

# The Bulletin



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

## A message from Bishop LaTrelle Easterling

For Christians, it really is “All About Love.” The rest is commentary.

But while many Christians preach, pray, sing and write about love, most of the time we get it wrong. Love is too large to be measured or limited. A Hallmark card won’t cut it. Love, we must understand, is not an emotion; it is an action.

But how do we define love? The theologian bell hooks teaches that love is “the will to extend one’s self for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth.”

The Gospel makes it plain that the only way to demonstrate, pronounce, proclaim and prove that we are in relationship with God through Jesus Christ is that we love one another. But this love can’t be in the abstract.



We must specifically and concretely build community and communion through the power of presence. In love, we heal divides by seeing the *Imago Dei* in everyone without exception. We become God’s walking Word, not

a word written on tablets, but the Word written on our hearts. We draw others to Christ by the light that shines within us. We must do love, be love, and give love to one another. Love is as love does.

## Covent to Create Beloved Community

Justice is a spiritual discipline. Acknowledging the sacred worth of all people is a vital step to creating Beloved Community.

You and your loved ones are invited to covenant with God and others to: seek and build relationships, respect differences, examine perceptions, assume positive intent, listen and engage for understanding, and grow in cultural humility. These six actions provide opportunities for us to journey together, grow in our capacity to love well, and to truly engage, honor, and respect the divine in one another.

### I WILL:

 SEEK RELATIONSHIP	 RESPECT DIFFERENCES
 EXAMINE MY OWN PERCEPTIONS	 ASSUME POSITIVE INTENT
 LISTEN FOR UNDERSTANDING	 PRACTICE CULTURAL HUMILITY

# Seek ye first the Kin-dom of God

A cornerstone of the United Women in Faith (UWF) is Mission u. This year's gathering will focus on Jesus' teachings about the kin-dom or reign (*basileia*) of God.



Jesus mentions the kin-dom 90 times in the synoptic Gospels. The kin-dom was not simply something to talk about but something we can live and experience. UWF uses the word kin-dom in place of the traditional "kingdom," to emphasize the community and equity of God's reign.

As part of the study, they're inviting United Methodists to practice *lectio divina* with the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. Set aside time and space for this "divine reading."

- Read the passage, and notice words that might jump out to you.

- Reflect on the passage, reading it again and note how God might be nudging you.
- Respond to the passage, reading it and noting what you feel in a journal or drawing.
- Rest with the passage, contemplating how it might apply to your life.

How do you envision the kin-dom of God and how does that impression shape your life today?

\*Art from book cover by Rachel Mosher



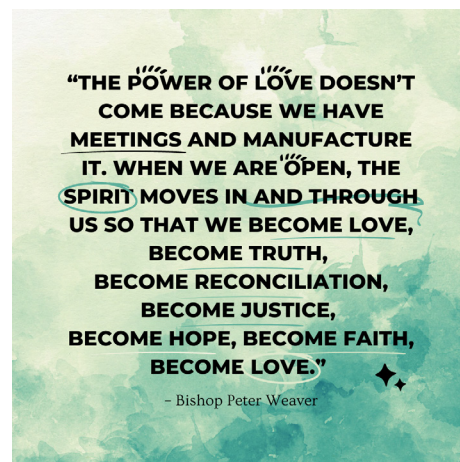
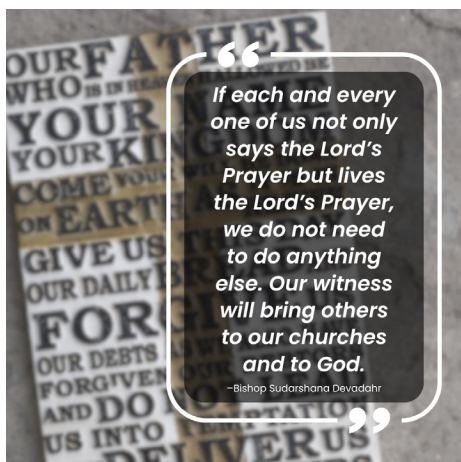
<https://uwfaith.org/>

# Becoming Pentecost People

At Annual Conference 2023, more than 1,600 United Methodists met for holy conferencing at annual conferences in the Baltimore-Washington and Peninsula-Delaware Conferences. The theme of the sessions was "All About Love."

In the BWC, members approved the disaffiliation of 23 churches and in Pen-Del, 92 churches disaffiliated. These

churches left the denomination because they disagreed with the United Methodist stance on homosexuality. While their departure was lamented, conference leaders are anticipating moving beyond the dissention, which has distracted from mission and ministry for decades, to focus on a future of grace, hope, faith and discipleship.



That focus on the future was present in the Bible studies, which challenged United Methodists to "live the Lord's Prayer" and "be perpetually Pentecost people – Spirit-filled and Spirit-sent."