles, he said. "Let's do both."

After three speeches in favor of the amendment and three speeches against – which some on Twitter found ironic, using Robert's Rules of Order to perfect a process that sought to avoid those rules – Bishop Marcus Matthews announced that an order of the day had arrived, and the debate had to cease.

When the Session resumed after lunch, Matthews took to the stage.

"Who knew that an order of the day would provide an opportunity for us to dare to believe," he said. "I'm always open to God's surprises."

During the break, he said, he, Ihlo and Sichel had had a chance to talk. "It was a time of holy conferencing," the bishop said. "Matt

and Jen have something to share with you."

At that, Sichel and Ihlo came to the podium. Together, they announced that they had reached an agreement whereby they would withdraw the motion and the resolution to allow a time for reflection and information gathering regarding the Circles of Grace process.

"By mid-fall," Ihlo said, "we commit to having a working resolution on the Circles of Grace, and we'll post that on the BWC Website. Hopefully, by Jan. 15, we will have a resolution on the Circles of Grace that embodies the spirit of the Circles process but addresses the concern about perfecting resolutions."

"I would much rather sit down and have a conversation, get everyone's thoughts, and reach common ground," said Sichel from the podium. "I appreciated the chance to talk with Jen and the bishop."

Ihlo closed her remarks by noting that the process she and Sichel had participated in was a "prime example of holy conferencing."

After both had withdrawn their motions, conference members gave them a standing ovation.

"You standing is an indication that there's no objection to the withdrawals," the bishop said.



Matt Sichel, left, and Jen Ihlo stand at the podium as they withdraw their respective motions.

Memorial Service: Hope and Challenge

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chose his disciples, he made an offer they could not refuse. We're here today because your loved ones accepted that

call. We've come to be God's people. If Jesus could use fishermen, he can use you.

"Never forget who you are and whose you are," Holston said in closing. "You are children of the king."

Following the message, the Rev. Mary Jo Sims, Conference Secretary, read the names of those mourned, saying with each name, "We remember, with thanksgiving and celebration, their lives." A bell was rung, their image was projected and family members or friends came forward to light a candle. The Rev. JW Park presided at the candle lighting.

The memorial list included 30 clergy, and 17 clergy spouses. Three United Methodist bishops were also remembered.

Bishop Matthews called for prayer at the end of the reading, asking all who had a loved one who died this past year to stand.

"Into your hands we commend these souls," Bishop Matthews said. Receive your loved ones into everlasting glory.



The Rev. B. Kevin Smalls, left, lights a candle during the Memorial Service with the assistance of the Rev. JW Park, Dean of the Cabinet and Superintendent of the Central Maryland District.

Water-walkers and Baby Elephant Syndrome

By ERIK ALSGAARD

JUST LIKE, BUT not-quite like, the Blues Brothers, the people of the Baltimore-Washington Conference are “on a mission from God.” This mission, the Rev. Laurie Haller said yesterday in a Bible study, is to be “water-walkers.”

Haller, co-senior pastor at First UMC in Birmingham, Mich., outlined this call to water-walking in her exploration of Matthew 14:22-36, in which Jesus walks on the water and calls Peter to join him.

With stories of her own walking on the water on the pilgrim’s path at Lindisfarne in Scotland, Haller shared how “water-walkers dare to believe by having the courage to get out of the boat.”

“Jesus calls each one of us as individuals to dare to believe that we, too, can do far more than we think we can. It’s the same with our churches,” Haller said. “We have the ability to be the ears, eyes, hands, feet, voice and heart of God by embodying Christ’s love in all that we do. There is so

much untapped possibility in each of you and in each one of your churches and it’s waiting to be unlocked.”

Too often, Haller said, individuals, churches and even the denomination, suffer from “baby elephant syndrome.” In India and Africa, she explained, elephants are born wanting to roam. But they are initially confined by being tied securely to trees. They learn quite early in life that they cannot break free of the rope, so they stop trying. The tragedy of baby elephant syndrome is that adult elephants are fully capable of breaking free from their bonds, but because they believe they can’t they remain stuck right where they are.

Do you have baby elephant syndrome, Haller asked. Does your local church?

“If you and I want to experience God’s power, we have to dare to believe, break the rope and take the first step. As the old saying goes, ‘If you want to walk on water, you’ve got to get out of the boat,’” she said. “How is God calling you to dare to believe?”



The Rev. Laurie Haller presents her Bible study Friday morning on Matthew 14:22-36.

Tony Richards

Ministries Report Highlights Transformed Lives

By MELISSA LAUBER

SMALL GROUPS OF determined people, on fire for mission and ministry, can change just about anything,” said Council of Ministries Director Sandra Ferguson. “Ministry is not about accomplishment, it’s about affecting people’s lives in ways that make

a difference. It’s about daring to believe the church can transform the world.”

During the Connectional Ministries report yesterday, Ferguson, along with Annika and Asher Rudolph, of North Carroll Cooperative Parish, and Donovan Parris, president of the Conference Council on Youth Ministries, highlighted several of the BWC’s ministries.

They included: a local church’s efforts to refurbish bikes that transform lives around the world; initiatives that open up and grow multicultural perspectives; vibrant outreach that brings young adults into leadership in the Church; training to help ex-offenders find their way successfully back into the community; and opening up churches so that all people find their place at God’s table.

Ferguson shared the report with three young people, believing that children and youth will be playing an expanding role in the life of the conference, “creating a church that is relevant in today’s culture.”

Another young voice on the stage was Markus McKinney, a junior at Rust College, who thanked the conference for paying 100 percent of its apportionment to support the Black College Fund.

Ferguson and Bishop Matthews also presented the Denman Evangelism Award to the Rev. Dae Sung Park, pastor of a new church start in Ellicott City, and Ron Deter, a member of New Covenant UMC in Cumberland.



The Rev. Dae Sung Park, left, receives the Foundation for Evangelism’s Denman Award from Bishop Marcus Matthews during the Connectional Ministries report. Ron Deter, from Cumberland, was the laity recipient.

Tony Richards

231ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE • DARE TO BELIEVE

CONFERENCE AGENDA

SATURDAY, MAY 30

TIME	EVENT	SPEAKER/MODERATOR
8 a.m.	Bible Study	Rev. Laurie Haller
9 a.m.	Plenary Session	
12 p.m.	Lunch	
2 p.m.	Ordination Service	Bishop L. Jonathan Holston






Tony Richards

The Rev. Michael Parker delivers an inspirational testimony, 'His Word.'

Some of Friday's tweets using #bwcumc15



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Selena Johnson @selenamjohnson · 2h
 Wow! Hearing from Russian conference reminds me God doesn't only speak English. #bwcumc15
- 
Shannon Sullivan @sha_sullivan · 4h
 A ramp to the altar area like Trinity UMC in Frederick has is so important- need 2 figure something like that out 4 #PresburyUMC #bwcumc15
- 
Daryl L. Williams @revdaryl · 1h
 Reports in iambic pentameter. Only at annual conference. #bwcumc15

Laity Elected to the 2016 General Conference

- Delores Martin, Good Hope Union UMC, Silver Spring
- Jen Ihlo, Dumbarton UMC, Georgetown
- Charles Moore, Community UMC, Crofton
- Cynthia Taylor, Epworth UM Chapel, Baltimore
- Tom Price, Mill Creek Parish UMC, Rockville
- Ken Ow, North Bethesda UMC

Note:

The 2016 General Conference meets in May in Portland, Ore.
 For more information, visit:
umc.org/who-we-are/general-conference-2016

Clergy Elected to the 2016 General Conference

- The Rev. Terri Rae Chattin, pastor, Sykesville Parish
- The Rev. Joe Daniels, Greater Washington District Superintendent, pastor, Emory Fellowship, Washington, D.C.
- The Rev. Charlie Parker, pastor Metropolitan Memorial UMC, Washington, D.C.
- The Rev. Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, Baltimore Metropolitan District Superintendent
- The Rev. JW Park, Central Maryland District Superintendent
- The Rev. Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, pastor, Foundry UMC, Washington, D.C.



Tony Richards

Sandy Ferguson, left, and Bishop Marcus Matthews share a tender moment during a retirement celebration Friday night. Ferguson, Director of Connectional Ministries, is retiring June 30 after 29 years of ministry to the Conference. Bishop Matthews thanked her for her service and her gifts of neckties over the years.