



# MAY CIRCUIT

VOLUME 2/NUMBER 4

The West Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church



## Color and Light

By Deborah Shaffer

*The glass, diverse in color and texture, joined together, creates a pleasing expression of God's love for all of His people. Many pieces of glass have imperfections and impurities that, just as they are, are still used for God's pleasure. It would not be much of a visual if every piece of glass was perfectly smooth and void of color.*

*(Deborah Shaffer on Rich Shaffer, Conference Lay Leader and Stained Glass Artist)*

It was as though all of the materials and the artist had waited to be used for this special and sacred moment to create a reminder of God's 2,400+ children who accept Christ as their personal Savior. Twenty four pieces of stained glass encircle the image. Each piece represents 100 people who have professed their faith accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior throughout the West Virginia United Methodist Annual Conference.

*Cont. on back cover*

# Purpose in the Planning

*By Rev. Mark Connor*

Shortly after the close of Annual Conference 2016, a group of annual conference members began evaluating and planning for your time in Buckhannon June 8-11, 2017. The Annual Conference Program Committee has the responsibility of looking at the needs and possibilities for our time together.

The Day of Pentecost occurs on the Sunday before we gather in Buckhannon for Annual Conference 2017. Following local church Pentecost celebrations and parties, we have joined together to celebrate the 2,400 newly received disciples. As the newly birthed church did, we will offer ourselves to the teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. The stories of the young believers in Acts 2: 41-47 provides the grounding for our work together.

As a conference, we are Christ-led, spiritual breaths of fresh air that change the world! Each year of this quadrennium, we will give attention to how we make that breath of fresh air known. The yearly themes of: Hopeful; Innovative; Invitational; and Generative, will help us give focus to that responsibility and gift we share of “making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”

Members of the Annual Conference have received information from our Conference Secretary concerning registration (which began on April 17). The Conference Workbook will also be sent to members. We are pleased to announce that Darlene Bosley will be serving as our Local Arrangements Coordinator in the Wesley Chapel Office. Please remember that Darlene is new to this position especially as we deal with on- campus housing. (We continue to offer our prayers and support to the family of Debbie Leigh, our former Local Arrangements Coordinator, who recently passed away.)

There are always certain items of business that must be completed while we meet. This year's agenda includes voting on Constitutional Amendments proposed by General Conference 2016. We will set the conference's budget, deal with agencies and hear from programs and ministries. Our Annual Conference time is so much

more than business. We will continue our times of holy conversation as we share in Circles of Grace. We have the joy of meeting at Wesley Chapel on Wesleyan's campus where we can worship, reconnect with sisters and brothers in Christ, and find hope for our future.

Opening Worship with Holy Communion will begin following the Call to Order on Thursday afternoon at 1:30pm. We will celebrate the hope we have experienced following the devastating flooding that occurred last summer. Pastors and congregation members from churches affected by the flood will lead us in worship and preaching.

We are pleased to welcome Bishop Jonathan Holston, resident Bishop of the South Carolina Annual Conference, as our guest preacher. He will be preaching on Friday's Memorial Service, Friday evening's celebration in the African American worship tradition, and on Saturday evening's Celebration of Ministry. David Wells, a Grammy nominated flugelhorn player and jazz style musician will be our guest musician at the Saturday evening worship service. Bishop Steiner Ball will preach at the Service of Ordination and Recognition of Membership and Commissioning on Sunday morning.

*Mark Conner, pastor of First UMC, Huntington, can be reached at [mconner@firstunitedmethodist.com](mailto:mconner@firstunitedmethodist.com)*



*Mark Conner speaking at AC 2016*



# Behind the Scenes of Annual Conference

## Chris Scott



My name is Christopher Scott, and I grew up in the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia and attended Shepherd University. After discerning a call to ministry near the end of my time in college, I decided to get involved in Christian service in Washington DC and St Louis. While living in St Louis, I discovered Eden Theological Seminary, where I graduated with a Masters of Divinity in 2012. During seminary, I met who is now my wife, Kendra Sullivan. Upon graduation, I moved to West Virginia and served as pastor in Southern Pocahontas County for two years and a year in Rainelle. I have a passion for exploring new and creative ways for doing ministry, as well as building bridges with those who may not consider themselves religious. I love to see young adults "come alive" by using their gifts in ministry to the church and the world, and guide them as they explore the calling that God has placed in their lives.

I have spent time planning for Special Meals, reaching out to student Conference Assistants, connecting with Campus Life to discuss room and housing details, and preparing for sessions such as Circles of Grace. We've recently hired Darlene Bosley as Religious Life Office Coordinator/Annual Conference Office Assistant who is incredibly gifted and will be a tremendous asset to both the College and the Annual Conference. I believe that God is at work in the midst of these transitions, connecting us with people and resources as we draw closer to Annual Conference.

There is a new face in the position of Chapel Coordinator and Annual Conference Assistant at West Virginia Wesleyan College. Darlene Bosley began working in this dual position on April 3, 2017.

Darlene works as the assistant in the Religious Life Office, coordinating student and chapel activities. She will work with Rev. Chris Scott, the Chaplain and Director of Religious Life at West Virginia Wesleyan College.

In addition, she is the Conference Assistant for all West Virginia Annual Conference activities, which are held on the Wesleyan campus. In this capacity, she helps with local arrangements, including housing and supervision of conference workers, assisting Conference Secretary, Judi Kenaston, with registration, and the many other details that make Conference happen.

Darlene is a Buckhannon native. She married her high school sweetheart, Joe, and they lived in Boston, MA, for a while before re-locating to Virginia for 19 years. Eventually, they decided they would like to raise their family in Buckhannon, so they returned to their hometown with Mackenzie (now 20), Kailyn and Lindsey (both 17). Darlene has been working for the last six years as the secretary for the Buckhannon Upshur Middle School.

Darlene is excited about the challenges of working in an environment with higher learning, faith and spiritual growth, and she is interested in learning more about the West Virginia Annual Conference. We welcome Darlene to the West Virginia Conference.

## Darlene Bosley





*By Rev. Janet Harman*

Circles. Have you ever wondered about Circles?

We “circle” loved ones in death and share memories and stories; as a Girl Scout, I remember sitting in a “circle” around the campfire as we sang songs and enjoyed the warmth; in the dining room at my Church, we’ve switched from oblong to “circle” tables to promote better hearing, fellowship and conversation; “circles” have no beginning and no end; and we remember that God’s love always en-“circles” you—no matter what! Circles.

What a joy it was to inaugurate Circles of Grace last year and train 100 Circle Facilitators who then led small Circles of Grace at the 2016 Annual Conference. Bishop Steiner Ball wanted all of us to be in conversation about the ministry and mission of our annual conference and about the topic of human sexuality and the church. She envisioned this to be a time of listening, learning and a model for how to have healthy, productive conversations over topics and ministry where we hold different perspectives, opinions and beliefs—2016 Circles of Grace was a wonderful success.

There are several goals of Circles; one is to strengthen and witness to Christ as well as deepen the places of ministry throughout our annual conference. There is a rhythm of conversation

where, first and foremost, we agree on a Covenant. A Covenant is how we want to be treated in this experience.

Our goals were to:

- \*Speak with Respect
- \*Listen with Respect
- \*Be gentle with yourself and with others.

Then the Facilitator begins with one of the posed questions and the flow of the conversation with a Talking Piece (in our situation an olive wood Cross) that is intended to encourage participation around the Circle and set a tone for sharing.

In our 2016 Circles, we learned and saw Christ in one another.

In our 2017 Circles at Annual Conference, we will again seek to hear God’s voice in the midst of the other voices of God’s children within our Circles. I hope that you will be able to participate this coming June in one of 100 Circles; and am looking forward to the upcoming training and leading the Circles.

*Janet Harman, Deacon Associate at St. Marks UMC, can be reached at [jmh5024@aol.com](mailto:jmh5024@aol.com).*

# A Life-Changing Week

*By Rich Shaffer, Conference Lay Leader*

Each June, my family would pack up the car and head for West Virginia Wesleyan College for Annual Conference.

My father, an ordained elder in the West Virginia Conference was required to attend, and so we kids also did not have a choice about attendance at Annual Conference. My parents would purchase an activity pass for us siblings and we would spend the time bowling, playing pool and swimming at the student union.

Although, I have wonderful memories of bonding with other kids across the conference, I really did not enjoy Annual Conference the same way I enjoy it now. The first time I was elected to be a member of the Annual Conference, I had the great honor to sit in the bar of the conference (the “bar of the conference” is the section of the Chapel designated for voting members) beside my dad. This was an entirely different experience.

Those elected to attend and clergy are not delegates to the conference, but they are members of the conference who vote as the Spirit directs. My father, Rev. J. D. Shaffer, was always in his place at the conference because he took his faith, dedication to the church, his vows to God and the Church seriously. To be able to talk with him about the issues we were considering, on a father son level, as well as knowing my vote counted as much as his, was an experience I will never forget.

By the time I was elected as the West Virginia Conference Lay Leader my dad was not physically able to attend the conference, but he always wanted to know what had happened at conference. So I would take the daily newspapers, pastor appointment list and the worship bulletins to my parents. After quizzing me on the conference, I think they read every word of the material I took to them.

**"The WV Annual Conference to me is a time of deep spiritual renewal and a time I dedicate to spending with God."**

The WV Annual Conference to me is a time of deep spiritual renewal and a time I dedicate to spending with God. The worship services are so inspiring with the music, teaching sessions, great preaching and the sense of community. I have told many folks that if there is ever a time I am not elected as a member of the conference, I will still attend because the worship services alone are well worth the trip. The choir, made up of people from all across the conference, combine their voices to provide beautiful music that can only be compared to a heavenly choir of angels. And if you sing you, too, can volunteer.

If you ever have the opportunity to attend the West Virginia United Methodist Annual Conference, I highly recommend for you to accept the challenge as an honor. One person who attended the conference for the first-time described the experience as trying to take a drink of water from a fire hose. The first time experience can be a little overwhelming, but let me assure you, the experience is very rewarding, and if you come with an open heart you CAN find Jesus there.

If you are not an official member elected by your congregation, come for a visit, attend some of the worship services, sit in on a business session or participate in the ministry fair. This year we will be celebrating the results of the challenge to reach 2,400+ people for the Lord as we celebrate new professions of faith in the Conference. You are welcome to celebrate with us, see you in Buckhannon!

May the Holy Spirit continue to direct your ministry, both clergy and laity, through making disciples for Jesus Christ.

*Rich Shaffer, West Virginia Conference Lay Leader, can be reached at [wv.lay.leader@gmail.com](mailto:wv.lay.leader@gmail.com).*



# So it's your **first** visit to Annual Conference?

## An Unofficial Guide for Newbies (and Reminders for Seasoned Veterans)

*By Rev. Joe Webb*

Annual Conference is a great time for United Methodists to meet, network, and worship together amidst the business of our connection.

But for first-timers, it can sometimes be confusing and intimidating. It can be hard to figure out where you're supposed to be and when. Which sessions are for lay people and which are for clergy? Who is and isn't allowed to vote? What is required for delegates and what is optional?

As a first-time attendee last year, I faced all of those questions and more. And so I offer you the following Unofficial Guide for Newbies (and Reminders for Seasoned Veterans):

### **1. Read the Conference Workbook**

The number one thing you can do to prepare for your first visit to Conference is to familiarize yourself with the Conference Workbook. In it, you will find all of the schedules of events and activities, plus helpful information on parking, lodging, etc. You'll also be able to familiarize yourself with all of the legislation that will be presented ahead of time to help you be an informed delegate or observer.

(Pro Tip #1: You can download the Conference Workbook on your phone or other mobile device for easy, instant access!)

### **3. Don't miss worship**

You've probably already heard this from friends or colleagues who have attended Conference in the past, but the worship services are the highlight of the week. Every aspect of worship design has been well-planned, and the worship experiences will lift your heart and spirit. Don't miss the daily opportunities to encounter Jesus in worship!

(Pro Tip #3: arrive early for worship services to network with colleagues.)

### **2. Ask questions!**

Our United Methodist connection is full of wonderful, helpful people. So don't be afraid to ask for help! If you don't know where you're supposed to be, or don't understand something that's going on, ask someone.

(Pro Tip #2: Conference Communication Team members will be identifiable by their official polo shirts and are ready and willing guides!)

### **4. Tip for veterans: watch your language!**

Specifically, be aware of the insider language we often use that we don't realize can be a barrier to new attendees. Try to avoid the acronyms (DCOM, DS, BOOM, GBOD) and terminology (lead teams, Wespeth, commissioning vs. ordination, etc.) that might confuse someone attending for the first time. Better yet, be willing to define and explain terms to help folks better understand our work!

(Pro Tip #4: Remember that good communications are essential to building relationships!)

Whether you're attending Conference for the first time or the 51st time, remember that the strength of our church is our connection. Make the effort to get to know people from areas and ministries other than your own. The friendships we form at Conference benefit all of our ministries as we seek to be a Christ-led, spiritual breath of fresh air that changes the world!

*Joe Webb, pastor of Sand Hill UMC, can be reached at [joewebb@suddenlink.net](mailto:joewebb@suddenlink.net).*

# CALENDAR

**Conference Event Highlights** - The role of the Conference Calendar is to share the event and business of conference level agencies and ministries.

## May

**1-6** Pastoral Ministry Licensing School

**10-11** John Wesley's Understanding of Salvation (John XXIII)

**11** MonValley Lay Servant Academy (Avery UMC)

**17-19** Course of Study

**31-1** Reaching New People (Grace)

## June

**8-11** Annual Conference

**22-25** Rally on the Mountain  
[www.wvumc.org/rom](http://www.wvumc.org/rom)

For full details and event locations,  
visit the conference calendar online at  
[wvumc.org/events](http://wvumc.org/events)

*If you've been on the Conference website lately, you'll notice brand new menu headings, drop-down lists, and color scheme. We hope you find this website to be much more user-friendly, and a valuable tool in growing your ministry!*

Visit [www.wvumc.org](http://www.wvumc.org) to start exploring!



## We Remember

**Rev. Gerald Dotson** died Tuesday, February 21.

**Rev. Robert P. Johnson** died Thursday, February 23.

**Rev. Robert Eugene Morales** died Friday, February 24.

**Paul Loudermilk** died Sunday, March 5.

**Dora Faye Smith** died Friday, March 10.

**Jennifer Beckett** died Wednesday, March 22.

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# Color and Light

Rich is a native West Virginian and he knew the design needed to represent the people and the beauty of West Virginia. His thoughts went to one of his favorite places in the state, Canaan Valley. And so the mountains and the streams took form around the cross and the flame in the design.

Rich began to again study the colors of the stained glass as he once did as a small child. "Only when the sun shines through the colored pieces of glass can we realize the true beauty of the translucent medium." And only when Jesus the Son shines through our lives can the true beauty of our souls be realized. After all of the glass had been cut, the edges were ground smooth on a water-cooled grinder to remove the razor sharp edges as well as remove excess glass to improve the fit. "It is also as we yield to the Holy Spirit that our rough, sharp edges are removed and our excesses are removed to improve our fit into the body of Christ."

Read the full article with photos on the Conference website: [www.wvumc.org/2017/04/colorandlight](http://www.wvumc.org/2017/04/colorandlight)

