



UMC Connection

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SIGNS & WONDERS
ADVENTURE
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Nathan, left, and Clay, both of Mt. Oak UMC, play during Sunday School as part of a ministry with exceptional children. (See story page 4).

CHRISTINE KUMAR

Special speakers to highlight conference

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMCONNECTION STAFF

Two bishops, a clergywoman from Mississippi and a musician with deep roots will assist members of the 222nd session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference in "Connecting Through Christ" next month, as the conference also celebrates the 50th anniversary of full clergy rights for women in the denomination.

Preaching at the opening worship service Thursday, May 25, at 2:25 p.m., will be Bishop Susan Morrison of the Albany Area. Bishop Morrison was a clergy member of the Baltimore-Washington Conference for 18 years. She was ordained a Deacon in 1970 and an Elder in 1974, and has served both the local church and as a district superintendent.



Morrison

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Board of Child Care dedicates new Archive Center

BY JOHN W. COLEMAN JR.
SPECIAL TO THE UMCONNECTION

Hannah R., 17, neatly wiped tears from her eyes as she and her younger sister, Elizabeth, told a captivated audience how the Board of Child Care of The United Methodist Church had saved their lives and, indeed, given them lives worth living.

The two recalled being rescued from an abusive home where they and 13 siblings had been "traumatized, neglected, sick and friendless - our lives torn apart over and over again" recounted Elizabeth.

When they arrived at the board's Baltimore campus in 2003, as fearful children yearning to feel safe and nurtured for the first time in their lives, they were greeted with a hot meal, new clothes, warm embraces and the special gift that welcomes all new young residents, a teddy bear.

Today, both girls are successful students, avid readers, active leaders among their peers and looking forward to college and continued success in their lives.

"I must thank the Board of Child Care with all my heart," Hannah said. "I would not have made it without all the staff, social workers and teachers who helped me and the people who brought me here.

"I'm glad to be alive," Elizabeth said, "and I can't wait for tomorrow because of the hope and promise it can bring."

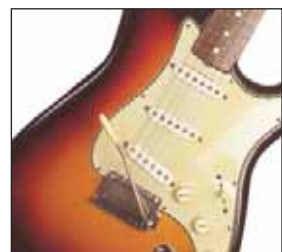
The two sisters shared their hopes for the future in a place that signifies the

Board of Child Care's worthy past. They spoke during the dedication April 8 of the board's gleaming new Archive and Welcome Center, for which planning began in January 2005.

The three-story, brick and glass structure, filled with over a century's worth of documents, artifacts and photographs, is the last building to be erected on the historic child care agency's sprawling main campus at 3300 Gaither Road in northwest Baltimore.

About 225 board members, staff and guests gathered on a rainy Saturday afternoon to hear remarks from board leaders and special guests, read a litany of

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JOHN COLEMAN

Thomas Curcio, president and CEO of the Board of Child Care, welcomes visitors.

Reunion offers look at history

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMCONNECTION STAFF

This fall, people from throughout the region will gather to celebrate a unique and powerful portion of Methodism's past and envision the church's future at the Washington Conference Reunion, Sept. 22-24, at the Hunt Valley Inn in Hunt Valley.

The reunion, whose dates have recently changed from October because of scheduling conflicts, will be a milestone in the lives of those who once served in the former, racially segregated Washington Conference.

The conference, which was created in 1864 and made a part of the Central Jurisdiction in 1939, "was the church's black water fountain," said the Rev. Lovell Parham, who served in the former Washington Conference.

"Segregation was the law of the land and the church didn't take the leadership to try to change that," he



Parham

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Disciples learn how technology enhances worship



LINDA WORTHINGTON

Vendors had materials on display at the "Worship Behind the Scenes" workshop.

BY LINDA WORTHINGTON
UMCONNECTION STAFF

As they watched the screen, some of the 98 attendees at the recent "Worship: Behind the Scenes" workshop laughed. Some looked puzzled. Others just whispered to each other.

Something was wrong.

They were watching a video of a worship service where, in fact, every-

thing was going wrong. The service was riddled with mistakes and distractions, including sound distortions and feedback, projected slides difficult or impossible to read or not matching the verbal message, the band not always together, and inappropriate interaction between members of the band and worship leaders.

Fortunately, this was just a game. Participants in the workshop had to identify as many distractions and "wrong things" as they could. Often as not, technology was to blame.

"How can we know our electronic technology is enhancing worship or distracting from it," asked Cathy Vitek, worship leader at Bethany UMC in Ellicott City.

She introduced a "distractions list" and instructed the audience to match the distractions with what was happening in the service. By learning what can go wrong, churches can fix it and make it right, all to reach the goal of worship, which is "to always glorify God," Vitek said.

"In my sanctuary, the glory of God does not always present itself when I walk in," she said.

"Technology is only a tool; ministry is from the heart," said Jo Chesson, director of the conference's Resource Center and one of the presenters at the workshop.

The attention span of youth is shrinking, Chesson said, and even mature adults "don't want to spend an hour looking at a stained glass window or cross." Chesson defended the use of projection screens in

sanctuaries, noting, "Even the elderly like to look up at a screen instead of at tiny little print."

"We've experienced all of (the distractions) – sometimes in the course of one service," Sharon Lomax of Queen's Chapel UMC in Beltsville said, somewhat facetiously.

"I came to the workshop to see how we can make our worship come alive," said Nancy Robinson from Community UMC in Maryland City. "We're just beginning. I didn't know what to expect."

Robinson's pastor, the Rev. Saroj Sangha, commented on the need for training for both clergy and laity. "We are seeking and searching," she said.

Worship, whether alternative or traditional, as well as every ministry in the church, must be based on Scripture, said the Rev. Mike Sharp. "All the tools and technology at our disposal pale in comparison to what is called of us by God."

Sharp led a group in the afternoon on "sound," one of four breakout groups. "We're trying to give you tools

to have a good sound system," he said. He pointed out that all churches are different but they all have dead spots, balconies, corners and edges where sound is distorted.

The largest breakout group gathered to learn more on forming worship teams.

"Worship moves from 'we' to 'I' as it comes to the time for the message," Vitek said. She explained that at the beginning, the congregation is singing and praying collectively, but as the worship progresses, it brings the individual into relationship with God.

"Always keep your focus on God," she said.

Whether the service is traditional, alternative or blended, all of which were represented in the audience, the worship team should pick a theme, said Vitek. This is usually based on the sermon and Scripture.

"The goal is to reinforce the Word of the week" and lead the congregation to glorifying God, she said.

Use of audio visual equipment was another popular breakout group. Chesson emphasized the importance of having the right equipment for a particular church, as well as appropriate lighting and atmosphere. She also stressed that it's worth spending the money to have quality equipment.

A half dozen vendors had their sound and audio visual equipment on display, readily answering questions about their respective fields of expertise and the equipment itself.

For information on licensing requirements, Christian copyright licensing, fees and legal matters, see www.CCLI.com.

For information on vendors, equipment and technology, contact Jo Chesson, at (410) 309-3490 or jchesson@bwcumc.org.

Board: New center preserves history of a life-changing ministry

FROM PAGE 1

dedication, witness a ribbon cutting and the presentation of gifts and donations, and finally to tour the colorful, spacious facility.

President and CEO Thomas L. Curcio lauded many contributors to the creation of the Archive and Welcome Center, especially former board chairwoman Sally Ransom Knecht, who collected and organized countless materials for the archive displays. But he and other speakers – including current board chairman James O. Mathis and Bishop John R. Schol – focused many of their remarks on the children and youth for whom the Board of Child Care exists.

"It is the young people who have come through this place that gives us pride in this occasion today," said Bishop Schol. Preaching on the theme "Stepping Stones to the Future," he credited the 133-year-old institution's success to its trust in God and its inclusive commitment to helping children and youth discover and achieve their aspirations.

He also expressed thanks to God for the board's partnership with the conference and many of its churches and individuals who "help to change lives in the name of Jesus Christ."

Peter Goldberg, President and CEO of the Alliance for Children and Families, a national program support agency, praised the Board of Child Care for its leadership, innovation and performance as a "model for nonprofit child-serving agencies everywhere."

Lillian Parks a member of Metropolitan UMC in Indian Head, and president of the Board of Child Care Auxiliary, presented a \$10,000

check from the auxiliary. Jean Ford from St. John's of Hamilton also presented a check to the board for \$4,500.

The Auxiliary has its own section of souvenirs on the second floor, surrounded by a three-dimensional timeline and exhibits on the board's early predecessor agencies: the Kelso Home for Girls, the Strawbridge Home for Boys and the Swartzell Methodist Home for Children. Other campuses of the multi-site agency are also depicted in displays.

In addition, there are copious copies of vintage and more recent photographs, old newsletters, mounted words of wisdom from former leaders

and contributors to the board's ministry, three meticulously constructed replicas of the old Strawbridge Home facilities and a video of former residents sharing their fond memories and success stories.

Alongside a reception desk and offices, the first floor display area, which one enters through a faux brick archway, illustrates the board's many services and campus life. A colorful fence structure lists the typical daily schedule and routine activities, from morning to bedtime. Services – including clinical therapy, education, recreation, transportation, foster care, adoption and family support – are

depicted in creative, playful fashion, using cut-out figures, puzzle shapes and facades that portray an open book, a climbing wall and the back of a school bus.

Cascading down between the open staircase and the floor-to-ceiling windows that look out across the campus are large, vivid images of contemporary, smiling children and families, as if to remind the visitor that despite its reverence for history, it is the present and future that signifies the Board of Child Care's timeless ministry.

Meeting rooms and more offices are located on the downstairs basement floor.

For President and CEO Thomas Curcio, the new center's message and the Board of Child Care's mission are summed up in three banners that hang at the entrance. One bears Jesus's admonition, from Matthew 19:14, to welcome and not hinder the children "for to such as these belongs the kingdom of heaven." A second banner depicts the hands of a child with the words "To bridge the hurt." The third banner bears Jesus's words in Luke 12:48, "From everyone to whom much is given, much will be required."

"My hope is that when people come here and look at our past and present accomplishments they will be inspired to contribute more to the future of these children," said Curcio, "because there's so much more we must do to help them and others who will come after them."



JOHN COLEMAN

Elizabeth Houston of Rockland UMC, looks at the displays at the Board of Child Care's new Archive Center.