

The Bulletin

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

Holy Conferencing is a spiritual act



As people of God, United Methodists are called to participate in holy conferencing. In addition to Bible study, prayer, and Communion, Methodism's founder, John Wesley, taught that conferencing with others in community is a practice that helps people experience God's grace.

Holy conferencing allows us to have difficult conversations in honest and meaningful ways. It "puts the *method* in Methodism," some church leaders say. It invites

the Holy Spirit into our interactions.

Each year, equal numbers of clergy and lay members from every United Methodist Church in a region meet for holy conferencing at an Annual Conference Session. This year, members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference will meet May 31-June 3 in Baltimore, members of the Peninsula-Delaware Conference will meet June 8-10 in Princess Anne, Maryland.

The theme of both conferences is "All About Love." In meeting with church leaders from throughout the affiliation, Bishop LaTrelle Easterling has lifted up some of her thoughts on holy conferencing.

She has been moved by the writing of theologian bell hooks. "Love is wanting yourself and others to be everything God intends for us to be," the bishop said. "We are called to see as God sees. We are called to be love."

Bishop's message

The tongue. The human tongue is a conglomeration of eight muscles. It is used throughout the day to perform several functions, such as tasting, breathing, swallowing and speaking. Proverbs 18:21 says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." It may not be the strongest muscle, but it can offer hope and healing, light and love, justice and joy.

Through our tongue, our words have power and can either bring light or darkness, it is incumbent

upon us to speak with a pure heart. There are myriad scriptures that espouse this teaching, but perhaps none as clearly as what Jesus taught in Matthew 12:34b, "What fills the heart comes out of the mouth."

In the season ahead, as we live in a world plagued with deception, may we allow the power of the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth of our hearts to us. And when we receive this truth, may we humble ourselves before God to be

cleansed of anything that is not of God. May we be more fully aligned with the will of God and fully alive in Christ, in whom is all truth and love. May our words then bring hope, healing and joy to a world yearning for truth. May we use the power of our tongues to the glory of God.

Learn more about our bishop:



What is an Annual Conference?

The Bulletin is designed to bring news of the annual conference to people in United Methodist pulpits and pews. An annual conference is a regional organization that connects local United Methodist churches. Clergy hold their membership in the annual conference, and lay members join together to do ministry that they might not be able to accomplish alone.

The Baltimore-Washington Conference (BWC) is composed of about 600 churches and

134,000 members in Washington, D.C., parts of Maryland and the panhandle of West Virginia. It has an office in Fulton, Maryland, with a staff of about 50 people. The Peninsula-Delaware (Pen-Del) Conference has about 400 churches and 81,000 members in Delaware and the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Its staff of about 15 people work in offices in Dover, Delaware. The two conferences are joined in an affiliation. They share a bishop, LaTrelle Easterling, some staff, and many ministries.

While the Affiliation was started in 2021, the annual conferences share a common story that can be traced back to 1784 and the beginning of Methodism in the new world. Pen-Del's vision is "Connected Christians offering the Hope of Jesus Christ in today's world." The BWC's vision is "transformed lives, transform lives." Together, they are making disciples for the transformation of the world.



MAP provides vitality framework

Missional Action Planning (MAP) offers a mindset and process for United Methodist churches seeking to thrive and become 100 percent vital. It calls on faith communities to look beyond their buildings and partner with their communities in innovative ways to create whole and abundant lives.

Based on a vision cast by Bishop Easterling, MAP calls on people to live out "whole-life evangelism" as they find new ways to use their resources and gifts – discerning how God is calling them to discipleship and service in partnership with their community.

This new way of "doing church" is grounded in the certainty that every congregation, regardless of its size, can grow in vitality. How that growth occurs will differ with every church, according to its context.

The BWC and Pen-Del Conferences offer a number of resources to empower churches to thrive. (pdcbwc.org/map/)

MAP is not a program, it's not

a new approach to church growth. It is a paradigm shift to enliven and redefine what it means to be church in this place and time. If you're church were to disappear tomorrow, what impact would that have on your community? MAP enables you to answer that question with love, wisdom, creativity and hope.



Thursdays at the Table
TELLING THE WHOLE TRUTH
A PODCAST WITH BISHOP EASTERLING

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