



CONFERENCE *CIRCUIT*

The West Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church

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WVAC18 Celebrates Innovative Ministries

By Sandra Steiner Ball

Resident Bishop, W. Va. Conference



As we gather together for this annual conference session under the theme of Innovative, I invite you to ponder what this theme might

invite in our lives as individuals and as congregations. As I consider the lay and clergy membership of the West Virginia Conference, I want leaders who are innovative as Christ was innovative.

Christ came into a world and into a religious system that was pretty set in its ways. God's chosen people, the Jews, had forgotten or maybe never fully understood the work and mission for which they had been chosen.

Into this situation stepped Jesus—God's innovative strategy and mission

Innovative: "Having new ideas about how something can be done." ---Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball

for reaching people with the Good News of life—the good news of forgiveness, redemption, and salvation.

Jesus was innovative from the beginning.

His life began as his parents transformed a feeding trough into a cradle and a star announced his birth. As a young boy, Jesus was not only innovative but courageous as he left the side of his parents during a pilgrimage and dared to teach and share ideas with religious leaders in a Temple who had far more credentialing, authority, and life experience than he had.

As Jesus called his disciples, he

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Innovative leader Rev. Dotson invites us to #SeeAllThePeople

By George Hohmann

Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball has tasked the 2018 Annual Conference with focusing on what it means to be innovative as we lead people into our mission of reaching people for Christ.



Rev. Junius Dotson (Photo by David Burke, Great Plains Annual Conference)

Rev. Junius Dotson, widely recognized as one of the United Methodist Church's most innovative leaders, will help conference attendees explore this topic.

Dotson is General Secretary (the title would be Chief

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Wednesday Schedule

- 1-8pm Check-in & Ministry Expo
Rockefeller Gym
- 3:00pm Ordination Rehearsal

Thursday Schedule

- 8:00am Check-in & Ministry Expo
Rockefeller Gym
- 9:00am Teller Training - Wesley Chapel
- 9:30am Usher Training - Wesley Chapel
- 9:45am Wesley Chapel opens
- 10:00am Clergy Executive Session
Chapel Hill UMC
- 10:00am Laity Session - Wesley Chapel
- 12:00pm Lunch
- 1:30pm Call to Order/Opening Worship
- 4:00pm Business Session
- 5:30pm Dinner
- 7:30pm Evening Worship Service
Historic Questions & Retirement

Welcome to Buckhannon for #WVAC18!

Step into a natural retreat just steps from WVWC campus!

By George Hohmann

Some annual Conference attendees may not realize they are steps away from one of the most beautiful nature trails in the Mountain State.

Walk out the Wesley Chapel door and down to the fountain on Camden Avenue. Turn left, and in two blocks you'll arrive at the Riverwalk Trail...a natural oasis that features relaxing views of the Buckhannon River, more than 170 native shrubs, trees and vines, and a level, paved course.

"It's a pretty river with a pretty little trail that happens to accompany it," said Mayor David McCauley. "There are very few days I'm not on the Riverwalk Trail."

McCauley recalled that when he started with Buckhannon as city attorney 35 years ago, the area along the river "was a very ugly part of town.

"It was blighted with a lot of ramshackle dwellings," he said. "I don't mean to suggest there was Divine intervention, but we had a horrible flood in 1985 that took out a lot of those structures. The college swooped in, acquired a lot of those houses, and went on a major urban renewal project to tear them down.

Pat Long, who was Buckhannon's street commissioner in 1996, came up with the idea of putting a loop around the baseball and football practice fields. The city received an \$80,000 grant from the federal Department of Transportation and in 1997 the first phase of the trail opened.

"In September 2000 Elizabeth J. "Binky" Poundstone, our beloved mayor who had previously served for 30 years as our city recorder, died suddenly," McCauley said. "I delivered her eulogy in Wesley Chapel. I proposed to City Council that we approve renaming the river trail the Binky Poundstone Riverwalk Trail. There's a sign by the boat ramp dedicated to her."

A second loop—around the softball, soccer and lacrosse fields—was added in 2003-2004. "That sort of formed a figure-eight," McCauley said.

In 2009 Dr. Kathy Gregg, an emeritus professor of biology at Wesleyan, worked with Buckhannon Public Works Director Jerry Arnold to secure funding for an extension known as The Learning Trail, which is behind the split rail fence factory.

In late 2016, a group approached McCauley about creating a dog park. It can now be found next to the boat ramp.

McCauley said the Riverwalk Trail is a story of "decades upon decades of collaborative effort between the city and the college. So much of what has been accomplished here is because of this ability to work together. It is integral to so much of what we do."

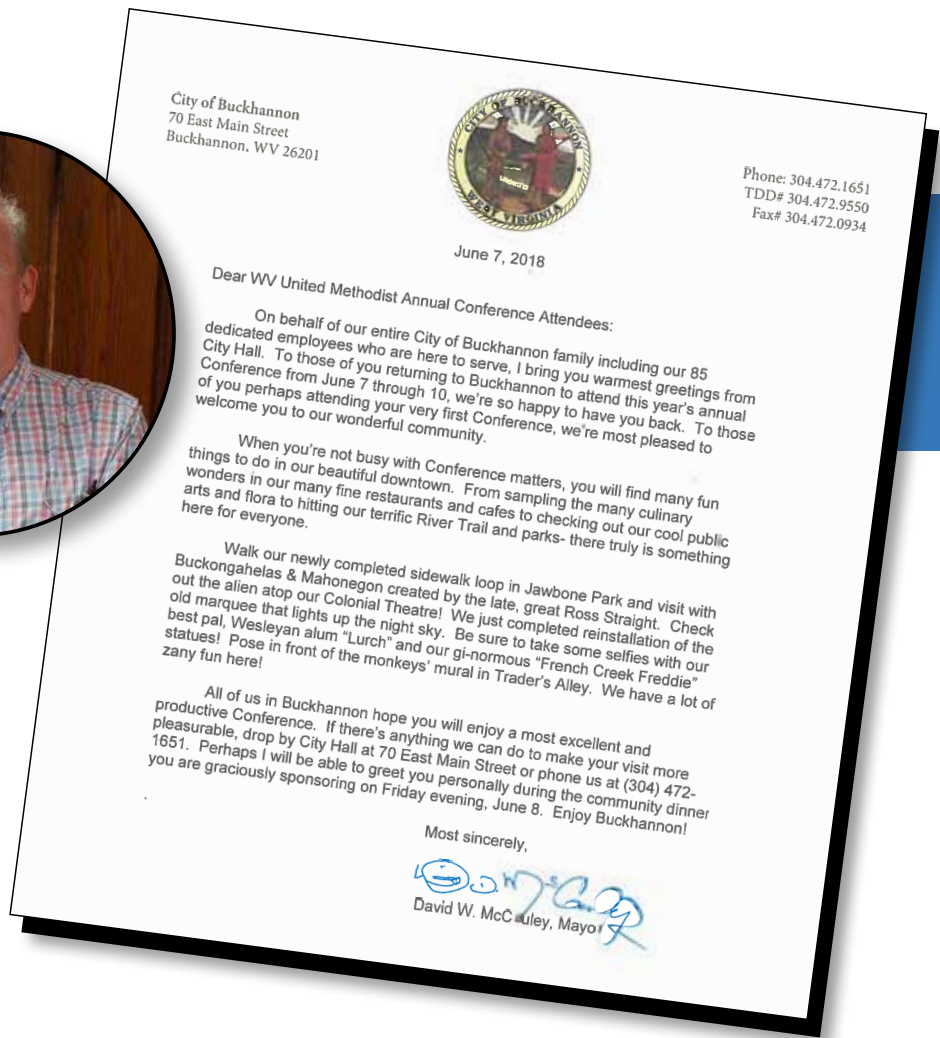


◀ Benches and swings invite those who use Buckhannon's Riverwalk Trail to linger and enjoy nature and views of the Buckhannon River.

▼ The Riverwalk Trail's Bob Wallace Bridge was dedicated in 2016.



**A Note
from
Mayor
McCauley...**



▼ *This map of the Riverwalk Trail was designed to help walkers and runners gauge distances. WVWC's Rockefeller Gym is adjacent to the football field at lower center.*



Learn more about the River Walk Trail and check out our Buckhannon restaurant guide online at: wvmc.org/annual-conference-2018

Proposed health insurance plan changes aimed at reducing costs, getting plan participants more involved

By George Hohmann

Four proposed changes in the conference's health insurance plan are designed to reduce the plan's costs and encourage plan participants to become more involved in their health care.

The proposed changes are not popular but action is necessary, said James Berner, the conference treasurer and director of administrative services.

The health insurance plan's 2019 anticipated annual revenue is \$7.1 million:

- \$3.9 million would come from apportionments. Berner, who also serves as conference benefits officer and executive secretary of the Board of Pensions, said this amount hasn't changed since 2015. The Board of Pensions is recommending that the amount remain unchanged this year. The \$3.9 million represents 31 percent of the \$12.4 million in apportionment dollars the conference expects to receive in 2019. It is by far the largest expense (for details, see Page 185 of the Conference Workbook). Raising the amount would mean increasing the apportionments local churches are asked to pay. That could be especially challenging for the 628 churches in the conference with 50 or fewer members.
- \$3.2 million would come from premiums paid by churches and individuals. Premiums were last altered on Jan. 1, 2011, when changes required by the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, were implemented. Berner noted that if premiums were increased, everyone in the plan would have to pay more, whether they use the plan or not.

Rising drug prices

The rising cost of prescription drugs is one of the major challenges the plan is grappling with, Berner said. Some drug prices are sky-high. Some examples: The New York Times has reported that Keytruda, a drug that can help lung cancer patients, costs \$13,500 a month and Humira, prescribed for rheumatoid arthritis, reportedly costs \$4,166 a month.

Of course if you have a life-threatening medical issue and there's a drug that could save your life, you want that drug — regardless of the cost. The way the health care system works now, you probably do not know the cost and, even

if you did, you might not care so long as the cost doesn't directly affect you.

The conference's health insurance plan limits the out-of-pocket amount participants have to pay for drugs to \$7,350 in a plan year (April 1 to March 31). This limits participants' expense but the health insurance plan's expense is not as limited.

An incentive

One of the Board of Pension's proposals would alter the price participants pay for some drugs.

Participants currently pay \$35 per prescription. The Board recommends participants pay \$35 or 30 percent of the cost of the prescription, whichever is greater.

It means that a prescription that costs \$1,000 would require a participant to pay \$300 instead of \$35.

The proposed change would save the plan an estimated \$360,000 to \$450,000 annually, Berner said.

In addition to saving the plan money, the proposed change is designed to give participants an incentive to talk to their health-care provider and search for less expensive drugs, he said.

"Thirty-five dollars is not going to stimulate this person to go to their doctor and say, 'I need to take something else,'" Berner said.

"You are going to have to take an active part in your health care because we cannot provide what we provided in the past," he said.

Berner said that a little over 20 percent of the conference's health insurance plan costs were attributable to drugs in 2017.

Other proposals

The Board of Pensions also is proposing:

- Raising the deductible for participants to \$2,000 for an individual and \$4,000 for families. "Currently there is a sliding deductible," Berner said. "The lowest tier is \$400 for an individual and \$800 for families. The highest tier is \$1,000 for an individual and \$2,000 for families."
- Establishing a policy that prohibits working spouses whose employer offers health insurance to be enrolled in the conference's plan. Berner said that if one assumes that all of the plan's active family policies include a spouse, 123 spouses are insured by the plan. The Board of Pensions estimates that 25 percent of the spouses would be required to move out of the plan. That would save an estimated \$400,000 to \$500,000 a year, Berner said.

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*Jim Berner,
Conference
Treasurer*

Health Insurance Plan

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- Requiring participants to work at least 30 hours a week to be eligible to participate in the plan. The current requirement is 20 hours a week.

Reserves

Berner said that as of Dec. 31, 2017, the plan had earmarked reserves of approximately \$1.1 million plus excess money in a deposit account of more than \$2 million. He said \$2 million was transferred from reserves in 2017 to cover the plan's shortfall.

"The plan has never been interested in increases to build reserves — only to cover current expenses," he said.

None of the proposed changes would become effective until Jan. 1, 2019.

Berner said the Board of Pensions is constantly reviewing the plan as well as plans in the marketplace. "We've tried to keep this plan sustainable," he said.

"Nobody's going to be happy with it," he said of the proposed changes. "We looked at several things. One is to not impact the local church. There's no increase in apportionments, no increase in premiums, no increase in maximum out-of-pocket. So the local church is not impacted by the recommendations we're bringing to Annual Conference. I think that's a key."

Summary

The Board of Pensions' proposals are summarized on Page 144 of the 2018 Conference Workbook.

Berner said the proposals will be discussed during the

Annual Conference at the Laity Session at 10 a.m. Thursday in Wesley Chapel.

In addition, Berner said he will be available to answer questions at the conference's Friday afternoon business session in Wesley Chapel. That's when delegates are

scheduled to vote on the proposals.

Jamie O'Brien, chair of the Board of Pensions, plans to present each proposal individually, Berner said.

Asked what would happen if one or more of the proposals fail, Berner said, "The Board of Pensions will be prepared to address the revenue side of the equation depending on what recommendations pass or fail."

A societal problem

Rising healthcare costs are a problem throughout society. It affects small plans like the conference's, which covers 560 individuals and families,

and big plans like the West Virginia's Public Employees Insurance Agency, also known as PEIA, which insures 116,319 employees, retirees and dependents.

In fact, an inability to resolve PEIA funding shortfalls was one of the reasons West Virginia teachers went on strike earlier this year.

One outcome of that strike occurred in February when Gov. Jim Justice created a task force to make recommendations and solutions to find a permanent fix for funding the PEIA. The task force is holding meetings around the state through mid-June as it seeks to find solutions.

In addition to saving the plan money, the proposed change is designed to give participants an incentive to talk to their health-care provider and search for less expensive drugs.



A video about these proposals is posted on the conference's Facebook page. Go to www.facebook.com/wvumc/ In the menu on the left side of the page, click on "Videos." Then select the video titled, "Health Insurance presentation."

Honor the heritage, learn to walk in beauty

By *Ellesa High*

We honor the ancestral heritage of this space by first acknowledging our relationship to it and then by thanking God and all that He has made.

I love the smell of burning sage. It brings back many memories of being in community with loved ones—not just my two-legged relatives, but also four-legged friends and those with wings or fins, and our cousins of the plant kingdom, also known as Standing People.

Just the lighting of the sage brings together so much. The shell I burn the sage in is connected to water without which we cannot survive, so I am thankful for it. The sage itself is part of the plant people who feed and nurture us. It gives itself so that we may pray and “get right” with our surroundings. I am thankful for its sacrifice.

The fire that burns the sage reminds us of the light and warmth that God, the Creator, brings to us everyday. When we burn the sage or other sacred plants like tobacco, it transforms itself into smoke and ash. As the smoke rises, we say that it is “prayer made visible” going up to God.

The ash returns to Mother Earth, from where it came. As She has mothered us, holding, feeding, and nurturing



Ellesa High, Chair, Committee on Native American Ministries

us throughout our lives, we are reminded that our bodies return to the earth, to give back the physical form we inherited at birth.

As you enter this sacred place for our annual conference and smell the sage that has been used to “smudge” it, I hope you will feel purified, safe and close to God — securely held by our relatives, all of Creation. Then you can “Walk in Beauty” here, as the Navajo say.

‘The 5-10 Link Rule:’ Practice makes perfect

By *Amy Shanholtzer*

Director of Evangelism and Congregational Development

If you want to get really good at something, you have to practice. Practice makes perfect, they say. One thing we will practice this week is welcoming one another. As we get ready to greet the Wesleyan and Buckhannon community at our Friday BBQ, we want to practice our hospitality skills so that we can be very good at welcoming and including our guests.

During our gatherings you will see a 5-minute countdown clock on the screen. This is your signal to begin looking around to find people who are within 10 feet of you who are unconnected to other people or conversations. This is called the 5-10 Link Rule. Don’t worry if that feels intimidating. We’ll have a teaching time about it and lots of opportunities to practice. If you’re curious, or want to study up, you can watch the training online at <http://bit.ly/2JnoPES>

Those 5-minute countdowns will become precious time to get to know the children of God around you. By the time we complete our conference this week, you will have a new skill to take home with you. You’ll be able to connect new people to your community.

Because practice makes perfect!



Musicians, choir, co-directors seek to amplify conference theme

By Jim Minutelli

Can you guess where you might see and hear an eclectic array of musicians ranging from flute players, a brass quintet, guitarists, percussionists, a bluegrass band, a praise band, a guest organist, and a 60-member choir?

If you guessed at the West Virginia Annual Conference, you are right!

Have you ever wondered what went into the music you hear during the conference?

Maybe it's something you never really thought about before, but with numerous opportunities for worship, there's a lot, music-wise, to plan and coordinate.

Up for the leadership tasks this year are Co-Directors of Music Julie Janisch and Craig Hinchman, both profound musicians in their own right, and an integral part of the 15-member Conference Worship Planning team.

This team started planning last October, according to Hinchman, to "begin brainstorming the theme Innovative," and met approximately six times over the course of several months to plan all aspects of worship during the conference.

Janisch, who joined the team in February 2018, adds, "Craig and I listen and contribute, see themes emerging, and suggest appropriate hymns and choir anthems. The planners of each service also suggest music and we work together to choose what we think will bring the message and theme of the service to life most effectively."

They also chose all the musicians based on suggestions of others and their own knowledge of the musicians.

Julie further said that she and Craig are generalists in their approach to their tasks as co-directors – a generalist being someone who takes their knowledge and skills and applies them to a variety of settings.

Not only do they choose the anthems being sung by the Conference Choir and hymns during the worship services in consultation with the worship planning team, they also divide up the pianist and organist duties, as well as the conducting tasks.

Their planning also has to take into account a wide variety of considerations such as the amount of time needed for practice and how each anthem or musical number fits into the overall theme of each service and to the conference as a whole.

It's a large undertaking, but both directors love the experience and the opportunity to honor God with their music. Both said they extremely enjoyed working as part of



Conference music co-directors Julie Janisch and Craig Hinchman (photo by Erin Sears).

the conference worship team.

As we talked this week, it was also obvious that both Julie and Craig were confident in their own abilities. Based on their education and experience, it is obvious as to why.

Janisch hails from Charleston and is the director of music at St. Marks United Methodist Church in downtown Charleston. This is her first year as a conference director of music. At St. Marks she directs the adult and youth choirs, the handbells, and the steel drum band. She feels that she gets to honor God by using her musical gifts, while gaining experience "leading all ages of people using their different skills" to further glorify God.

Hinchman, a lifelong West Virginia native, is the music director and organist for St. Andrew United Methodist Church in St. Albans. He grew up in the Charleston area and, with his wife Amanda, continues to make the Capital city his home.

Music is an important part of worship and praise to God, and the Bible tells us that making joyful noise to the Lord is an essential part of our worship to him, whether in our hearts, our minds or out of our mouths.

As you hear and experience all of the sounds of joy and wonder at annual conference this year, reflect a bit on the creativity, and also the logistics, that go into the planning and the coordination of the event. Let the music inspire and move you closer to God. As Psalm 105:2 tells us, "Sing to God; sing praises to the Lord; dwell on all his wondrous works!"

Thursday sessions: Clergy, laity — and even a fish tale

By Cheryl George

The work of the Annual Conference begins on Thursday with clergy and laity sessions.

All clergy — licensed, deacon, elders, currently under appointment, retired, and in extension ministry — are invited to attend the clergy session at Chapel Hill UMC at 10 a.m. Everyone else will attend the laity session at Wesley Chapel at 10 a.m.

The laity session will also include information for first-time attendees.

At 4 p.m. the first official business session will begin with a welcome from our hosts, organizational motions adopting the rules that we will work by (available in the workbook on pages 35-50,) and other information that we will need to do the work of the conference.

It is important that each person bring the Conference Workbook and the information distributed at registration to the business sessions. These documents will be referred to by page number or document number throughout the sessions.

During the business sessions it is also important that all those with a vote (delegates and clergy) sit within the Bar of the conference. That Bar includes most of the floor seating and some of the balcony. There will be instructions at this first session. During worship and other special times, members may sit anywhere except in specially reserved, marked seating.

This first session also includes an invitation to hear a fish tale with Conference Lay Leader Rich Shaffer. We may all be looking for places to use our fishing poles before we're done for the afternoon!



W.Va. Wesleyan College grad preaches at opening worship

By Erin Sears

Communications Intern

Once a West Virginia Wesleyan College student, Bishop Peter D. Weaver returns to his “home among the hills” for the 2018 Annual Conference.

Bishop Weaver will help us begin our time by preaching at the opening worship and will be present for the remainder of the 2018 conference.

No stranger to the workings of the conference, Bishop Weaver — who prefers to be called Pete — was born into a parsonage family in Greenville, Pa.

Receiving his own call to ministry, Bishop Weaver graduated with a bachelor’s degree from West Virginia Wesleyan College, a master of divinity degree from Drew Theological School and a doctor of theology degree from Boston University. He also has four honorary doctorates.

Bishop Weaver’s life and ministry have centered around his “life verse:” “If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation!” (II Cor. 5:17)

He began his ministry close to our conference, in Pittsburgh, Pa. — in the Western Pennsylvania Conference — where he served as a pastor from 1971 until 1996.

During that time he served three churches focusing on “making disciples for the transformation of the world” through ministries with diverse groups that represented the population of Pittsburgh including urban youth, university students, older adults, the homeless, industrial workers and corporate executives.

Within the community of Pittsburgh, he led weekly radio programs along with helping found Bethlehem Haven, a community for homeless women. He also was active with the city-wide “One Voice Against Racism” initiative.

In 1996 his ministry shifted when he was elected bishop in the Northeastern Jurisdiction. He served the Philadelphia Area from 1996 to 2004 and the Boston Area from 2004 to 2012. He was innovative by helping initiate over 40 new congregations and the “Good Schools Pennsylvania” campaign for public education reform. He also served as President of the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church.

Now in retirement, Bishop Weaver’s ministry has continued in a different capacity. From 2012 to 2016 he served in Washington, D.C., as executive secretary of the Council of Bishops. During his time as executive secretary



Bishop Peter Weaver
(UMNS photo by Paul Jeffrey).

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Thursday opening worship to celebrate a special birthday

By Lauren Godwin

Birthdays are special.

They aren't special because of the cake, gifts or parties. They are special because birthdays are moments in time that bring us together to remember the joy and hope that new life offers. They also provide us with an opportunity to reflect on how that new life and sense of joy has forever changed our world. This year we will celebrate a special birthday during Thursday's Opening Worship.

On April 23, 1968, The United Methodist Church was born.

It was on that day 50 years ago that the Evangelical United Brethren (EUB) Church and the Methodist Church birthed a new entity. How many of you hosted or attended a 50th birthday party for The United Methodist Church? Some of you might have done that in your local congregation. Chances are, like most birthdays in our adulthood, it was just another day on our calendars that we acknowledge, but probably didn't do anything special to celebrate.

We will be doing something innovative and special to remember the hope and joy of new life created in the 1968 merger. We will look to our past by using elements from the uniting service in our worship.

Looking to the future with hope, we will use some new songs and liturgy. Our communion servers and some of the participants come from historic EUB and Methodist churches and remember the merger while others have only known The United Methodist Church.

We come to the table united like the saints did 50 years ago. Bishop Peter Weaver will be sharing a sermon about



the opportunities each day brings for us to have a birth-day! Like any good celebration, we have a surprise planned for children of all ages.

I recently read an article on "The Odyssey" by Shannon Que about the importance of celebrating birthdays. In her article, she argues that instead of saying "Happy Birthday" we should say "Congratulations." She likens our birthdays to other milestones in our lives, like getting a job, buying a home, or graduating from school. These are moments where we congratulate someone on all the hard work it took to get to that moment.

She says, "I just feel like 'Congratulations' takes it one step further and implies that they've earned

a celebration. With life being so difficult and people fighting seen and (often more importantly) unseen battles...with the amount of stress and pressure we put on ourselves everyday, it should be celebrated when people have accomplished another 365 days.

Imagine it: "Congratulations! This year has dealt you quite a hand of highs and lows, but look at you now, stronger and wiser than ever before."

I hope this service will be an opportunity for us to say "Congratulations" to The United Methodist Church!

Let us remember and celebrate the hard work over the last 50 years of Kingdom building.

Let us remember the joy and hope birthdays offer.

Let us step into the future with hope as we continue to live every day as a birth-day and seek to make disciples of Jesus Christ who transform the world.

Bishop Weaver

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he traveled with youth from all over the Northeastern Jurisdiction, including youth from our conference, on a Mission of Peace to India.

He has been engaged in mission and preaching on five continents and has taught in four seminaries. He now serves as bishop-in-residence at Drew University Theological School.

Bishop Weaver and his spouse, Linda, now live in

Williamsburg, Va. They have eight grown daughters and thirteen grandchildren. Along with enjoying family, he plays the trombone, does woodworking, enjoys water sports, and helps in ministry with persons who are homeless. He even combines his love of music and woodworking by crafting lamps from musical instruments.

We are pleased to welcome Bishop Weaver among us.

Special opportunities to bless many others

By Cheryl George

One of the opportunities we have during Annual Conference is to bless others with our gifts and offerings. There will be four Special Offerings during the week: for Spring Heights camp, the West Virginia Conference Volunteers in Mission, the Old Mutare Hospital in Zimbabwe and the Volunteers in Mission team that is going to Puerto Rico.

All offerings will be combined, then divided between the four causes unless you specifically designate one of the causes on your check. Please make checks payable to the West Virginia Annual Conference.

The first offering, for Spring Heights camp, will be on Thursday opening worship. Spring Heights has limited funding for scholarships/camperships. With our offerings, we can bless a special category of campers: those who are in foster care.

According to the Children's Home Society of West Virginia, approximately one in every 57 children in West Virginia is in foster or alternative care. One of the ways that we can share Christ is through the ministries of Spring Heights camping.

(If you or your church is interested in supporting the ministries of Spring Heights through scholarships/camperships, please contact either Shea James (sjames@wvumc.org) at the Conference Office or Amy Mullins, Spring Heights Camp Manager, at 304 927-5865).

On Thursday evening the highlighted offering will be the West Virginia Conference Volunteers in Mission. These gifts support the outreach ministries of conference as well as the work of coordinating the Volunteers in Missions teams that

come into West Virginia.

(To find out more about this ministry contact Rev. David Stilgenbauer @ revdaves@yahoo.com or 304 210-6938.

Also, see Page 82 of your Conference Workbook. To make a special gift at any time to UMVIM, designate #804 on your check and send it through your treasurer to the West Virginia Annual Conference.

Saturday evening's offering at the Prayer Service will focus on the Old Mutare Hospital in Zimbabwe with a special gift for children and maternity equipment.

This gift will benefit the women and children of Zimbabwe where 96 percent of the population lives at or below the poverty level. This hospital was built in the early 1900s. It delivers 60 babies per month and provides outpatient maternal and child care for 70 people daily. The goal is to update the facility to provide the needed medical care in an atmosphere that is non-threatening and life-giving.

(If you or your church would like to make a special donation to this cause, give through the Advance #3022277; <https://www.umcmission.org/Give-to-Mission/Search-for-Projects/Projects/3022277>).

The Sunday morning offering will go to the Volunteers in Mission team that is going to Puerto Rico. They will use it to purchase supplies for reconstruction work. This American island has been devastated with lack of power and structural damage from Hurricane Maria in 2017. Your gifts will help bring hope to the communities where this team will be working.

(If you or your church would like to make a special gift for this purpose, contact Rev. David Stilgenbauer).

Please give generously.

Cokesbury offers special deals, free shipping

By George Hohmann

Cokesbury, the retail division of The United Methodist Publishing House, always has a robust bookstore and special offers at the Annual Conference...and this year is no exception.

Mechele Brown, Cokesbury's lead resource consultant, said books recommended by Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball and the conference staff will be among the volumes available for sale at this year's conference.

As always, the bookstore will be at the Ministry Expo in the Rockefeller Gym on the West Virginia Wesleyan College campus.

Bookstore hours are Wednesday June 6 from noon to 8 p.m., Thursday from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturday from 8 a.m. to noon.

For a complete list of conference staff book recommendations, visit wvumc.org/annual-conference-2018



Thursday evening session honors 29 faithful disciples

By Cheryl George

On Thursday evening we will celebrate the work of 29 faithful disciples who will be taking the next step in their ministries: retirement. The full list of retirees is available on page 21 of your conference worship book, which is also available online at wvumc.org/annual-conference-2018.

Each person has their own story of how they became a United Methodist Pastor and served in many ways and in many areas.

Some have traveled far and wide; others have served long-term in some wonderful spaces.

All have made an impact on the people of West Virginia and Garrett County Maryland, making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

This year marks the largest number of videos made about retirees. The videos, produced by D.d. Meighen, will be shown during the Thursday evening service.

Those who are not able to attend the 7:30 p.m. Thursday evening session may view it online at: wvumc.org/annual-conference-2018

Junius Dotson

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Executive Officer in the secular world) of Discipleship Ministries, one of 14 international agencies of The United Methodist Church.

The primary purpose of the agency Dotson leads is to assist annual conferences, districts, and 35,000 local churches in their efforts to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Based in Nashville, TN, Dotson and his staff of more than 150 employees provide resources for new church starts, leadership development, Christian education, spiritual formation, worship, stewardship, and evangelism.

Members of the West Virginia Conference will have three opportunities to hear Dotson. He will teach at 8:45 a.m. on Friday and Saturday and preach at the Friday evening community BBQ in front of Wesley Chapel.

“Making disciples for Jesus Christ begins with having a heart for all God’s people – even people not personally known to us, people who reject God or reject us, and even our enemies,” Dotson said through a spokesman. “The crucial first step in developing an intentional discipleship pathway is to seek out and engage people outside the church walls.”

“Every intentional discipleship system or pathway should include a long and prayerful discussion about those in our community who are not yet here,” Dotson said. “Every church should endeavor to create intentional spaces where the nonreligious and nominally religious, or even those who have rejected the church, might find room to search and explore spirituality and Christianity. Building relationships by getting out and engaging the community is key to successful intentional discipleship.”

“To varying degrees, churches have moved away from this paradigm and, in a noble attempt to save the church as an institution, have lost sight of the very people we are called to reach,” he said.

“One unintended consequence of the church growth movement of the past 25 years is that people simply became numbers on a report. In too many cases, strategic plans focused on filling the sanctuary with the goal of becoming the next nationally known megachurch.”

Dotson became head of Discipleship Ministries in 2016. He previously was pastor of Saint Mark United Methodist Church in Wichita, KS.

He received his undergraduate degree in political science at the University of Texas. He began his graduate work at Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University and earned his Master of Divinity degree from the Pacific School of Religion. He was ordained in 1992.

Dotson’s book, *Developing an Intentional Discipleship System: A Guide for Congregations*, will be available Wednesday and Thursday at the Discipleship Ministries booth at the Ministry Expo in the Rockefeller Gym. Also, it may be available at the Cokesbury bookstore Friday and on Saturday morning.

In addition, the book may be downloaded by going online to www.seeallthepeople.org and clicking on “Resources and Downloads.”

Additional resources can be found online at <https://store.umcdiscipleship.org/see-all-the-people.html>

For more information about Discipleship Ministries, go to www.UMCdiscipleship.org

Bishop's Welcome

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innovatively called those to follow him who were -- how shall I say it -- not up to the standards of what other rabbis, other teachers, or even the rest of society would have wanted or expected.

Jesus was innovative as he walked among the people instead of lodging himself in a Temple. Not only was he innovative in going out to the people instead of expecting the people to come to him, he innovatively shared God's word using parables or stories to make God's word relevant and understandable to the lives of the people among whom he walked.

Jesus was innovative:

- He ate with sinners instead of condemning them.
- He touched people and spent time with people who were mentally and physically ill.
- He recognized the beauty and the value of forgiveness -- even among those whom society would want to condemn to death.
- He told a group of people, "You, you who are without sin, cast the first stone."
- He offered to one who had to go to the well alone because she was an outcast, "living water."
- He told others, "Your faith has made you well."

Jesus was innovative in that he not only gave life, but literally gave his life as a ransom for others, for us! As followers of Christ, we are called to be innovative leaders as Christ was and is innovative.

How are we being innovative in reaching others with God's Good News in ways that are relevant and understandable? How are we reaching out beyond our walls, our Temples, and walking among the people who need Christ's touch and hope in their lives? How can we innovatively give life and give our lives so that others will find and accept God's life-giving love, forgiveness and transformation for themselves?

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The Conference Circuit

P.O. Box 2313
Charleston, WV 25328
Conference Phone: 304 344-8331
Email: wvumc@wvumc.org

Resident Bishop: Sandra Steiner Ball
Email: ssteinerball@wvumc.org

Director of Connectional Ministries: Ken Krimmel
Email: kkrimmel@wvumc.org

Communications Director: Deborah Coble
Email: dcoble@wvumc.org

Print and website designer: Joe Webb
Email: faithrants@gmail.com

Photography coordinator: Jonathan Nettles, Little Kanawha
Email: nettlesjk@gmail.com

Editor: George Hohmann, Midland South
Email: g.hohmann48@gmail.com

Communications Chair: Cheryl George, Potomac Highlands
Email: pastorcheryl@mail.com

Intern: Erin Sears
Email: sears.erin2014@gmail.com

Conference Communications Team

District Communication Coordinators

Judy Pysell, Greenbrier
Email: judyppysell@gmail.com

Ken Peters, Little Kanawha
Email: revken@suddenlink.net

George Hohmann, Midland South
Email: g.hohmann48@gmail.com

Dusty Merrill, Mon Valley
Email: DustyMerrill@GenesisLite.com

Sheri Kernik, Northern District
Email: slkernick@gmail.com

Melissa Paugh, Potomac Highlands
Email: melissahillmt@gmail.com

Wayne Richmond, Southern District
Email: worichmond@gmail.com

Jim Minutelli, Wesleyan
Email: minutellij@gmail.com

Kerry Bart, Western
Email: kerrfunk1@gmail.com

At-large members

Maria Wiblin, MonValley
Email: maria.wiblin@gmail.com

Brad Bennett, MonValley
Email: PastorBradBennett@gmail.com

Jake Steele, Northern
Email: jacobsteele714@gmail.com

Scott Mayberry, Southern District
Email: umpastor7@gmail.com

Chris Ferguson, MonValley
Email: digital.winds@gmail.com