



## CYNTHIA MOORE-KOIKOI ELECTED BISHOP

Baltimore-Washington superintendent elevated to episcopacy



By Maidstone Mulenga  
*DCA Editor*

Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, a district superintendent in the Baltimore-Washington Conference, was elected as a bishop of The United Methodist Church Wednesday evening during the 2016 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference in Lancaster, Pa.

Her election came on the 11th ballot. She received 108 votes, a percentage of 64.29%.

Moore-Koikoi and one other bishop to be elected this week will be consecrated on Friday.

**'God has spoken'** Rev. Cynthia Moore-Koikoi and her husband, Raphael, celebrate. Profile on page 19

## NEJ bishops call for 'justice, repentance and reconciliation'

By Maidstone Mulenga  
*DCA Editor*

Declaring that "black lives really do matter and the lives of all persons of color really do matter," bishops in the Northeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church on Wednesday afternoon called for action in the wake of shootings and violence in the United States.

In a statement read by Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball, president of the College of Bishops, at the start of the 2016 NEJ Conference, the leaders of the United Methodism on the East Coast also declared that: "The lives of our LGBTQ brothers and sisters really do matter."

The bishops stated that all persons are created in God's image, and from our United Methodist faith perspective, all people matter, all are valuable. "The NEJ College of Bishops believes that in the midst of the chaos, fear, and violence, there is a rich opportunity for the church to be the church. We seek to be the leaders of this church. We seek justice, repentance and reconciliation. We seek not just to

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## Daily Christian Advocate

The Daily Christian Advocate is the official daily record for the Northeastern Jurisdictional (NEJ) Conference. The NEJ is composed of nine Episcopal areas (composing 10 annual conferences), from New England to West Virginia.

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## Bulletin Board

- Youth and young adult delegates, representatives, and visitors are invited to gather for conversation and snacks Thursday evening at 9:00 p.m. (after the conclusion of Bishop Matthews' retirement reception) in the Independence Room on the second floor.
- Individuals who have mobility issues and need transportation to the Consecration Service at First United Methodist Church on Friday MUST sign up at the Hospitality Table on the second floor by 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, July 14.
- Water Street Rescue Mission, 210 S. Prince Street, is the local resource for shelter for the homeless.

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## Corrections

Please email corrections in the Daily Christian Advocate to DCA Editor Maidstone Mulenga (maidstonem@gmail.com)

DCA copy deadline for each day is 5 p.m. Please submit the information electronically.

- The story about Lancaster on Page 16 of Wednesday's DCA was written by Jerry Wolgemuth. The byline was missing.

## 2016 NEJ Conference Staff

### *Vision Table*

Bishop Marcus Matthews,  
Chair  
Candace Carter, Vice-Chair  
Thomas J. Salsgiver, Secretary  
David W. Simpson, Treasurer

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*Committee Chair*  
Timothy R. Baer

### *Episcopacy Committee Chair*

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### *Finance and Administration*

*Committee Chair*  
Edward C. Horne

### *Program and Arrangements*

*Committee Chair*  
Boyd B. Etter

### *Rules Committee Chair*

Jen Ihlo

### *Board of Laity Chair or*

*Representative*  
Scott Johnson

### *Ordained Ministry Committee*

*Chair*  
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### *Youth*

Taylor Hamilton  
Helena Cecilia Hamilton-Turner

### *Young Adult Council*

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### *Treasurer*

David Simpson

### *Assistant Treasurer*

Jennifer Williams

### *Registrar*

Sylvia Simpson

*Daily Christian Advocate Editor*  
Maidstone Mulenga

# Thursday Agenda

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity/Group</b>	<b>Meeting Room</b>
6:30 a.m.	Prayer with Eucharist	Hickory Room
7:00-8:00 a.m.	Breakfast	
8:15 a.m.	Conference Session	Heritage
8:30 a.m.	Worship	
	Representative of Council of Bishops: Bishop Mary Ann Swenson	
9:45 a.m.	Conference Session	Heritage
	Daily Reports of Sessions Committees (Journal, Credentials, Courtesies)	
	Report on Committee on Examination of Annual Conference Journal	
	Treasurer's Report	
	Resolutions	
12:00 p.m.-1:30 p.m.	Lunch	
1:30 p.m.	Gathering	
	Recognition of Disciple Bible Study	
1:45 p.m.	Conference Session	Heritage
	Adoption of Budget	
	Committee on Nominations - if needed	
	Resolutions	
	Designation of Conveners and Locations for Organization of 2017-2020 NEJ Committees	
4:30 p.m.	Organization of 2017-2020 Jurisdiction Committees	
	Vision Table	Conestoga
	Committee on Appeals	Hickory A
	Episcopacy	Hickory B
	Rules	Federal 1
	Program & Arrangements	Federal 2
	Finance & Administration	Independence A
	Committee on Investigation	Independence B
	Annual Conference Boundaries	Susquehanna
5:15 p.m.	Dinner	
7:15 p.m.	Session	Heritage
	Continued business	
	Announcement for Jurisdictional Conference	
	Monitoring report: Rev. Leigh Goodrich	
	Closing business	
	Sending forth the Committee on Episcopacy	
	Episcopal election occurs	
8:00 p.m.	Celebration Retirement for Bishop Marcus Matthews	
	Retirement reception	
9:30 p.m.	Journal Committee	Susquehanna

*Continued from page 1: Bishops Respond*

love peace, but to be peacemakers. God's people need us to be bearers of peace."

Offering prayers for "each family and each community affected by profound loss and grief," the bishops also called for prayers for the ripple effect of these acts of violence that strip away certainty of safety, sanctuary, value, and trust.

"The death of young black males in encounters with white law enforcement officers calls for response. The loss of life within our Hispanic/Latino community and among our brothers and sisters identifying with the LGBTQ community in Orlando, calls for response. The death of police officers protecting the rights of persons to peaceably protest points to a destructive cycle of violence and retribution and calls for response," the statement said.

As a call for action, the bishops pledged:

- a) a commitment to acknowledge our participation in the sin of institutional racism and to have ongoing conversations within the College about racism, privilege, and oppression;
- b) to give leadership and develop plans to continue these conversations within and among the jurisdiction and with the leadership of the annual conferences about our own racism and prejudices, to heal the wounds that have been caused by racism, privilege, and oppression;
- c) hold one another accountable, reporting to conferences at their annual sessions and providing a report to the 2020 Jurisdictional Conference; and
- d) to partner with both the Multi-Ethnic Center and the Vision Table in our on-going response.

*The bishops' statement is published in full below.*

## STATEMENT FROM THE NEJ COLLEGE OF BISHOPS



As we gather for this Jurisdictional Conference many persons have been confronted and consumed with the overwhelming reports of shootings and violence. Life taken! Trust broken! Anger and fear growing. Frustration and despair looming. We believe that God's heart

breaks as our hearts break with these acts of violence - fed and complicated by fear, prejudice, racism, and privilege. We pray for each family and each community affected by profound loss and grief. We pray for the ripple effect of these acts of violence that strip →

*Bishops' statement continued from page 4*

away certainty of safety, sanctuary, value, and trust.

The death of young black males in encounters with white law enforcement officers calls for response. The loss of life within our Hispanic/Latino community and among our brothers and sisters identifying with the LGBTQ community in Orlando, calls for response. The death of police officers protecting the rights of persons to peaceably protest points to a destructive cycle of violence and retribution and calls for response.

We, the College of Bishops of the Northeastern Jurisdiction stand together to respond, and our response is not just for the moment.

Our response is a commitment to acknowledge our participation in the sin of institutional racism and to have ongoing conversations within the College about racism, privilege, and oppression. Our response is to give leadership and develop plans to continue these conversations within and among the Jurisdiction and with the leadership of the annual conferences to which we are assigned. The purpose of these dialogues will be to talk about our own racism and prejudices; to heal the wounds that have been caused by racism, privilege, and oppression; to train our leadership and churches in intercultural competency; and to lead them to celebrate diversity. We will lead and offer training for leaders in the craft of building bridges across cultures and ethnicity so that all those whom we profess to acknowledge as created in the image of God and persons of sacred worth will truly feel welcome and find the safety, sanctuary, value and trust these recent and ongoing acts of violence have robbed from them.

We in the College will hold one another accountable for this action, reporting to our conferences at their annual sessions and providing a report to the 2020 Jurisdictional Conference. At the jurisdictional level we will partner with both the Multi-Ethnic Center and the Vision Table in our on-going response.

Together, we claim the need to listen more deeply and to seek greater understanding for those who cry out for justice. We commit ourselves to seeking justice, supporting faithful law enforcement officers, and empowering the movement of people toward more healthy community engagement within the areas we serve.

Because we believe that all persons are created in God's image, from our United Methodist faith perspective, all people matter, all are valuable. In these particularly violent and life-taking incidents and times,

however, we need to intentionally lift up that black lives really do matter and the lives of all persons of color really do matter. The lives of our LGBTQ brothers and sisters really do matter.

The NEJ College of Bishops believes that in the midst of the chaos, fear, and violence, there is a rich opportunity for the church to be the church. We seek to be the leaders of this church. We seek justice, repentance and reconciliation. We seek not just to love peace, but to be peacemakers. God's people need us to be bearers of peace.

At the beginning of this Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference, we ask you to join us. Join us as we make this response not just for the moment, but effecting the future. Our hope is that, together, bishops, clergy, and laity, we might be quilted together more strongly in our work of allowing God to transform us, so that we might go out with God's great transforming love – to bring healing, hope, and peace to the world.

As a beginning, we would ask that you think and reflect with us on these questions? How will you be a peacemaker in the midst of the storms of violence and destruction? How can you be a peacemaker and at the same time work for justice? What can you do to help develop a sense of well-being and harmony in your life, in the lives of neighbors, strangers, friends, and communities? What social problems move you to want to make a difference by building bridges, making connections, valuing people?

Blessed are the peacemakers! Blessed are the peacemakers! Blessed are the peacemakers! In the midst of all the storms encountered and perpetuated in this life, please think on these things! This work begins with each one of us - first individually and then collectively. We, your bishops, will not only be thinking on these things, but moving in response. We seek your prayers and support as we take this action.

“But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the Head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.”(Ephesians 4:15 -16)

# State of the NEJ: The church tears down walls

By **Beth DiCocco**

*DCA Staff*

Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar, who leads the New England Conference, delivered the State of the Northeastern Jurisdiction Address Wednesday afternoon.

Building his address around the theme of this year's conference, "Quilted by Connection," Bishop Devadhar opened with Paul's words to the Ephesians (4:4-6):

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all."

"As United Methodists," the bishop said, "we are quilted together in connection because of our common faith tradition founded on the love of God in and through Jesus Christ."

Paul's words are also about a connection, Devadhar said, the one that "we hold with one another in our shared faith in Christ. He [Paul] also makes reference to the one hope of our calling. This is a promise to hold on to and run with, especially in these times.

The bishop celebrated the blocks of the NEJ quilt that are the mission and ministry taking place in the 10 annual conferences of the jurisdiction, including these:

- Baltimore Washington's InspireDC as a leadership incubator for millennials.
- Peninsula-Delaware's Youth Rally providing inspiration and motivation.
- Greater New Jersey's recruitment of new people through their Ghanaian congregation and the addition of a second Arabic-speaking community of faith.

- New York's First UMC in Flushing having received 59 young adults through professions of faith.
- Upper New York's Leadership Academy.
- West Virginia's increase in attendance, professions of faith and baptisms.
- Western Pennsylvania's process of forming church planters.



- Susquehanna's initiative on Equipping God's People.
- And New England's pilgrimages to Taizé and how they are providing the entryway for new pastoral vocations.

"What an amazing quilt!" Bishop Devadhar said. "All across the Northeastern Jurisdiction, the rich fabric of our United Methodist heritage is being woven into new and amazing faith communities and ministries that reach out into the future."

Bishop Devadhar recounted his visit to the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati and the unfinished quilts –

those that told unfinished stories – he saw there.

"Bishop [Joseph] Yeakel, addressing this same Jurisdictional Conference 20 years ago, referred to The United Methodist Church as 'The Unfinished Church,' Devadhar said. "It is unfinished in the sense that God is not yet finished with us. It is unfinished because God still has work for us to do and is counting on us to keep going, to keep witnessing, to keep championing the causes that have made a positive impact on our world."

Doing that, Devadhar said, requires abandoning "business as usual."



*State of the NEJ continued from page 6*

“We as a church need to be the clear and loud voices of the voiceless, poor, marginalized, LGBTQIA community, and imprisoned who cannot speak for themselves. We cannot keep silent when black lives are being lost in our neighborhoods. And some people are saying we need more walls when we, the church, should be challenging them to tear down all kinds of walls and helping to build bridges,” he said. “We cannot ignore our poor churches that are doing transformational ministries in places that need competent pastors. We cannot remain silent as a church when heroin addiction is destroying families and communities, gun violence is threatening our very being, and genocide and terrorism continue to add to our refugee crisis.

“We cannot remain silent; we need to be active peacemakers or as stated by one of our young adults, Ashley Johnson, ‘If we are really committed to planting seeds of trust that have the potential to positively change the landscape and diet of our society, we’re going to have to get dirty, and we will need all hands on deck.’”

We are called to be one, big, beautiful, pieced-together fabric, the bishop said, but there is work still to be done; we are still unfinished.

“Perhaps we are an ‘unfinished quilt’ because God has more pieces to include in the great mosaic of fabric that tells the story of our faith and lives and history and future,” Devadhar said. “Perhaps we are an unfinished quilt because God has wonderful new ministries for us if only we would listen attentively to the movement of God’s Spirit in our midst. Friends, these are challenging, yet exciting, times to be in ministry. My prayer is that the fabric of our lives remains stitched together as we move forward as people of God in ministry and mission to the Northeast—a quilted connection!”

The full text of the address is on Page 12

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## Bishop Matthews honors God’s unforgettable people

By Erik Alsgaard

*DCA Staff*



During a sacred time of worship Wednesday this morning, Bishop Marcus Matthews of the Baltimore-Washington Conference preached the Service of Remembrance and Communion.

“God gifts us with people who remain unforgettable,” said Matthews. “We celebrate four of those people today.”

Those four included Bishops David Frederick Wertz and Martin McLee; and bishop’s spouses Eunice Treffry Jones Mathews and Lois Yeakel.

Matthews offered brief memories of each of the deceased, noting personal times he and his wife, Barbara, had spent with each.

Bishop Wertz, he said, was his bishop for four years in the Baltimore-Washington Conference. “I would get love notes from him along my journey,” he said. “He saw something in me that I didn’t see myself.”

Both Barbara and he got to know Lois Yeakel at some very deep levels, Bishop Matthews said. “I spent eight years in his Cabinet,” he said.

Bishop McLee, the bishop said, was one who

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# Youth Convo Offers Energizing Worship and Fellowship

By Mollie Landman

*Western Pennsylvania Conference*

The 2016 NEJ Council on Youth Ministries Convocation brought new life and energy to the young people of The United Methodist Church in the Northeastern Jurisdiction. The convocation was held July 8-10 at the Marriott Hotel in Lancaster.

The mission of the Northeastern Jurisdictional Council on Youth Ministry (NEJ CYM) is to grow youth into adult disciples of Jesus Christ. The young people came together for worship and fellowship, and to learn about impoverished areas of the world through Hope International. The youth also made important decisions, including determining how the council should operate. They also elected leaders.

The youth were blessed by the wisdom and guidance of Bishop Peggy Johnson and Retired Bishop Violet Fisher, who emphasized that the youth are children of God and challenged them to continue their connections to each other through their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. They were encouraged to be inclusive to all people, knowing that God has a plan for all.

Throughout the weekend, the young people nominated several youth to committees of the jurisdiction. They include: Mollie Landman for Annual Conference Boundaries; Madison Dean and Zach Aiosa for Finance and Administration; Jose Tirado for Programs and Arrangements; Kiersten Kennedy for Rules; and Jacob Drexler and Jessica Eden for the Vision Table.

Also, Ted Anderson was elected from Upper New York as the Mission of Peace (MOP) adult coordinator, and Heather Stierheim from Upper New York as the assistant adult coordinator.

McKenna Keltz from Western Pennsylvania was chosen as the Division of Ministry with Young People (DMYP) representative for the youth. Bethany Amey-Sutton from Greater New Jersey was chosen as DMYP's adult representative.

Officers of the NEJ Council of Youth Ministries also were elected. They are: Danny McClure from Susquehanna, chair; Mei-Ling Blackstone from Eastern Pennsylvania, vice chair; Mollie Landman from Western Pennsylvania, secretary; Rachel John from Upper New York, Youth Service Fund (YSF) coordinator, and Mike Mancini from Greater New Jersey, financial coordinator. Elected adult coordinators for NEJ CYM were Tony Hipes from Upper New York (4-year position) and Bruce Gowe from Susquehanna (2-year position).

The NEJ Council of Youth Ministries will meet in November to further discuss their plans for the young people of the Jurisdiction.

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## 2017-2020 budget: 'NEJ finances are strong'

By Erik Alsgaard

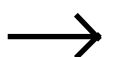
*DCA Staff*

NEJ Conference delegates were given an opportunity to explore the budget for the next quadrennium Wednesday afternoon. The Rev. Edward Horne, chairperson of the Finance and Administration Committee for the NEJ, and a clergy member of the New York Conference, offered highlights and explanations of the proposed budget.

"The state of the NEJ finances are strong," said Horne. "We have been able to fund all the budgetary requests made by all the agencies and committees of the Jurisdiction these past four years, plus extra dollars for emergencies."

Horne thanked each of the annual conferences for supporting the NEJ by paying 100 percent of their jurisdictional apportionments during the past four years.

Total expenses for the 2017-2020 quadrennium are proposed at \$1,347,375, Horne said. This represents a 28 percent increase over the current budget, he said, but that is because of \$200,000 requested for possible





*Budget continued from Page 8*

realignment of annual conferences in 2020.

“When we had conversations around the Vision Table about possibly losing a bishop,” Horne said, “we realized we would have expenses associated with realignment. We added \$200,000 to the budget for this possibility.”

Part of that increase, Horne said, “is because we anticipate costs associated with special sessions, listening posts, and other expenses related to realignment.”

The NEJ was threatened with losing one bishop for 2016-2020 due to membership decline, Horne said, but the 2016 General Conference approved keeping all nine.

Even with the reprieve, Horne said, the NEJ CFA thought it shouldn't wait until four years down the road to address the issue of possible realignment. That is why, he said, the \$200,000 is still in the budget.

Leadership development continues to be a priority of the NEJ, said Horne, with \$55,200 in the budget for the Episcopal Leadership Conclave. This addition, he said, comes from reducing the Leadership Development line, to which the Bishops' Conclaves had been charged during the current quadrennium.

“This re-categorization will give the College of Bishops full control of the expenditures for their ongoing training without seeking funds from other program lines,” Horne said.

Horne noted that the NEJ does not have any program staff, “but we have a lot of wonderful volunteers,” he said. The Rev. David Simpson serves as treasurer, and the Rev. Jen Williams serves as assistant treasurer. Both are up for re-election this year.

Most of the program dollars, Horne said, go to four areas: the Anna Howard Shaw Center, the Multi-Ethnic Center, Korean-American Ministry, and Volunteers in Mission. Much of the Finance Committee's work was given to evaluating and reviewing these ministries, Horne said, but that work will now be given over to the College of Bishops.

Voting on the NEJ budget is expected to take place today.

The reports of the NEJ CFA can be found on pages 11 through 14 of the Advanced Daily Christian Advocate.

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*'Unforgettable' people continued from Page 7*

left us “too soon.” The bishop described him as a visionary and gave thanks that he and other NEJ bishops were able to minister to him in his last days.

Bishop Matthews knew Eunice Mathews very well, he said, and he would often visit her along with her pastor, the Rev. Charles Parker from Metropolitan Memorial UMC in Washington, D.C., to take her communion and have tea. Eunice Mathews, who died just short of 102 years old, was ahead of her time, he said, and helped show him and Barbara that they lived in a “global village.”

In his sermon, Bishop Matthews said that the common thread weaving all four together was that they welcomed everyone to the table. Using Ephesians 4:11-13 as his text, the bishop said that each of these four “had a role to play in helping the church move to a higher level of maturity, centered in Jesus Christ.”

If we are to continue the legacy of those whom we remember and honor her today, Bishop Matthews said, then each generation of the church must push us higher and broader in our understanding of what it means to be followers of Jesus Christ. “They loved everyone,” he said.

The bishop said that he is in the midst of moving right now and has been in a technology blackout for eight days. We get a diet of negativity every day, he said, but, as “we start this NEJ, we don't need to start with a lot of negativity.

“We as the people of God have something the world doesn't have,” he said.

Encouraging everyone to stay at the table, the bishop proclaimed that the best is yet to come for the Northeastern Jurisdiction. “God is not finished with us yet,” he said. “I believe that with all of my heart.”

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# Call to Action to the NEJ and The NEJ College of Bishops

We applaud, appreciate and fully support the College of Bishops' opening challenge to us and to the church. The clear willingness of the College of Bishops to lead us toward the healing of the wounds of racism affirms and underscores the purpose of the Call to Action in our original resolution/petition. We therefore stand in solidarity with the College of Bishops and those who stood together with our bishops as their statement affirmed the value of all life and especially Black lives. What we've heard from our bishops gives even more authenticity and purpose to the vision, goals and objectives found in Our Call to Action printed in the July 12, DCA. However, after prayerful consideration and the undeniable moving of the Holy Spirit in this the 2016 gathering of the NEJ, we have re-written with greater specificity the original document.

Following the slaughter and carnage of black lives and officers of the law last week, several persons representing the following groups in the NEJ: Black United Methodist Pastors (BUMP), and Black Leadership Forum (BLF) (including several delegates), gathered for an emergency conference call Sunday evening. As a result of this conversation, along with consultation with the Executive Director of the Multiethnic Center for Ministry and the strong encouragement of NEJ-Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR) Coordinator/Chairperson, it is clear that the time to act is NOW.

It was unanimously agreed that it is time to break our silence. The people of faith called United Methodist have not mobilized nor been pro-active enough. While there have been pronouncements, calls to prayer, moments of silence and candlelight vigils, we have not moved from rhetoric to action. Racism, white privilege and white supremacy, which are inconsistent with the kingdom of God are still the order of the day. To those viewing from within and from outside, the church appears to be complicit in perpetuating a culture of racism and white privilege.

Therefore, in an effort to address, confront and otherwise demand systemic, fundamental and institutional change both within the church and the world, we are calling on the NEJ College of Bishops, the lay and clergy leadership of the NEJ and each Annual Conference to do the following:

1. To confront your racism, and affirm that while all lives matter in God's eyes, in the current cultural and social context of this country, black lives and all lives of color really do matter.
  2. That the NEJ College of Bishops collectively and as individuals lead the Church in healing the wounds caused by unchecked racism, white privilege and internalized oppression.
  3. To require the district superintendents and staff of all conferences to comply with #1 above.
  4. To mandate ongoing internal and external conversations on white privilege, white supremacy, racism and internalized oppression on every district, sub-district, and within each local church. Realizing that viewing each other through the eyes of Christ and remaining at the table during the hard/difficult discussion is the only way/path to new genuine relationships and partnerships, we believe that out of these conversations new and more sustainable relationships and partnerships will emerge.
  5. To require training in areas of racism, white privilege and white supremacy for the entire College of Bishops, the district superintendents and other conference staff.
  6. To address the impact of structural and institutional racism on people of color in the NEJ: particularly
    - a. The closing of Black churches; and
    - b. How current ordination processes in the annual conferences affect black persons interested in ordained ministry.
  7. That each Annual Conference be required to provide an annual update on work in all of the above to the NEJ Committee on Episcopacy and the Multi-Ethnic Center for Ministry.
  8. That each Annual Conference will provide a written report to be included in the 2020 NEJ Advance Daily Christian Advocate. This report shall include: (1) Its progress within the 2017-2020 Q and (2) Its plans for the 2021-2024 Q.
  9. The funding required for this proposal will be developed in partnership with the College of Bishops, the Vision Table and the Multi-Ethnic Center for Ministry.
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In addition to this funding providing the resourcing for these seven phases, we anticipate that it will also provide seed funding for the implementation of the following goals to be accomplished by the end of the 2017-2020 Q: 1. Those areas with a significant population of persons of African descent African American demographic should be reflected in this number of black leaders, both lay and clergy, at every level of the Jurisdiction and Annual Conferences.

2. To establish at least one new Community of Faith (New Church Start) specifically for black children, youth and young adults in every Episcopal Area in the NEJ.

3. To plant at least one new black church in every Episcopal area.

4. To increase the number of viable and sustainable black Churches and ministries in the NEJ.

5. To study the impact of structural and institutional racism on Black people in the NEJ, in particular:

a. Closing of Black Churches; and

b. The impact of the ordination process on the number of Black persons interested in ordained ministry.

There have already been far too many Black lives taken at the hands of those who are charged to “protect and serve.” In the inimitable words of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: “...we are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now... .”

Finally, it is as true today as it was during the civil rights era that:

...In a real sense, all life is inter-related. All of humankind are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied to a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be, until you are what you ought to be; and you can never be what you ought to be, until I am what I ought to be. (MLK, Jr.)

**TODAY IS THE TIME FOR ACTION!**

(Submitted by; NEJ Black United Methodist Pastors , NEJ Black Methodists for Church Renewa, NEJ-Black Leadership Forum)

Joseph Daniels, Varlyna Wright, William Meekins, Lillian Smith, Denise Smart-Sears,

## NEJ Treasurer, Secretary re-elected



The Rev. Thomas Salsgiver, director of Connectional Ministries for the Susquehanna Conference was re-elected secretary of the NEJ. He has served in several roles at the district, jurisdictional and general church levels. He previously served as a district superintendent and director of Connectional Ministries.

Sharon Darlynn McCrae, Baltimore-Washington Conference was re-elected assistant secretary.

The Rev. David Simpson, from the Baltimore-Washington Conference was re-elected NEJ treasurer. He has

performed the duties of treasurer with his wife, Sylvia, as registrar. Prior to being treasurer, Simpson served as chair of the Program and Arrangement Committee for the NEJ from 2005 to 2008, and was the assistant treasurer from 2008-2012.

The Rev. Jennifer Williams, Susquehanna Conference, was re-elected current assistant treasurer.

# NEJ Episcopal Address by Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ of the Northeastern Jurisdiction, I greet you in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Will you pray with me?

As I begin this Episcopal Address, let us reflect on Paul's words in his letter to the Ephesians:

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all." Ephesians 4:4-6 (NRSV)

We are meeting this week in one of the epicenters of the quilting world. Lancaster hosts annual quilt shows with participants from all over the world, so it makes sense that we United Methodists would pick up on the quilting theme to reflect on who we are as we gather together for holy conferencing here in Lancaster.

The American Quilter's Society, sponsor of Lancaster's "Quilt Week," which was held in March of this year ...believes that with inspiration and advice, creative individuals can take quilting projects beyond anything they have previously imagined. That is why inspiration is central to everything they do. The leading authors in quilting choose to publish with AQS, the best in quilt artistry display their work at AQS events, and the newest quilters learn from the knowledge and inspiration of AQS members.

The tradition of quilting goes back to the earliest days of settlers living in this part of the country. According to the organization, "Quilting in America," based in Lubbock, Texas,

The quilt, as we know it in America, was originally a strictly utilitarian article, born of the necessity of providing warm covers for beds. Quilts were also used as hangings for doors and windows that were not sealed well enough to keep out the cold. The earliest American quilts, made by English and Dutch settlers, were so intimately connected to everyday life of the early colonists that no record of them exists.

Today, quilting has become a form of art that goes beyond the mere utilitarian use it still has. A quilt is composed of many individual pieces of fabric that are sewn together to form a mosaic picture that reflects the designer's artistic vision or simply tells a story or calls attention to an event, landmark or season of the year.

When we apply the analogy of quilting to our jurisdiction of United Methodism, we, too, come up with a mosaic picture comprised of individual annual conferences representing thousands of individual churches across a vast geography. It is our connection as United Methodists that brings us together despite different points of view, theologies, cultures, accents, races, sexual orientations, and political affiliations as well as the great diversity of people who have come to live in the northeast from other parts of the country or the world. There is a rich diversity of individual pieces of cloth that are sewn together. As United Methodists, we are quilted together in connection because of our common faith tradition founded on the love of God in and through Jesus Christ.

When the pieces that have been sewn together are stitched into a quilt, the entire fabric becomes stronger and durable. Without the quilting, the cloth portraits would be vulnerable to fraying and would not stand up to the test of time.

On the screen now is a photo of an 1809 quilt—207 years old! Similarly, our Methodist connection in this part of the United States traces its beginning back 250 years—to 1766 and the very first Methodist societies that were formed in Baltimore and New York. We are here today because of the strength of the stitching that has bound us together for 250 years: "one Lord, one faith, one baptism."

When Paul wrote these words, he, too, was referring to the quilted connection we hold with one another in our shared faith in Christ. He also makes reference to the one hope of our calling. This is a promise to hold on to and run with, especially in these times. Please allow me to describe some of the stitching that binds us together as witnesses for Christ in our present age in the Northeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church. There is so much to celebrate. Just as quilters make a beautifully designed warm blanket by sewing together individual pieces of fabric, we become a beautiful creation when we connect our vital ministries and mission across the jurisdiction.

Picture a large quilt. If we start in the upper left corner, we see the block that shows the beauty and strength of our common vision. This past quadrennium, our NEJ Vision Table gathered together our Extended Cabi- →

nets, Boards of Ordained Ministry, and young and emerging leaders for the “See/Know/Love” Transformational Leadership Conference in Hershey, PA. Over 600 new and emerging leaders came together for networking and resourcing our church. New conversations and relationships began that planted seeds of fruits that we will see in the years to come.

Now move over one block to the right in this jurisdictional quilt to another piece highlighting our shared mission. This year marks the 30th anniversary of Mission of Peace organized by the Northeastern Jurisdiction Council on Youth Ministries. As Rev. Dr. J. F. Lacaria writes, "The Mission of Peace was created from the combination of Bishop C. Dale White's challenge to the NEJCYM to venture out and see the church at work in the world, and the wanderlust of Rev. Gordon Shea, Alfred University campus pastor and NEJ youth worker who was always ready to go some place interesting in the world." .

As we are all aware, this journey of Shalom has transformed many youth across the jurisdiction and the fruits of their transformation are yielding more and more fruits across the globe. This quadrennium seven bishops and others joined them in their pilgrimage to the Mission of Peace to India. What a marvelous experience it was for bishops, youth, and leaders! It is impossible to express in human language the joy, breadth, and depth of this pilgrimage. In retrospect I wish we had recorded some of the holy conversations and courageous, yet authentic, questions our youth asked bishops during this pilgrimage.

Moving over one more block, we see another shining light of our shared work as a jurisdiction: the NEJ network of Boards of Ordained Ministry. For years, they have modeled best practices in collaborative ministry and shared resources. Our Cabinets observed the strength of that network at Hershey and are seeking to build a similar connection together for their work.

If we move to the top right corner of our quilt, we celebrate as a jurisdiction each and every one of you! As the church, beautiful people of God, we need to pause and reach out to our neighbors and thank them for their passion for mission. Even though membership has decreased, the total dollars spent for mission climbed from \$33 per member in 1996 to \$40 per member in 2014. Friends, this increase is higher than the inflation rate! Way to go church! Let us celebrate this...reach out to your neighbor and say to him or her, “Thank you for your passion for mission!”

The remaining blocks of fabric represent some of the amazing ministries and initiatives in our NEJ patchwork from each annual conferences. Today, I want to lift up and celebrate these pieces of fabric that together make up our quilted connection in the jurisdiction. When you hear these stories, you will not only be able to see the beauty of each conference; you will also be able to follow the stitching that binds us as members of the Northeastern Jurisdiction – and more importantly as United Methodist siblings in Christ.

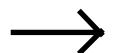
Bishop Marcus Matthews shared:

- With more millennials per capita than any other U.S. city, Washington, D.C. is home to a new faith community, Inspire D.C., that is joining the poor and affluent to work together to feed whole communities of people.
- From providing backpacks to making sure children are fed, to combatting bullying, tutoring and even addressing rampant heroin addiction in area schools, the churches of the Baltimore-Washington Conference are reaching out to children in their communities in innovative and transformative ways.
- When violence and racial unrest erupted in Baltimore, United Methodists were in the streets praying with the people and opening church buildings for meals and support.

Bishop Matthews, if I may add: This is the model all of us should follow.

Bishop Peggy A. Johnson shared:

- Each January, the Pen Del Youth Rally brings some 4,000 teenagers to the Ocean City, Maryland, Convention Center for worship, music, inspiration and challenge.
- In May of 2015, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the merger of the Delaware and Philadelphia conferences.
- Also last year, the Southeast District of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference raised the funds to build a pediatric unit in Mpasa, Congo, to meet the needs of children and families.



Bishop John Schol shared:

- In the last 10 months, the Greater New Jersey Conference chartered a new Ghanaian congregation with more than 200 singing and dancing worshippers and engaged a new Egyptian faith community that now has more than 60 worshippers. It is the second Arabic language congregation in Greater New Jersey.
- The primarily Anglo congregation at Morristown United Methodist Church is an example of how vital congregations are pursuing God's call. They have a Korean pastor and launched a new Hispanic ministry on Pentecost Sunday.
- Through "A Future with Hope," Greater New Jersey has now worked with 441 families, teamed up with 11,004 volunteers, to repair or build new 234 homes as part of the Hurricane Sandy recovery effort.

Bishop Jane Middleton shared:

- In the New York Conference, First UMC in Flushing received 59 young adults by profession of faith on Easter Sunday.
- Tien Fu, a Chinese congregation in Brooklyn, worships with 500 on Sunday. Because so many of their members work Sundays, they also host a complete worship with a choir on Monday mornings for several hundred more.

Bishop Mark J. Webb shared:

- Upper New York has more than 50 active new faith communities and several more are in various stages of planning.
- A focus on increasing leadership capacity has led to the development of a leadership academy; the preaching academy, Preaching for Power; peer learning groups and more.
- Renovations have begun for a new conference center that will also house a Mission Central hub of more than 10,000 square feet.

Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball shared:

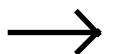
- There is good news in the West Virginia Conference! They are reaching more people for Christ! They are walking more people into discipleship. For the first time in many, many years, total worship attendance is not only up, but up by 4.3%. Professions of faith are up by 10%. Baptisms up 11%.
- For the past three years, West Virginia has focused on "raising the blinds" to see where Christ is present in its communities and seeking to join Christ at work there. They are taking the word "can't" out of their vocabulary, and intentionally working on spiritual formation.

Bishop Thomas Bickerton shared:

- Western Pennsylvania celebrates the ongoing partnership with the Zimbabwe Episcopal Area. Since 2010, the "chabadza covenant" has continued to expand ministries in both annual conferences. Relationships are strengthened as they engage with the leaders of both conferences.
- Western Pennsylvania has an ongoing process for formation of church planters that is in its second year. The cabinet along with their Director of Congregational Development and Parish and Community Development team are working diligently toward a vision for new churches and new places for new people.
- Western Pennsylvania celebrated its 8th consecutive year of paying 100 percent of General and Jurisdictional Apportionments.

Bishop Jeremiah Park shared:

- In the fall of 2013, the Susquehanna Conference began a new initiative called Equipping God's People or 'EGP' that is designed to resource lay people to lead their church toward the type of vitality that responds to a rapidly changing world. Groups of laity are invited to come together across districts, clusters or within their own local church to share together in the study and application of exciting ideas that stretch the



boundaries of what we think possible for the church today.

- Since 2013, dozens of EGP courses have been offered across the conference and an estimated 500 laity have responded with enthusiasm and passion for doing out-of-the box ministry within their local churches, communities and beyond. The excitement has only continued to build as new courses are set up throughout the year, and new ideas are taking root where laity and clergy combine efforts to envision God's Kingdom coming to life in new and transformational ways.

And if you will allow me to share what we are celebrating in the New England Conference:

- Our annual pilgrimage to the Taizé Community in France is awakening and renewing faith in youth and young adults. This year's Laity Address was delivered by Ashley Johnson, a former teacher and Taizé pilgrim, who is now attending seminary at Boston University School of Theology.
- We have drawn on the incredible resources of the boards and agencies of our general church. With assistance from GCFA, we have analyzed and improved our financial practices and goals and now have access to IT resources and support that would not have been possible otherwise.
- Two years ago, we initiated a transitional workshop for every pastor and congregation preparing for a pastoral change. The workshops include a video made by a rainbow of retired bishops and conference leaders to equip churches and pastors in Cross-racial/Cross-cultural appointments in particular. They have been transformational in leading to quicker acceptance and stronger ministries in these vital appointments.

What an amazing quilt! All across the Northeastern Jurisdiction, the rich fabric of our United Methodist heritage is being woven into new and amazing faith communities and ministries that reach out into the future.

The strong stitching in our quilted connection holds us together as we share in a common witness of the truth and love of Jesus Christ for the people living in the northeast. This quilted connection will bear fruit into the future. When we follow the key lines of thread in our quilted connection, we are led to some of the challenges and opportunities for people living in our midst and the ministries we undertake to address them. Let's take a closer look at these key lines of thread, especially as they relate to the four areas of ministry focus of our church.

### **Engaging in Ministry with the Poor**

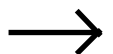
As United Methodists, we affirm our call to be in ministry with the poor and marginalized. The key word here is "with." We are called to stand "with those who are regarded as 'the least of these,' listening to them, understanding their needs and aspirations, and working with them to achieve their goals." It involves us in the work of advocacy to address the underlying causes of poverty.

According to a report published by UNICEF, "the United States ranks near the bottom of the pack of wealthy nations on a measure of child poverty...In the richest nation in the world, one in three kids live in poverty." According to the National Poverty Center at the University of Michigan, "Children represent a disproportionate share of the poor in the United States; they are 24 percent of the total population, but 36 percent of the poor population. In 2010, 16.4 million children, or 22.0 percent, were poor. The poverty rate for children also varies substantially by race and Hispanic origin. Poverty rates for blacks and Hispanics greatly exceed the national average. In 2010, 27.4 percent of blacks and 26.6 percent of Hispanics were poor, compared to 9.9 percent of non-Hispanic whites and 12.1 percent of Asians."

Our Northeastern Jurisdiction area includes areas of extreme poverty as well as excess wealth. As we engage in ministry with the poor, we need to continue to encourage our churches to find ways to alleviate the devastation of poverty as well as advocate for ways in which we can address its root causes. Residents of New England, where I serve, are less likely to live in poverty than residents of the U.S. as a whole, but poverty has increased in every New England county in the past decade. There are important challenges to all of us in the Northeastern Jurisdiction as we continue to focus our energy, time, and resources in ministries with the poor.

### **Improving Global Health**

We, as United Methodists, know that poverty and health are intertwined. Another area of focus of our church has to do with improving global health. We heard the celebrations of our annual conferences



that have forged partnerships with sister conferences in Africa and of the lives that have been saved through our focused efforts to eliminate malaria. As we live into the future of this quilted connection, we need to keep fighting diseases and promote wellbeing everywhere and anywhere. We are close to eradicating malaria in Africa, but there are new challenges on the horizon. We need to be ever vigilant in pursuing the end of diseases such as AIDS, Zika, and Ebola; stopping the increasing impact of climate change on global health, as well as the rise of gun violence and drug addiction; and preparing for yet to be known maladies. As the government website, “Healthy People” indicates, “Rarely a week goes by without a headline about the emergence or re-emergence of an infectious disease or other health threat somewhere in the world.” As one of the four areas of focus for our church, we, too, are called to do what we can and advocate for the prevention of the spread of disease to protect our health and the health of billions of people worldwide.

### **Developing Principled Leaders**

As United Methodists, gathered in quilted connection, we reaffirm our commitment to develop principled leaders. As we have asserted as a denomination:

The church needs leaders rooted in Christ, who have a vision for changing the world. Today’s young people have fearless hearts, vibrant ideas and a passion for ministry. Their talents should be nurtured to shape the church’s path into the future. The church must recruit young people — including women and people of color the world over — for ministry, equip them to be effective leaders and be open to where they want to lead us. We also must strengthen lay members, who are ministering at every level of the church.

We lifted up examples of how some of our newer ministries are developing younger principled leaders. We mentioned . . .

- Baltimore Washington’s Inspire DC as a leadership incubator for millennials.
- Peninsula-Delaware’s Youth Rally providing inspiration and motivation.
- New Jersey’s recruitment of new people through their Ghanaian congregation and the addition of a second Arabic-speaking community of faith.
- New York’s First UMC in Flushing having received 59 young adults through professions of faith.
- Upper New York’s Leadership Academy.
- West Virginia’s increase in attendance, professions of faith and baptisms.
- Western Pennsylvania’s process of forming church planters.
- Susquehanna’s initiative on Equipping God’s People.
- And New England’s pilgrimages to Taizé and how they are providing the entryway for new pastoral vocations.

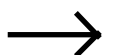
All of these initiatives are fulfilling the call to develop principled leaders for next generation of the church. We give praise to God.

### **Creating New and Renewed Congregations**

Finally, as United Methodists, we are committed to finding new places for new people. We celebrate the many innovative ways in which this is happening across our quilted connection of the northeast. From dinner churches in Massachusetts to Hot Metal bridges in Pennsylvania and many other new expressions of church, we give thanks to United Methodist leaders who are helping create new places where new people can come to know the joy of Christian fellowship and commit their lives to follow Jesus Christ.

Last month as I was watching the live stream of my former home conference, I was thoroughly enjoying it, laughing with joy. My wife Prema kept reminding me to quiet down, but I was so excited to be watching the worship service led by youth and young adults at the Upper New York Annual Conference. It was a worshipful experience and a teaching moment seized by the youth.

However, as much as we celebrate our children, youth and young adults, we as a jurisdiction lost 49% of our children and 32% of our youth and experienced a 58% decline in baptisms between the years of 1996 and 2014. Friends, this is a very serious concern. Harvard professor, Robert D. Putnam explains the





gravity of this loss when he says, “Churchgoing kids have better relations with their parents and other adults, have more friendships with high-performing peers, are more involved in sports and other extracurricular activities, are less prone to substance abuse (drugs, alcohol, and smoking), risky behavior (like not wearing seat belts), and delinquency (shoplifting, misbehaving in school, and being suspended or expelled). As with mentoring, religious involvement-when it happens-makes a bigger difference in the lives of poor kids than rich kids, in part because affluent youth are more exposed to other positive influences.”


These are times of challenge and promise. I believe we are called to continue to improve upon the ministry of church “as we have always known it” while at the same time creating new models of ministry that will carry us forward into the future. We see it happening, and we need to have the courage and fortitude to follow the movement of the Holy Spirit to allow new expressions of church to take form.

During a recent trip to Cincinnati, I visited a wonderful downtown museum on the banks of the Ohio River that honors the many people who helped slaves from the south escape to the north. Coincidentally, this building where we are meeting stands on the site of parts of the Underground Railroad. You can see the evidence on display in the downstairs. In Cincinnati, “The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center,” includes the largest exhibition of African American quilts ever assembled. On view now and throughout the summer, 85 quilts tell the history of 400 years of slavery. There is one quilt that takes up an entire wall, and it took the quilter 35 years to complete. I am told some quilts that tell a long story are purposely left “unfinished” because the story itself is unfinished.

It is like that for the work of the church. Bishop Joseph Yeakel, addressing this same Jurisdictional Conference 20 years ago, referred to The United Methodist Church as “The Unfinished Church.” It is unfinished in the sense that God is not yet finished with us. It is unfinished because God still has work for us to do and is counting on us to keep going, to keep witnessing, to keep championing the causes that have made a positive impact on our world. One of the points that Bishop Yeakel emphasized 20 years ago is the work of United Methodists that is conciliar. “I’d like to be part of a Church that’s conciliar. Not tied to creeds and faith statements—although we use and need faith statements. But a Church that believes God is still speaking! And so we meet in council to counsel together to understand God’s will. A conciliar Church.”

Conciliarism is very much a part of the DNA of Methodism. In his book, the late Bishop David J. Lawson speaks about the early Methodists and conferences, and he reminds us that bathed in prayer, the conference spent five days together asking two fundamental questions: “What to teach?...[and] What to do? or How to regulate the doctrine, discipline, and practice of the ministry and the society.” He continues to write, “There is a major difference between ‘conferencing’ and ‘legislating.’ Conferencing as a style implies open and respectful sharing of ideas and experience as we seek for better wisdom. As our church has grown large and more complex, it was thought that our conferences needed a legislative style. The new style requires parliamentary procedure, motions and amendments, debate and political coalitions. However, we are still at our best when we follow the spirit of ‘conferencing.’”

I agree with Bishop Yeakel: I want to be part of a church that is conciliar! I am also thankful to Bishop Lawson for reminding us that, “The originating purpose of the conference was ‘to aid in preserving unity, to encourage those who most suffered from mobs and social ostracism, to maintain the organization of the societies, and to allow for the systematic transferring of the pastors from one point to another.’”

What a prophetic statement! We cannot talk about unity on the surface without attacking ghosts that ruin the fabric of God's creation. Friends, it is no longer time for the church to do “business as usual.” We as a church need to be the clear and loud voices of the voiceless, poor, marginalized, LGBTQIA community, and imprisoned who cannot speak for themselves. We cannot keep silent when black lives are being lost in our neighborhoods, and some people are saying we need more walls when we, the church, should be challenging them to tear down all kinds of walls and helping to build bridges. We cannot ignore our poor churches that are doing transformational ministries in places that need competent pastors. We cannot remain silent as a church when heroin addiction is destroying families and communities, gun violence is threatening our very being, and genocide and terrorism continue to add to our refugee crisis. We cannot remain silent; we need to be active peacemakers or 

as stated by one of our young adults, Ashley Johnson, “If we are really committed to planting seeds of trust that have the potential to positively change the landscape and diet of our society, we’re going to have to get dirty, and we will need all hands on deck.”

What if we took a break from following Roberts Rules of Order and instead yielded ourselves completely to the hands of God, trusting the Holy Spirit to take over in our all our deliberations? Church, are we courageous enough to do this or do we fall into the trap like what we saw occur in the General Conference, spending almost three days talking about Rule 44?

What if our annual conferences were a means of grace, transforming hearts and minds to embrace God's vision for the church? What if Holy Conferencing was so clearly our priority that when our clergy and laity returned to their mission stations, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and passionately in love with God, Christ, and neighbors, the people back home asked them, ‘What wine did you drink, oops...what grape juice did you drink at the Annual Conference?’”

We are a “quilted connection.” We are invited to remember always that we are called to the one hope of our calling, by the one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God of all, who is above all and through all and in all.” We are called to be one, big, beautiful, pieced fabric. The stitching that unites us holds us together despite differing perspectives on what God is calling us to be and do in this present age. Perhaps we are an “unfinished quilt” because God has more pieces to include in the great mosaic of fabric that tells the story of our faith and lives and history and future. Perhaps we are an unfinished quilt because God has wonderful new ministries for us if only we would listen attentively to the movement of God’s spirit in our midst. Friends, these are challenging, yet exciting, times to be in ministry. My prayer is that the fabric of our lives remains stitched together as we move forward as people of God in ministry and mission to the northeast—a quilted connection!



## Bishop-elect Moore-Koikoi: 'I remind myself, God has got this.'

By Melissa Lauber and Erik Alsgaard  
Baltimore-Washington Communicators



Bishop Marcus Matthews and Bishop John Schol congratulate Cynthia Moore-Koikoi after her election on Wednesday evening. She served as a district superintendent under both of them.

The Rev. Cynthia Moore-Koikoi of the Baltimore-Washington Conference was elected as a bishop in The United Methodist Church at the 2016 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference.

The new bishop served as superintendent of the Baltimore-Metropolitan District immediately before her election, where she played a pivotal spiritual role in the city following the unrest in 2015 around the death of Freddie Gray in police custody.

The daughter of a retired United Methodist pastor, she grew up in the church, worked for 17 years as a school psychologist, and was ordained as an Elder in 2010. She has served as a student pastor at St. Matthews UMC in Highlandtown, Md.; an associate pastor at Calvary UMC in Annapolis, Md.; a Discippler Guide, resourcing local churches; and as a superintendent of the Greater Washington and Baltimore Metropolitan districts.

She also serves as chair of the conference's Unified Funding Task Force, which oversees loans and grants, and as the Cabinet's spiritual director.

Moore-Koikoi says she sees the work of bishops as "overseeing the work of the church, working prophetically, evangelically and apostolically with all as they cooperate with the Grace of God."

A key component of that, she believes, is leaving space for the transforming movement of the Holy Spirit, especially at this time in the life of the church when the denomination is divided and many people may be wondering about what the future might hold.

"That's spiritual work -- remembering who God is and who God has called us to be," she said. "We got God, so we got this."

Moore-Koikoi sees herself, she said, "as a bridge-builder," clear and confident about what she believes, while also respecting others who might not believe the same way.

Growing up as an African-American woman in an often discriminatory culture and church, Moore-Koikoi believes she has a unique voice.

"As a woman of color, I have learned the gift of perseverance," she said, "being able to hold onto hope in the midst of oppression.

"Our denomination needs that," said Moore-Koikoi. "As our pews become more empty, as we experience more financial difficulties, we have to hold out hope. I've had to use my spiritual eyes."

Her vision is one of a diverse church that embraces justice and the life-saving love of Christ.

When she was a child, she listened to her preacher father. He taught her the 139th Psalm, "especially the beautifully and wonderfully made part."

As a new bishop, it's a vision of the church she's committed to work for. It won't be easy, and the "awesome responsibility" has her feeling a little scared.

"But I remind myself, God has got this. God is in control," she said. "My role and the church's role is to experience the reign of God here on earth and point that out to people."

