

Bishop's message

Bishop LaTrelle Miller Easterling

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Beloved, July is the beginning of new appointments for many clergy within The United Methodist Church. The first Sunday in any new appointment brings joy, excitement and perhaps a little trepidation for pastors and the congregations they serve.

We often weigh what to preach, whether our sermon will be well received or critiqued, or what vestments, if any we should wear. We recall that old adage, "You never get a second chance to make a first impression."

Beloved, let it go! Let it go and breathe. Let it go and embrace the moment. Let it go and relax into the beginning of a glorious and spirit-filled journey. Let it go and revel in the newness of God. We should begin every new journey confident that we are right where God wants us to be. And whether we're new or returning for another year, there is always something to learn. Just be!

These words are true for our pastors for this season, and for all United Methodists as we seek to begin every day as vessels of God's love and grace.

I concur with Meister Eckhart who said, "Be willing to be a beginner every single morning." Begin to love one another for who you are and who God will help you to become together. Laugh a lot. Preach and hear the Word with compassion and grace. Be your beautiful and exquisite self. Enjoy!

Blessings and Love,
Bishop LaTrelle Easterling



Learn more about
our bishop:



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Monthly message from your Annual Conference

The Bulletin

Join us as 100 percent of our congregations become 100 percent vital and thriving

Camp offers grace & fun to all

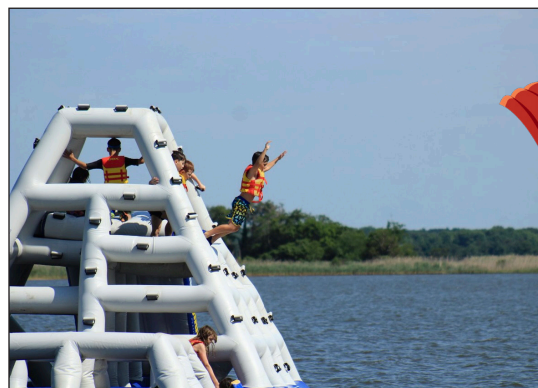
Summer Camp is one of the treasures of United Methodism. In this



region this year, West River near Annapolis, Camp Manidokan near Harper's Ferry, and Camp Pecometh in Centreville helped to transform the lives of more than 2,000

young people at Summer Camp.

Campers, some of whom are second, third and even fourth-generation Methodists, explored the Fruits of the Spirit and studied the Bible in sessions that also included "blob tag." At the heart of the experience was faith interwoven with fun.



The spirit of camp can continue around your family table with these two graces:

"Thanks be to God the Father Almighty, Thanks Be to God who created the Earth, Thanks be to God the Spirit eternal, Thanks be to God forever. Amen."

The Superman grace is sung to the tune of the Superman theme, while standing:

"Thank you God for giving us food (arms up and off to one side like you are flying like Superman)

Thank you God for giving us friends (arms up and off to the other side)

For the food we eat (arms: first side)

And the friends we meet (arms: second side)

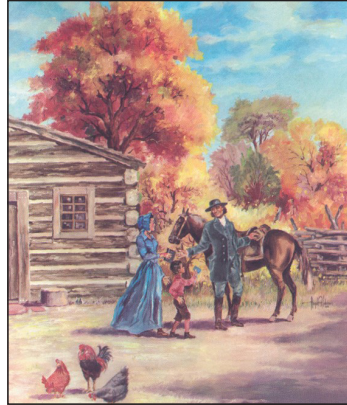
Thank you God (arms straight up) for giving us food. (hands on hips making your best superhero pose)"

Amen!



Meet the Methodists – Robert & Elizabeth Strawbridge

The first Methodists to publicly proclaim their faith in America were Robert and Elizabeth Strawbridge, a married couple who settled in Carroll County, Maryland, in the early 1760s. Immigrants from Ireland, Elizabeth made the first Methodist convert during a conversation with her neighbor while standing at her kitchen sink. She tended the family farm while Robert often set off on horseback -- preaching and teaching. In America, he was the first Methodist to perform a baptism, and the first to start a class meeting, which he held in the couple's living room.



A layman, he frustrated the church leaders by preaching and offering Communion to those who lived too far away from a church. The couple is credited by many historians for lighting the spark that created the Methodist movement in the United States. You can learn more about Robert and Elizabeth at Strawbridge Shrine (www.strawbridgeshrine.org) in New Windsor.

CONNECTIONAL GIVING

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Because you give, United Methodist missionaries serve in 60 different countries as teachers, doctors, nurses, agriculturists, development specialists, community organizers and peacebuilders.

Learn more at umcmmission.org/missionaries.

We are called to live a vital faith



Deepen Discipleship

Deepen, See, Love, Multiply – these are the pillars that create church vitality. Too often, churches focus on “nickels and noses,” counting money and membership, worship attendance and programs. Individuals sometimes focus on activities, appearances and lifestyle faith. But true vitality – the cornerstone of abundant life – is grounded in Seeing All the People, Deepening Discipleship, Living and Loving Like Jesus, and Multiplying Impact.

Every day, United Methodists seek to grow in holiness of heart and life. We seek to intentionally respond to the love and presence of God in our spiritual lives and the way we love our neighbors. In our personal faith, we seek out and engage in acts of devotion and compassion; in their interactions with others, we worship and pursue acts of justice.

Methodism's founder, John Wesley called these acts of grace, which creatively combine “personal piety and social holiness” in ways that deepen discipleship. How are you growing deeper in your faith? What personal or shared spiritual practice might you explore to help you grow in vitality?

