

# Bishop's message

"That my glory may sing your praise and not be silent, O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever!" – Psalm 30:12



Bishop LaTrelle Miller Easterling

Beloved of God,

During this season of Thanksgiving, I am filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude for our journey together. My heart is full of love and appreciation for your steadfast commitment to our mission and ministry. We have come through the valley of the shadow of disaffiliation, sometimes being overwhelmed with grief and lament. And yet, here we are. Continuing to praise God together; continuing to deepen our discipleship together; continuing to serve our communities together. As a conference, we are more than just a gathering of like-minded souls; we are family.

I am keenly aware of the toll this year has taken on so many of you. You remained faithful through personal loss, communal trauma, societal unrest and financial difficulties. The latent effects of COVID finally surfaced for many of us and we served in and through exhaustion. And yet, here we are. Continuing to embody hope and inspiration; continuing to offer healing and restoration; continuing to lift as we climb. Your Christ-centered lives have made a difference in countless ways, and I am humbled by the love and support that permeates our communities.

In the midst of the challenges we face, you, your church, and the Baltimore-Washington and Peninsula-Delaware annual conferences serve as beacons of light, reminding us of the divine presence that resides within and around us. You are a testament to the power of unity and faith, reaffirming our belief in the goodness of Almighty God. Thank you!

Happy Thanksgiving and may God richly bless you.



# The Bulletin

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

## Turning the World Upside Down

This month, area United Methodists gathered with the Rev. Michael Adam Beck, an expert in Fresh Expressions, and the Rev. Bill Brown, the affiliation's Director of Innovative Evangelism, to explore how to create small, often lay-led faith communities for those not currently connected to a church. These communities are cultivated by United Methodists in the daily rhythms and spaces of people's lives and are being formed in unexpected places like tattoo parlors, dog parks, nursing facilities, and community gardens.



**FRESH EXPRESSIONS**  
ACADEMY

During the training Brown encouraged United Methodists – especially the laity – to take risks and turn the world upside down for the sake of the Gospel.

"I believe right now is a profound opportunity for us to access the imagination of God," Beck said. "It's not about our imagination, or our bright ideas, or our innovation, but God has an imagination for communities; God has imagination for people's lives and if we can prayerfully access the imagination of God, it helps us see the gaps in our communities between the fullness of God's Kingdom and what exists as our current reality. It's only through prayerfully accessing the



imagination of God that we can join in with what God is doing and see the fullness of God's kingdom manifest in real places with real people.

# Meet the Methodists: Rev. James Lawson

The son and grandson of Methodist ministers, the Rev. James Lawson, 94, is known as the architect of the nonviolence movement. The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., called him “the leading theorist and strategist of nonviolence in the world.”

As a young man, he worked as a teacher and minister in India and was influenced by Gandhi, coming home to lead college students in Nashville, Tenn. how to put their lives on the lines as they conducted



a peaceful witness at segregated lunch counters in the South. His teachings led to staggering results. On May 10, 1960, Nashville became the first Southern city to desegregate its lunch counters.

For Lawson, Jesus’ message of love and justice stands central in all things. “The politics of Jesus and the politics of God are that people should be fed, that people have access to life, that people should be treated equally and justly,” he said.

“Through nonviolence, courage displaces fear,” he said, “love transforms hate, acceptance dissipates prejudice, hope ends despair, peace dominates war, faith reconciles doubt, mutual regard cancels enmity, justice for all overthrows injustice.”

“There’s an idea in the New Testament that love vanquishes all fear,” Lawson said. “There is an energy in the universe that can allow us human beings to be fearless in living out our lives and in facing whatever the tumult of living is.”

I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. – John 10:10

## Called to grow in vitality



VITALITY

Within the Baltimore-Washington and Peninsula-Delaware Conferences, every church is called to grow to be 100 percent vital. Vitality isn’t measured with numbers, but rather how much congregations embrace the four pillars to live and love like Jesus, see all the people, deepen discipleship, and multiply their impact.

Multiplying impact can feel complicated. In 2 Peter 1:2, the apostle writes: “May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” Multiplication signifies abundance.

In this pillar of vitality, we are called to abundance – aligning what we do with where God is calling the church to be in this season. Many United Methodists mistake activity for impact. But we don’t need to be all things to all people. Rather, we are called to reflect on what God is calling us to do and be and focus on creating that – with grace and peace – in abundance.

