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Bishop

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Washington, DC Area
Baltimore-Washington Conference

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Seek the shalom of the city where I have sent you, for in its shalom, you will find your shalom. –Jeremiah 29:7

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The city of Baltimore, the birth place of United Methodism needs shalom - well being, prosperity, healing and wholeness. It is battling a wave of violence and murder and its residents have few places to turn. As United Methodists, God has entrusted to us the responsibility to reach out with shalom. We need to be a place to which people can turn. On Friday, December 7, 11:00 AM, the Baltimore-Washington Conference will hold a worship service and press conference at John Wesley United Methodist Church, 3202 West North Avenue, Baltimore. These important events will represent the start of our urban renewal strategy in Baltimore. This invitation is open to all clergy and laity. We encourage you to attend and to bring others with you. Let us demonstrate to the city of Baltimore that United Methodists stand with them and for them. That evening I will also visit several sites in Baltimore where people have been murdered to pray and stand with the people in the community.

This is a defining moment for us as we make our presence and our mission felt. The public wants to know what the church is going to do. Our worship service and press conference on December 7 will make a stand with God's people and commit to shalom actions. In addition to the walk that evening, the conference will launch several initiatives:

- Free camp experience to children under 15 whose family was affected by a murder
- Reinvigorate the Shalom Initiative in Baltimore and develop a round of new trainings in early 2008
- Stop the violence – save a life gun turn in at our churches
- Pastoral counseling for families affected by murders
- Special prayer on Sunday, December 9 at all of our churches to pray for Baltimore, the birth place of Methodist and Brethren movements.

After the morning worship service and press conference, I am asking you to join me that evening as we visit several sites where homicides occurred. One of the sites will be the place where the nephew of Rev. Joan Carter-Rimbach, one of our pastors was murdered.

*We seek to be like Christ as we call, equip, send and support spiritual leaders
to make disciples and grow at least 600 Acts 2 congregations by 2012*

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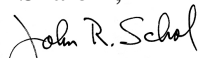
It is important that the residents of the city be able to see the heart of the Baltimore-Washington Conference and experience our compassion and to look us in the eye and see our commitment to God's city.

As of November 15, the Baltimore homicide number stood at 269. This is approaching a record number of homicides in Baltimore. This represents the lives of many innocent children, youth and adults - all are God's children.

Sisters and Brothers, we are in a unique position to be spiritual leaders in Baltimore. Our 61 Baltimore churches can not do this alone. This requires a conference wide effort. Please take time to come and support the building of God's shalom in Baltimore as we stand with the people of Baltimore.

Further information will follow next week that will include resources for prayers on December 9. I ask you to announce this event this Sunday in your congregation and to pray for Baltimore, the city of Washington and your own community. I look forward to joining all of you in God's shalom movement as we work to save lives in Baltimore.

Shalom,


John R. Schol