

Annual Conference 2026: Highlights from Baltimore-Washington Conference

More than 1,000 clergy and laity gathered in Baltimore May 27-29 for the 242nd Session of the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference under the theme "**Rooted in Christ: Love Boldly.**" Here are some of the highlights from the three-day gathering.

Worship and Spiritual Growth

- Annual Conference launched a new three-year emphasis inspired by The United Methodist Church's vision to **love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously**.
- Bishop LaTrelle Miller Easterling's Opening Worship sermon challenged members to live out bold love in their communities.
- Retired Bishop Gregory Palmer led Bible studies and preached at the Service of Ordination and Commissioning, reminding members that disciples are called to abide in Christ and bear fruit.
- Local churches are invited to participate in the new **Love Boldly Worship Series** with worship resources available at pdcbwc.org/worshipseries.

Learn more: [[Opening Worship](#)] | [[Thursday](#) and [Friday](#) Bible Study]

Learning, Leadership, and Laity

- More than a dozen workshops explored topics including artificial intelligence, adaptive leadership, evangelism, justice ministries, congregational vitality, and spiritual formation.
- During the Laity Session, members reflected on the role of lay disciples in the church's mission and were challenged to embrace evangelism as an expression of bold love.
- Laity leaders emphasized that making disciples is the work of the entire church, not clergy alone.

Learn more: [[Workshops](#)] | [[Laity Session](#)]

Holy Conferencing and Conference Business

- Members engaged in holy conferencing, approved reports, and adopted plans that will guide ministry throughout the conference.
- Conference leaders celebrated paying off the Mission Center and affirmed financial plans supporting ministry across the region.
- Reports highlighted the importance of connectional ministry and collaborative mission throughout the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

Learn more: [[Wednesday](#), [Thursday](#) and [Friday](#) plenary] | [[Stewardship and Budget](#)]

Mission Project

- Conference members donated **35 units of blood** during the Project SPIRIT Sickle Cell and American Red Cross blood drive.
- Those donations equal **105 lives** saved.
- Participation was so strong that organizers eventually had to turn additional donors away.

Generosity in Action

- Special offerings throughout the conference supported ministries of healing, compassion, and renewal.
- Gifts totaling \$6,475 benefited **Seeds of Security**, which supports survivors of domestic and intimate partner violence.
- Offerings totaling \$7,011 supported the **Clergy Renewal Leave Fund**, which provides opportunities for clergy rest, renewal, and spiritual growth.

Remembering and Celebrating

- The Service of Remembrance honored clergy and lay leaders who joined the Church Triumphant during the past year.
- The Celebration of Ministries highlighted innovative and faithful ministry taking place throughout local churches, districts, and conference ministries.
- Retired clergy were recognized for a combined 566 years of service to Christ and the Church.

Learn more: [[Service of Remembrance](#)] | [[Celebration of Ministries](#)] | [[Retirees](#)]

Ordination and Commissioning

The conference celebrated a new generation of clergy leaders answering God's call.

Commissioned

- David Scott was commissioned as a provisional member preparing for ordained ministry as an elder.

Ordained as Deacons

- William Carpenter
- Jaleesa Hall
- Cassandra Lawrence

Ordained as Elders

- Charles Anderson-Gray
- James Cogman
- Gerald Elston
- Joshua Gillen
- Ashley Hoover
- Jenn Osterfeld
- Yongchi Rhie
- Leo Yates

The service also marked the **70th anniversary of the ordination of women** in The United Methodist Church. Many clergy and laity wore red shoes in honor of the women whose leadership helped shape the church over the past seven decades.

Learn more: [[Service of Ordination and Commissioning](#)]

A Call to Ministry

Following Holy Communion, Bishop Easterling invited worshippers to consider God's call on their lives.

As the congregation sang "*Here I Am, Lord*," several people came forward for prayer and discernment, each greeted with a joyful "Hallelujah!" from the bishop.

Closing the conference, Easterling reminded members:

"When we go together, it's twice the joy and half the grief. When we go together, the roots are deeper and stronger. When we go together, we gain the courage to love more boldly."

Looking Ahead

As churches return to their local communities, conference leaders encourage members to continue living into the Annual Conference theme: **Rooted in Christ: Love Boldly**.

For complete news coverage, photos, videos, and resources from Annual Conference 2026, visit bwcumc.org/ac26.