



Emmanuel United Methodist Church
11416 Cedar Lane
Beltsville, MD 20705
301-937-7114
www.eumcbeltsville.com



The Lamplighter

The Newsletter of Emmanuel United Methodist Church

Happy **NEW YEAR**

*You crown the year with Your goodness,
And Your paths drip with abundance.*

PSALM 65:11



The Newsletter of Emmanuel United Methodist Church!

January opens
the box of the year
and brings out days
that are bright and clear
and brings out days
that are cold and grey
and shouts, "Come see
what I brought today!"
-Leland B. Jacobs, January

JANUARY 2021

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From the Pastor's Desk A New Thing

Happy New Year and Welcome to 2021! I pray that we are still full of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love from the Advent Season and Christmas. It is a good foundational starting point for this year. If you can remember, this time last year we shared the cliché saying and looked forward to a great month, year, and decade. Things turned so quickly, and I am certain, we weren't expecting what we got. We must start this year optimistic that the Pandemics will subside, and we will get a change in routine that will make the past less daunting. Isaiah 43:18-19 says, Forget the former things, do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wastelands.

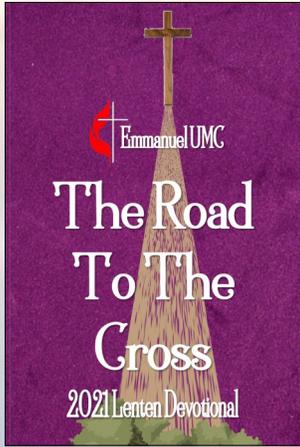
Last year was "interesting." Interesting in a way that aroused curiosity. It was highly anticipated and anticlimactic. It lived up to what was expected and a lot of the unexpected. It was usual and unusual. It was exciting and exhausting. It was joyful and sorrowful. It gave us hope and disappointed us. It kept us on the edge of our seats, or beds, wondering what will happen next. We were challenged in a way that we couldn't imagine at the beginning of 2020 – the year of vision. We observed "unprecedented" things, an unprecedented number of times. We witness things that were "unconscionable", an unconscionable number of times. Regardless of how we feel or felt about last year, 2020 taught us that:

- ~ Essential workers and support workers are heroes.
- ~ Educators and the educational system are invested in the future of our children.
- ~ Material things aren't as important as family and friends.
- ~ Our freedom shouldn't endanger other's freedom.
- ~ We can learn new things at any age, like virtual worship, medical visits, and education.
- ~ Our God-given gifts help us find creative ways to meet community needs.
- ~ Our vote, voice, and participation in the democratic process make a difference.
- ~ Things won't always go our way, but we can still progress.
- ~ We are more resilient than we realized.
- ~ Equality, Equity, and Inclusion move us towards One Nation Under God.
- ~ And adversity will strengthen our faith when we surrender ALL to God.

These Pandemics seem to have no end, but our faith tells us that it will. As I shared before, my favorite scripture, Isaiah 40:31, got me through my wilderness experience. It reads, **"They that wait on the Lord SHALL renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they SHALL run, and not be weary; they SHALL walk and not faint."**

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Got News? Do you have something for our newsletter? Send items to the editor, Rick Bergmann at lamplighter@eumcbeltsville.com

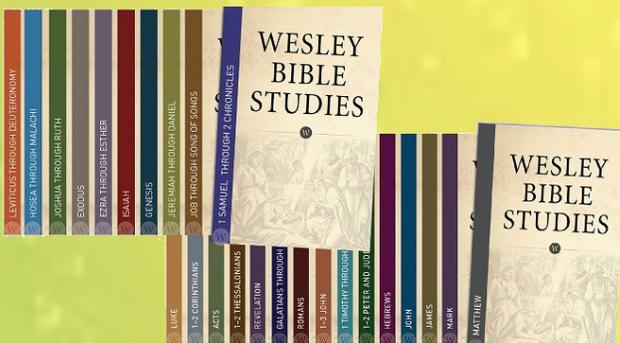


2021 Lenten Devotional

In 2013 Kathy Mellott produced our first set of Advent and Lenten Devotionals. Since that time she has spent many hours each year putting together these special books for our congregation. Each year she has compiled stories, artwork and poems from Emmanuel's members into a treasured keep-sake. We thank her for all of the hard work and heart she has put into these devotionals for us.

This year our devotional for Lent will be a digital version, but the concept will still be the same. As the editor of the Lamplighter I will be compiling and putting together our devotional this year. Lent begins on Wednesday, February 17. We are looking for stories, poems, drawings and artwork, or reflections from you! There are 40 days in Lent, so we need 40 submissions! Those of you who would like to submit, you can email your submissions to lamplighter@eumcbeltsville.com no later than February 7th. If you have any questions, you can email Rick Bergmann at lamplighter@eumcbeltsville.com or give him a call at (301) 785-7516.

Wednesday Night Bible Study 2021



*While in Thy word we search for Thee,
We search with trembling awe,
Open our eyes, and let us see
The wonders of Thy Law.
Now let our darkness comprehend
The light that shines so clear:
Now the revealing Spirit Send,
And give us ears to hear.*

-John Wesley and Charles Wesley

The Wednesday Night Bible Study will begin its 6th year on Wednesday, January 6th, 2021 at 7 p.m. This year we will be taking a deep dive into the Bible with guidance from the word's of John Wesley. We will be using the Wesley Bible Studies to study and learn the Bible from the beginning.

Genesis will be our first stop on the journey. This series will provide a "thoughtful and powerful survey of key Scriptures in Genesis. It combines accessible commentary from contemporary teachers, with relevantly highlighted direct quotes from the complete writings of John Wesley, along with the poetry and hymns of his brother Charles.

As we journey through the books of the Bible, we will get to know one another and have a deeper meaning of the Bible. This is a great way to learn and study with other members and friends at Emmanuel. The insight that we share at each session always gives us new ways to look at the scriptures. It allows us to see each reading from the Bible with new eyes and deeper understanding. We hope you can join us on this journey. We meet on Wednesdays at 7 p.m. on Google meets. The link is <http://meet.google.com/htq-rikj-hkh> If you would like a copy of the book please email Rick Bergmann at rick.bergmann@eumcbeltsville.com.

A Message of Thanks

As 2020 grinds to a close, I want to recognize Emmanuel members who made the work of maintaining the church possible. I am talking about persons who met repairmen, unlocked doors and fixed things that had stopped working.

* **Doug Weston** saw to it that security cameras were installed. (seems strange at a time when few came to the buildings, but the daycare continues, and the installation had long been planned)

* **Lynne and Bob Miller** were on site many times when repairmen needed to be met. They fixed things and checked the fire extinguishers, monthly.

* **Gretchen Buchen** headed the big job of rehabbing the Parsonage. She worked for many months, making the house ready for renters.

The work of the church and in the church continues.

Barbara Butcher, acting chair of the Trustees



How do United Methodists celebrate Epiphany / Three Kings Day?

From UMC.org



The Adoration of the Magi tapestry dating from 1894 from the Manchester Metropolitan University, England. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Epiphany is the day Christians remember the coming of the Magi to visit Jesus, bringing their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

It occurs on Jan. 6 every year, the 13th day of the Christmas season. The word "epiphany," from the Greek word *epiphania*, means appearance or manifestation.

The arrival of these visitors was a sign that the incarnation of God in Christ had been made known and was recognized by the heavens to the whole world, so that even Gentile wise men from the East came to pay him homage. This is an observance of great majesty, solemnity and awe.

An even more ancient Christian celebration than Christmas, Epiphany originally focused on the nativity, God's incarnation (God made flesh) in the birth of Jesus Christ, and Christ's baptism. After the late fourth century, as Advent developed as a season of baptismal preparation in addition to Lent, Epiphany became associated with baptism. This is why we

see images of the three Magi on many older baptismal fonts.

In many Hispanic cultures, Epiphany is a day of great rejoicing and celebration, often kicked off by a parade the night before in which people dressed as the three kings or carrying statues of the three kings pass through the towns and villages throwing out candy and small gifts to all around. Families and children alike look forward to Día de Los Tres Reyes (Three Kings Day) as a time for presents, feasting and celebration. Attending church services that include the celebration of communion is also common in many of these cultures, even for those who may not attend worship regularly.

In England and some other European cultures, Jan. 5 is known as Twelfth Night, the culmination of the 12 days of Christmas feasting and partying. On Twelfth Night, many families gather in homes to celebrate with friends, food, singing and gifts. It is at these Twelfth Night celebrations that "Chalking the Door," asking God's blessing on those dwellings and upon all who live there, is most often observed.

In New Orleans, Twelfth Night begins another season of celebrations that comes to fulfillment at Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday). Epiphany itself, Jan. 6, becomes the kickoff day for that season, but is also often observed with a full celebration in church, complete with incense, elaborate processions, choral celebrations, and Eucharist.

Some United Methodists in the United States, who are not part of these rich traditions, tend to recognize Epiphany on the Sunday nearest Jan. 6. There may be a pageant of the three kings as part of worship that day and a small party afterward.

In celebrating Epiphany this year, consider partnering with a Hispanic, Latino or other congregation to find new ways to joyously celebrate Epiphany/Tres Reyes. In whatever ways you decide to celebrate it, remember at the heart of your celebration are the Magi kneeling, worshipping and offering gifts to Jesus, Messiah for all people.

January Memory Verse

*But Jesus looked at them and said,
For "mortals it is impossible,
but for God all things are possible."
Matthew 19:26*

From the Pastor's Desk continued from p. 1

Find the scripture that uplifts you. Let's see what 2021 brings. We have healing to do. We have new lessons to learn. We will find ways to live with purpose, together. I look forward to New Things that will happen in our lives.

Blessings, Pastor Jalene



An Update from Emmanuel's



In 2020 we faced many challenges in our nation and around the world. In spite of the fact that UMW units were unable to have their usual fundraisers to support missions, we were able to support the following:

Salvation Army----- -Prince Georges County
Family Crisis Center -----Elizabeth House/Fish of Laurel
UMW Scholarship Fund-----Baltimore-Washington Conference
Epworth House Fund-----Wesley Seminary Scholarship for Int'l Female

Missionaries

Nan McCurdy Circle ---"Give Ye Them to Eat": Mexico
Sisters in Spirit -- Kabaka Ndala Alphonsine---Women/Children: Tanzania
Susanna Wesley -- Fuxima Wang----Chinese Community: Oklahoma

We were able to do this thanks to the generosity of Emmanuel UMW. In 2020 we received \$1,195.00 in donations/pledges. We also deposited \$1,294.00 from the sale of pecans. We qualified to become a 5-star unit. In order to become a 5-star unit, a local unit must contribute *to each of the Five channels of Mission Giving which includes Pledge to mission, Special Mission Recognition, Gift to Mission, Gift in Memory and World Thank Offering.* At the Washington East Virtual annual meeting we were recognized as a Gold Mission today unit.

Because of COVID-19 our annual "Pledge to Mission Service 2021" will be held virtually on Saturday, January 9, 2021 at noon. You will be provided a zoom link and call-in phone number. As this pandemic continues, many people continue to need support and we want to bless others through Mission Giving just as God has blessed us. Looking forward to seeing you there.

If you are unable to attend Pledge Service, please send donation/pledge info to Jane Grays, UMW Treasurer, 7118 Piney Woods Pl., Laurel, MD 20707. Make check payable to Emmanuel UMW.

Your Sisters in Christ,
President, Becky Cavallo
Treasurer, Jane Grays

News from Missionary Nan McCurdy



"Give Ye Them To Eat" Mark 6:37

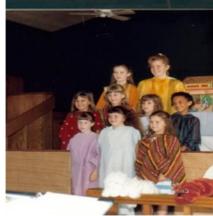
Nan shared some 2020 highlights: 25 women completed the intermediate health course; 80 women participated in continuing education on Covid-19; youth and staff studied because of your donations; helpful friends from Tabernacle UMC in Virginia and from Susquehanna Valley Parish in Pennsylvania were welcomed; more friends participated in six Virtual Mission Teams; students were trained in all day workshop/tours of the Tree of Life Center; people were trained to build a Palapa, ecological toilets, stoves, and water systems; the community was organized to improve the road and did several trash pickups; corn, peanuts, squash, watermelon, mangos and bananas were harvested, and corn was replanted for feed for the goats and sheep.

For those who are able, the GYTTE Mission Wish List includes: more AWARE teams visiting in 2021 or 2022; help to continue training and teaching programs in different aspects of development and appropriate technology by being able to pay salaries; help to continue health activities and have money to train a new group of health promoters beginning in September 2021 (\$1,050 covers one woman for 3 courses); help to build an appropriate technology home, ecological toilet, and wood-saving stove with a new family in 2021.

Nan, Miguel, Clara, Catalina, Estela, Liborio, Panchita, Betzy, Erick, Lore, Ray, Marce, Eduardo, Carlos, Salatiel, and Veronica thank God for you, for your love of GYTTE and the people of Mexico, for your prayers, your participation in virtual mission journeys and for your gifts. May God's love and peace fill you with joy and contentment this Christmas season.

Fabulous Flashbacks

It has been almost 10 months since we heard our choir sing. This month let's look back at our wonderful singers through the years.



New progressive Methodist denomination starts

By Heather Hahn (originally published on UMNews.org)



The Revs. Martha E. Vink (left) and Alka Lyall lead a Holy Communion service during an Advent gathering in December 2019 at St. Andrew United Methodist Church in Highlands Ranch, Colo. The two are among the collaborators organizing the Liberation Methodist Connexion, a new denomination that held an online launch event on Nov. 29. Photo courtesy of LMX.

A group of progressive United Methodists and other Christians launched a new denomination named the Liberation Methodist Connexion, or LMX.

The new church aims to center on the voices of people of color as well as queer and transgender individuals — those the LMX organizers see as marginalized in The United Methodist Church.

“We are a grassroots denomination of former, current, and non-Methodist faith leaders working on the unfolding of the kingdom of God,” the Connexion says on its website. “We intentionally invite the full participation of all who are living out their God-given identities and expressions.”

Organizers announced the new denomination’s formation with an online worship service, presentation and after-party on Nov. 29, the first Sunday of Advent and the start of the Christian year.

The online gathering had more than 400 registrants. But because of technical difficulties, a number of those registrants were unable to log on, including United Methodist News.

The new Connexion is getting off the ground after decades of intensifying debate within The United Methodist Church about how inclusive to be of LGBTQ Christians.

At the General Conference planned for May 2020, United Methodists expected to take up a proposal to resolve the dispute over same-sex marriage and gay ordination through a formal denominational separation. However, coronavirus-related shutdowns postponed the lawmaking assembly, which is now scheduled for Aug. 29-Sept. 7, 2021.

The new denomination’s organizers, a number of whom are LGBTQ, said they feel called to act now.

“The timeline of the Holy Spirit is driving our decision to launch the LMX at this moment, and we are following her call,” the Rev. Althea Spencer-Miller told UM News by email.

Spencer-Miller, a New Testament professor at United Methodist Drew Theological School, is one of more than 40 collaborators who are helping to establish the new church.

She and other collaborators declined to say how many congregations or people are part of the new denomination at launch. Organizers said by email they do not want to equate worth with volume.

Among the collaborators are both United Methodist pastors and lay people, including at least three church leaders elected to be General Conference delegates or reserve delegates.

The new Connexion is not asking people to choose between the LMX and their affiliations with other faith communities, Spencer-Miller said by email and at the event.

Ian Carlos Urriola, another collaborator and veteran General Conference delegate, said at the event that the new denomination plans to work with The United Methodist Church’s official racial and ethnic caucuses, “ensuring that we remain in relationship with our forebears in the struggle.”

At this point, the Liberation Methodist Connexion has obtained tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit status in the United States. The new church also is in process of applying for a group exemption with the IRS to simplify the administrative process for its congregations and ministries.

The Wesleyan Covenant Association, a group on the traditionalist end of the theological spectrum, also plans to start a new denomination separate from The United Methodist Church. The WCA’s leadership includes General Conference delegates, and the association already has drafted its own Book of Doctrines and Discipline.

The new Connexion has no doctrinal litmus tests, said the Rev. Janet G. McKeithen, a member of the new denomination’s working group.

The LMX focuses more on actions than beliefs, Spencer-Miller later added.

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WE ARE THE CHURCH

This month's member is Ann Rowland



How long have you been a member of Emmanuel?

I transferred my membership from Ager Road UMC 51 years ago in June of 1969. The following year I enrolled my daughter in the Beltsville/Calverton Co-Operative Nursery School at Emmanuel.

Who was the Pastor when you began attending Emmanuel?

The Pastor was Rev. Gloyd Allis. He actually visited me in my home and extended an invitation to Emmanuel shortly after we moved to Calverton, a newly developed neighboring community at the time.

What is your fondest memory of being a member?

There are many, but one of my fondest was New Year's Eve, 2006. Pastor Daniel invited me to join him at Faith UMC in Accokeek in their food distribution to the homeless on the streets of DC. A couple of my friends who were in a bad place emotionally needed a change of scenery so I convinced them that serving the homeless would be just what they needed to put things in perspective. I'm not sure who benefited the most, my friends or me, but it was my most memorable New Years Eve. That night marked the beginning of Emmanuel's Community Outreach Ministry that, in time, transitioned focus from DC to our current monthly Food Distribution Ministry serving the Beltsville community.

What are some of the ministries you have been involved in over the years?

I've had a hand in many ministries over the years, but most have been since my retirement in 2001. Among major leadership roles I have served as Sunday School Superintendent, Church Council Chair and Lay Leader. I have taken the lead in a number of endeavors over the years including renovation of the narthex and arranging for mental health programs during mental health months in May and October. Another initiative was to get the food ministry off and running that included registering as an agency of the Washington Area Food Bank. I cooked and served at Community Place Café for 15 years and have been a member on just about every committee at one time or another. Currently I serve on the Memorial Committee and chair the Hospitality Ministry for Funeral/Memorial Service and Special Occasions Luncheons where I have served for the past 8 years.

What is your favorite thing about Emmanuel?

My involvement on committees/ministries has given me the opportunity to engage on a more personal level with those I see in worship on Sunday mornings. I have forged my most treasured relationships at church through these small group settings.

What is your favorite scripture or Bible verse?

I would have to say John 3: 16 is my favorite. It was probably one of the first scriptures I memorized. I find Matthew 25: 35-40 especially meaningful now when there is so much pain and need during this pandemic.

Anything else you would like to say?

Yes, as I write today, December 14th, I am grateful for this momentous occasion. We witnessed the first COVID -19 vaccinations being injected into the arms of first line healthcare workers in this country today. There is light at the end of the tunnel. It will take a while, but one day we will meet in church for worship, in person, once again. **A hallelujah moment for sure!!**



**Ann at National Night Out
with Pat Allen and P.
Elliott**

Delegates discuss mapping new church vision

By Heather Hahn (originally posted on UMNews.org)



An informal group of General Conference delegates holds the first of two webinars Dec. 1. The delegates discussed feedback they have received from United Methodists about casting a new vision for the denomination. Screenshot of Zoom meeting by UM News.

feedback it already has received on what that vision might look like.

The group, which includes delegates from all four continents where the church is present, held two nearly identical hourlong webinars at different times to reach more United Methodists around the globe.

“This effort is really an opportunity to talk in a different setting without legislation, without complicated rules, just an opportunity to meet as humans,” Schneider said during the first session. Schneider, who lives in Zurich, is a delegate from the Switzerland-France-North Africa Conference.

Because of the pandemic, General Conference — originally scheduled for May this year — is now postponed to Aug. 29-Sept. 7, 2021.

The group held its first set of webinars in July and invited United Methodists to use the delay to help cast a new vision. The group is not affiliated with any United Methodist advocacy organization, nor is it backing any particular piece of legislation.

The group is not trying to set up a new denomination, as the Liberation Methodist Connexion and Wesleyan Covenant Association are doing. In fact, group members all spoke with love for The United Methodist Church and hope that, with God’s help, the church can become better.

“I commit to be a church that invites and welcomes everybody at the Lord’s table with mutual respect, mutual love,” said the Rev. Betty Kazadi Musau during the first session. She is a delegate from the North Katanga Conference in Congo and an advocate for indigenous women.

During the Dec. 1 webinars, group members said their goal was to learn participants’ aspirations for the church, help them learn the aspirations of others and find ways to join in common purpose.

The group also is seeking responses to a survey — published in English, French and German — that asks United Methodists about their vision for the church in their contexts.

The “Out of Chaos” group plans to collect responses through Dec. 31 and use them in drafting a new vision statement. The group expects to complete the draft by the end of January and then present it for more public feedback.

“This will not be the final word,” Schneider said. “This is an ongoing process that will continually invite feedback.”

The Rev. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai, delegate from the Michigan Conference, shared some of the responses the group already has received. So far, Out of Chaos has received responses from eight General Conference delegations around the globe and 57 individual survey responses.

For example, a survey response from the Middle Philippines Conference aspires to “a more vital church, vital Christians, and the engagement in the community and the world for peace, justice and compassion.”

Other responses struck similar tones. One from the Texas Conference called for the church to be “open, welcoming, forgiving.”

Christine Schneider describes her time at General Conference as some of the worst experiences in her life as a United Methodist.

“We must definitely learn to do things differently because what we’ve done there has brought us to, well, you all know to where,” said the veteran delegate about the denomination’s top lawmaking assembly.

The United Methodist Church has reached a point where it is facing a potential split over its longtime debate over LGBTQ inclusion — much of the most heated disputes taking place at General Conference. Simultaneously, the international denomination faces the ravages of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

In this chaotic time, Schneider is among an informal group of General Conference delegates who see an opportunity to map a new vision for the denomination’s future.

The group, called “Out of Chaos ... Creation,” held its second set of webinars Dec. 1 to share some of the international

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Delegates continued from p. 8

A group of United Methodist youth in Tanzania and Tanganyika submitted a statement saying they want the church to be unifying, caring, capacity-building, sanctifying and one that “strengthens evangelism in the local church” and fosters “healthy interpersonal relationships.”

During the second session, one webinar participant asked if the effort is in any way related to the Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation, a mediated proposal submitted to General Conference that has support from various United Methodist groups.

The Rev. Jay Williams, a delegate from the New England Conference, advised that the world looks different from when the protocol was first developed in 2019.

“We don’t know what the 2021 General Conference is going to look like if it happens in person or virtually,” he said. “So, it seems to me that in the moment of transition in the church, we need to continue the visioning process.”

Lay planters open new windows on ministry

From bwcumc.org

The time before a journey begins is often filled with high hopes and creative expectations. It’s a time for vision and daydreams.

In the past two years, the Baltimore-Washington Conference started a new journey with a new ministry area: New Faith Expressions. It was a leap of faith that the people called United Methodist still had something essential and life-transforming left to say, and share, with the world.

It is a ministry of innovation, of broad horizons, and uninhibited faith. In the words of its director, the Rev. Bill Brown, New Faith Expressions “seeks to bring the

church God loves closer to the people God loves.” They are willing to defy expectations. They’re opening new windows on God’s world. God’s light shines through.

I’m hopeful the Lay Church Planters training delivers a new, and maybe even surprising, view of the laity and all that is possible. These postcards will record a bit of the journey.

Claim. The invitation goes out.

And so, yes, you claim. Yes, you imagine. Yes, you begin. Yes, you build. You open new windows – fresh expressions – and the church is reborn.

It all started with an invitation. The Rev. Bill Brown, the Conference Director of New Faith Expressions, along with Doug Ruffle and Bener Agtarap of the denomination’s Discipleship Ministries, asked the laity of the BWC if they wanted to plant.

Plant churches, specifically. But also plant ideas, and expressions of faith, and sacred experimentation. It’s a pilot program for the BWC, so they’re planting, too – sowing hopes that the denomination’s laity will begin to see themselves as pioneers or, maybe, apostles.

Twenty people took them up on their invitation. I joined because I wanted to see the laity in action, to see how their callings unfolded in interesting ways, to watch people begin to dream about what tomorrow’s church might be.

Remember. We’re ignited by history.

On a Saturday morning, the lay planters gathered via Zoom and Brown asked them to draw upon their Methodist DNA – that part of faith that is lived out in the amazing unfolding story of the people called United Methodist.

Harken back, he asked, to a time when, as Bishop Easterling (and the prophet Jeremiah) likes to say, “Methodism was like a burning fire shut up in people’s bones.” It ignited a new world.

In 1776, 2.5 percent of the population in this nascent nation was Methodist. In 1850, 34.2 percent of Americans were Methodist. That’s one in every three people!

And that growth over those 76 years, Brown said, was because of laity. In colonial times, when Methodism began, all of the denomination’s pastors could fit into a small meeting house. It’s 10,000 members, in class meetings and in profound faith, built and led a church. If that’s your heritage, how can you now sit as a spectator in a pew? These lay planters on Zoom are ready and, if history is any indication, God has plans for them and the people they encounter.

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Lay Planters continued from p. 9

Ask. We rediscover why.

Christology. Ecclesiology. Missiology. The next step for the lay planters was access to a portal with three online Discipleship Ministries classes to learn about and discuss Jesus, Church, and Mission.

The point, Ruffle stressed, is to explore “the why.” These planters are now confident they don’t have to build new churches – with steeples and apportionments. Rather, their task is to explore what kind of new faith expression – a ministry, an experience, a small group, a faith neighborhood, whatever God is placing on their heart – will be what they begin to discern and pour themselves into. At the heart of that is Jesus.

During the first class, Ruffle shared Jesus’ story and the group explored “What is it about Jesus that has shaped civilizations and cultures for more than 2,000 years?” Everyone has opinions, but what seems more important to them is “how will we live as the hands and feet of Jesus?”

“Why Jesus?” the planters are asked. They begin to answer with ideas about how their story is aligned with God’s story and how Jesus serves a model for our relationship with God.

Act. We awaken love.

Agtarap appeared on this second video and told people the story of Jesus appearing to his disciples after he had died and asking them if they love him. “Yes,” the disciples said. Three times, they said, “yes!” And they believed it, and they had all kinds of theories about love, and God, and this resurrected savior.

But Jesus just told them, “feed my sheep.” That’s the message he wanted the planters to understand. Church, faith and life make for wonderful theories. But theory is diminished without action. Church as an idea is good. Church that feeds God’s people – body, mind, and soul – can be immeasurably better.

They explored the idea of church as a space for new visions, for people to discover God in different ways, and how the church can awaken meaning, purpose and love in people’s lives.

And the planters began to feel the nudge of urgency. Brown tells them, “The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time to plant a tree is now.” That feels important.

Dare. The kingdom of God is within us.

Twenty years ago, Bishop Joseph Yeakel stood before the Baltimore-Washington Conference and asked them to consider the future. “You are a sign, instrument and foretaste of the kingdom of God,” he told them. In the third lay planters’ video on “Why new places?” Ruffle echoed his remarks, challenging today’s leaders to be a sign, preview, and instrument of God’s realm.

He shared how in the New Testament, the Greek word the Bible writers used for church matters, even today. There’s kyriakos, or the German word kirche, which means building; and there’s ekklesia, which translates as “assembly.” Church, he stressed, is – and must be -- a gathering, not a place. It is people coming together for an experience of God. “This definition,” he said, “undergirds a way of being.”

But in recent years, for a vast array of reasons, people have opted out of the gathering. Within the Baltimore-Washington Conference, in the last 20 years, the number of United Methodists has dropped by 65,202 members.

Lay Planters are responding by creating “new places for new faces.” It’s an overly sweet little phrase. But it’s asking people to search their hearts, discover what is most sacred to them and how that intersects with the culture around them. It’s asking that planters, and the expressions of church they create, be authentic, vulnerable, and interesting to people who have turned away from the traditions of faith. It’s asking lay people to dare to be signs and instruments and previews of God’s reign. It’s asking for a first step and knowing that God will be present for the rest of the journey.

Church Mice

Copyright Karl A. Zorowski



New Denomination continued from page 6

“We seek not answers that lead us to correct doctrines as to why we suffer. We seek correct actions, correct praxis where God sustains us during the unanswerable questions,” Spencer-Miller said during the online event.

Such actions — the Connexion’s website notes — include reparations, caring for the earth and freeing Methodist tradition of colonialism, white supremacy, economic injustice, sexism, ableism, ageism and heteronormativity.

The new church draws its name from liberation theology, developed by Latin American Catholic theologians in the 1960s and soon augmented by Methodist theologians such as the Rev. James Cone. The theology emphasizes God’s call to liberate the poor and oppressed.

The name Connexion comes from the old British spelling of connection used by Methodism’s founder John Wesley. The letter “X” is also a symbol for Christ, the first letter of which looks like an X in Greek. “In that way it reminds of our heritage, some of the good soil,” the Rev. Sue Laurie, one of the group’s organizers, said by email.

The new denomination emerges out of the work of UM Forward, which formed ahead of the 2019 special General Conference to advocate for the removal of all United Methodist restrictions against homosexuality. Instead, a majority of General Conference delegates adopted the Traditional Plan, legislation that tightened bans on “self-avowed practicing” gay clergy and instituted mandatory penalties for same-gender weddings.

Since that special session, UM Forward has held gatherings in Minneapolis, Denver and Dallas to discuss the church’s future. The group also submitted its own separation plan to the coming General Conference that would dissolve The United Methodist Church and form four new denominations instead.

While the idea of dissolution has gained little traction, a number of United Methodists have endorsed another proposal titled “Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation,” negotiated by a professional mediator with a theologically diverse group of United Methodists.

The protocol would allow traditionalist churches — those that oppose same-sex weddings and the ordination of noncelibate gay clergy — to leave with their properties. The new traditionalist group would also get \$25 million in United Methodist funds.

The protocol also sets aside \$2 million for any other new Methodist denominations that form.

But neither money nor the Protocol was an emphasis at the LMX launch event. Instead organizers focused on plans to provide educational resources, offer pastoral care and address the sins they see plaguing the church.

Laurie, a longtime activist for LGBTQ equality in The United Methodist Church, preached during the event’s worship service about her weariness after decades without change to the church’s stance.

“Now I am grateful for a new day, an invitation to the Liberation Methodist Connexion to be among a fresh constellation of believers who have the urgency for their vision,” she said.

“I am grateful to be confronted by people who have come to the Gospel from different places.”



If you feel like you're losing everything, remember that trees lose their leaves every year and they still stand tall and wait for better days to come.
(thank you to Margie Mock for this submission)



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Each week there are weekly prayer requests and scripture readings as well as updates about not just Emmanuel but church in the world at large. Check us out today!



**APPOINTMENTS
available**

The Pastor is available for appointments on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Email office@eumcbeltsville.com or call 301.937.7114 to make arrangements.

How Can I Give?

Online: You can now give online through Emmanuel's website at www.eumcbeltsville.com/giving or scan the QR Code below. This is a great way to keep up with your giving if you are out of town, are sick or if you can't come to church. If you have any questions, contact Kemi Oluwafemi.

Through the Mail: You can mail your offering to the church. The address is 11416 Cedar Lane, Beltsville, MD 20705.



Share your talents at Emmanuel by Sharing the Word as a Scripture Reader during our Sunday Zoom Service! Help for a single Sunday or choose several. You choose how many Sundays you are able to help. To volunteer to serve as a Scripture Reader during our Zoom Sunday Service, just email the office at office@eumcbeltsville.com and they will let you know which weeks are available!

No experience needed!
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Start your week off with Virtual Worship at Emmanuel!

Join us on Sunday mornings in virtual worship through Zoom. Join us for 30 minutes of fellowship from 9:30-10:00 am followed by worship at 10:00. Use this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85125785976?pwd=bExodVh2SE5XckxGVjB3N3A0ZFd2UT09>

or go to zoom.us and click join a meeting.

The meeting number is 851 2578 5976.

The Password is 850888

You can call in on any telephone (cell or landline) at 1-301-715-8592

1. Carrie White
3. Doug Galloway
7. Katherine Cavallo, Dan Kenyon
11. Jane Grays
12. Dare Hassan
13. Geoffrey Kaufmann
14. Hazel Newell
25. Bonnie Bland
26. Bobbie Deegan, Doug Weston
28. Rebecca Vaughan
31. Rick Bergmann



Happy Anniversary

January 14: Rick and Nancy Zerbe



Please pray for our sick and shut in
Homebound: Evelyn Adkins, Harry Cottman, Norma Hall, Carolyn Scarcia, Dottie Gilbert
Out of state: Lil Mizzer

In Memoriam

Christian Love and Sympathy:

- ~ to Mary Jane Shearer on the death of her son J.B. Shearer on November 20.
- ~ to Willie Taylor's friend Victor on the death of his wife, daughter and father in law.
- ~to the family of Emmet Croson, Jr on his death on November 26
- ~ to the family of Alex Governatori (friend of Tammy White) on his death on November 28.
- ~ to the Vaughn family on the death of Mike Vaughn's Father, Sam Vaughn on December 6



When our arms can't reach people who are close to our hearts we can always hug them with our prayers.



5 Interesting Facts about January

1. The January birthstone is a garnet
2. In leap years, it always starts on the same day as April and July
3. January is the coldest month in the Northern Hemisphere
4. It's named after the Roman god of transitions, Janus
5. January is National Donate Blood Month

January