September 2023

A publication of Bethesda United Methodist Church

washmorefeet.org

The Messenger

Ministry Direction for 2024

During the summer, I organized myself in preparation for my annual interview with District Superintendent Rev. Dawn Hand. During the interview, I shared with Rev. Hand all the happenings at Bethesda United Methodist Church. I spoke continuously about the various ministries for about thirty minutes. Rev. Hand commented, "You must have been very busy!"

Dear members of BUMC, we have made significant progress since the start of the pandemic. In the past two years, we have welcomed 30 adult, 11 youth, and 14 child new members. Our Connect ministry team has worked diligently to foster community by organizing fellowship gatherings after worship. We have also put in a lot of effort to upgrade our building code and are pleased to announce that our facility will be available for use by a school starting in January 2024. Additionally, we have launched BUMC Canopy Groups, a small group ministry that currently has three active groups with more in the process of forming.

We have established two Bible Study Groups that operate year-round, the Tuesday Bible Study and Wednesday's Prayer Bites Bible Study. During the pandemic, we provided the Taize Wednesday Worship Service for two years. Furthermore, some of our leaders participated in a program called "A Diverse Church by Design" and subsequently proposed a Listening Session to facilitate safe discussions on controversial topics. This initiative has successfully promoted unity through diversity over the past year.

Our efforts to promote diversity have resulted in two positive outcomes. Firstly, BUMC is supporting the recovery of the African American Cemetery project with the Macedonian Baptist Church in River Road, Bethesda, MD. Secondly, our youth have been building relationships with Liberty Grove United Methodist Church, which has a more diverse community.
Our worship service has become more diverse with increased participation from children, youth, and lay members. The trustees have been diligently working on

implementing a security system and have successfully applied for government grants. As a result, security cameras have been installed throughout the building, and the system is continuously upgraded with each grant received.

Our church has established a Lawyers Guild who are using their skills to serve God's people. BUMC has taken a positive step towards being a welcoming congregation by displaying an "All Are Welcome" banner. Additionally, we have improved the quality of our online ministry by upgrading our media equipment. These upgrades have allowed us to have better angles for our worship leaders and a simpler system, which allows more volunteers to participate in our media ministry. Our stewardship team has provided outstanding spiritual and professional leadership to ensure that all of our ministries and staff receive the necessary financial support.

What should we focus on next for the year 2024? First, it is an important year for us as a denomination because there will be a General Conference where the official split of the United Methodist Church will be declared. The conference gives us an opportunity to rediscover our identity as the United Methodist Church and embrace our Wesleyan roots as outlined in the Book of Discipline.

Second, we are currently reviewing our Sunday schedule with a task force. There are different opinions regarding the timing of worship, Sunday School, worship style, and format. The task force will present their recommendation to the congregation, and we will follow the majority opinion.

Third, in 2010, the United Methodist Church conducted a survey on vital congregations that remains relevant today. The study identified four key drivers of vitality: Small Groups, Lay Leadership, Worship Service, and Pastor. To support these drivers, we will continue to develop and promote BUMC Canopy Groups for Small Groups, spiritually equip our leaders for Lay Leadership, provide inspirational worship services at all times for Worship Service, and have the pastors lead as spiritual guides while being open to growth led by people.

Fourth, we ask for your prayers for the successful housing of a school beginning in January 2024, which would be of great financial benefit to BUMC.

Join us on September 10 for our Kick-off Sunday as we celebrate Reclaim, Revive, and Rejoice in Jesus' simple call: "Follow Me." We invite you to make that same choice and deepen your commitment to following Jesus. Remember that BUMC is here to support you on your faith journey. Let us walk alongside you and help you grow in your relationship with Jesus.

Rev. Dr. HiRho Park

Butler's Orchard Trip

Come join us on October 14th at Butlers Orchard for a fun-filled evening. We will be taking a hayride, followed by roasting hot dogs and s'mores over a bonfire. This event is for the whole family, young and old. Please email me at *dennis@washmorefeet.org* if you are interested in joining.

Inviting All to a Listening Session with Our Former Associate Pastor, Rev. Rachel!

Join us on September 17 after church as we welcome back Rev. Rachel Cornwell for a special listening session. Rev. Cornwell has been serving in full-time ministry in the United Methodist Baltimore-Washington Conference since 2002. She brings a wealth of experience in congregational leadership, fundraising, and strategic planning.

Rev. Cornwell is coming back to discuss her book, *Daring Adventures: Helping Gender-Diverse Kids and Their Families Thrive.* In this book, she shares her experience as a passionate advocate for transgender and gender-diverse children. As a mother of a transgender son, she has written a beautiful and helpful book for parents seeking guidance and hope. Discover how a family's faith community can develop a deeper understanding and commitment to creating safe spaces for all. Don't miss this opportunity to learn, grow, and surround our transgender and gender-fluid kids and adults with the love and support they need. Do not miss your chance to reconnect with or meet Rev. Rachel! Mark your calendars for September 17 and join us for this inspiring session with Rev. Cornwell. Email *shaw@washmorefeet.org* for more information.

Music News

All Things Music…

Fall is here! Come be a part of BUMC Music!

If you read last month's Messenger, you may have seen this sentence: "August is the best time to give singing with the choir a try – we're really close to starting up for the 2023-24 season." Whether you saw it or not, it's now old news! We are no longer "really close to starting up," we ARE starting up for the '23-'24 season. But the next part – i.e. "We'd love to have you join us for the entire season" – is still relevant! We would, indeed, love to have you join us regularly, not only for Sanctuary Choir, but for Praise Band, Bethesda Bells, Church Folk, or for the kids – Children's Choir. Here's the schedule for first rehearsals:

- Sanctuary Choir 1st rehearsal – Thursday, August 31, 8:00 pm in the Sanctuary. Email *max@washmorefeet.org* or *chris@washmorefeet.org*.
- Praise Band – Thursday, September 7, 6:30 pm in the Sanctuary. Email *chris@washmorefeet.org*.
- Bethesda Bells – Monday, September 11, 7:30 pm in the Choir Room (Rm. 208). Email *gailwilltoo@verizon.net*.
- Children's Choir – Sunday, September 10, 9:30 am in the Choir Room (Rm. 208). Email *max@washmorefeet.org*.
- Church Folk – TBD. Contact John Euler at *john@eulers.net*.

Summer Hymn Sings – Singing is Praying Twice

During the summer, we had two fun evenings of singing and laughter. My eternal thanks go to Max for his help with the leadership, and to those who attended both in-person and online. Sounds fun, right? Okay – I admit, gathering to sing hymns doesn't sound all that exciting, but it was… here's what you missed.

Yes – at the heart of it all, we gathered and sang some hymns – some old, some new, some fun, some familiar, but also some that were challenging and left us scratching our heads and asking "why?" (anyone

ever thought it was a good idea to include that in the hymnal). Regardless, we had fun stumbling through some unfamiliar hymns.

If you didn't attend or tune in online, you missed "Stump the Organist" in which attendees looked for the most difficult (looking) piece they could find in one of the hymnals, and I (Chris) had to play it. (So they thought… I made them sing it too!)

You missed a Top 10 list – the category of which, from the home office in Upperco, MD, was the Top 10 Things John and Charles Wesley Argued About in the Early Days of Methodism.

You missed an experiment that involved singing a very popular song by Billy Joel – "Piano Man."

Riley Williams shared a brief portion of a monologue by Garrison Keillor:

"We make fun of Methodists for their blandness, their excessive calm, their fear of giving offense, their lack of speed, and also for their secret fondness for macaroni and cheese. But nobody sings like them… If you were to ask an audience in New York City, a relatively Methodist-less place, to sing along on the chorus of 'Michael row your boat ashore' they would look daggers at you as if you had asked them to strip to their underwear. But if you do this with Methodists, they'd smile and row that boat ashore and up on the beach! And down the road!"

Now, if that sounds like a fun time, plan to join us next time or click the YouTube link here: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifv7xQQHOCA&t=1997s*

So much of our faith and theology is expressed through music – I'm determined to prove that our Methodist hymnody is not just "a little something we do to fill time in a worship service. Expressing our faith through song is at the core of who we are as Methodists… as Christians."

Last Call!

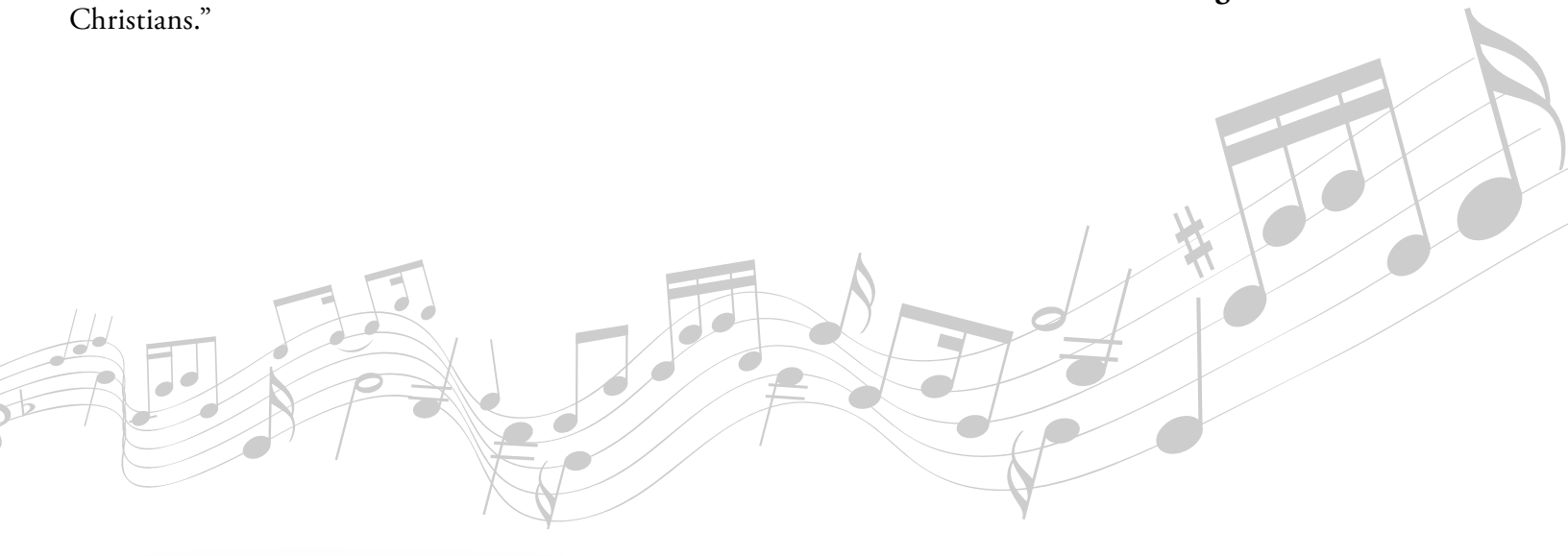
At the beginning of the summer, I offered (admittedly, in somewhat of a "raise it up the flagpole and see who salutes" fashion) to lead a workshop that would teach some basic music reading skills. I completely understand if you are someone who opens the hymnal and becomes confused, or even intimidated by the printed music. My hope is that anyone could open the hymnal and make sense out of the lines and dots on the page.

I think I can help… but so far, only one person has indicated interest. I'm going to blame that on the fact that I mentioned this in June – a time when everyone was focused on the lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer – finishing school, graduations, weddings, summer vacation – anything but September! More importantly, there was no set date. So… it is now (almost) fall, and I'm choosing the date of September 24 at 12:15 – right after the morning service. Come and see… it's not as hard as you think. I promise, it'll be fun!

Now that you know when this is scheduled to occur – let me know that you're coming. Send me an email at *chris@washmorefeet.org*.

Peace…

Chris Warrington – Music Director



Here's What's Coming Up in Sunday School

Confirmation

Our Confirmation class is a special invitation for individuals in 7th and 8th grade to respond to the amazing grace of God, as experienced through baptism, and make a commitment to live as people of faith. During this transformative journey, participants will have the chance to deepen their understanding of their faith and reaffirm their commitment to living a life rooted in Christ. Confirmation and reaffirmation are moments of rededication, a chance to say "Yes" to what God offers to our youth. But that's not all! Our church also plans exciting trips for our confirmands, including a thrilling day at an amusement park, a snow tubing adventure, and a historical Methodist site tour. And who can forget the unforgettable retreat experience that awaits us or the all-out celebration at the end of our journey? Join us on this incredible journey, led by the Rev. HiRho, at *HRPARK@WASHMOREFEET.ORG*. Together, let's grow in faith and create everlasting memories!

Children's Sunday School

Join us for our Children's Sunday School every Sunday morning at 10:00 a.m.! Your child's Sunday mornings will be filled with fun and learning. Each week, a different Bible story will be taught in exciting and innovative ways using artwork and engaging activities. We have two classes available: one for children in grades K to 2, and another for children in grades 3 to 6. Younger children are warmly welcomed in our nursery during this hour. Don't miss out on this enriching experience for your little ones. For more information, contact Dennis at *dennis@washmorefeet.org*. See you there!

Faithful Families Fellowship

BUMC's Faithful Families is an adult fellowship group where participants can fellowship and discuss topics related to families and caregiving. Formerly known as Faith-Filled Parenting, this group provides a community where adults can support and be candid with each other about family life. Come join us on Sunday mornings from 10:00 – 10:45 a.m. and participate in the day's discussion, which anyone can sign up to lead. For instance, we might have an invited speaker, such as Rev. HiRho or have a topic we discuss, such as anxiety or caregiving of our parents. If there is no leader, we invite everyone to share their recent highs and lows with one another. Regular and infrequent participants are all welcome. Whatever your story or situation, you are invited to take part in this community to share and receive encouragement in your faith journey. For more information, please contact Sue Owen (*susyowen@hotmail.com*), Lance Leverenz (*lanceleverenz@gmail.com*), or Albert Sim (*albertandandlaura07@gmail.com*).

PTR

Join PTR for a new series titled "The First Christians" taught by Michael Manson. This series looks at the world, writings, beliefs, and practices of Christian communities in our first two centuries. The first history describing Christian communities was The Acts of the Apostles, but there are other histories and other books both within the New Testament and outside it. Christians produced around twenty gospels. We'll examine some of those gospels and the processes by which emerging churches accepted some and rejected others. Each gospel addressed a different Christian community with different concerns. We'll also study other Christian literature of the first two centuries—among them, the Didache, the Odes of Solomon, and the Acts of Paul and Thecla, works that inspire as well as illuminate. Don will follow it up with a short series titled "The First Anti-Christians."

Beyond

Join us on Sunday mornings as we venture beyond the traditional boundaries of Sunday school! We will dive deeper into how our faith influences and shapes the way we interact with the world around us. We will examine current news stories from diverse publications, look at the teachings of the Bible, and explore the United Methodist Church's stance on important issues. By doing so, we hope to broaden our understanding of how our faith informs our thinking. Each week, we will focus on a different topic, allowing us to delve into a variety of subjects that impact our lives and our society. From social justice to environmental stewardship, this class aims to spark meaningful conversations that inspire positive change. To find out more, simply email *Shaw@washmorefeet.org*. We look forward to embarking on this enlightening journey together!

Young Adult Gathering September 20

Join us for Young Adult Gathering at Jacob's! It's time to come together for an evening of fun, fellowship, and food. On Wednesday night, September 20, we invite all young adults to come and enjoy a night of games, delicious pizza, and great company. Bring your favorite desserts and drinks to share, and don't forget to bring a game, too! We will be meeting at Jacob's house, located at 110 Sheffield Street, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910. We'll be hanging out in his backyard, enjoying the beautiful fall weather. This gathering is also an opportunity to plan exciting events for the upcoming fall season. So mark your calendars, let us know you're coming, and get ready for a fantastic evening. Contact Shaw at *shaw@washmorefeet.org* or Jacob at *jacob.couch@gmail.com* with any questions. We can't wait to see you there!

New Cameras, New Livestream

A few months ago, the church council approved a proposal to enhance our livestream by replacing our older cameras with state-of-the-art Canon cameras and other necessary equipment. After an extensive installation and troubleshooting process, the cameras are now in use! If you join us for worship via livestream, you will notice that these cameras offer new perspectives of our musicians, capturing creative angles. Additionally, our worship leaders can now be seen at eye-level, rather than the traditional "God's Eye View" from the balcony. The cameras also provide smooth panning and tilting capabilities, allowing for dynamic and engaging visuals.

With the new cameras, there is no longer a need to turn around and share peace with online participants. Furthermore, these cameras perform exceptionally well in low-light conditions. Perhaps the most significant

advantage is no longer need to worry about being on-camera during the sermon!

This presents a wonderful opportunity to honor or remember your loved ones by contributing towards the cost of these cameras. Each camera costs $3000, and we have four of them. If you are interested in gifting these cameras to BUMC, please contact Rev. HiRho at *hrpark@washmorefeet.org*.

For those who would like to see our new livestreaming setup, we invite you to visit the balcony after worship on Sunday for a tour. Experience first-hand how this upgrade benefits the 150+ individuals who watch our services online each week.

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION NEWS

A United Methodist church in Nashville, Tennessee, recently held a program on gun violence, which was live-streamed for viewing. The church is located in the neighborhood where the tragic Covenant School shooting took place in March, resulting in the deaths of three 9-year-old students and three teachers. During the program, the bishop of the Tennessee-Western Kentucky annual conference spoke passionately about the Methodist commitment to social justice, a calling that has been upheld since the time of John Wesley. He encouraged us to engage in dialogue and seek understanding of different perspectives, while advocating for actions aligned with Jesus' teachings, specifically referencing Matthew 22 and the command to love our neighbor. Though not without difficulty, the bishop emphasized the role of the faith community in fostering safer communities for the greater good.

According to him, Methodist theology compels us to offer peace, hope, love, and justice to a world in need of healing.

You can watch the program here:

Join us for the BUMC Gun Violence Prevention team meeting on Wednesday, September 6 at 7:30 in the Narthex. If you feel a calling to contribute to the creation of a "beloved community," consider joining our gun violence prevention group at BUMC. Over the past few years, we have invited speakers to our church, participated in advocacy days at the state and federal level, and helped educate our community about the importance of safe firearm storage. We invite you to come and share your ideas – together, we can make a difference.

Prayer Bites: The Gospel of Luke

Join us at Prayer Bites as we journey through the Gospel of Luke: discover Jesus' ministry with ordinary people!

This Wednesday and the following two Wednesdays at noon, we invite you to join us at Prayer Bites as we continue our walk through the Bible with the Gospel of Luke.

Luke paints a vivid picture of Jesus' encounters with ordinary, unexpected individuals — people who were far from perfect and struggling in their own ways, including the last, the least, and the lost. Jesus brought the good news of God's kingdom to those who needed it most. And guess what? That includes you and me!

Come and be inspired by these transformative stories. Uncover the incredible power of God's grace and love in the lives of imperfect people. We can't wait to explore Luke's gospel together. To join us, email *hrpark@washmorefeet.org*. Hope to see you there!

Helping Hawaii: Donations to UMCOR Bring Hope to Maui Today!

In the wake of the recent crisis in Maui, the people of Hawaii need our support. Many of us are wondering how we can make a difference, and one impactful way is by donating to the United Methodist Committee on Relief. With their incredible partners, UMCOR responds to disasters worldwide, including right here in the United States.

UMCOR U.S. Disaster Response is working tirelessly to provide aid and relief to the affected areas. Your prayers are invaluable, and if you're able, we encourage you to consider giving to UMCOR. Together, we can bring hope and help rebuild the lives of those affected.

You can donate to the cause in Hawaii in multiple ways. You can visit https://umcmission.org/advance-project/901670 online or call 1-888-252-6174 toll-free. Another option is to send a check made out to Global Ministries/UMCOR with "Advance #901670-Hawaii" written on the memo line to Global Ministries/UMCOR at GPO, P.O. Box 9068, New York, NY, 10087-9068. Alternatively, you can also give the same check to our church with Hawaii written in the memo line.

For the latest updates on UMCOR's efforts, be sure to follow their Facebook page. If you have any questions or would like to learn more about getting involved, please reach out to *shaw@washmorefeet.org*.

Thank you for your compassion and generosity. Let's join hands and show the people of Maui that they are not alone in this journey of recovery!

Fasting Prayer on September 2

On the first Saturday of each month, we encourage you to fast as we pray for BUMC and its ministry. You can choose to skip a meal or two or fast for an entire day according to your health condition.

Please pray for these items in September:

- Pray that the Holy Spirit touches the hearts of many to return to worshipping God on Sundays, starting on Kick-Off Sunday, September 10.
- The Stewardship Team will be officially launching its campaign in September. Pray that we may boldly reclaim, revive, and rejoice our faith and discipleship in Jesus Christ.
- Please keep praying for BUMC to find a faithful and dedicated new youth director. Additionally, pray for the Confirmation class, their mentors, and teachers.
- Please keep the Worship Schedule Task Force in your prayers as they make recommendations for the congregation.

Kick Off Sunday Potluck: Let's Feast and Unite!

Join us on September 10 after worship to kick off the new fall season with a delightful potluck feast! We'll provide the fried chicken; we invite you to bring your favorite sides or desserts for eight people or more. It's the perfect opportunity to connect, grow, and build meaningful relationships within our church community. As we embark on this new calendar year, let's come together, worship, and serve side by side. We believe that shared meals foster strong bonds, and we can't wait to see what connections are made and friendships are formed over this delicious spread. Don't miss out on this exciting event! For more information, reach out to Sue Owen at *susyowen@hotmail.com*.

Sign up to help by scanning this code:

Little Free Food Pantry Needs Volunteers

The BUMC Little Free Food Pantry, located on Huntington Parkway in Bethesda, is seeking more volunteers to meet the ongoing food demand in the neighborhood. The pantry has been providing assistance for a few years, but the responsibility of supplying food falls on a limited number of individuals. We appreciate donations of pasta, boxed milk, tuna, peanut butter, kidney beans, black beans, rice, juice boxes, and other non-perishable items (no glass containers). Additionally, the pantry requires salt, common spices, flashlights, socks, gloves, and feminine hygiene products. Donations can be placed directly in the pantry or, if full, in the bin in the Narthex. For more information, please contact Janet Edmonds at *j.edmonds@erols.com*. Thank you for your support.

Seeking Spiritual Growth? Join the Bible Marathon Email Group

If you're seeking spiritual growth, joining the Bible Marathon Email Group is a great way to achieve it. Every day, Reverend HiRho will send you a short devotional via email, including a passage from *The Bible Year Devotional* by Magrey deVega. Currently, over 35 people have joined this group, with 10-12 individuals attending the Prayer Bible Study every Wednesday at noon. If you're interested in becoming a part of the Bible Marathon email group, please contact Reverend HiRho at *hrpark@washmorefeet.org*.

Volunteers Needed for BUMC Foster Care Ministry

We are looking for volunteers to help with our BUMC Foster Care Ministry! There are two ways you can assist. First, we need help sorting and organizing clothing in our Foster Care Closet. Second, we need assistance collecting clothes for new foster children based on specific requests from the social workers at the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (MCDHHS). Sometimes, the MCDHHS also asks us to support families at risk of losing their children to foster care. Our ministry provides valuable resources, such as clothing, to new foster parents and at-risk families. To get more involved in helping foster children and families, please contact Janet Edmonds at *j.edmonds@erols.com* or Stacy Welch at *snwel062@yahoo.com*. Thank you for your support!

Dive Into Bible Study With Us

Join us on Tuesday nights beginning September 26 as we embark on an incredible journey into the heart of the Scriptures. Have you ever wondered what the Bible truly says about rejoicing, reviving, and rebirth? This fall, we're delving deep into each word, unpacking their significance and discovering the transformative power they hold. Be prepared to unleash your inner nerd as your spirit grows! Whether you're a seasoned theologian or new to studying the Word, this series is for you. So, mark your calendars and get ready to explore the treasures hidden within the pages of the Bible. For more information, contact *shaw@washmorefeet.org*. Together, let's embark on a journey of faith and knowledge that will revolutionize our understanding of God's Word.

United Methodist Youth Fellowship

UMYF: Same Fun at a Different Time

Join us at UMYF for an exhilarating time every Sunday night at 5:30 p.m.! We are thrilled to announce that this year, we'll be meeting a little bit earlier and taking turns providing dinner. So mark your calendars for September 10 as we kick off UMYF with a delicious Chipotle feast, followed by a thrilling game of manhunt and unforgettable fellowship. We'll also dive into our study of the Lord's Prayer, making this a fast-paced evening full of fun and spiritual growth. But the excitement doesn't stop there! Throughout the year, we have planned regular meetings and exciting activities, including an upcoming hay ride. We can't wait to see you there, so save the date and get ready for a fantastic time. For more information, contact *shaw@washmorefeet.org*.

Mission Monday - September 11, 2023

Mission Monday for September will be on Monday, September 11. Martha's Table will be taking a break from collecting sandwiches and trail mix to celebrate Labor Day, so we need to move our collection to the second Monday. We will be collecting individually wrapped meat and cheese sandwiches and baggies of homemade trail mix (No Nuts) in the BUMC parking lot from 8:30 until 10 a.m. These items will be delivered to Martha's Table in D.C. for distribution to the homeless and hungry.

We will also be collecting non-perishable foods for Bethesda Help, and contributions to the Little Free Pantry at the same time.

We hope to see you then!

BUMC Canopy

BUMC Canopy: Watch Over One Another in Love

Are you searching for a way to connect with fellow Christians and grow spiritually? Consider joining BUMC Canopy, a small group ministry within the BUMC family. Our groups, based on Wesley's small group model, meet regularly for fellowship and support. Currently, we have three groups with 24 active members. If you're interested in organizing or joining a group, please contact Mary Ann Toomey at *matoomey@outlook.com* or Rev. HiRho at *hrpark@washmorefeet.org*. To learn more about BUMC Canopy, visit our webpage at washmorefeet.org/canopy. Let's watch over one another in love.

the Messenger

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