



THE MOUNTAIN CIRCUIT

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The Rev. Vance Ross preaches during opening worship yesterday at Conference. Photo: Whitney Cherry

Worship in Action: DEPLOY!

by Laura Allen

*"Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you,
the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard."
— Isaiah 58: 6-8 NRSV*

Real worship is concerned with more than getting the liturgy or anthem just right.

True worship takes action.

In his sermon Thursday afternoon in Wesley Chapel, the Rev. Vance P. Ross reminded members of the West Virginia Annual Conference to seek a common humanity through deployed worship.

Ross is the director of annual conference relationships for Discipleship Ministries (formerly known as the General Board of Discipleship or GBOD). He preached during yesterday's opening worship service at Wesley Chapel, on the campus of West Virginia Wesleyan in Buckhannon, W.Va.

He based his message on Isaiah 58: 6-8, in which the prophet Isaiah reminds the people of Israel that societal position and the appearance of piety aren't the kinds of things God wants in worship.

Rather, God seeks a kind of worship that carries out actions worthy of God's people.

A native of Bluefield, W.Va., Ross shared a story from his first pastoral appointment in Fairmont to illustrate the passage. It started with a visit to the Middletown Mall at about 11 o'clock in the morning.

cont. next page



Worship in Action: DEPLOY!

by Laura Allen

cont. from front page

"Traffic was backed up all the way to exit," he said.

It was Mountaineer game day in north central West Virginia.

"All these people, backed up all this way, to go to the temple of worship called Mountaineer Field," said Ross.

John Talley was the starting quarterback for the game. Ross noted that he was one of the few African-American starting college quarterbacks in the country in the mid-1980s. "I was so proud," he said.

The Mountaineers won that day.

But then, the team started losing. And the pride that Mountaineer Nation felt toward John Talley became something entirely different.

State newspapers, talk radio, and television programs went after the young student athlete without mercy.

"They blasted this 20-year kid, they worked on him like he was a dog," said Ross.

"And the worshippers at Mountaineer Field, many of whom, like me, would go to worship on Sunday, never once called in on his behalf. Including myself."

While worshipping at the football field, it seems Mountaineer fans forgot true sportsmanship.

"We missed our worship opportunity to stand up for somebody who was being humiliated day after day after day," Ross said.

Ross continued with another example - a story about his daughter and a boy she sang with in the high school choir. As she talked with her father, she mentioned that her friend was gay.

"Someone's gay? In high school?" said Ross. "Doesn't that bother you?"

"He's gay. Why would that bother me?" his daughter replied.

Ross realized that he had already dehumanized his daughter's friend. "I didn't ask about him - his grades, whether he had a good voice, if there were plans for his future," he said.

"I dehumanized him, and it took my baby to rehumanize me."

Treating one another as human beings "isn't conservative or liberal, it's human," Ross said.

Ross drew the text from Isaiah out further.

"How many of us blame the poor for poverty, the ill for injury, the lonely for loneliness? Dehumanized. And God will ignore, even

scoff at dehumanized insular routine worship," he said.

"In Isaiah, and for Jesus followers, God seeks deployed worshippers, re-humanized people."

He also touched on the Black Lives Matter movement, referencing the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014.

"When people demand that Black lives matter, it's not because all lives don't, but because when Blacks are killed indiscriminately, their lives DO, it's not liberal or conservative, it is human."

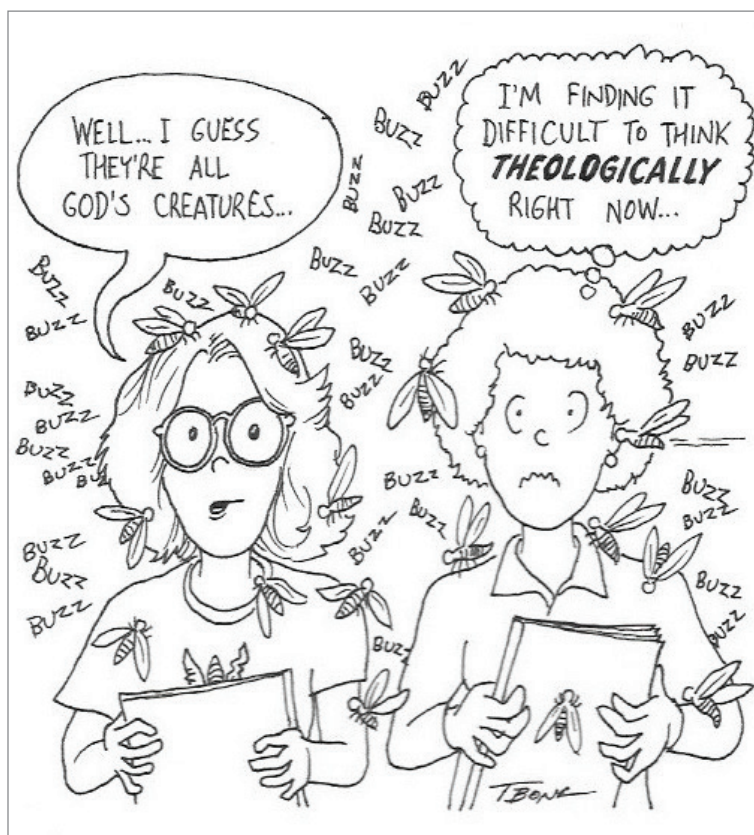
Ross concluded with an example of deployed worship from his childhood at John Stewart Center and Church in Bluefield, WV. It was a place where all children, regardless of income or place were welcome to come. It was a place, Ross said, where he knew he belonged.

"Let's engage in this kind of deployed worship," he said. "So that lives will be changed."



The Conference Cartoon

by Tom Bone III





Foundation Elects Officers and New Trustees

by Jeff Taylor

Jeff Taylor, President of the United Methodist Foundation of West Virginia, Inc., announced the election of four new trustees and re-elected officers at its April

25 meeting at Bridgeport Conference Center. The Foundation is governed by a thirty-two member board of trustees, made up of a diverse group of laity and clergy from every district within our Annual Conference.

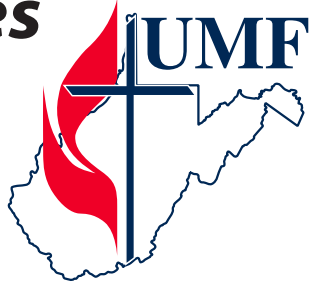
The board re-elected David Ellwood of Wheeling, West Virginia to serve as Vice-Chairperson; William B. Goode, of Hurricane, West Virginia to serve as Treasurer; Kim Matthews, the Foundation's Associate Director, to serve as Secretary; and Jeff Taylor to serve as President. Jeffrey A. Porter, of Huntington, West Virginia, continues his two-year term as chairperson of the board, and Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball continues to serve as the honorary chairperson. Four new trustees were elected.

- Marie Sams, a layperson from the Little Kanawha District;
- Elaine Stonetreet, a layperson from the Southern District;
- Ben Vincent, a layperson from the Wesleyan District; and
- Rev. Dr. William Wilson, a clergyperson from the Western District.

Foundation president, Jeff Taylor, said this new class of trustees brings a variety of gifts to the Foundation's ministry. "Our leadership development committee works hard to nominate prospective trustees who possess a broad range of gifts and experience to complement those of existing board members," said Taylor. "As usual, they did a great job in bringing these names before the full board. We look forward to working with them."

The Board also recognized the service of four retiring trustees: Ron Eaton, Karen Grafton, J. Franklin Long, and Ed Sisson.

The United Methodist Foundation of West Virginia, Inc., established in 1974, manages \$90 million for United Methodist causes.



Ministry Fair Kicks Off Conference



*Cheryl George shows off the first edition of The Mountain Circuit to the Rev. Steve Rhodes and Belinda Toms at yesterday's Ministry Fair.
Photo: Whitney Cherry*

Today's Schedule

- 8:30 am Praise and Prayer**
- 9:30 am Business Session I**
- 10:40 am Break**
- 11:00 am Memorial Service - Dr. Vance P. Ross, preaching**
- 12:30 pm Lunch**
- 2:00 pm Business Session 2**
- 2:30 - Circles of Grace - Small Groups**
- 3:45 pm**
- 4:00 pm Business Session 3**
- 5:30 pm Dinner**
- 7:30 pm Evening Worship - Act of Repentance and Reconciliation**

**CCYM Ice Cream Social
following worship**



MOUNTAINCIRCUIT

JUNE 10, 2016



*Yvette Richards, national President of the United Methodist Women (UMW), shares time with the children during yesterday's opening worship.
Photo: Jon Nettles*

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to help us capture our story



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