



CONFERENCE *CIRCUIT*

The West Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church

Issue #2 • Friday, June 8, 2018



Join us for a special
INNOVATIVE
night of fun, food,
and worship!

FREE Community BBQ

FUN, food, fellowship, music & activities for all ages

Everyone welcome! • Bring your family & friends, lawn chairs & blankets • Message by guest speaker Rev. Junius Dotson
• Ice cream social to raise funds for youth events

By Amy Shanholtzer
*Director of Evangelism and
Congregational Development*

Have we got a Friday evening planned for you?!

You don't want to miss this evening's BBQ on the lawn! Years ago, it was an annual conference tradition for families to share a picnic lunch on the college grounds during Annual Conference. We're bringing that tradition back with a little thank you twist this year.

West Virginia Wesleyan and Buckhannon are gracious hosts when the United Methodists come to town. This picnic is our way of saying thanks to the community. They have been invited to bring their lawn chairs and join us for this meal.

Following our afternoon session, the BBQ will begin on the lawn at the foot of the steps leading to Wesley Chapel. You can grab a plate, sit where you like, enjoy conversation and meet new people.

Following the meal we will hear a message from Junius Dotson, general secretary of Discipleship Ministries. He'll have an inspiring word that will help us #seeallthepeople.

After his message there will be a variety of opportunities for you to respond to God's word by creating artwork, receiving prayer and anointing, and joining in a conversation circle. There will also be games for children led by the Spring Heights staff.

Afterwards there will be the always-popular Youth Service Fund, or YSF, ice cream social. (The social is a youth initiative. It is part of a larger youth connection that raises money used for youth ministry around the world).

We hope you'll join us for a casual, relaxed evening of inspiration, laughter and fellowship. It will be a great evening to welcome the community and grow more deeply in relationship.

See you tonight!

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Friday Schedule

8:30am	Praise & Prayer
8:45am	Teaching time with Dr. Junius Dotson
9:55am	Business Session
11:00am	Memorial Service
12:30pm	Lunch
2:00pm	Commission on a Way Forward Report
3:15pm	Circles of Grace
4:30pm	Business Session
5:30pm	Community BBQ with preaching by Dr. Dotson



You can always
find more news
on our website!
wvumc.org



Your United Methodist Foundation at work

Recent grants totaling \$37,000 Benefit WV United Methodist Programs & Ministries

By Jeff Taylor

The United Methodist Foundation of West Virginia, Inc., recently awarded grants totaling \$37,000 to several programs and ministries around West Virginia.

Foundation President Jeff Taylor said the Grants Committee reviews applications and awards grants to help fund innovative programs that address acute needs in communities.

At its April 12 meeting, the Foundation awarded grants for the following:

- \$6,000 to Spring Heights Retreat Center, a ministry of the West Virginia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church in Spencer, to help increase its visibility in its community.
- \$12,500 to The House of the Carpenter, Inc., in Wheeling, to help with construction costs of its new Youth Center. The Youth Center will provide space for existing House of the Carpenter ministries as well as a safe place for neighborhood youth and their families.
- \$5,000 to the West Virginia Council of Churches to help establish and support six Community Re-entry Councils for ex-offenders across the state. These councils address re-entry and other community issues such as housing, employment, behavioral health, substance use disorders, family services, positive youth development, benefits, and food assistance.
- \$1,000 to Elizabeth Memorial United Methodist Church of Charleston to help cover a portion of the costs of an upcoming event at the church where the National Federation of the Blind, West Virginia, will be training a number of young persons in the areas of reading braille, independent living skills, getting around obstacles and learning self-reliance skills.
- \$12,500 to Tyrand Cooperative Ministries, a Mission Project of the West Virginia Annual Conference in Millcreek, to update an antiquated heating system in the mission project facility. The new system is needed to increase safety and to reduce heating costs, increasing funds available for serving the needs of the community.

The United Methodist Foundation of West Virginia, Inc., established in 1974, manages over \$100 million for United Methodist causes in West Virginia and Garrett County, Maryland.

For more information contact Jeff Taylor at 304-342-2113 or e-mail him at jefftaylor@umfwv.org

Foundation Elects Officers and New Trustees

By Jeff Taylor

The Board of Trustees elected new officers and eight new trustees at its May 9 meeting in Vienna.

The Foundation is governed by a 32-member Board of Trustees made up of 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 and Judy Raines of Bluefield to serve as Treasurer.

In addition, the Board re-elected 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 eight new trustees are:

- James Wadsworth, a layman from the Greenbrier District
- Cheryl Davis, a laywoman from the Midland South District
- Albert (Vic) Mays, a layman from the Midland South District
- Michael Perkins, a layman from the Northern District
- Gina Palmer, a laywoman from the Potomac Highlands District
- Chris Meighen, a layman from the Wesleyan District
- Jeff Welshonce, a layman from the Wesleyan District, and
- Maribeth Anderson, a laywoman from the Western District

The Board recognized the service of several retiring trustees: Anne Charnock of Charleston, Becky Keeling of Fairmont, Jeff Porter of Huntington, Earnest Watkins of Wheeling, and George Webb of Cross Lanes.

The Foundation, established in 1974, manages over \$100 million for United Methodist causes.

Friday filled with resolutions, reports, Memorial Service, Circles of Grace, Community BBQ

By Jim Minutelli

The work of the Annual Conference resumes Friday as the conference enters its second day. It continues to be important for each person to remember their Conference Workbook and materials given out during registration, as these materials will be referred to throughout the business sessions.

Following a teaching session with Rev. Junius Dotson in the chapel, the morning business session begins at 9:55 a.m. and includes possible actions on resolutions (proposed resolutions can be found on pages 169-174 of your Conference workbook), reports and actions on reports.

The session is scheduled to end by 10:40 a.m. to be able to setup for the Memorial Service at 11:00 a.m.

The Report on the Commission on A Way Forward and Circles of Grace breakout sessions begin at 2:00 p.m.

The afternoon business session, which starts at 4:30 p.m., will include continuation of actions related to any resolutions not addressed in the morning business session and reports and actions related to reports.

Friday concludes with everyone invited to a community BBQ at 5:30 p.m. on the lawn of Wesley Chapel and worship with Junius Dotson preaching. An ice cream social will follow (*see details on page 1*).

Living Hope High School: 'A God miracle'

"Go into all the world....." Mark 16:15

By Judy Pysell

Living Hope High School was started when God's audible voice was heard by Marilyn Uhl and the message was very clear: "Go to Africa, they are hungry, they are praying and God will provide."

Marilyn said, "I sat at my kitchen table and heard God's voice telling me to go to Africa."

"Without hesitation I sold everything; furniture, household belongings and even the house and headed to Africa in 2009," she said.

Marilyn saw the need in a poverty stricken nation and started Living Hope High School with one teacher, four books, some chalk and 24 hungry students. Marilyn is now the director of the high school in Bungoma, Kenya.

Marilyn discovered Chas Wafula in Bungoma. He was painting note cards in watercolor. Each is a story of his native land.

Chas paints in the front room of his tiny three-room house. When he runs out of watercolor paint he uses coffee and soot from kerosene lamps, mixed with milk.

Chas was recently hired as Living Hope High School's art teacher. His cards are being sold to raise funds for the school.

Helen Markwell, United States coordinator for the school, has not only visited Kenya many times, she but organizes mission teams to go to Kenya to help with their many needs.

Helen said, "Living Hope High School is a God miracle." The school now has 86 students.

Marilyn came to the 2018 West Virginia Conference praying that attendees would sponsor six students. As of early Thursday afternoon, that number was down to five. The cost to sponsor a student is \$88 a month.

Both Marilyn and Helen have many inspirational miracle stories to tell. If you would like to know more about Living Hope High School and what you can do to help, visit www.LivingHopeHighSchool.org or email Marilyn at marilynkuhl59@gmail.com

We're live streaming!

...And the world is watching!

All of our business and worship sessions at Annual Conference are being broadcast LIVE on our website! Be sure to let your congregations back home know they can tune in by visiting wvumc.org/annual-conference-2018. And please remember, everything said on the conference floor is being broadcast and recorded. All sessions will be available following conference on our youtube channel at youtube.com/user/wvumc





Bishop to host spiritual pilgrimage to Holy Land

By George Hohmann

Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball invites people from across West Virginia to join her on a tour of the Holy Land next year.

Steiner Ball will host the 10-day “Journey through the Bible” from Sept. 28 to Oct. 7, 2019.

“For me, and I hope for you, this journey will be a spiritual pilgrimage,” Steiner Ball said in a message in the tour brochure.

The brochure is included in the Annual Conference registration packet (Document No. 2018-20).

Highlights of the tour include visits to Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jericho, Masada, the Galilee, Jerusalem and many other sites.

As participants tour these sites, “just maybe, we will hear afresh the claim of God on our lives and the call of Christ to renew our efforts in sharing God’s love, making disciples, and empowering leaders that work to transform the world for greater good,” Steiner Ball wrote.

“Together my hope is that we will gain new insights and greater courage to live in ways that make the hope and life of Christ more real and relevant in this world.”

The tour educational theme is “Jesus: His Life, His Times, His Land, His Hebrew Faith.” Participants will earn two continuing education credits.

Price of the tour starts at \$3,398. The price includes basic tour and guided sightseeing, roundtrip airfare, administrative fees, entrance fees, hotel gratuities and program fees, love offering for guides and drivers, daily buffet breakfasts and dinners, deluxe motor coaches, and first-class hotels.

Educational Opportunities Tours is the tour operator.



Welcome to Annual Conference! Caila Linger assists Clare Sulgit and Judi Kenaston at the Conference registration table.



Circle of Grace participants listen, discern, hear others

By Janet Harman

This is the West Virginia Annual Conference's third year participating in the Circles of Grace process of listening, discerning, and hearing other voices from our conference—laity and clergy—speak about topics that have been presented by Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball.

On Friday afternoon we will be in small circles around this college campus addressing the three potential models for the future of The United Methodist Church.

These models have been thoughtfully discerned by The Way Forward Commission. No final decisions have been made on any of the plans. Delegates to the 2019 General Conference may decide on one of these plans, an amended form of one of these plans, or something else that may be moved on the floor of the General Conference as a way forward for our Church.

In your Circle of Grace you will have an opportunity to write comments, words of encouragement and questions to the delegation.

The covenant (packet document No. 2018-16) for our Circles of Grace is focused on speaking with respect, listening with respect, being gentle with yourself and others, and being mindful of your wellbeing and emotions.

Each circle location has been prayed over and blessed.

I pray that you will have a positive experience in your Circle of Grace.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any concerns regarding your Circle of Grace experience.

*Rev. Janet Harman can be reached
at JMH5024@aol.com*



Proposed health insurance changes, amendment discussed in laity session

By George Hohmann

Conference Treasurer James Berner discussed reasons for proposed changes to the conference's health insurance plan during the laity session Thursday morning.

It was one of several topics brought up during the session, which was led by Conference Lay Leader Rich Shaffer.

The Board of Pensions, which oversees the conference health insurance plan, has proposed raising the deductible; establishing a policy that would exclude working spouses who have health care offered by their employer to be enrolled in the conference's plan; changing the prescription drug co-payment; and increasing the hours one must work to be eligible to participate in the plan.

Berner, who serves as conference benefits officer and executive secretary of the Board of Pensions, said all of the proposed changes are expected to be voted on by the conference Friday.

The health insurance plan had a \$2 million deficit last year. The proposals are designed to reduce that shortfall by shifting the cost of benefits from the conference to the participants.

"We cannot continue down the path we're on," Berner said.

The proposals generated numerous questions from the laity.

Berner said the conference's Clergy Emergency Fund could be used to help ease the cost of increased healthcare costs. The fund is designed to help clergy and their families faced with medically related expenses that would create financial hardship to them or their family.

Active clergy families under appointment to the West Virginia Annual Conference or retired clergy families may request grants of up to \$2,500 annually. The maximum amount of grants available in a lifetime is \$7,500. These amounts were recently increased by the Board of Pensions.

(Those who previously reached the maximum of \$3,000 may now be eligible for an additional \$4,500 based on the guidelines of the newly enacted policy.)

One person questioned what would happen to a spouse who must leave the plan because their employer offers insurance, but the employer plan's open enrollment period does not fall between July 1, 2018, and Jan. 1, 2019.

"We don't want anybody to go without healthcare," Berner said. "That is not the goal. The goal is to shift some of the costs to the people utilizing the plan."

"We would ask for documentation from the spouse's plan as to when their open enrollment is" and, if needed, "we would provide coverage for that interim period."

However, if the proposed change is approved, spouses who must leave the conference plan and learn that their employer's plan has an open enrollment period before the end of this year, they will be expected to go ahead and enroll in their employer's plan, Berner said.

Another person asked what would happen regarding insurance for children if a spouse must leave the conference's plan.

It would be up to the family to decide under which plan they want their children covered, Berner said.

In response to another question, Berner pointed out that eligibility to participate in the conference plan is not based on whether a spouse is a member of the conference. "It is based on whether the spouse has an employer who offers a plan."

None of the recommendations impact the finances of local churches, Berner emphasized.

But if the expense side of the plan's balance sheet is not rectified, "we'll be forced to move to the income side,"

Continued on page 7



We are thrilled to once again feature the art of Tom Bone in this year's **Conference Circuit!** Tom is auctioning the original drawing to benefit WVUMC Disaster Recovery (an UMCOR partner). To bid, contact Jack Lipphardt by 4pm Saturday at jwlipphardt@aol.com.

Laity Session

Continued from page 6

Berner said. That could lead to a recommendation that premiums be increased.

"The number we've talked about is 20 percent," he said. A 20 percent increase would total more than \$600,000.

Any premium increase would impact local church budgets because churches are required to pay at least 70 percent of their clergy's health insurance premiums.

Therefore, \$600,000 increase in premiums would require the conference's churches to come up with at least \$420,000 more than they currently pay.

"Our concern is, at the local church level, where does that money come from?" Berner asked.

He revealed that as of the end of May, "209 of our churches have not paid one penny toward their apportionment." That's \$1.2 million in unfunded apportionments.

"If one-third of our budget is related to healthcare, that's about \$400,000 I don't have to pay healthcare claims," he said. "That's the cash-flow problem we have right now. Hopefully that will catch up, as it always does..."

Also during the session, Conference Secretary Judith Kenaston explained that one of the five proposed church constitution amendments voted on last year would be voted on again Thursday afternoon.

The proposed amendment states that, "As the Holy Scripture reveals, both men and women are made in the image of God and, therefore, men and women are of equal value in the eyes of God."

A re-vote was required because, due to a clerical error, some unapproved language was included in the proposed amendment that was sent to the conferences last year.

The outcome of the re-vote won't be known for some time. That's because it must be voted on by all of the annual conferences around the world.

(The amendment with the unapproved language was narrowly defeated last year. That has prompted some clergywomen and laity to wear buttons this week that say, "Nevertheless, She Preaches" or "Nevertheless, She Leads!")



Celebrating Innovation



Rev. David Johnston (right) of Concord UMC in Athens and Conference Page Austin Goldizen use coffee as a way to create conversations at Concord University, and right here at Annual Conference!

Don't miss a minute of #WVAC18 with Sched

By Kerry Bart

Conference Communications is pleased to share an innovative tool called SCHED (pronounced "sked") for keeping track of the conference agenda whether you're attending sessions or observing from afar.

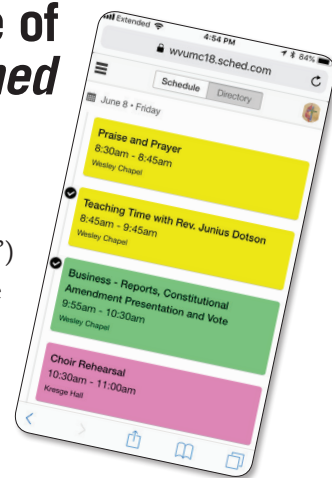
When you go online to wvumc18.sched.com you can not only view the agenda, you can create "My Schedule" by selecting the agenda items that pertain to you.

You can make a personal profile if you wish. You also can read profiles of other attendees and speakers.

In addition, you can view and download worship bulletins and the conference agenda. By doing so, you don't have to shuffle through your bag for the printed documents.

You can also add an icon to your mobile device so you can easily access our SCHED web app at the touch of a button.

If you have a question about SCHED or need help, contact Kerry Bart at WVUMCsched@gmail.com or 610-304-5437.



Thursday business recap

- Lay Nominating forms (2018-12) for the 2020 General Conference must be turned in to the Conference Secretary by noon on Saturday. Names submitted will be read on Saturday afternoon. Persons nominated must be a professing member of The UMC for two years prior to their election. The person nominating at this time MUST BE a LAY member of the 2018 Annual Conference Session. Nominees will be contacted to provide information about themselves for distribution prior to 2019 Annual Conference. Additional nominations may be made at the 2019 Conference.
- Clergy Discernment forms may be placed in the designated box found in the Chapel Narthex, until Saturday, June 9 at 5 p.m. Those nominated will be contacted and may submit information that will be available to the clergy prior to the 2019 session. All clergy remain on the ballot.
- Lauren Weaver will be the United Methodist Church Liaison and Spiritual Life Coordinator at WV Wesleyan College beginning on July 1. She introduced WVWC President Joel Thierstein, who shared about the partnership of the college with the church. Bishop Steiner Ball highlighted the Wesleyan Foundation which has been established through the UM Foundation.
- The bishop presented Ecumenical awards to Ms. Erin Sears and Rev. Tim Allen for their participation in Ecumenical Ministries.
- Francis Asbury Award was presented to Mr. Rod Blackstone of St. Mark's UMC, Charleston. The award recognizes individuals who have advanced campus ministry. Rod Blackstone serves on the University of Charleston campus ministry. He supports the UC campus and shares his faith with the students.
- Constitutional Amendment vote was taken. The Constitutional Amendments have been approved by the 2016 General Conference and are now being voted on by all Annual Conferences throughout the Connection. This vote will be turned in to the Council of Bishop and not reported at this Annual Conference session.
- Rich Shaffer brought the laity address dressed in fishing gear to share his fishing story. He compared a fishing trip to how we witness to people, saying you need to understand where you are fishing, what you are trying to catch as well as having patience.
- Opening Communion offering was \$3,569.28

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