

Light From The Hill



July, 2023

The Global Methodist Church in Central and Eastern Europe

- June 21, 2023
By Bishop Mark J. Webb



Bishop Mark J. Webb joins Bulgaria

Provisional Annual Conference laity and clergy to celebrate the ordination of Global Methodist Church deacons.

“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” –Philippians 1.3-6

The words of the Apostle Paul to the believers at the Church of Philippi represent my heart as I reflect upon my recent time with brothers and sisters of the Global Methodist Church in Slovakia and Bulgaria. It was an absolute joy and blessing to spend ten days with these passionate Christ followers who are seeking to be the church and live out our mission of “making disciples of Jesus Christ who worship passionately, love extravagantly and witness boldly.”

The leaders and congregations of Bulgaria and Slovakia were some of the very first to join the movement of the Global Methodist Church as it launched on May 1, 2022. With conviction, faith, and courage they stepped into the future they believed God was calling them to. Currently there are 24 congregations and 19 pastors in Bulgaria, while Slovakia has 11 congregations and 12 pastors.

During my visit, I was treated with radical hospitality, experienced passionate worship, and witnessed a people who are serious about being the church and taking the gospel of Jesus Christ into the lives of those

around them. With every visit of a local congregation and every conversation with clergy and laity I heard about the ways in which God is at work in, among and through them. But even more, I heard the dreams of what they believe is yet to be. Their commitment to the gospel, to being the body of Christ and the hope they have in what God has in store for them in the days ahead is inspiring.

One of the highlights for me was the opportunity to be a part of the ordination of three deacons in Slovakia and eight deacons in Bulgaria.

The leadership of Rev. Dr. Gabi Kopas, presiding elder of the Slovak Provisional District, and the Rev. Dr. Daniel Topalski, presiding elder of the Bulgaria Provisional Conference, is a blessing within the Global Methodist Church. Their commitment to the clergy and congregations with which they partner was evident, and the gifts they share will equip leaders and congregations well for the future as they seek to be the church of Jesus Christ in their respective countries.

In a Pew research article several years ago, it was noted that “roughly a quarter of a century after the fall of the Iron Curtain and subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union, religion has reasserted itself as an important part of individual and national identity in many of the Central and Eastern European countries where communist regimes once repressed religious worship and promoted atheism.”

In Slovakia, according to the latest census data, 69 percent of the population identify as Christian, with the majority related to the Roman Catholic Church, while in Bulgaria 65 percent of the population identify as Christian with the majority related to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Like most parts of the world, these numbers continue to decrease and there is a significant gap between identification and active involvement in the life of a faith community. The opportunity to invite people into a transforming relationship with Jesus Christ and a vibrant connection to the community of faith is rich.



Bishop Mark J. Webb joins Slovakia Provisional District laity and clergy to celebrate the ordination of Global Methodist Church deacons. The future of the Global Methodist Church in Bulgaria and Slovakia is filled with opportunity and potential, but also presents very real challenges. As these congregations and leaders live into the commitments of the Global Methodist Church that include transformational discipleship, a culture of multiplication and a zeal for evangelism, the work of leadership development (both clergy and lay), church planting and financial sustainability are vital areas of focus. Perhaps unknown to some is the fact that when our brothers and sisters in Bulgaria made the decision to leave the United Methodist Church, they did so knowing they were sacrificing 70 percent of their existing funding for pastoral support and ministry. As the Global Methodist Church continues to grow and mature, our sisters and brothers in Bulgaria and Slovakia are demonstrating a boldness and commitment to the mission and purpose of the Church. They

are providing leadership that is shaping our movement. I believe they have much to teach us about being the church. They yearn to be global partners in the mission we share.

A value of the Global Methodist Church movement is to see congregations, districts, and annual conferences within and outside the United States connected in true partnerships, sharing mission and ministry in relevant and practical ways. May we live out the truth that we can learn from one another and grow together. Local churches in the U.S. can be strengthened by what brothers and sisters in places like Bulgaria and Slovakia can offer them. The impact on churches in places like Bulgaria and Slovakia will be significant when brothers and sisters in the U.S. take seriously the truth that the “world is our parish.” As the Global Methodist Church continues to form and build the necessary systems for maximum missional impact, my prayer is that we will truly live out our values and take seriously our commitment to be a global church. I pray we in the U.S. will back-up our words with actions. God is calling us as individuals and local congregations to be true partners with those in other parts of the world who are faithfully seeking to be the body of Christ and boldly offer Jesus to the world. I trust we will joyfully respond to that challenge.

I give thanks to God for the people of the Global Methodist Church in Slovakia and Bulgaria. I am blessed to call them brothers and sisters in Christ and partners in the work of the gospel. In just ten short days, they impacted my life and I know that God has great plans to give them “a future and a hope” and to use them to increase the kingdom of God.

Forward *Crossroads* to your church friends and encourage them to [subscribe](#). Thank you.

Learn more about the [Global Methodist Church](#).

Bishop Mark J. Webb is an episcopal leader in the Global Methodist Church.

PASTORAL UPDATE: Pastor Yunho Eo has very graciously agreed to serve as our interim pastor during the months of July and August as we prayerfully await the pastoral assignment from our new denomination. We have asked him to preach all of the Sundays and also to provide pastoral care in the form of visiting the sick in hospitals if needed, as well as being available for spiritual counseling, for ministering at funerals, and for other needs that may arise among us.

We have been so blessed to have speakers and liturgist from our own congregation for the past two months. Everyone graciously accepted this opportunity and all have done a splendid job. It has provided us a way to know each of these church family members in a new and exciting way and experience their special gifts. Thank you to each and every one.



SERMON TITLE AND SCRIPTURE FOR JULY

JULY 2 – “We Are One in God!” (Ecclesiastes 4:1, 7-12)

JULY 9 – “Forget the Past, Enrich the Future” (Genesis 41:50-52)

JULY 16 – “Renew Baptismal Vow!” (Mark 1:4-11)

JULY 23 – “The Kingdom of God Comes Near!” (Mark 1:12-15)

JULY 30 – “Come Out!” (Mark 1:21-28)



HAPPY BIRTHDAY-JULY 2023

Christopher Shumaker – July 5th

Bud Funk – July 12th

George Kaloski – July 19th

Bernard Ferguson – July 21st

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY-JULY, 2023

Ann and Henry Ragland – July 4th

FOR YOUR INFORMATION:

DEAR LAUREL HILL FRIENDS...Just a note to say thank you for all the cards, calls and love sent our way during Deanie's surgery and healing. He is still weak and has a way to go, but we have been so blessed by your love and support. Keep the prayers coming.

Love in Christ, Deanie and JoAnn Murdoch

GRADUATES...Bryce Alexander Warren, grandson of Nancy Henry, will graduate in December, 2023 from Virginia Tech's Department of Mechanical Engineering with a degree in Construction Management. He is interning this summer with Mark Turner Construction, LLC as a construction manager and hopes to be hired permanently after graduation. The Laurel Hill Church family sends Bryce our congratulations and blessings for a bright future.

THE LADIES OF LAUREL HILL...We plan to have lunch together in July, and August on our regular meeting day (second Tuesday of the month). Meet at church at 10:30 A.M. On July 11th we will eat at the Brickhouse on the Boulevard or Hondos. On August 8th we will see a movie and have lunch if anything good is playing, or eat at Indian Fields. Watch the bulletin for more information as the summer progresses.

THE MISSIONS COMMITTEE IS PLANNING :

Mission Sunday, July 30th will feature Guest Speaker from FISH, Inc. Following our worship service we will have our Churchwide Luncheon.

Homeless Feeding, August 29th

Yard Sale, October 7th, you may begin bringing items now. Please put them in the back section of the Fellowship Hall. **Please, no clothes or electronics.**

Baby Shower, October 29th for East End Pregnancy Center

FISH NEWS:

Here are upcoming events to support FISH.

FISH is having a "Spirit Day" at Roberto's on Tuesday, July 11. We hope you will consider going for lunch or dinner or both. We have coupons for you to present to benefit FISH. They will be in the narthex beginning on June 27. If you present this coupon or show the FISH Facebook page on your phone at the time of payment, FISH will receive 10% of the cost of your meal before taxes.

The annual FISH BBQ luncheon is coming soon. It will be held on Sunday, August 13 at Fort Lee Baptist Church from 11:30 to 1:30. You can "Dine in" or "Take out". **You must get tickets in advance.** The cost is \$10 and the meal includes a BBQ sandwich, coleslaw, green beans, baked apples, beverage and dessert. You can purchase tickets from Pam Wilson or see Connie Madison in the narthex after church beginning Sunday, July 9.

If you have a little time to spare, Pam would love some help pricing items for the next FISH yard sale. Talk with Pam about this if interested.

Here is what we will be collecting for the next few months: July = glue sticks (or any school supplies), August = beef stew, September = Breakfast bars, October = pancake mix. Thank you for continuing to support FISH in so many ways.

WEEKDAY SCHOOL NEWS:

Our summer program started on June 12th, and we are having a wonderful time. The children are great and beautiful as ever. We have a large majority of students who transitioned with us from the fall program, some returned from last summer, and we welcomed several new families to our program. They are excited to be with us and we are just as excited to have them.

I am still looking for people to volunteer their talents in the areas of **gardening / planting flowers, knitting, baking, crafting** or **any special skill** you can share with our students. It can be a one-day or multi-day workshop, a brief demonstration, or a special day treat. Any time you can share your talent would be greatly appreciated. Please call me at (804) 795-2772 if you want to share your gift or talent. Continued on next page...

Weekday School News...continued

This program will end August 18th and we will be starting our Fall program on Monday, August 21st. We can always use volunteers in that program as well. Please stop by my office, email me or give me a call.

As always, thank you for your prayers and support of our program.

Sincerely, Margo Keeles, Director

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Margo Keeles, Director

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

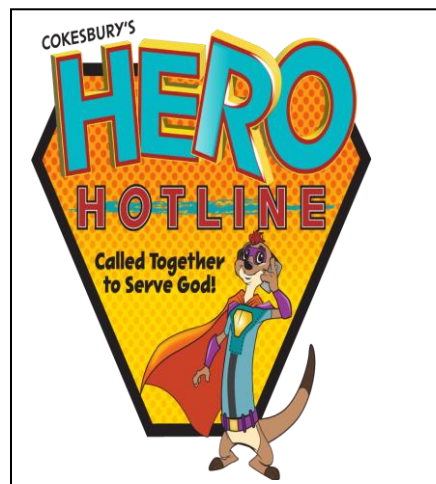
VOLUNTEERS are needed for Vacation Bible School. The date is July 17th – 21st from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

The ages are 3 to 12 years old. Our Theme this year is,
HERO HOTLINE: Called Together to Serve God!

The materials have been ordered and most have arrived.

We just need volunteers in the following areas:

Planning
Decorating
Music



Crafts

Story Telling

Floaters/Assistants

Recreation

Kitchen: Daily Snacks

If you think you might be able to assist, please contact

Dale Dixon at (804) 837-4562 or (804) 737-6846.