

March 9, 2018
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Deborah Coble Named UMAC 2018 Communicator of Year



March 9, 2018 | PHILADELPHIA—The United Methodist Association of Communicators named Deborah Coble, director of communications for the West Virginia Conference, as Communicator of the Year for 2018 at their annual gathering on March 9 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

UMAC chair Mark Doyal welcomed Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball to the podium to introduce the communicator, who has served her episcopal area since July 2016.

“West Virginia was devastated by floods in June 2016 in areas where people already lived below the poverty level with few resources.” Ten days before Deborah Coble was officially hired to the communicator’s position, she was already on the scene. “Our new

communicator came in and gave people hope,” the bishop recalled. “She took pictures. She wrapped her arms around people. She gave a smile.” And she helped tell stories that “resulted in over \$2 million in contributions from across the connection.”

While response to natural disaster filled the opening months of her job, Coble went on to develop creative projects that touched many lives around the state. “With Deborah leading we reached 2,400 plus new disciples,” Steiner Ball reported. There were new initiatives that connected people, in meeting and online, in moving from membership to discipleship and a Lenten campaign that addressed the opioid epidemic.

“Congregations are coming to the Day of Resurrection seeking to determine how they can break the cycle addiction,” the bishop concluded.

Coble’s team members joined her on the stage as she accepted the honor saying, “This is yours, too.” She began, “I was a TV marketing and promo gal until God took a 2 x 4 and said, ‘I want you as a pastor.’ I believed there was a way to merge those two together.” She came to the job of the West Virginia Conference Communications Director from Iowa. There she was serving as a pastor while offering expertise in communication to the Iowa Conference and districts.

“It is working because of these guys,” she said, turning to her team members. Coble has organized conference communications around a gifted core group of volunteers in covenant with one another. UMAC members had an opportunity on Thursday afternoon to attend an Innovation Session during which Coble and her team explained their group life and ministry.

Coble credits United Methodist Communications for supporting and resourcing her as she handled crisis communications around the 2016 flood. “I was in shock. I called UMCOM. When they asked, ‘What do you need?’ I answered, ‘I don’t know what I need!’ Then I got in my car and hit the road.” She exited the stage saying, “We have work to do! Let’s go!”

The criteria for nomination as Communicator of the Year include recent striking achievements in communication, broad impact of the communicator’s contribution, and vision-thinking beyond the demands of the job. From her leadership in reporting an epic flood to her pastoral approach to team building, Deborah Coble is indeed breaking new ground as the 2018 Communicator of the Year.

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Photo caption: Deborah Coble addresses attendees after being named Communicator of the Year at the 2018 UMAC gathering at the Westin Philadelphia in March 2018.
Photo by Matt Brodie.