

233rd Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference
"WE ARE ONE: Connected in Covenant"

The 233rd session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference was held May 31- June 2 this year at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, D.C. with the theme of "WE ARE ONE: Connected in Covenant."

During the Opening Worship on Wednesday evening, the Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, the first woman bishop of BWC UMC, stressed the theme-- We Are One. "We are the body of Christ together. How we choose to live out our days is our response to this covenant. If we allow ourselves to be divided, we will lose our moral witness to the world."

On Thursday evening, clergy, laity, friends and family of the Ordinands rejoiced at the Ordination Service celebrating God's call and their truthful response and preparation for that calling. Seven Elders were ordained, one provisional Deacon and nine provisional Elders were commissioned during the service. Retirement reception and luncheon for twenty four clergy who retire July 1 was also held on Wednesday.

"Covenant and Unity" was the theme of the Bible Study led by the Rev. Steve Manskar, of the Board of Discipleship. Based on the text from Ephesians 4, he explored how United Methodists are to be sign, foretaste and instrument of God as they make disciples, serving as Christ's ambassadors and servants. "We are called to covenant. We don't baptize people in private but in a congregation. To those who say I can experience God alone, 'holy solitaries' is a phrase no more consistent with the Gospel than 'holy adulterers.' We are called by baptism to be a blessing, to bring the world into God's kingdom, to also love one another. The oneness of God is reflected in the unity of the church."

There were many presentations and reports during the session. An \$18,463,136 budget for 2018 was adopted. Representatives from the General Board of Church and Society, Christine and Rebecca, encouraged United Methodists to become active in the sanctuary movement, opening their hearts and doors to provide shelter and safety to immigrants in need.

Among other reports was the NEJ Call to Action. It is a resolution passed in July 2016 by the Northeastern Jurisdiction (NEJ). The resolution calls for "an effort to address, confront, and otherwise demand systemic fundamental and institutional change both within the church and the world" to confront y/our racism, initiate ongoing internal and external conversations on white privilege, white supremacy, and racism, to initiate training in the area of eradicating racism, and to evaluate and address the impact of structural and institutional racism on people of color in the NEJ.

It also suggested some practical action items--"Get to know someone who doesn't look or think like you. Be aware of your own implicit biases. Name and address racism when you witness it and work toward being at least **level-4** change agent."

Level 1: Acts with no knowledge of biases and prejudices and their negative impact.

Level 2: Aware of biases & prejudices, but continues negative behaviors & reinforces stereotypes.

Level 3: Tolerates unjust behavior in others and play it safe.

Level 4: Acts as a role model, takes action when appropriate, addresses others' behaviors when necessary.

Level 5: Always on the lookout for prejudice and sees it everywhere.

The 2018 session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference will be held May 30-June 1, 2018 at the Waterfront Marriott Hotel in Baltimore.