



April 2019

Advocate

*We are
Easter
People*

Important *Advocate* news on page 4.

Connecting with the



VirginiaAdvocate

The official magazine of
the Virginia Conference of
The United Methodist Church

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Local Church News

Items should be typed (preferably sent via e-mail) or printed legibly, no more than 100 words, and of conference-wide interest. Complete names of individuals, churches and districts should be included. Because of space limitations, the Local Church section prohibits news items related to church members' birthdays (of less than 100 years), wedding anniversaries, receptions for moving and/or retiring pastors, photos of traditional Christmas trees or Easter trees/crosses, and any item over two months old. Color photos are encouraged. Photos returned only if submitted with a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Photos included on a space available basis. The editor reserves the right to edit all copy or refuse publication.

Letters

Letters to the Editor are printed on a space-available basis. Letters should be limited to 150 words for space reasons. The Advocate will not print letters addressing a topic beyond two months of the publication of that issue. The Advocate editor reserves the right to edit all letters.

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PILLOW TALK



Madeline Pillow
Editor

The hard conversations

Following General Conference, you might find yourself upset or affirmed by the delegates passing The Traditional Plan.

This was my second General Conference that I attended as a conference communicator. I definitely felt the heartache in the room; you really feel that when you are in the General Conference plenary room versus watching it on the livestream. You see what happens in the breaks between sessions, you hear the protests as the sessions continue on.

Right now in this time of uncertainty, we will have hard conversations, and we will ask ourselves the hard questions trying to understand who we are and what The United Methodist Church is.

As a result of these hard conversations and hard questions, there might be hard decisions to make.

I felt such sadness following this General Conference. I believe our church, our God, to be far more inclusive and loving than what The United Methodist Church is showing itself and its people to be right now.

But I choose to look for the signs of hope and life even in this hard time.

*"In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree;
in cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits
to be,
unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see."* 🍷

—"In the Bulb there is a Flower," Natalie Sleeth, *The United Methodist Hymnal*

Until our next issue,

Madeline C. Pillow



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LETTERS

To the Virginia Annual Conference and our Advocate magazine subscribers—

Over the last several years, the conference Communications staff, in consultation and partnership with the conference Board of Communications, has reflected on how best our office can meet the communication needs of our members and our conference as technology continues to change and communication needs shift.

We have specifically looked at how we can increase our reach to all of our members and provide better access to information across the Virginia Conference. Our board, in helping us do the work of understanding both the needs of our clergy and laity, recently conducted 19 focus groups in five different locations. We were able to ask in-depth questions about the communication needs of 98 people from 10 districts. Participants included active and retired clergy, church staff, lay members and

leaders in local churches, districts, conference boards & agencies and youth. This helped us gather a variety of great ideas on how we can improve conference communications.

In recognizing how the needs of our conference have changed over the years, the staff and the Board have had in-depth conversations concerning the *Advocate* magazine which has been our flagship communication tool for many years.

The board voted unanimously at its February meeting to end production of the *Advocate* magazine with the December 2019 issue. This decision was approved by Common Table.

I, along with my staff and the board, recognize what this magazine has meant to this conference as well as its legacy. It was not a decision made in haste but one we have wrestled with to make sure we are best serving our

conference in the area of communication.

In the remaining *Advocate* issues this year, you can expect to see articles that share *Advocate* history and the legacy of this fine publication. Attached to this letter, you will find information related to your subscriptions as well as answers to additional questions you may have. Please do not hesitate to contact me by email (MadelinePillow@vaumc.org) should you have additional questions.

It has been a joy for me to work on this magazine. I am so appreciative of those who shared their stories with us throughout the years and for our *Advocate* representatives around the conference who so passionately supported the magazine and, forgive the pun, advocated for it. To all our readers, I am so grateful for you.

At Annual Conference, we will be sharing a survey we hope everyone will fill out to help my office continue on this journey of providing helpful and accessible information to the Virginia Conference. We will be providing this survey through upcoming issues of the *Advocate*, on our website and in person in the

display space at Annual Conference.

Although the *Advocate* may be ending, the storytelling from the conference Communications office is not ending. We are finding new ways to reach our audience and seeking to create better access for all to important information from and about our United Methodist connection.

Blessings to you on the journey,

Madeline

Frequently Asked Questions:

I get a good deal of my information from the *Advocate* publication. How will I get my news?

Other avenues to get news include our conference website (www.vaumc.org), our *Sunday Advocate* bulletin insert, *e-Advocate* weekly electronic newsletter and our conference social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram). On these platforms, we will still be creating the content that you often find in the *Advocate* magazine from Virginia news to timely features. Should you need help identifying where to find any of these pub-

LETTERS

lications, contact the conference Communications office at 804-521-1110 or by emailing Advocate@vaumc.org.

As we continue to prioritize how best to communicate to the conference, as stated in the letter, it is so important that all our readers fill out the survey we release at Annual Conference to share their thoughts. Our goal is to reach ALL of our conference members in communication avenues where they receive their news.

You will find this survey in a number of places come June, including in the July issue of the *Advocate* magazine.

How did the Board come to the decision to end the *Advocate* publication?

The conference Communications office, in consultation with the Board of Communication, has been having conversations about the future of the *Advocate* for many years.

For the last decade, we have seen a drastic drop in subscribers each year as needs and preferences have changed how readers want to receive their information. Likewise, our costs to print and

mail the magazine have continued to rise over the years as the magazine runs a deficit each month.

Our current membership in the conference is over 300,000 and our magazine reaches less than 1 percent. In this process of ending the *Advocate* magazine, we are interested in reaching more of our audience to provide news and helpful resources.

For questions about this announcement, please contact Madeline Pillow (804-521-1113 or MadelinePillow@vaumc.org).

Do you want me to participate in the conference wide survey?

Yes! We encourage everyone in the conference to participate in the survey. This conference-wide survey will be made available in a number of ways including online and in the print *Advocate* as well as at the Board of Communications booth at Annual Conference.

We want to receive as many responses as possible to make sure we understand the needs of our members and how the conference office can best share information and resources that the conference needs.

Some of these questions will test things we learned from the focus groups. The final results from this survey will help the office prioritize our efforts as we work to continue improving conference communications.

My subscription to the *Advocate* continues past 2019. Can I get a reimbursement?

Yes. If you would like a reimbursement, we will be sharing a postcard to request this in the upcoming May *Advocate* magazine for print subscribers. We will also be sharing in other upcoming issues as well.

If you are an online subscriber, you can send your name, address and best contact number and how long your subscription continues to Advocate@vaumc.org.

For questions concerning your *Advocate* subscription, please contact Pam Culler (804-521 1110 or PamCuller@vaumc.org) or Brenda Capen (804-521-1116 or BrendaCapen@vaumc.org).

My *Advocate* subscription ends in 2019. Can I renew my subscription to get the final 2019 issues?

We will still be

accepting one-year subscriptions for those whose subscription is ending in 2019; the amount left over can be reimbursed to you after 2019 by following the step above.

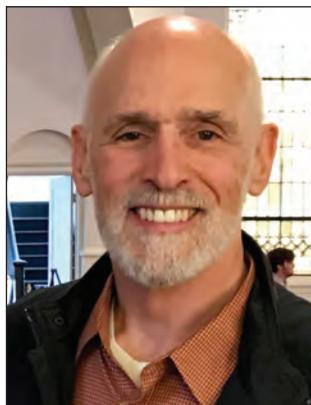
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For questions not listed here, you can contact Madeline Pillow, Director of Communications and *Advocate* editor, at 804-521-1113 or MadelinePillow@vaumc.org. 

Music offers a way to stay united amid differences

By John D. Copenhaver

For decades United Methodists have been debating issues of human sexuality. The debate usually comes down to differing interpretations of Scripture. As a Protestant denomination it is not surprising that United Methodists would look to Scripture to find the right way forward. Frankly, I'm tired of that debate because we are so dug into our posi-



Rev. John D. Copenhaver

tions that discussions are seldom productive. In fact, they often seem to lead to further entrenchment.

Traditionalists frequently describe their views as “orthodox” based on their inter-

pretation of Scripture. Progressives argue that traditionalists do not own orthodoxy and that progressive interpretations are equally or more orthodox.

For the purposes of these reflections, I will set aside that debate and turn to another meaning of orthodox — right praise/worship. (The Greek word “doxa” can mean opinion, belief, glory or praise.) I’m not proposing an alternative way of settling the issues, but I am inviting us to think about the issues in the light of worship — more particularly in the light of our hymnody.

This is not as strange as it may seem, as early Methodists often learned and expressed their theology in their hymns. Perhaps such reflections can begin to loosen the logjam. How is our theology of human sexuality reflected in our hymns? How singable is our theology of human sexuality? Does it uplift and unite us in faith? Does it inspire and challenge us? Does it help us move on to perfection in love? Perhaps this fresh way of framing the issues will help us hear each other better. I’m going to make a case for the singability of a progres-



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sive theology of human sexuality. I believe it fits well with the One Church Plan or the Simple Plan.

As it will help if you can sing along as you read, I hope you can find some privacy. I will indicate tunes for the hymns. I don't, however, recommend taking phone, tablet or computer into the shower!

I think it is appropriate to begin with ecclesiology. Over the last year I began singing "The Church of Christ, in Every Age" frequently as part of morning prayer. The first stanza addresses the task of the church, both to affirm enduring truth and test parts of its heritage that may hinder its mission. This is what the 2019 General Conference is constituted to do.

*The Church of Christ in every age
Beset by change but Spirit led,
Must claim and test its heritage
And keep on rising from the dead.*

– Fred Pratt Green, 1969
DICKINSON COLLEGE LM
(UM Hymnal #589)

Let us hope that we get this right and keep on rising from the dead! The third stanza suggests the appropri-

ate humility with which the church should approach this task.

*Then let the servant Church arise,
A caring Church that longs to be
A partner in Christ's sacrifice,
And clothed in Christ's humanity.*

Another hymn, "Many Gifts, One Spirit," speaks more clearly of how difference and diversity can amplify our praise.

*God of change and glory, God of time and space,
When we fear the future, give to us your grace.
In the midst of changing ways give us still the grace to praise.*

Refrain: Many gifts, one Spirit, one love known in many ways.

*In our difference is blessing, from diversity we praise
One Giver, one Lord, one Spirit, one Word
Known in many ways, hallowing our days.
For the Giver, for the gifts, praise, praise, praise!
God of many colors,*

*God of many signs,
You have made us different, blessing many kinds.
As the old ways disappear, let your love cast out our fear. (Refrain)*

– Al Carmine 1973
KATHERINE 65.65.77
(UM Hymnal #114)

Difference and diversity, of course, add nothing to our praise of God if our celebration of diversity is a cloak for sinful behavior. Is it possible to express a sexual ethic in hymnody? It sounds like an impossible task! Excellent books¹ are available for those looking for a fully developed progressive sexual ethic, but I think this hymn provides a good moral foundation. Remarkably, in her hymn "Sacred the Body," Ruth Duck does this in just two stanzas (3&4) of the hymn:

*Love respects person, bodies, and boundaries.
Love does not batter, neglect or abuse.
Love touches gently, never coercing.
Love leaves the other with power to choose.
Holy of holies, God ever loving,*

(Con't. on page 8: "HYMNS.")

I'm not proposing an alternative way of settling the issues, but I am inviting us to think about the issues in the light of worship – more particularly in the light of our hymnody.



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("HYMNS," cont. from page 7.)

make us your temples; indwell all we do.

May we be careful, tender, and caring, so may our bodies give honor to you.

– Ruth Duck (2001)
 RUDDLE 10.10.10.10
 by W. Daniel Landes
 (The Faith We Sing, 2228)

These brief stanzas express the gentleness and holiness with which Christians are to express physical intimacy. Although these stanzas do not provide a complete sexual ethic (it would need to include, at a minimum, a discussion of maturity, commitment, and mutual vulnerability) but they are not the loose license some associate with progressives. Based on the long-term relationships and marriages of same-sex couples, we know they have the same capacity as heterosexual persons for this holiness and gentleness. If, indeed, their relationships are holy, then the task of the church in our age is to overcome our prejudice and fear of the otherness presented in LGBTQ+ persons and their relationships.

Hymn writers have long recognized the difficulty of welcom-

ing and embracing the other, the stranger, and have sought to both challenge and reassure us. The next two hymns I cite deal with the fear of the other and, subsequently, celebrates the power God gives us to overcome it. (First 3 stanzas of a 7 seven stanza of the hymn "O Praise the Gracious Power," without the refrain.)

O praise the gracious power that tumbles walls of fear and gathers in one house of faith all strangers far and near:

O praise persistent truth that opens fist-ed minds, and eases from their anxious clutch the prejudice that blinds:

O praise inclusive love, encircling every race, oblivious to gender, wealth, to social rank or place:

– Thomas H. Troeger (1984)
 CHRISTPRAISE RAY 6.6.8.6.
 by Carol Doran
 (Evangelical Lutheran Worship #651 and Presbyterian Hymnal #471)

Stanza Four of the hymn: "All Are Welcome"

Let us build a house where hands will reach beyond the wood and stone to heal and strengthen, serve and teach, and live the Word they've known. Here the outcast and the stranger bear the image of God's face; let us bring an end to fear and danger. All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

– Marty Haugen (1994)
 TWO OAKS 9.6.8.6.8.7.10 with refrain by Marty Haugen
 (Evangelical Lutheran Worship #641)

No examination of inclusive hymns would be complete without noting the wonderfully creative work of Mark Miller. Here I've decided to use a video link to convey the beauty of the music and lyrics. The anthem is titled "Christ Has Broken Down the Wall" (2011). It is performed here by the Virginia Tech Wesley Foundation Singers under the direction of the Rev. Leigh Anne Taylor. I have chosen this video because of the

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clarity of the lyrics, and because Leigh Anne is a friend and colleague in the Virginia Conference: <https://bit.ly/2Hlgu2W>²

There are many other wonderful hymns I could cite³, but I think these examples provide at least a glimpse of the rich resources available for progressive, inclusive faith communities. Ruth Duck demonstrates that a responsible Christian sexual ethic can be communicated in worship, one that fits well in this #MeToo era. It is also important to note that a warm welcome to LGBTQ+ worshipers makes other minorities feel welcomed, honored, and safe. This kind of worship is evangelistic in the ancient and best meaning of the word—it is GOOD NEWS to those who feel vulnerable, insecure and marginalized. When I sing these hymns in communities that include LGBTQ+ friends there is a wonderful energy in the felt unity. These hymns uplift me and challenge me to embrace everyone in the spirit of Christ's all-encompassing love. For those of who take seriously John Wesley's counsel to seek perfection in love, these

hymns help us move in that direction.

So, I offer a resounding 'YES!' to the question of the singability of a progressive, inclusive theology. It is consistent with our Wesleyan emphasis on inclusiveness, evangelism, and sanctification. As "right praise," it is eminently orthodox!

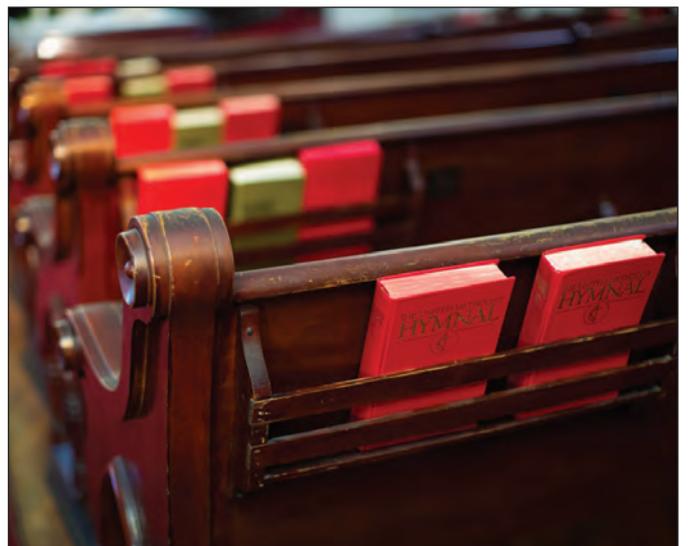
I'll conclude with the final stanza of a hymn that has a familiar tune so everyone should be able to sing along. It is titled "Guide Us to Openness" and sung to the tune of "Great is Thy Faithfulness."

*Though there are
those who would
limit Christ's graces,
Still we refuse to believe
in such lies,
For in this time we
have made a commitment
Never to limit love's
power or size.
Guide us to openness!
Guide us to openness!
Let no one ever be
shunned or denied.
Make of the Church a
bold place of compassion,
That all who seek You
may come and abide* 

– © W. Robert Martin, III
Sung to "Great Is Thy Faithfulness"
Tune: FAITHFULNESS 11.10.11.10
with refrain

- 1 A good place to start would be Marvin M. Ellison *Making Love Just: Sexual Ethics for Perplexing Times* (Fortress Press, 2012). For those wanting a Biblical and theological justification for full inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons in the church see David P. Gushee *Changing Our Minds* (Read the Spirit Books, 2014).
- 2 "Christ Has Broken Down the Wall," Soloist Anna Skinner. You Tube, uploaded by missyj Hughes, 11 February 2012 <https://bit.ly/2XMFTbM> Accessed 9 Feb. 2019
- 3 Two that come immediately to mind are: "We Are the Church Alive" by Jack Hoggatt and David Pelletier (1980) and "Sing a New Church" by Delores Dufner, OSB (1991)

– The Rev. John D. Copenhaver is Professor Emeritus of Religion and Philosophy at Shenandoah University and a retired clergy member of the Virginia Conference. The hymn lyrics referenced herein are quoted under the "fair use" doctrine of U. S. copyright law. This article was originally published by United Methodist Insight.



From Haitian Methodist Dream to Reality: The Marco Depestre School of Music

By Jack Martin

Last January, my wife Marianne and I attended the Haitian Partners meeting at the headquarters of the Haitian Methodist Church, located on the Freres campus, in the uptown section of Port-au-Prince. The Partners are those in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom who have been engaged in mission consistently over the years with the Eglise Methodiste d’Haiti (EMH), as the Haitian

Methodist Church is known in Haiti. The group formed to coordinate efforts of those working in Haiti and to establish clear lines of understanding and accountability, agreeable to the leadership of the EMH and to ourselves.

During our visit, we had the privilege of worshipping in Arcahaie, a town about an hour north of Port-au-Prince, not far from the seaside. During the service the congregation lifted their voices spontaneously to God, singing hymns from memory, since few have access to a hymnal. The instrumentalists that day were a drummer, a guitar player and a fellow playing an

electric keyboard. After the singing began, the instrumentalists sought to join in on the music, searching for the right key, and eventually provided a rather haphazard accompaniment. Finally, our host for the day, the Rev. Marco Depestre Jr., walked over to the keyboard and took over the playing, providing the correct notes, tempo and rhythm. He clearly knew what he was doing and did it well.

Later in the day, as Marco and Marianne were chatting, she complimented him on his playing and mentioned that both she and I had trained as church musicians in college. We in fact had met on the campus of Westminster Choir College in Princeton, N.J., a school that specialized in church music leadership.

During supper, Marco strolled into the Methodist Guest House dining area from his home on campus and said he wanted us to come to his house later in the evening to play his electronic organ and to talk.

We had no idea what was on his mind other than making some music together. After playing a few hymns on the organ, he said he wanted to share something —

A view of the school during construction. Photos courtesy of Jack Martin.



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his dream.

“What we need is a music school for our church.” Many of the church’s musicians have little or no opportunity to learn to read music or to play an instrument.

The EMH has some fine choirs, such as those from Duplan Methodist Church and the New College Bird Church, both located within metro Port-au-Prince. These are the exception, however. As we talked, Marco’s words resonated more and more within us.

We told him we would go home and share his dream with others.

Before we left Haiti, however, Marco introduced me to the engineer they used for many of the church’s building projects and said that they would begin working on the architectural plans right away. The excitement was already building, and we were wondering what we had gotten ourselves into; indeed, in Haiti you must watch what you say, because even a “maybe” can sound like a “promise.”

Our first opportunity to share back home was during the next week’s choir rehearsal at Braddock Street UMC in Winchester, where we are members of the



Children participate in the dedication.

sanctuary choir. It was my belief that church musicians in the Virginia Conference would be a good place to share the vision and promote involvement. Many are members of the American Guild of Organists or the Choristers Guild, and they have ways of networking with each other. I spoke to certain musicians that I knew and even interviewed one of our United Methodist college presidents, who had had experience in Haiti, receiving some assurance that if we could get the school of music built, that there might be a way to partner with the school, resourcing it with volunteer teachers and students, to help develop its program.

Eventually, a former parishioner who had been generous in his support of mission for many years, allowed us to share what we were doing. He wanted to know a lot of details, including the building concept, how the school would be administered, how funds would be handled for accountability both within the Virginia Conference and in Haiti. Afterward he offered to pay half the cost of construction.

We shared with many Virginia friends how the hope and momentum for a music school was growing in Haiti, yet we were beginning to fear that we were heading for another big

(Con't. on page 12: "HAITI.")

We had no idea what was on his mind other than making some music together. After playing a few hymns on the organ, he said he wanted to share something – his dream.



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Team members on this trip included: Joe Boaz, Bob Brock, Chip Connelly, Judy Connelly, Nina Frederick, Randy Lenz, Aaron Lloyd, Marianne Martin, Jack Martin, Mark Pugh, David Roane, Linda Shimer, Dr. Rick Taliaferro, Jackie Wilbourne, Bryant Wilbourne (the Wilbournes had to drop out at the last minute due to a tragedy in their family.) During the team's time in Haiti, the Rev. Sam NeSmith and his wife, Brenda, arrived to participate in the Dedication. They were not officially part of the team, but shared in group activities and worship, including the concert.



(“HAITI,” cont. from page 11.)

disappointment for the Haitians.

We did not want to create another unsustainable program for Haiti and neither did they. Part of Marco’s concept was to make the School of Music a joint project of the EMH and the Marco Depestre Sr. Family Foundation, whose board is made up of top leaders in Haiti, including the former Minister of Education for the nation of Haiti.

In the early stages of development, Marco carried his concept for the school both to the Foundation and to all the levels of decision making of the EMH, receiving enthusiastic approval all along the way.

I returned to Haiti in May with the Rev. Glenn Rowley, Virginia Conference director of Mission and Social Justice Ministries. We were introduced to leadership at every level necessary to make the project a reality. In each case we asked their opinion of starting such a school, and in every case the response was enthusiastic affirmation.

Back in Virginia, I shared with our benefactor what was happening in Haiti,

including a full set of architectural drawings and a beautiful artist’s rendering of the building. More questions were asked regarding usage — whether the design truly fit the need, and so forth. When his questions were fully satisfied, our donor said that he had decided to fund the building project in its entirety.

We now had the go ahead that we needed, even though the Haitians had already gone ahead. In fact, before Glenn and I left Haiti, they held a well-attended ground-breaking ceremony with outgoing Bishop Gesner Paul swinging the pickax that broke the ground for the first time. Our “maybe” had become a “promise.”

The construction went swiftly and included an unexpected requirement for a cistern. This was another sum of money that we had to quickly raise.

We knew that the building itself would not be enough to get the school up and functioning. We raised more than \$7,000, along with the pledge of musical instruments, at a benefit concert.

Our generous donor set up a substantial matching fund at

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the conference level, promising to match every dollar raised up to \$5,000 per project for disaster and humanitarian projects. Our goal was not only to build a music school, but to provide funds for the construction of two homes for survivors who lost their homes in Hurricane Matthew.

In early February 2019, the Winchester District Board of Missions donated \$4,000 to the project. With the matching grant we had more than \$20,000 for equipping the school and building two homes.

We wanted to do more than just raise money, so we formed a United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) team with plans to help with the finishing work, including painting and building cabinetry, in addition to providing dentistry, and offering a Bible school experience. Our team of 15 was scheduled to arrive in mid-February, just before the dedication of the building — a big event that would include a public concert by our musicians and Haitian musicians.

Just before our departure we heard there were demonstrations taking place in Haiti, protesting the high prices

of food and fuel. EMH leaders felt we would be safe within the walls of the compound.

We arrived to see quiet streets, although we could see some evidence of the disturbances. On arrival at the Guest House, we received a warm welcome but were told there were marches taking place here and there, and it would be best if we confined our stay to the compound. We knew there was plenty of work to do and had no problem with that arrangement.

That first night marchers passed nearby on one of the major avenues. We could hear the crowd chanting. We were told that many of the demonstrators were

being paid to protest and that some troublemakers were racing around on motorcycles and occasionally burning tires, some shooting into the air. Frankly, the outside disturbances were becoming more disconcerting. We wondered if it would get worse. We saw on the Guest House TV news that there had been some looting downtown and that shops were closing. By the next day the streets were even more deserted than when we arrived. People were hunkering down, staying in their homes. The markets were not functioning.

Our team by now was working at full speed, coming together

(Con't. on page 14: "HAITI.")

The excitement was already building, and we were wondering what we had gotten ourselves into; indeed, in Haiti you must watch what you say, because even a “maybe” can sound like a “promise.”



The interior of the school during the dedication.



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("HAITI," cont. from page 13.)

as a family and having a great time. We were meeting new friends on the work site. Haitian pastors living in the compound stopped by to see the progress, as did their new bishop, Jean Lesly Dorcely.

On Feb. 14, two days after our arrival, the U.S. State Department issued a level 4 alert, and began evacuating non-essential Embassy-related people, particularly family members, out of the country. At the same time, we began receiving messages from home that we ought to get out of the country ourselves, that we should not "risk our lives." We truly appreciated the concern and prayers of friends, family, and church leaders who were emailing us, but none of us felt that our lives were at risk. In fact, it had become

rather quiet on the streets around the Guest House. We kept working and felt things would be all right.

We knew how important the dedication was to the EMH and that they were determined to conduct it on schedule, if possible.

After much prayer and discernment, I decided that we needed to come home early. We were having difficulty getting supplies for the project, especially lumber for the carpenters, and we sensed that our presence was putting a strain on the Guest House with water and fuel in short supply. However, to a person, we wanted to stay through the Service of Dedication. Our hosts were daily assuring us that they were monitoring the situation and were confident that we were safe. The compound had high walls, and there were armed guards at all the active gates. However, I began the process of leaving Haiti. It was frustrating at times and took a lot of phone calls.

Finally, with the help of many people back in the States, we were now ticketed and had a plan to participate in the three-hour dedication service, complete

with musical concert by Haitians and our musicians, and the ribbon cutting, which I shared with Bishop Dorcely. Afterwards, we hustled to say our goodbyes, barely making it on time to the airport, where we saw a few U.S. Marines ushering out State Department personnel. As we prepared to leave, Marco came to us and said that we must come back. "We need you," he said. We assured him that we would and that we needed them as well.

Our lives are now intertwined, we feel, in a

great work for God. Just as God opened so many doors to us, even while other doors closed, we believe God has great things in mind for Virginia United Methodists as we continue to partner with our brothers and sisters of Haiti. As Bishop Dorcely said at the dedication, "We have a birth. Now we must nurture it into fullness of life." 🌸

—The Rev. Dr. Jack Martin was the Haiti UMWIM Team Leader.

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When The Pound Cake Is Gone

By Bill Pike

I suspect every church has one or maybe had a pound cake maker.

Growing up at Davis Street United Methodist Church in Burlington, N.C., I remember Ethel Foster's pound cake. There was nothing like Mrs. Foster's pound cake, and the congregation knew it.

At any covered dish dinner, Ethel Foster had a pound cake on the table of desserts. I suspect her cigar smoking husband, Clifford, was probably sad at the end of those events. I'm sure the cake platter that was taken home only had a few crumbs left on it.

Depending upon your research source, the origin of pound cake can be traced back to northern Europe. Everyone agrees that the name "pound cake" comes from the four key ingredients: flour, butter, eggs and sugar. A pound of each of those ingredients was used to make the cake, thus the name

pound cake.

Somewhere in my memory is an interview I heard with journalist Cokie Roberts. Early in her career, a boss told her to eat pound cake to sustain her through the long hours of developing a story on the run. The point was all of the eggs in pound cake offered protein. I'm sure a skilled dietician might counter that opinion with a question — what about all that butter and sugar?

Regardless, pound cake is a Southern staple, and there is nothing like a homemade pound cake. It is a soothing comfort, grounded in hospitality and a welcome guest for any occasion.

But I also have a worry, and I'll go ahead and say it — a fear.

I sense we are losing our pound cake makers, particularly at churches.

On January 15, 2018, members of Trinity

UMC, Richmond, said goodbye to Lane Dickin-son at a celebration of her life. Lane was quite a lady. She had many admirable traits. I loved her honesty; Lane never beat around the bush with her opinion. She had a servant's heart. And, I'm sorry, but I loved Lane for her pound cake, too. There was nothing like it.

Her family knew Lane's pound cake reputation, so they included her recipe on the back of the funeral bulletin.

For years, the congregation at our church longed for a gathering place after each worship service. We had no space large enough for people to chat with each other. People gathered in lobbies and hallways and it created bottlenecks, human traffic jams.

In February 2010, our new welcome center was dedicated. An unused exterior garth between the sanctuary

and the children's wing was transformed into a magnificent gathering space. In this case, the garth had been a rarely used garden plot, with a brick floor, surrounded on three sides by brick walls and facing a connecting brick walkway.

The welcome center allows us to gather after worship services, but it has become much more. At weddings, it is the staging area for bridesmaids and the bride to enter the sanctuary. We have played host to meetings and dinners, and the space allows us to stage chairs for extra seating at Christmas and Easter worship services.

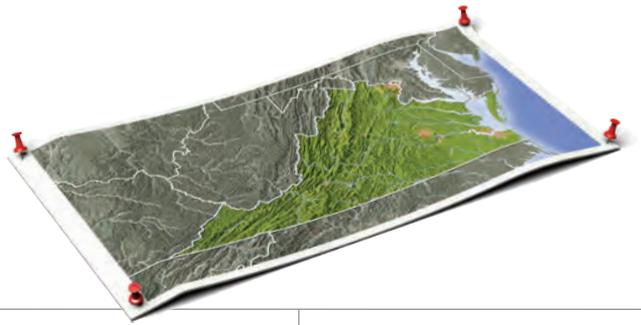
I think the most important work the Welcome Center does is provide comfort to families at a time of loss. How can a room do this? If a family makes the request, our bereavement team will stage a reception for the family and their guests immediately following the funeral service.

This reception is simply heartfelt hospitality. Families are sustained by fellowship with their friends and with the food provided. These receptions take



(Con't. on page 29: "POUNDCAKE.")

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Making disciples... digitally

By Forrest White

It's about 17 miles via the Fairfax County Parkway from Christ Church in Fairfax Station to Floris UMC in Herndon, and church seekers consider both when looking for a home ... You know, folks from California or Florida or Belize or Uganda.

Each of the churches has members engaged from such faraway places.

I know what you're thinking.

"Those big Northern Virginia churches have their own airplanes and helicopters, and our old van stays in the shop!"

Actually, choppers aren't landing on Frying Pan Road near Floris, nor are planes touching down on Ox Road outside Christ Church.

Both Christ Church and Floris offer online churches, with pastors dedicated to making disciples digitally.

The Rev. Tony Arnold of Christ Church Online and the Rev.

Ashley Allen of Floris's Restoration Worldwide do God's work on the devil's playground, as some have called the Internet.

This isn't simply about livestreaming a Sunday morning worship, as many churches do, never really knowing much about the anonymous visitors watching from afar.

This is about building a community of disciples, intent on growing in their faith as much as anyone who steps inside a brick and mortar church.

Christ Church greets visitors to its online church website with these words:



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

We are a digital faith community that exists to make the freeing and saving grace of Jesus Christ accessible to people all over the world. Too often the church is seen as a place but it's really people. Wherever the people are, that's where the church is, and it isn't always in a physical location. We believe that a healthy and fulfilling life is all about relationships and that the God we worship meets us where we are. The online campus is all about meeting you where you are.

"When I interviewed for this potential ministry opportunity, I said to the senior leadership team that I wasn't going to be content just launching a Sunday morning experience," Arnold said. "I think it's the front porch, if you will, of online experience but it can't stop there. It's just like physical church. It's just a different medium. You don't stop with just Sunday morning worship; you've got to have ways for people to engage throughout the week."

Arnold's job title is "Associate Pastor, Online Campus" while Allen is simply "Associate Pastor," as she takes on more traditional roles

of the associate as well. Christ Church Online launched in October 2017, while Restoration Worldwide is about a year old, though both Floris and Christ Church were livestreaming years before.

Both online churches have chat options for worshippers to engage with one another and the online pastors during the Sunday worship services.

It's just like physical church. It's just a different medium. You don't stop with just Sunday morning worship; you've got to have ways for people to engage throughout the week.

Most assume they largely attract technologically savvy young people, but that's not so.

At Christ Church

Online, the average age is 45, Arnold said.

At Restoration Worldwide, it's even older, with the primary demographic falling from 50-64, Allen said.

Surprising?

"Yes, absolutely, for lots of reasons," Allen said. "I don't want to sound ageist or anything negative, but my mom is 65 and she is ... a little technologically challenged.

"People in Northern Virginia are retiring a little earlier than in other places around the country. I would have expected them to be one of the most connected groups to the life of the (brick and mortar) church. They're not young adults figuring things out. There's not that new family busyness. It has been a complete surprise. I thought we would see a larger presence in the 25-35 age group."

Christ Church Online has expansive offerings beyond Sunday mornings for its members. It launched three online small groups via Zoom Video Conferencing in January 2018, but Arnold called that a bit too ambitious as some found being "face-to-face" on the computer

(Con't. on page 26: "ONLINE")

What is Easter



and how are we “Easter people”?



Though Easter may seem that it is just one day, it really is a 50-day period. The season of Eastertide begins at sunset on the eve of Easter and ends on Pentecost, the day that celebrates the birth of the Church and the appearance of the Holy Spirit.

As shared on The United Methodist Church website, Lent was the season for new converts to learn the faith and to prepare for baptism on Easter Sunday.

Today, this extended season gives us time to rejoice and experience what it means when we say Christ is risen. It's the season when we remember our baptisms and how through this sacrament we are, according to the liturgy, “incorporated into Christ's mighty acts of salvation.” As “Easter people,” we also celebrate and ponder the birth of the Church and gifts of the Spirit (Pentecost), and how we are to live.

– The United Methodist Church



Every day to us is Easter: Experience resurrection all year long

This feature was originally published March 1, 2016.

By Joe Iovino

During the Easter season, many United Methodists sing, “Every day to us is Easter, with its resurrection song.” These words open the last verse of “Easter People Raise Your Voices” (*United Methodist Hymnal* #304) penned by United Methodist pastor the Rev. William M. James. The hymn reminds us that we celebrate renewal every day.



After Katrina, the Rev. Darryl Tate saw many instances of renewal, including the rebuilding of St. Luke’s United Methodist Church in New Orleans.
File photo by Mike DuBose, United Methodist Communications.

Out of floodwaters

In late August 2005, Hurricane Katrina and the resultant flooding displaced hundreds of thousands of people in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. The Rev. Darryl Tate was one of them.

“I had lost our church by floodwaters, and our home,” Tate said. At the height of the flooding, St. Luke’s United Methodist Church in New Orleans, Louisiana, had 10-12 feet of water in it.

“I lost my stuff, but the storm was not going to define Darryl Tate,” he recalled, “I was going to overcome.”

Bishop William W. Hutchinson soon asked Tate to organize The United Methodist Church’s disaster relief ministry in Louisiana. Tate served as director of the Louisiana Conference Storm Recovery Center until 2012.

In his work, Tate saw many examples of renewal. “Our organization helped 125,000 households,” in response to “four hurricanes, seven tornadoes, three floods, and one environmental crisis,” he reported.

He remembers a unique request from a man whose home the Storm Recovery Center was ready to rebuild. “I want a house only 1,000 square feet,” he said.

The case manager assured him that though guidelines would not allow them to build more than he had before, they could rebuild the 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom home the storm destroyed.

“No,” the man replied. “I only want a house that is 1,000 square feet. I live alone. I don’t need a home that big anymore. Give it to somebody else.”

An elderly couple from a horse farm in Pecan Island were forced to live in a horse trailer when floodwaters came to their home. During the home blessing service held for the family by the Storm Recovery Center after rebuilding their home, the woman excitedly showed Tate her new refrigerator.

“I can put my glass in the door and I’ll get water and ice. Isn’t it amazing?” she said. “I am so blessed.”

A new home, a new refrigerator, a new blessing that comes after a storm. Every day can be Easter.





Kohtla-Järve, Estonia was formerly part of the Soviet Union. Today Galvary United Methodist Church is a young, growing congregation. Photo courtesy of the Rev. Sergei Sutskov.

Out of oppression

In 1940, when Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia became part of the Soviet Union, there were 46 Methodist congregations in the region (we didn't become United Methodists until 1968). When Estonia gained independence in 1991, there were only 17 left. God, however, was working toward revival.

"I accepted Jesus Christ into my heart in 1991," said the Rev. Sergei Sutskov, "It was a time of great spiritual awakening in Estonia. At this time, Estonia seceded from the Soviet Union."

Three years later, Sutskov moved to nearby Kohtla-Järve to start Galvary United Methodist Church.

Sutskov, a member of the first graduating class of the Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary founded by The United Methodist Church, continues to pastor this growing congregation today. In partnership with Mt. Bethel United Methodist Church in Marietta, Georgia since 1996, they are reaching the people of Kohtla-Järve.

In the early days of Galvary United Methodist Church, their biggest challenge was "the lack of its own building for the community," Sutskov said. In 2007, the congregation moved into a place with suf-

ficient space for worship, Sunday school, and other activities.

Reflecting on his faith journey and the church he serves, Sutskov said, "God responded to the spiritual hunger of people." Every day can be Easter.

Out of ashes

Living Waters United Methodist Church in Centerton, Arkansas, was just getting started when fire destroyed their building in 2011.

"The fire and loss of the building just seemed like a long line of setbacks and obstacles we had to overcome," said the Rev. Blake Lasater who then pastored the congregation. "It happened at a time when I seemed to be losing everything close to me."

Lasater's wife was suffering from pancreatic cancer and would die just four months after the fire.

"We are called to place our absolute trust in God even when we cannot see a way forward," Lasater explained. "That's what I ultimately did. It wasn't easy."

After two years of struggle, the new building opened in 2013 with a sense of renewal. "The fire made people into a community of faith," Lasater said.

"I learned that loss can be absolutely overwhelm-

(Con't. on page 22: "EVERY DAY.")



The Rev. Blake Lasater and the congregation of Living Waters United Methodist Church in Arkansas said they were excited to worship in their sanctuary again in 2013, nearly two years after fire destroyed their building. Photo courtesy of the Rev. Blake Lasater.



(“EVERY DAY,” cont. from page 21.)

ing and leave you feeling that there is no hope, and it is in those moments we are called to trust God the most,” Lasater reflected. “When we cannot see beyond the next horizon, when we can’t imagine the sun ever rising again, God is still there working,” in Louisiana, Estonia, and Arkansas.

The sun will come up again. Every day can be Easter.

We are Easter people

As Easter people, we know that even in the tragedies of life, God is at work bringing renewal. Some of those renewals we get to experience: rebuilt homes, national revival, and new church buildings. Others, like the death of a loved one, we wait to celebrate in the Kingdom of God to come.

Tate shared one more story from the Storm Recovery Center in Louisiana.

After a morning of shoveling muck, wet ceiling tiles, and other debris from a house damaged by floodwaters, a group of volunteers were approached by the neighborhood street-watcher. She was concerned about unknown people rummaging through her neighbor’s house. After showing her the paperwork authorizing them to be there, Tate explained, “These are five United Methodist bishops.”

The neighbor was stunned. “Bishops?” she asked.

Later in the day, she returned to have lunch with these special volunteers. Tate remembers, “She was just blown away with the servanthood of our bishops.”

As Christians, we experience resurrection every day and are called to share it in our worship and work. Every day can be Easter, all year long. 🍀

— Joe Iovino works for UMC.org at United Methodist Communications.





Resurrection People

By Kindred Project

I was listening to some of my favorite pieces of music — “The Four Seasons” by Vivaldi, “The Prayer of St. Gregory” by Alan Hovhaness and others. These pieces and others recognize despair and hope in the human condition. But, listening to them lifts me up, makes my spirit soar above the struggles and challenges of my day. The music sinks in and brings goosebumps to my arms. I shiver with joy and a deep movement in my soul. These pieces resurrect, restore and renew my soul and my sense of being in the world. They inspire me to rise and bring the spirit of the goodness of God to others.

Easter is Resurrection, grace, hope and promise. Easter is music that moves and dances and enriches, that reaches into the depths of our Being. Easter is dance which moves our bodies to experience the spirit of joy. Easter is healing and recognizing our faults and forgiving others (forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us). Easter

is welcoming all into a circle of faith. Easter is Word which speaks to our inner sense of self, our true self in and with God. Easter paints an image of Creation the way God intended it with harmony and actual peace. God dwells everywhere, in our hearts, in our minds and in the communities in which we live.

Though the spirit of Easter is joy and hope and promise, what brings us to Easter joy and revelation is a trail of sweat, tears and anguish. Humanity's angst. Our ability to treat others and ourselves with cruelty, despair and indifference. But, and this is a big but, there is the Resurrection! Life renewed, life anew.

When Christ Jesus rose, he appeared different to many. The two disciples on their way to Emmaus did not recognize him until he “broke the bread” with them. Jesus appeared suddenly among the disciples gathered. (Luke 24: 36). They were startled and filled

(Con't. on page 24: "RESURRECTION")



(“RESURRECTION,” cont. from page 23.)

with fear. At the tomb, Mary Magdalene, (present in all four Gospels as the first witness of the risen Christ) thought he was the gardener. The Ascension brings us a Jesus Christ who, can physically rise from the group gathered and is “carried up into heaven” (Luke 24:50-51). Perhaps the disciples’ initial hesitancy to know the risen Christ is true for us today. Do we recognize that Christ is risen so that we might live in goodness, and also recognize and live with his ministry of caring, inclusion and grace?

We need Easter. We need Easter each day, just as in a way we need Vivaldi, Bach, Hovhaness, Michelangelo, the Beatles and others. (I also enjoy the Moody Blues, as they often bring joy, dance and compassion to my heart!)

Our theme this month is Resurrection people. If we are to be a people of the Resurrection, we need to experience what Christ is to us and for us. We need to look at the world with the eyes of Jesus.

Easter is the experience of the divine in us and around us. It was not about Jesus the man, it was to experience (to walk with the mind of Christ). In our Holy communion liturgy, we say together that the mystery of our faith is: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. Might we add Christ is alive and Christ is with us. Those statements reflect a mystery that we cannot truly fathom, but our faith and practice of living in Christ give us a real promise of hope, comfort, joy and life! We do not know what we might experience in our lives, but that assurance of the presence of the divine in Christ through grace brings us this hope.

Our *Book of Discipline* (2012, p. 51) declares that, “New birth (an awakening of a personal resurrection – my addition) is the first step in the process of sanctification. Sanctifying grace draws us toward the gift of Christian perfection, which John Wesley described as a heart “habitually filled with the love of God and neighbor” and as ‘having the mind of Christ and walking as he walked.’” Easter calls us to make a habit of loving God and neighbor and to walk as Christ walked. The prophet Micah knew about walking with God when he wrote that we are called “to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8) The Resurrection brings this home, to our home (“That Christ

may make his home in your hearts through faith.”— Ephesians 3:17). Christ rose to demonstrate in a very real way that we are loved by God, that we are to live in Christ and be nurtured and taught by the Holy Spirit. (John 14: 26)

The Gospel according to John writes of Jesus before the Crucifixion that “in a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, your also will live. On that day you will know I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.” (John 14:19-20) It is how we live in Christ, in ourselves and in our communities that brings guidance, hope and peace.

We live in a world in need of grace. So, make this Easter season be the renewal we are called to, of our hearts and lives so that the presence of the Holy Spirit (embedded within the Father and the Son) will come alive! 🍷

– The Rev. Bruce Lugn is an actively retired elder and member of The Kindred Project. Learn more about Kindred Project at <https://www.kindredprojectva.com/>.

Suggestions for further spiritual awakenings

The Faith We Sing: #2130 – *The Summons* – “Will you quell the fear inside”; #2128 – *Come and Find the Quiet Center* – “Clear the chaos and the clutter”; #2222 – *The Servant Song* – “We are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.”

The United Methodist Hymnal: #289 – *Ah, Holy Jesus* – “Twas I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied thee, I crucified thee”; #302 – *Christ the Lord is Risen Today* – “Soar we now where Christ has led. Alleluia!”

This We Believe: The Core of Wesleyan Faith and Practice by Bishop William H. Willimon

The Way of the Heart: Connecting with God Through Prayer, Wisdom, and Silence by Henri J. M. Nouwen



Words about Resurrection

“HOPE! When I explain what it means to be “Easter People,” I am constantly talking about hope. I find that much of my ministry with students in campus ministry is reminding them of that Resurrection hope they live into as followers of Jesus.

As mental health struggles and life in college gets more difficult each year, it is vital that students realize in the midst of their struggle and darkness that we have this hope; that God is with us always through the power of the resurrected Christ in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Living into resurrection every day means looking for those moments where God is at work in our lives. We call them “Glory Sightings” at Wesley. So, living resurrection each day means living in hope that God is still at work in our lives...our stories are still being written!

This is what it means to be an Easter People...living in the hope that we have through the Resurrection of Jesus. That even in the midst of fear, struggle and pain we have this hope!”

– The Rev. Bret Gresham is the campus minister at Wesley at Virginia Tech.

“The trouble with resurrection is all that we project or transfer onto that one word. Resurrection becomes the catch-all for what would makes us feel better, or what would make our life together inarguably alive and well and pleasing in the sight of others. Confession: my belief in resurrection sounds an awful like my desire for relief, some days. When God raised Jesus, though, it was not for the sake of an eternity in ease. On the other side of the grave was (and is) more ministry — different ministry — a reimagined presence. That is at once beautiful and terrifying.”

– The Rev. Rachel May is pastor of Boulevard UMC in Richmond.

“Whenever I think about resurrection I have to think about death, because in order for there to even be resurrection we have to acknowledge that death has occurred. We wrestle with what that death may be, and we celebrate the new life that is occurring through resurrection. Christ died and was resurrected, this is one of our tenants of Scripture. To live this each day means we must recognize what we may lose in our own death, and what is thereby gained in our resurrection. It causes grief and mourning, yes, but it also provides an assurance of Christ’s love that is present within each and every one of us. Grace is at the center of resurrection because it focuses our mind on God’s action rather than our own.”

–The Rev. Andrew Ware is the pastor of Wood’s UMC in the James River District.

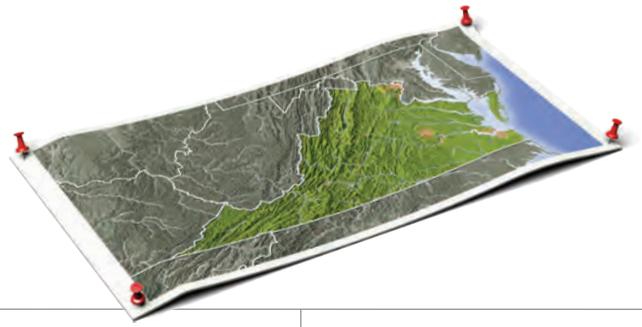
“We are called to be an Easter people regardless of what it looks like tomorrow.”

– Bishop Leonard Fairley, Resident Bishop of the Louisville Area, From a time of prayer for Special Session of General Conference 2019

“As Christian people, as Easter people, we know that a lot of good work can happen in three days. We remember on that Friday that all was lost and broken. Darkness and anxiety and fear moved in but not to stay, because on Sunday, life conquered death as Jesus rose up from that grave.”

– The Rev. Brian Adkins, an openly gay pastor in California, a member of the Commission on a Way Forward (COWF) shared this at General Conference 2019

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



("ONLINE," cont. from page 17.)

screen a bit intimidating.

Arnold shifted gears and soon offered an online version of Alpha, a class for those exploring the Christian faith, something Christ Church had been doing for years. That worked well for the online church – it recently began its third iteration of Alpha. He also began offering a weekly livestream on Wednesday afternoons called "Living It Out" to dig deeper into the previous Sunday's sermon. It has moved to Thursday evenings and grown in numbers and in scope. There's now a co-host, Jennifer Deschanel. Software called OBS allows them to show video clips from the Sunday service and use images to make the experience more dynamic.

Coming soon to Christ Church Online — a second livestreaming experience during the week. It will be a prayer gathering online for about 30 minutes, where Arnold will lead participants through various forms of prayer.

"Right now there's really no venue aside from Sunday morning and praying in the chat where people can do

that," Arnold said.

Online Bible study is in the works as well. There are Facebook groups for each small group and, soon, a Constant Contact newsletter.

"We're always asking 'How do we expand what we're doing to meet people's needs?' I am all about discipleship," Arnold said. "It is why I went into the ministry. I'm passionate about seeing people grow in their faith, to become the people God has created them to be. We are building this community together. This is what God has called us to do."

Restoration Worldwide is focused on online small group ministry with options on Sunday, Monday and Wednesday nights. Allen plans to add an online meet and greet experience after worship services and an online moderated discussion board, so that people can engage in sermon-related conversations all week long.

"We're also looking at a new expression of worship that will be independent to the online community," Allen said.

Both online churches find about 20-25 percent of their members participating from far-

away places, with the rest scattered around Northern Virginia, where traffic often snarls to nightmarish levels and may discourage travel to an evening event in a traditional church setting.

Allen tells the story of Mary in North Carolina who heard about Restoration Worldwide through a friend attending Floris. Mary attends online worship each Sunday during the 9:15 a.m. service. She's in an online small group, as well as Floris' card ministry and on the prayer team.

Arnold speaks of his friend Jonathan in Uganda, who works in a refugee camp there and found out about Christ Church through a missionary. He joins one of the church's hybrid groups (in person/online) each Tuesday.

Restoration Worldwide has an online group in Ghana, which Allen considers to be its first house church. She would love to see the house church concept explode.

"I think there's great potential for that," Allen said. "That's one of the things we're working on now. Do they livestream the sermon and have their own worship leader? What

makes the house church work? Is it small group discussion over a meal? What do they do?"

Allen and Arnold collaborate often and he, too, speaks with great passion about the potential for spreading the Gospel through online churches branching off into house churches.

"I never expected coming out of seminary to have an opportunity like this one. I didn't see the full potential of it at first," Arnold said. "Imagine if down the road we really developed and we really pick up steam. What if we have hundreds upon hundreds of people joining us in worship each week, maybe even thousands?"

"What if we were to use the online campus as a tool and a way to plant house churches in different areas of the country, of the world, where people could be mobilized to meet the needs of their community and spread the Gospel? That's one of the things that excites me most about this concept." 

– Forrest White is the news associate with the conference Communications office.

Perspective from a member of Restoration Worldwide

My journey with Restoration started last spring, when a friend who is a Floris UMC member suggested that I listen to the livestream or sermon archive. I had a church family in North Carolina but was feeling distanced from it by my own sin, and my friend assured me that there was a place for me at her church.

The first week I listened to the livestream was Mother's Day, and the message resonated with me. I started listening to the sermon archives and attended the 9:15 service in person when I visited Virginia last September. At that time, I was introduced to The Rev. Tom Berlin, The Rev. Barbara Miner and The Rev. Ashley Allen and was warmly welcomed.

Restoration has enabled me to participate in so many areas of church life: I attend every Sunday online, plus special services are also available to us online. I have listened to Berlin explain the General Conference in a special meeting, attended the recent Women's Con-

ference online and am about to start my third small group through the Zoom Meeting venue. I have also been able to participate in service projects, such as the Christmas giving tree and I am a member of the weekly card writing group, which writes cards to church members who are ill, suffering or bereaved.

The security of belonging at Restoration has helped me in my spiritual journey and in my healing. I am duplicating the card writing ministry at my home church. I look forward to Sundays now instead of dreading them.

Lots of churches offer online services, but it's the leadership and guidance from Allen during the service that makes Restoration special. I have invited several friends who feel like going to a physical church building is not for them to join me online on Sundays and a few have.

I am grateful for a ministry that reached across physical distance to show God's love to all His people. 

– Mary Showalter

Learn more...

Here is the link to Christ Church Online: <http://christchurchva.churchonline.org/>.

Here is the link to Restoration Worldwide: <https://www.florisumc.org/restoration->



EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY

Risen today! A Wesley hymn devotion for Easter

By Joe Iovino

Many churches of all denominations begin worship on Easter Sunday by singing “Christ the Lord is Risen Today.” Charles Wesley’s lyrics wonderfully celebrate how Jesus’ Resurrection is God’s victory over death, and call us to tell the world.

Charles and John Wesley, two of the historic founders of The United Methodist Church, published the beloved hymn in their first hymnal, *Hymns and Sacred Poems* in 1739.

For those who know our United Methodist Hymnal well, reading the words Wesley penned can feel incomplete. The alleluias we are used to singing at the end of each line aren’t there; a later editor added them to make the lyrics fit the tune and to give added opportunities for praise.

Wesley writes about the Resurrection in the present tense, inviting us into the biblical narrative. As we sing, we easily picture ourselves standing among the witnesses of the empty tomb on that first Easter morning.

“Christ the Lord is ris’n to day,”

Sons of men and angels say,

Raise your joys and triumphs high,

Sing ye heav’ns, and earth reply.

Participating in this moment, we are also aware of the magnitude of the Resurrection. In this opening verse, Wesley introduces a theme that runs through the hymn. The Resurrection is celebrated both on earth and in heaven.

Our *United Methodist Hymnal* includes an edit to the second line. “Earth and heaven in

chorus say” replaces “Sons of men and angels say.” According to United Methodist Discipleship Ministries, this change updates Wesley’s language to be gender inclusive and emphasizes the Resurrection’s impact throughout the world and beyond.

“The entire universe sings the triumphant chorus,” writes United Methodist scholar the Rev. Paul Chilcote in *The Song Forever New: Lent and Easter with Charles Wesley*, “with earth and heaven shouting their praise back and forth in ecstatic joy.” Earth and heaven sing because in the Resurrection we know death is not the final word. Wesley writes,

Love’s redeeming work is done,

Fought the fight, the battle won...

Lives again our glorious King,

Where, O death, is now thy sting?

In a podcast interview for UMC.org’s *Get Your Spirit in Shape*, Chilcote says, “Death seems to be a final word in the life of every human being. Seems to be, I say, a final word, because it isn’t,” he



continues. “The final word is life, not death. The final word is resurrection. The final word is eternal life with God who loves us.”

Wesley calls us to live into eternal life every day,

Soar we now,
where Christ has
led?

Following our
exalted head,

Made like him,
like him we rise,

Ours the cross—the
grave—the skies!

In the final three of Wesley’s 11 verses, the hymn’s focus shifts to our hope of a day of Resurrection yet to come. Wesley returns to the theme of earth and heaven singing praise on that day:

Hail the Lord of
earth and heav’n!

Praise to thee by
both be giv’n:

Thee we greet
triumphant now;

Hail the resurrec-
tion thou!

Jesus is the Resurrection who brings new life to all of creation, and will bring it to completion.

We receive new life

in Christ by God’s grace and are to share God’s love with the world. We do this by joining the song with our voices and lives.

King of Glory, soul
of bliss,

Everlasting life is
this,

Thee to know, thy
pow’r to prove,

Thus to sing, and
thus to love!

“We experience so many little deaths, don’t we, in our lives?” Chilcote asks in the podcast interview. Some are literal deaths like the loss of a loved one, but we also experience other griefs. Relationships end. Jobs are lost. “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today” proclaims that Jesus has conquered all those deaths.

“The central message of our faith,” Chilcote concludes, “is the Cross and the Resurrection. Its earliest proclamation of a God who is in the business of raising us from the dead. Oh, if that isn’t good news, I don’t know what good news is.”

— Joe Iovino works for UMC.org at United Methodist Communications. This story first posted on April 10, 2017.

(“POUNDCAKE,” cont. from page 15.)

an ounce of pressure off the grieving family. Their sadness is temporarily distracted, and I think that is good for them.

But since January 15, 2018, I’ll selfishly admit these receptions have been bittersweet for me — no more pound cakes from Lane Dickinson gracing those tables.

I’ll add another concern to the absence of a pound cake. When I look at the age of our bereavement team members, I wonder, how we will replace them? At some point, these women, as strong as they are, will wear out. They will hang up their aprons. Churches today are faced with lots of challenging questions.

I never suspected that one of those questions might be what will churches do when the pound cake makers are gone?

What will churches do when bereavement teams age out and hang up those aprons?

No matter how we frame them, our lives evolve around our connection to people.

As I reflect upon every job I’ve had, any success I found was anchored in people. The same can be said for my church experiences —

people. My early molding and shaping came from my family and the people who surrounded them.

Pound cake makers and bereavement teams are people with giving hearts. Their hearts sustain people in need.

As churches look to figure out their future, understanding the needs of people will be one of the keys. Meeting those needs will always be tied to having a congregation with compassionate hearts.

Maybe you are thinking pound cakes and receptions for grieving families are old school.

You might be right.

But there is going to be a point in your life and my life when I’m going to need a piece of homemade pound cake and the love of giving hearts.

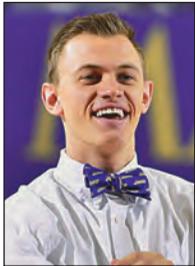
For a long, long, long time churches have been the place where people can find that sustenance in times of need.

Churches can’t forget this.

As churches peer into their futures, searching for a path to sustain them, I hope homemade pound cake and giving hearts are not overlooked.

— Bill Pike is director of operations at Trinity UMC in Richmond.

LIVING THE WORD



Garrett Oguich is a junior at James Madison University (JMU) in Harrisonburg, Va. He is involved in an organization called Younglife which has allowed him to meet some of the most amazing people. His life as a Christian started very young as a "preacher's kid" in The United Methodist Church. He attended Sunday school and participated in youth group and mission trips like the typical minister's "munchkin." His relationship with the Lord started growing deeper in his junior year of high school after realizing that following Jesus isn't just the kind of relationship that happens once a week. "His love is consistently reaching out every day, so I must walk with the sense that He lives inside of me, and I live for Him and nothing else for all of my days," he says. Oguich shared that he is blessed to share his thoughts on these Scriptures and hopes they are meaningful for readers.

April 7, 2019 Matthew 10:1-15

This is one of the first times in Scripture that we see all of Jesus' disciples called by name, together. Jesus took pride in each of them and taught them to follow in his steps always. One thing stands out to me after all of those names are called out in verses two through four. A name is missing. Mine. Jesus wants all of our names to be on that list. He wants you, Garrett. He wants you, Eric. He wants you, Judy. He wants you, Abby. The list goes on and on. Jesus wants each of us to have him at the center of our lives. He knows everything about us, and he wants you to come after his love.

My biggest takeaway comes in verses five through eight. We are told Jesus "sent." (verse 5) This was the start of making disciples of all nations. The disciples had learned from following in Jesus' footsteps. Can you imagine what that was like? Waking up each day in the physical presence of Jesus, so eager to learn more. The key part of this passage was Jesus sending the disciples to the lost sheep, not to the ones who already knew about Jesus. They were to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven was coming, and it was coming soon. Jesus knew that his time on earth was coming to an end, and he wanted every nation to know about him. To this day, there are nations that do not know of Jesus and His love. As disciples, isn't that what we should pursue every day? There are many people lost and not just in distant places.

Verse eight blows me away. The same power enabling the 12 to perform miracles lives inside of us! That power to heal the sick, to cure those with leprosy, to cast out demons and to even raise the dead, is consistently knocking at our door to work in and through our lives in mighty ways. Jesus wants to reach all nations, and we have

the power, inside of us, to do it.

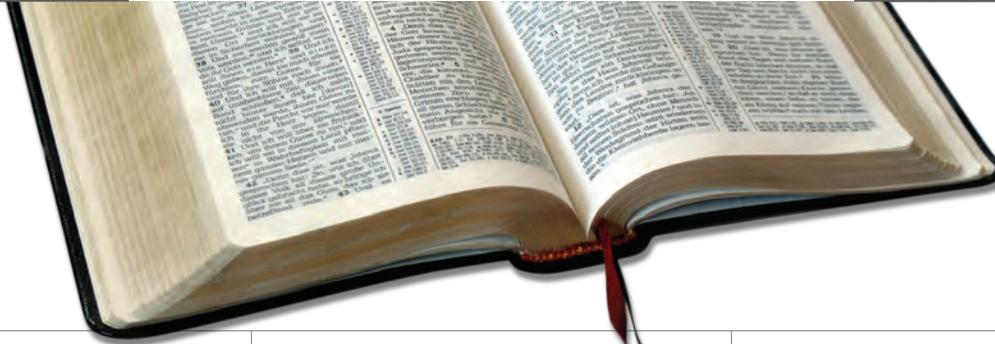
Father,

Help us to be wise and courageous as we seek to fulfill your Son's calling. Give us the strength and abilities we need to proclaim your kingdom whenever and wherever you need us to do so. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

April 14, 2019 Matthew 26:1-13

In these verses, we start to learn about Jesus' last few days on this earth and how even in this time of preparation for his own death, he was still teaching the disciples about the most important things in life – honoring Him. So many people hated Jesus and all of the things that he was teaching. They believed that he wasn't the true Messiah who was to be sent. There was so much hatred within their hearts that the thing that would make them happiest was to kill Jesus. As humans we can get lost in our own sense of jealousy that leads to hatred. From relationships, to new clothes, to new jobs, to people "living their best lives" on social media, we all can get lost in it. Instead of letting jealousy build up to the point we can't take it anymore, why not, as soon as we notice it, give it up to the Lord?

The second part of this passage is Jesus in Bethany, in the house of Simon, who was formerly known as a leper, but was someone who had been healed and worked to know Jesus every day. When was the last time our actions reflected Simon's? What has happened in the past doesn't define who we are and never will, unless we let it. What does define us is walking closely to Jesus, relying on that relationship each day and remembering we are beloved, faults and all. As a woman approached Jesus with expensive perfume and poured it over him, honoring who he was, the disciples raged against



this “waste” saying the perfume should have been sold and the money given to the poor. To me, the message here is we should pour out our best for Jesus each day, regardless of the cost, doing whatever he asks, being ready at all times for his command.

No matter what hatred and jealousy has been present in your life, there is an answer in Jesus. Even with all of the hatred going on in his world, Jesus continued to give his best and his love. He asks us to do the same with everyone we meet and to give him our best each day.

Father,

Help us to examine our motives lest we become scornful towards people whose expressions of devotion to you may seem wasteful to us. Help us to be as generous as Mary was in our service to you. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

April 21, 2019

Matthew 28:1-15

Could you imagine seeing Jesus die on the cross, seeing his body carried into the cave, and then seeing the stone rolled away and the cave empty? I would absolutely be shocked, just like Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were. That amazing sight, being fulfilled with his promise, is what walking with Jesus is all about. He has promised a life that will always be fulfilling no matter how empty we feel. Along with the women being surprised, the guards at Jesus' tomb were shaken by what they saw. There was an angel

dressed in a blinding white cloak with an appearance as astonishing as lightning. That angel was just sitting in the empty tomb, telling them that Jesus was not there, and that Jesus was going to meet them in Galilee. The angel also told them to go and tell the other disciples about what had happened.

Has there been anything that has happened to you that you had been so excited to tell people about that you couldn't wait? Multiply that by about a thousand, and that's what you get from those who saw the empty tomb and heard the news from the angel. While all of this was going on, the guards of the tomb sprinted to go and tell the high priests what had happened. When was the last time you were ecstatic about something that Jesus was doing in your life? While I was a freshman, I wasn't at James Madison University, but at Pfeiffer University playing basketball. I endured so many hardships. I had no idea what I was going to do. Jesus put it on my heart to transfer to the university I call my home today. I always thought transferring was a bad idea, that we should always stick it out through the worst of times. But, that's when Jesus comes! He comes to us when we are at our lowest, and when we feel like nothing can boost us up to where we belong. When I was at peace with my decision to transfer, I couldn't wait to tell everyone! This is how we should feel about sharing the Good News!

Father,

How thankful we are that today and every day we are re-

minded of the greatest love story ever told; your Son's love for us. Use us to change hearts and minds with this amazing news of the risen Savior. We pray this in his name, Amen

April 28, 2019

Matthew 28:16-20 & Acts 1:6-8

When was the last time you doubted something, even though the proof was right in front of you? One of those times was when I got my first pet, a yellow Labrador Retriever we named Champ. It was around Christmas time, and my mother said that we had to go help with a Bible study. My sister and I tagged along, with no clue what was going on. We got to the house, and we were greeted by six puppies. After a little bit of playing with them, my father, who is known for being sarcastic in some situations, asked us if we wanted to take one of them home. I was completely shocked! I didn't believe him at first. My first dog, ever, was one that I fell in love with from the beginning. That same doubt, that I believed that I possessed in that time as a child, was the same kind of doubt that these disciples were feeling having a risen Jesus standing in front of them. They were worshipping Jesus and what had just happened over the past couple of days. Jesus wants us to pursue the Lost and to pursue him, with

(Con't on page 33: "LIVING WORD.")

The 2019 Living the Word devotions are from the *Standard Lesson Commentary* from Cokesbury. Note: you can follow the April readings for the 2019 Bible Challenge from Bishop Lewis on pg. 35.

CLERGY & DIACONAL



DEATHS



The Rev. David (Dave) Barnes Camden, 88, of Appomattox, died Feb. 16. He served West Mathews, New Castle and the

Appomattox Circuit before retiring in 1993.



The Rev. Reginald "Reg" Harrell Potts III, 94, of Richmond, died Feb. 13. He served as a pastor for 40 years in

the Virginia Conference at East Halifax, Morrison, Middleburg, Herndon, McGuire Park, Crooks Memorial, Oaklette, Chamberlayne Heights, Miles Memorial, First in Newport News, and Main Street in Bedford. He retired in 1990.



The Rev. Ken Swick, pastor of Melfa UMC, Eastern Shore District, died Feb. 17, while vacationing in

Panama. Burial and Celebration of Life services with full military veteran honors will be held at Upper Bermudian Lutheran Church in Gardners, Pa., on Apr. 6.



The Rev. Dr. David Palmer, retired, died Jan. 30, 2019 in Danville. He retired in 1993 after serving in the Illinois and

Virginia Conferences in various capacities for over 50 years. Funeral services were held on Feb. 2 at St. Luke's UMC in Danville.



The Rev. Gerald M. "Jerry" Vaiden Jr., 84, retired, died Jan. 22. He served Kenwood on the former Peter-

burg District, as director of the Wesley Foundation at UVA, then back to the local church at Princess Anne Plaza, Saint Andrew's in the former Portsmouth District, as the associate at Annandale, as pastor of Good Shepherd in the Alexandria District, Cameron and Dranesville. After retirement in 2000 he served Eastland in the former Ashland District.

Marian Virginia Lynn, 89, died Oct. 15, 2018, in Burlington, New Jersey. She is the mother of **the Rev. Barbara L. Parker** of the Greenbackville Charge, Eastern Shore District.

Janie Comstock died Feb. 9, 2019 in Portsmouth. Her daughter-in-law is **the Rev. Ellen Comstock**, retired clergy in the Virginia Conference.

Dorothy (Dot) Simpson Chidester, 90, of Boones Mill, died Jan. 20, 2019. She was preceded in death by her second husband, **the Rev. A. Benjamin Chidester Jr.**

Alice Virginia Maddox White, 87, of Goode, Va., died Jan. 29. Her son-in-law is **the Rev. Dr. Richard A. "Dick" Daily**, a retired elder serving the New Hope-Sharon Charge in the Lynchburg District.

Pauline Anna Davola "Polly" Wash, 99, of Richmond, died Jan. 31. Her son, **the Rev. Willard D. "Bill" Wash**, is retired clergy in the Virginia Conference.

Mildred Nelson, 89, of Washington, Va., died Jan. 30. Her son, **the Rev. Clyde T. Nelson**, is retired clergy in the Virginia Conference.

Jane Sydney Meloy, 74, of Richmond, widow of **the Rev. Mike Meloy**, died Jan. 22, 2019. Her son-in-law, **Rev. Mark Roscoe**, is pastor of Bethel UMC, Rappahannock River District.

Kay Mayton, 85, of Seaford, Va., died Jan. 22, 2019. She is survived by her husband, **the Rev. Wilfred "Bill" Mayton**, retired, and the mother of **the Rev. Michel "Mike" Mayton** pastor of Macedonia UMC, Winchester District.

The Rev. Deroy C. Campbell, 90, of Rocky Mount, Va., died Jan. 19, 2019. He served several churches on the Danville District and was a professor at Ferrum College before his retirement in 1992. 🇺🇸

("LIVING WORD" con't from page 31.)

all the love and enthusiasm and innocence of two children meeting their new pet for the first time.

In the Acts passage, the disciples ask Jesus if he was going to restore Israel. This causes Jesus to say that nobody knows when things will happen, but everything is in God's timing. I am definitely one to get frustrated and question the timing that the Lord brings to me, but it's passages like this that remind me the best promise in the world – when the Holy Spirit comes to us, at any point, the power will electrify our motives and actions so much that we will be on fire for the Lord more than ever. A Lord that gives us power when we walk in the Holy Spirit is one that I want to follow every day.

Father,

May we give the words of Jesus the attention that they (and He) deserve. We pray your help to keep us focused on the Great Commission we have. We pray this is Jesus' name, Amen. ☞

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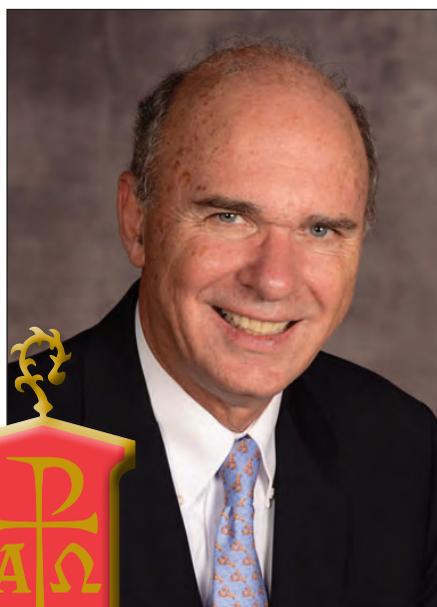


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FROM THE BISHOP



Bishop Lewis to go on medical leave, new interim bishop announced

Bishop Sharma D. Lewis announced on Mar. 4, during the “State of the Church” address that focused on General Conference 2019, that she will be on medical leave for six months. In late December 2018, Bishop Lewis underwent a hip surgery and then had an additional surgery in January. This made her unable to attend General Conference in St. Louis from Feb. 23-26.

Lewis shared she will have to undergo two additional surgeries due to ongoing complications related to her original hip surgery;

the first took place Thursday, Mar. 7. The medical leave is at the strong recommendation of her doctors.

“To take six months off will be hard, but I have got to get well,” Lewis said.

In Lewis’ absence, an interim bishop was assigned to oversee the Virginia Annual Conference. The process to find this interim bishop has already started.

Bishop Weaver comes to Virginia as interim bishop

The Rev. Tom Berlin, co-chair of the Committee on Episcopacy, shared on Mar. 6 that Bishop Peter (Pete) D. Weaver will begin his duties as interim bishop of the Virginia Conference effective Thursday, Mar. 7, 2019.

Peter D. Weaver was born into a parsonage family in Greenville, Pa. Following education at W. Va. Wesleyan (BA), Drew University (MDiv) and Boston University (ThD) he served United Methodist churches in Pittsburgh, Pa. for 25 years focusing on making disciples through ministries with youth, young adults, older adults, the homeless, industrial workers and executives and with weekly radio broadcasts. He was a founder of “Bethlehem Haven” for homeless women and “One Voice Against Racism.”

In 1996, he was elected a bishop and served the Philadelphia Area (1996-2004) and Boston Area (2004-2012). From 2012-16 Bishop Weaver served in Washington, DC as executive secretary

of the United Methodist Council of Bishops and now serves as Bishop-in-Residence at Drew University Theological School.

Pete (as he prefers to be called) and his spouse Linda now live in Williamsburg, Va. and have eight grown daughters and 12 grandchildren. Along with enjoying family, Pete plays the trombone, does woodworking, water sports, and helping with ministry with persons who are homeless.

His “life verse” is: “If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation!” (II Cor. 5:17)

You can view Bishop Weaver’s full biography at https://vaumc.org/pages/news/va-news/vanews_bishopweaverbio. 🇺🇸



ONE LAST WORD

Bishop's Bible Challenge readings for APRIL

April 1	Prov. 25-26; Heb. 3
April 2	Prov. 27-29; Heb. 4
April 3	Prov. 30-31; Heb. 5
April 4	Lev. 1-3; Heb. 6
April 5	Lev. 4-5; Heb. 7
April 6	Lev. 6-7; Heb. 8
April 7	Lev. 8-10; Heb. 9
April 8	Lev. 11-12; Heb. 10:1-18
April 9	Lev. 13; Heb. 10:19-39
April 10	Lev. 14; Heb. 11:1-19
April 11	Lev. 15-16; Heb. 11:20-40
April 12	Lev. 17-18; Heb. 12
April 13	Lev. 19-20; Heb. 13
April 14	Lev. 21-22; Rev. 1
April 15	Lev. 23-24; Rev. 2
April 16	Lev. 25; Rev. 3
April 17	Lev. 26-27; Rev. 4
April 18	Daniel 1-2; Rev. 5
April 19	Daniel 3-4; Rev. 6
April 20	Daniel 5-7; Rev. 7
April 21	Daniel 8-10; Rev. 8
April 22	Daniel 11-12; Rev. 9
April 23	Ecc. 1-3; Rev. 10
April 24	Ecc. 4-6; Rev. 11
April 25	Ecc. 7-9; Rev. 12
April 26	Ecc. 10-12; Rev. 13
April 27	Numbers 1-2; Rev. 14
April 28	Numbers 3-4; Rev. 15
April 29	Numbers 5-6; Rev. 16
April 30	Numbers 7-8; Rev. 17



Our Lord has written the promise of Resurrection, not in books alone, but in every leaf of springtime.

– Martin Luther

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