



CONFERENCE CIRCUIT

The West Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church

Issue # 3 • Saturday, June 10, 2017

Global Ministries building excitement by building Hope!

by Pat Mick, Chairperson

Global Ministries – what’s happening that is building hope? What’s occurring that is bringing hope to the people of the West Virginia Conference and around the world? How are we fostering hope that is turning situations and circumstances

around to better conditions? What transformative, hopeful ministries are taking shape or are already happening?

New on the docket and still in the planning stage

is *Abundant Health: Our Promise to Children*, an initiative of the General Board of Global Ministries. Linda Williams, Conference Health and Disabilities Coordinator, is leading our Board of Global Ministries in envisioning how to achieve this initiative.

To date, two foci have been identified – one dealing with obesity among children in our conference and the other reducing preventable deaths in Haiti and Zimbabwe. Linda has already established a partnership with the Health Ministry services at West Virginia University to coordinate the obesity issue.

New things have begun in the area of parish development.

Thomasina Stewart, Conference Parish Development Coordinator, facilitated the planning of a two-day workshop called *Better Together: Hope and CommUnity*. The major focus was reshaping parish ministries through creating partnerships, asset-based ministry,

and change – one step at a time. Plans are already under way for The Next Step in reshaping parish ministries.

Our Church and Community Workers—Gayle

Lesure and Joanne Davis—are engaged in bringing hope. Joanne’s program could not be better named: it’s called *Hope in the Mountains* and is located in the Southern District. Gayle is situated in Clarksburg.

The House of the Carpenter is proceeding with securing a Church and Community Worker to replace the position held by Amy Purdom who is returning to teaching. Southern District hopes to have a second CCW by the end of this year.

The seven conference mission projects are to be commended for all the ministries they provide, both ministries of mercy and ministries of transformation, each of them building hope among the neighbors they serve. Take note that

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In This Issue

Amendment discussion.....	p2
Foundation elects trustees.....	p3
Celebration of historically African American churches.....	pp4-5
Disaster Recovery Team.....	p6
Business session recap.....	p8

Today's Schedule

8:30 am	Praise and Prayer
8:45 am	Business Session 4
11:00 am	Circles of Grace
12:30 pm	Lunch
2:00 pm	Business session 5
5:30 pm	Dinner
7:30 pm	Evening Worship Service Celebration of Ministry, Bishop Holston, preaching

Community Development Outreach Ministries is now called Heart and Hand Outreach Ministries, Inc.

And much could be said about the work David Stilgenbauer, VIM Coordinator, and Dan and Sue Lowther, Disaster Relief Coordinators, are doing to bring hope to people in need.

Mission and ministry are getting done. Watch for new events, follow-up events, and other information as the Board of Global Ministries moves forward in building hope. Also, check out our Facebook page at [facebook.com/WVUMCGlobalMinistries/](https://www.facebook.com/WVUMCGlobalMinistries/).

Constitutional amendments generate discussion

By George Hohmann

A lively discussion preceded the vote yesterday on five proposed amendments to the United Methodist Constitution.

The proposed amendments were not amendable. Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball noted that although they could only be voted up or down, there could be a discussion.

Two of the proposals drew comments.

Proposed amendment No. 1 is focused on emphasizing the church's desire to eliminate discrimination against women and girls in every facet of life. But yesterday's discussion zeroed in on language that says the church "recognizes it is contrary to Scripture and to logic to say that God is male or female, as maleness and femaleness are characteristics of human bodies and cultures, not characteristics of the divine."

Adam Ployd, deacon, Little Kanawha District serving in extension ministry, spoke in favor of a portion of the proposal that contains language that says maleness and femaleness are not characteristics of the divine. He said the language states a "conservative, traditional, orthodox affirmation of the transcendent sovereignty of God that has been taught, preached and received as orthodox, reliable, true faith for centuries."

"Our forefathers in the faith affirmed that God transcends all created categories of space and time and therefore is not limited the way we are by those characteristics," he said.

Mary Thomas, laity, from Temple United Methodist Church in Beckley, said she supported the intention of proposed amendment No. 1 but she urged its rejection because "of words that would later perhaps cause conflict or concern."

Diane Kenaston, elder, on loan to the Missouri Annual Conference, spoke in favor of the proposed amendment. Describing God in human terms "limits who God is," she said.

"When we say God has no gender, no nationality, no height differential, what we are saying is that human nature does not overcome divine nature," she said. "It is very important that we claim, along with this amendment, what the church has taught for thousands of years — that Jesus, as the incarnation

of God, expresses a God who is beyond gender."

Larry Hedrick, laity, the Grove Street United Methodist Church, Petersburg, spoke against the proposal. "I'm concerned that in our culture, those involved in blurring gender and sexuality are not necessarily interested in joining with us but perhaps leading us into sin," he said.

Proposed amendment No. 2 would include gender, ability, and marital status in a list of attributes in which people should not be excluded. (In the Book of Discipline, "gender" refers to men and women.)

Mark Smith, clergy, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Nitro, asked why the proposal would remove the word "status" and add the word "abilities."

Judith Kenaston, West Virginia Conference secretary and head of the West Virginia Conference's delegation to the 2016 General Conference, said that General Conference

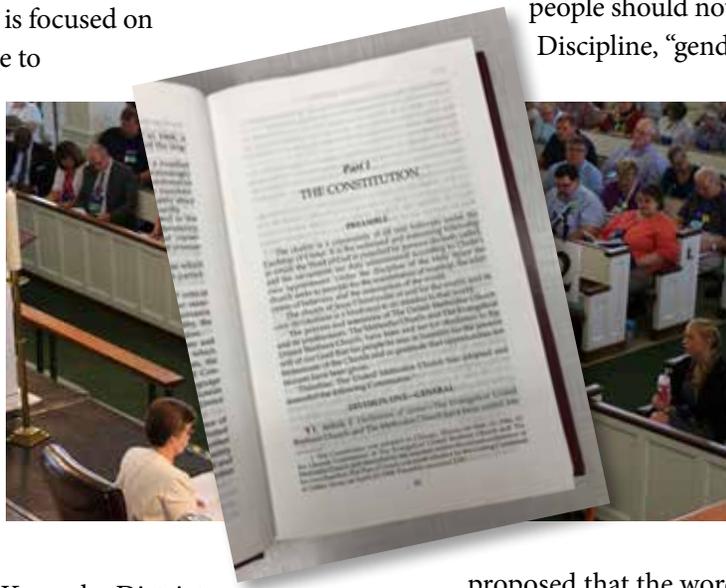
proposed that the word "status" be removed because "it was felt it had been defined in other places."

She said the proposed amendment would add the word "ability" "because we do not have that as a part of our Constitution, where we recognize that persons with differing abilities are welcome participants in the life of the church."

Robert Fulton, clergy, Hamlin United Methodist Church, Hamlin asked, "Can we trust that, because of all of the news things we're hearing now, that there are over 100 definitions of gender — so in the future are we still going to be referring to gender, in regards to this Constitutional amendment, as dealing with male and female?"

Judith Kenaston explained that the rationale provided by the secretary of the General Conference was, "In the Discipline, gender always refers to male and female by definition and that has been upheld by the Judicial Council.

"So at this point, without making another change to the Discipline — and you recognize the difficulty of doing that because that's what we're dealing with now — at this point, that would have to be changed," she said. "It has been recognized by the Judicial Council as 'male and female.' And I will go ahead and add, because it came up in the clergy



Continued on page 2

Amendments...

Continued from page 2

session, ‘marriage’ in our Discipline is defined as between a man and a woman.”

The word “gender” also drew comments from Kevin Lantz, clergy, Steele Memorial United Methodist Church, Barboursville.

“I guess I’m concerned about what we would define as language now and what we define as language later,” Lantz said. He mentioned secular society’s changing definitions of gender and marital status. “It seems that a lot of the laws of the government or the laws of Hollywood seem to infiltrate our church life, our spirituality.”

“I’d suggest we vote ‘no’ on No. 2 just because of the potential of language being re-interpreted at another time,” Lantz said. “As we remind ourselves, as Christian people we are called out to be different. We are called out to be holy. We are called to be separate from the ways of the world.”

Scott Sears, elder, First United Methodist Church, Princeton, “moved the question,” which passed, ending discussion. The vote followed.

The discussion and vote occurred yesterday morning in the Wesley Chapel sanctuary during the first business session of this year’s conference.

Votes cast by delegates to the West Virginia Conference will be recorded and added to the votes cast at annual conferences around the world. The amendments will pass and become part of the Constitution only if they receive a two-thirds affirmative vote of the aggregate number of members of the annual conferences and are ratified by the Council of Bishops.

Judith Kenaston noted, “There’s a rather high bar to pass for a constitutional amendment.”

Because the amendments will pass or fail depending on the total votes cast, there won’t be a report on the vote totals from our conference.

The results will probably be known at the end of the 2017 calendar year.

All five of the proposed amendments were approved by at least two-thirds of the General Conference delegates voting in Portland, Oregon, in May 2016.

Proposed amendment No. 1 was approved by the General Conference by a vote of 746 Yes, 56 No. Proposed amendment No. 2 was approved by the General Conference by a vote of 509 Yes, 242 No.

George Hohmann is a member of the First United Methodist Church in South Charleston, Midland South Lay Leader and member of the Conference Communications Team.

Foundation Elects Officers and New Trustees

The United Methodist Foundation of West Virginia, Inc.’s Board of Trustees elected new officers and five new trustees at its May 10 meeting in Barboursville, said Jeff Taylor, the foundation’s president.

The Foundation, established in 1974, manages \$96 million for United Methodist causes. It is governed by a 32-member Board of Trustees—a diverse group of laity and clergy from every district of our Annual Conference.

The board elected David Ellwood of Wheeling to serve as chairperson; D. Lyn Dotson of Morgantown to serve as vice chairperson; Ben Vincent of Gassaway to serve as treasurer; and Foundation staff members Jeff Taylor to serve as president and Kim Matthews to serve as vice president. Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball continues to serve as the honorary Chairperson.

The board also elected five new trustees:

- Aileen Lee, a layperson from the Midland South District;
- Barbara McDonald, a layperson from the Little Kanawha District;
- Judy Raines, a layperson from the Southern District;
- Ed Sisson, a layperson from the Little Kanawha District; and
- Kristi Wilkerson, a layperson from the Wesleyan District.

Taylor said the Board of Trustees’ Leadership Development Subcommittee has been working to nominate prospective trustees who bring a variety of gifts to the Foundation’s ministry.

“This new class of trustees represents the fruit of the subcommittee’s work to bring diversity and a broad range of experiences and backgrounds to complement those of the current board,” Taylor said. “We look forward to working with them.”

The board also recognized the service of retiring trustees Martha Nepa Hall, William B. Goode, Russell Haynes, Jeffrey Clay Welshonice, and Suzanne Knight.

The United Methodist Foundation of West Virginia, Inc., can be reached at info@umfwv.org.

A gift and a challenge: Celebrating our historically African American churches



Bishop L. Jonathan Holston's message, "Failure is Not an Option," highlighted West Virginia's historically African American churches celebration. (Photo by Deborah Coble)

By Rev. Joe Webb

"Failure is not an option."

That was the title of and refrain of Bishop L. Jonathan Holston's message last night as we celebrated our historically African American churches.

Bishop Holston's words and the theme of the service reminded us that the contribution of those 16 churches to our connectional family brings with it not only a tremendous gift, but also a challenge...and with it, an opportunity.

The rich heritage of our historically African American churches in our Annual Conference (highlighted individually in your conference packet at 2017-27) only begins with the racial and cultural diversity they bring to our family. Many of these churches have been serving in their communities for more than 150 years. There is a sense of homecoming, as service coordinator Rev. Jim Martin put it prior to the service, among these churches with such a strong shared legacy.

But one of the greatest gifts they bring to our connection is their sense of radical inclusiveness, borne out of their shared experiences as havens for marginalized peoples.

Our historically African American churches are among the most integrated congregations in our conference. Largely because their historical demographics have comprised people who have experienced oppression, they have flung wide their doors to others in our society who feel unaccepted or rejected, regardless of racial or cultural background.

Their model of inclusiveness provides a blueprint for how the wider church might begin to seek broader diversity in many of our congregations.

And therein lies the challenge...and the opportunity.

"Open the doors of your church!" Bishop Holston implored. "Whether you have 30 people, 300, 3,000, or 30,000. Somebody is bringing every single thing that they have, and they want to know that you know a God for whom failure is not an option!"

As we United Methodists in the West Virginia Annual Conference strive to be a Christ-led, spiritual breath of fresh air that changes the world, we must all seek ways to bring as many voices, experiences, and contexts as possible into our faith communities...not so much so that we might serve more segments of our society (although that is certainly a legitimate motivation), but so that we might broaden our collective perspectives and know one another better.

Ultimately, those are the ways we move from reaching 2400+ for Christ to making deeply-rooted, well-rounded disciples. It's how we can equip those Jesus calls to us to be sent into the world.

"This service celebrates and remembers the past, acknowledges the present, and claims the future of continued faithful discipleship," Martin said. "It is an affirmation and a challenge to live into the wholeness and unity of the body of Christ; that we are one in Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world."

Rev. Joe Webb is a Provisional Deacon serving as pastor of Sand Hill UMC (Little Kanawha District). He completed a cross-cultural ministry internship at Logan Memorial UMC (one of our historically African American churches) in 2014 as part of his masters program at Asbury Theological Seminary.



Liturgical dancers from Simpson Memorial UMC were part of last night's celebration. (Photo by Whitney Cherry)

Alive

*There's an energy in these hills –
Sends creativity soaring.
Oh, the gifts these hills are storing!
Makes flatland seem so boring.
There's an energy in these hills.*

*There's a rhythm in these hills –
Its more than just surviving.
Uphill – downhill – it's thriving.
It surrounds me when I'm driving.
There's a rhythm in these hills.*

*There's a melody in these hills –
It's basic to all others;
Makes strangers sisters and brothers,
A soulful, spiritual mother,
There's a melody in these hills.*

*There's a sadness in these hills –
Whose veins, still rich with coal,
Revive us as we strip their soul,
For undermining takes its toll.
There's a sadness in these hills.*

*There's a joy in these hills –
A porch, a rocker, a dog, and a swing,
And old-time Gospel song to sing,
Neighbors and family visiting.
There's a joy in these hills.*

*There's a calling in these hills –
We go from here to there – not really clear,
But we're seeking, searching – far and near,
For what we finally realize, we left back here.
There's a calling in these hills.*

*There's a Promise in these hills –
It transcends the prejudice of class and race,
For the hills' Creator taught the hills to embrace
All who "lift their eyes" in this hallowed space.
There's a Promise in these hills.*

by Charlotte A. Meade 1-16-06





Our Disaster Recovery Team was recognized during Friday's business session. (Photo by Deborah Coble)

Disaster recovery team shares current needs list

Friday morning during the West Virginia Annual Conference, Jack Lipphardt of the Disaster Recovery Team reported on recovery efforts following the June 23, 2016, floods.

Lipphardt did not have an opportunity to present a list of flood recovery needs. Here they are:

- \$800 will provide kitchen dishes, pots and pans, flatware, countertop appliances, and sheets and bath towels for a survivor's new home.
- \$1,900 will buy a much-needed 12-inch, 4-tire, tandem flatbed trailer with rails and mesh sides that can be licensed for road use to haul construction supplies to work sites.
- \$2,700 will provide a large appliance package including washer, dryer, range, range hood, fridge, microwave, and water heater.
- \$25,000 will cover half of the materials and supplies needed to build a three-bedroom home for a survivor family.
- The Depot needs a heavy duty truck, such as a Ford 550 flatbed.

Another tool trailer, outfitted with construction tools, would be very useful.

In addition, gifts of all sizes are needed to help in the direct work of disaster recovery.

For ways to give visit the conference's website at <http://umfvw.org>, click on "Ways to Give," then click on the "Online Giving Portal."

If you make a designated gift, let Lipphardt know by emailing him at jwlipphardt@aol.com.

The New Vision Depot, a warehouse in Beaver, acts as the main hub for the West Virginia Annual Conference's Disaster Relief Ministry. To contact the depot call 304 253-9038.

Friday Photo Gallery



For more photos from Annual Conference, visit our flickr page at flickr.com/photos/wvumc/albums



Faces of Hope: That was then...this is now.



Six young men and women from West Virginia served as pages for the annual conference sessions and were responsible for handling messages and the distribution of all materials to the delegates. Pictured from left, first row: Penny DeGolyer, Bob Lohr, and Nancy McClang; second row: Bill Wilson, John Lacaria, and Ellis Conley.

Faces of HOPE
#WVAC17



Faces of HOPE
#WVAC17

Paraphrased from Bill Wilson's Facebook Post Wednesday:

Fifty years ago! Annual Conference, 1967 [above left, top row]. Who would have thought that as the W.Va. Annual Conference began, three colleagues having served the Annual Conference as Pages 50 years ago would come back as leaders together this year [above right]. It all began at the 1967 Conference which voted to support the union of former Methodist & EUB churches into The United Methodist Church (consumated in April, 1968).

Congratulations to our colleague & friend, Rev Dr. JF Lacaria, as he enters the retired relationship. Continued prayers for our colleague & friend, Rev. Dr. Ellis Conley, as he pastors and leads. And thanksgiving for my four years retired. Thanks be to God for our years, the life of the Annual Conference, and prayers for the future. Special thoughts and prayers for our long time friend, Bob Lohr, who lost his wife to death this past year.



Faces of HOPE
#WVAC17

Who knows what hope the future holds for the 2017 class of pages?



Tweeting your Conference experience?
Hashtag your post using #WVAC17



Tag us on Instagram! @wvumc

Friday, June 9 business recap

- Received welcome from Boyd Creasman, acting president of West Virginia Wesleyan College.
- Approved rules as presented.
- Voted for a resolution that the current General Conference delegation will represent the conference at the 2019 Special Called Session of General Conference.
- Approved a resolution affirming the bishop, cabinet, and clergy members of the conference.
- Voted on five Constitutional Amendments which would change the constitution of the United Methodist Church if approved.
- Heard from the Conference Disaster Relief Team and Cathy Earl from the United Methodist Committee on Relief.
- Memorial Service recognized clergy, clergy spouses and surviving spouses who have died since the last annual conference.
- Experienced the Circles of Grace with a conversation around the Commission on a Way Forward.
- Approved the pensions report.
- Increased minimum compensation levels for full time clergy in the following categories:
 1. \$37,000
 2. \$35,000
 3. \$34,000
 4. \$30,000
- Heard from Clayton Childers from the General Board of Church and Society and Craig Catlett from United Methodist Communications.
- Recognized BA Miskowicz for a professional certification in Spiritual Formation as well as recognizing those who have completed the Course of Study.



*Pajamas and ice cream...does it get any better? Special family moments happen every year at Annual Conference!
(Photo by Whitney Cherry)*

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Help Wanted

Wanted: Director of Christian Education. Full time Christian education/children and youth minister at Christ Church in Charleston.

For more information email Jay Parkins at jayparkins@msn.com.

(For more job opportunities around the conference visit wvumc.org.)

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