



**CARING AND
CONNECTING TO
SUPPORT
PEOPLE LIVING
WITH
HIV & AIDS**

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**A ministry of
the Baltimore-
Washington
Conference of
The United
Methodist Church**

Celebrate Life!

Volume 3, Issue 1—Spring-Summer 2017



Quality of Life Retreats' Board of Directors held a planning retreat May 20 at Linden-Linthicum United Methodist Church to review the program's 30-year history, examine its strengths and challenges, and envision possibilities and improvements for its future. More info on page 3.

1st Women's Retreat reflects beauty, self-love

"You Are Beautiful!" was the constant affirmation offered to those who attended Quality of Life Retreats' first women's retreat in April. But the subtext of that uplifting theme was simply to love one-

self. There were 10 first-timers among the 23 women who attended the requested women's retreat April 3-6 at the Washington Retreat House. And from the moment they arrived, the theme of beauty was evi-

dent everywhere—in the table decorations, Communion service and festive dinner; in the cards, candles, gift bags with make-up samples and red silk flowers each received; in the handmade

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QLR Statement of Faith And Purpose



In affirmation of the love of God, this program is offered to all HIV-infected persons, regardless of religious faith, nationality, race, gender or sexual orientation.

The QLR Board views the church as a healing instrument, which can extend a caring, supportive

ministry of prayer, education, advocacy and direct service. The goal of our effort is to uphold and enhance the quality of individual life by nurturing hope, unconditional love, independence and self-determination.

Our mission is to provide retreats that will be a connecting and coping experi-

ence for persons living with HIV/AIDS in the Greater Baltimore/Washington DC area, Western Maryland, Southern Maryland and the Eastern West Virginia panhandle.

From the Quality of Life Retreats Handbook

1st Women's Retreat

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fleece blankets given by women at Linden-Linthicum UM Church; and in the straw hats retreatants decorated to win coveted prizes.

"We wanted them to feel special and to know that someone cared about them," said the Rev. Nancy Green, retreat director, who had help from five retreat staff. For some that was, sadly, an unfamiliar feeling.

"Several of the women



Dr. Ella Curry, PhD, RN

were trying to break away from abusive relationships, and some were struggling to stay away from drugs" said Green. "They found a lot of mutual support and encouragement in our small groups.

Some members told others about women's shelters and drug recovery programs that had helped them." One woman had just learned of her HIV status in the past week, said Green. "She needed that support right



Dr. Mary Young, MD

then, especially to learn how others had shared the news of their status with family and friends and what to expect."

They learned even more from two long-time medical professionals in HIV/AIDS treatment, whose compassion and candor connected well with the women.

QLR board member



At the Women's Retreat, three winners of the Strawhat Decoration Contest show off their prizes for creating the most beautiful, the most creative and the funniest hats. Nancy Green photo

Dr. Ella Curry, RN, a former Clinical Specialist at Georgetown University Hospital with 28 years in the field, shared key HIV-related legislation coming to Congress this year, including research funding and access to affordable health care. Curry discussed lobbying efforts by AIDSWatch 2017, assuring the women of the advocacy being done on their behalf at all levels of government.

Dr. Mary Young, a recently retired Infectious Disease Specialist and Professor at Georgetown University Hospital, devoted 32 years to research and care of women with HIV, including a study of the AIDS virus' natural history in women's bodies.

Spending two hours at the retreat, she also answered many ques-

tions and reviewed three decades of insights about the virus, various medications and patients' changing circumstances and behaviors. She stressed to the women the importance of taking their meds consistently.

A teacher and retired pastor, Nancy Green began planning the retreat as she always does: by praying for a theme. "I prayed a long time, asking God, 'What message do you want our women to hear?' His answer was 'You are loved.'

"When things aren't perfect in our lives," she explained, "we often feel we're not loved or worthy to be loved."

The women, coming from the Baltimore area, Washington DC, Virginia and New Jersey, were diverse in their backgrounds—

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Celebrate Life!

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Raymond Shattuck,
Board Chairman

John Coleman: Editor,
Communications Chair

E-mail: Qualityof-LifeRetreatsHiv@yahoo.com

Phone: 410.972.1498

Web: bwcumc.org/
quality-of-life/



Board examines history, future improvements

The Quality of Life Retreats Board of Directors held a planning retreat May 20 at Linden-Linthicum UM Church to examine the program’s 30-year history, as they also envisioned possibilities and improvements for its future.

The Rev. Stephanie Hixon (left), who facilitated the board’s last retreat in 2015, did so again. “We were blessed when our discussion revealed again the deep level of commitment each board member has for continuing this vital ministry,” said the Rev. Terri Rae Chatten, QLR’s treasurer who started the life-changing ministry three decades ago. “We reviewed key events and



persons in our history with an eye toward our strengths and challenges for the future.”

The board continued perfecting its policies and procedures for accounta-

bility and explored ways to learn more effectively about the needs and concerns of retreatants it serves and how to offer them the best possible retreat experiences.

Women’s Retreat continued from page 2

including a transgender woman—and in their age range, from their 20s to a few in their 60s. Planners sent invitations to health departments and HIV-service agencies all over the region.

“When can we do this again? We have to do it again,” was the feedback many offered at the retreat’s end, said Green.

“Everyone was excited to be at an all-women’s retreat, and there was lots of laughter and tears,” she recalled.

“The dynamic was so different. I think they felt they could be themselves, discuss their own issues and not worry about impressing anyone”—especially the men who usually outnumber them at coed retreats. “Some said they’ve been waiting, even praying a long time for this kind of a retreat.”



< **Communion**
December 2016
Retreat staff celebrate Holy Communion, which is served during worship at all Quality of Life Retreats for those who wish to receive it.

John Coleman photo

Themes, activities inspire retreatants

“Believe in Yourself!”

“Wake Up! Show Up! Shake Up! Start Up!”

These themes, for our August and December 2016 retreats, respectively, prodded participants to explore how such imperatives relate to their own lives, beliefs, decisions and actions.

Along with valuable reflection and dialogues, there are always times to feast and fellowship, hear presenta-

tions on HIV topics, like trends and treatment protocols, learn alternative therapies, enjoy inspiring worship and healing services, and engage in creative expression through talent shows, games, and arts and crafts.

The 2016 retreats had all that and more. And now, plans are underway for the August 2017 retreat at Manidokan Camp & Retreat Center. Check our website for more information.

Quality of Life Retreats Board

- Raymond Shattuck,
Chairman
- Rev. Reg Barss,
Vice-Chairman
- Angel Ortiz,
Secretary, Registrar
- Rev. Terri Rae Chattin
Treasurer
- Loretta F. Anders
- John Coleman
- Ella Curry, PhD, RN,
MTS
- Josette Foster, RN
- Rev. Nancy Green
- Steve Green
- Lance Hogue Jr., RN
- Judith Travers

Quality of Life Retreats was started by the Rev. Terri Rae Chattin. At the first retreat in 1987, 12 gay men met at the Baltimore-Washington Conference’s West River Camp to share the impact of HIV/AIDS in their lives and experience healing grace together.

During the early years of this ministry, many people still looked upon HIV/AIDS as “God’s punishment.” Ignorance about the virus brought out fears, even among people within the church. But Rev. Chattin persisted, securing donations from local churches, getting the word out in the HIV/AIDS community, and “going always on faith.”

Today, the many faces of HIV/AIDS are represented in the quarterly retreats. Participants range in age from young adults to senior adults. They self-identify as gay, straight, transgender, bi-sexual, non-gender conforming, and queer. Some report histories of substance use. They come together, often as strangers, and unite to create community.

Terri Rae says, “Quality of Life Retreats has connected the Church” with the HIV/AIDS epidemic. “Many of these people left the church for lifestyle reasons, or felt driven away because they thought the church was narrow and judgmental. But we show that there is a place for them to belong in the church. We’ve given the church back to them. That’s our gift.” —Adapted from the *Quality of Life Retreats Handbook*

Making new friends for QLR...



Two new friends joined Quality of Life Retreats at our December 2016 retreat. Chairman Raymond Shattuck met Janis Sloane (left) of First UMC Hyattsville and Bernadette Bailey of Ebenezer UMC of Washington DC at a UMW Mission u event. They became interested in QLR’s ministry and have supported us through their churches. We hope to make more new friends in 2017.

Upcoming Events

- July 15:** 2017 Hagerstown Pride Parade
- July 15:** 2017 Swim for Life fundraiser, > Rolph's Wharf on the Chester River, MD
- July 22:** QLR Board Meeting
- Aug. 17-20:** Summer Retreat, Manidokan Retreat Center, Knoxville, MD
- Sept. 1:** QLR’s 30 anniversary begins
- Nov. 11:** QLR Board Meeting
- Dec. 4-7:** Fall Retreat:, Washington Retreat House



Check us out on the Web at bwcumc.org/ministries/quality-of-life/ and on Facebook and on Twitter: [#QOLretreatsHIV](https://twitter.com/QOLretreatsHIV)

Telephone:



Raymond Shattuck

P.O. Box 2209
Annapolis, MD. 21404

Address correction requested