



The Virginia United Methodist

August 2013

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Advocate



2013 ANNUAL CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS



**LORD,
TEACH
US TO
PRAY**

2013 VIRGINIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

2013-2014 Mission Opportunities Guide inside

Connecting with the



Virginia Advocate

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

FROM THE EDITOR

Neill Caldwell
EditorDiscerning
the will of
the Lord**Sitting here in the comfort of the MethoDome in Glen Allen,**

Annual Conference is a few days and at least one humongous traffic jam in my rear view mirror. But downloading hundreds of photos from the event is a good way to review what happened at the 231st gathering of the Virginia Annual Conference. If it's not an instant replay, then at least it's a series of snapshots of our 48 hours of peace and love.

As Bishop Cho said to the staff this week, Annual Conference wasn't perfect, but all went well. And I think he received consistent high marks for his leadership from everyone. Our soft-spoken bishop was firm and forceful when it mattered, and he kept things light with his sense of humor, which many people had never experienced before. His Episcopal Address was a highlight, and, coming early on the agenda, set the tone for the rest of conference.

Dr. Steven Harper was deep and challenging, but isn't that what you want from Bible study? Clarence Brown was doubly good, both in his powerful preaching and in his patient presiding over Pensions proposals (OK, stop with all the alliterations already!). Tom Berlin's sermon was filled with some poignant moments... He refused to sugarcoat the future that's ahead of this year's group of ordinands, provisional members and local pastors, while still making it sound like a calling with great promise. I had never heard Marg Kutz preach before, but she was good enough to make me want to hear more. Too bad she was in the large group of clergy retirees.

The Hampton Roads Convention Center was functional and professional. It was also cold, dark and somewhat overwhelmed by our numbers. I hope we can make some small adjustments to make it better for next year. It's nice to have most everything under one roof. Plus, the food was pretty good and the staff seemed eager to please.

I liked the card-under-the-seat idea (cards with the names of the 1,200 or so churches in the conference were placed under all the seats and during the Vital Congregations report, Larry Davies invited everyone to retrieve the card and begin praying for that church and pastor). It's the kind of small, simple act that can transform Annual Conference from a business meeting to a spiritual event of the kind Bishop Cho is urging.

Budget, an 11-point pension proposal and Common Table restructuring all went through with little discussion. I guess everyone was too busy tweeting.

I also loved the way Bishop Cho called for votes. Instead of that "all in favor" stuff, the bishop said something like "If you discern that it's the will of the Lord that you support this, please raise your hand." Ah, discernment! That was another simple, spiritual shift that set this conference apart.

Annual Conference is part homecoming, part trade show and part political convention. When I asked my local church representative how she liked this year's experience, she simply answered "Our bishop is a jewel!"

That's about all you need to know. 

*Neill Caldwell*

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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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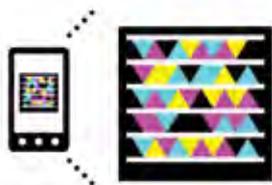
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COMMENTARY

Now is the time to put an end to gun violence

Every time the date April 16, 2007, comes up, memories resurface for those of us in Blacksburg about that tragic day.

Every time there is an episode of gun violence anywhere in the United States, I see once again the picture of the mentally ill Seung Hui Cho, who wreaked unbelievable havoc and tragedy on the Virginia Tech community.

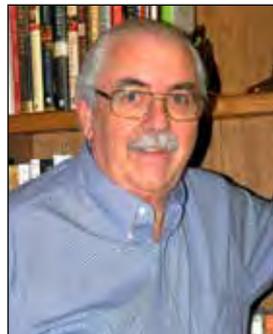
Recently I visited the second floor of Norris Hall, where 31 of the 33 deaths (including Cho's) occurred. The beauty of the place belies the awful scene that first responders found there six years ago. It has been completely refurbished, and now houses the Center for Peace Studies and the Prevention of Violence.

My wife and I attended an open house at the center during a busy weekend last month, and there was almost no one there. In many ways, life has returned to normal. Yet

the wounds are deep, and the memories are troubling for anyone who was here on April 16.

I was working at the Wesley Foundation on that cold and windy April day marked by blowing snow flurries. We were about one-half mile from Norris Hall.

The rest of that day and the days following, our center became a haven for our own Wesley students as well as others who were afraid, and needed warmth and comfort and maybe a couple of extra lines for phoning home.



Commentary by
The Rev. Glenn Tyndall

In the days that followed, we prayed, we counseled, we fed students and had group discussions about "why?" One of my major jobs quickly became brokering the tremendous outpouring of tangible

tokens of love from around the United Methodist world and other places: posters, cards, crosses, prayer shawls, Bibles and literally hundreds of dozens of homemade chocolate chip cookies.

The Wesley Singers participated in an incredible Sunday morning service at Blacksburg United Methodist Church on April 22, hearing an outstanding sermon by our pastor, the Rev. Reggie Tuck. All of these things, plus candlelight vigils on campus, helped

the healing begin and then continue.

The April 16 shooting politicized me on the issue of gun violence. Regardless of the legal ramifications at this point, I am convinced that it is an ethical issue, a moral issue and a spiritual issue.

Tucson, Aurora and Newtown have only made it more clear that the status quo is not satisfactory. It is time for Christians, Jews, Muslims and other people of good will to act individually and collectively to do all that we can to curb this insane epidemic of citizen-against-citizen gun violence that has marked our country, almost uniquely in the world.

The day of the Newtown shooting, thinking about a young man firing a semi-automatic weapon repeatedly into the faces and bodies of first-graders at point-blank range, my reaction was "Enough!"

We must do whatever we possibly can to take a stand.

When the next Newtown occurs, we can at the very least say we have done all we can to prevent such carnage. We cannot say that today, because of the irrational rhetoric of the NRA and the cowardice of our politicians.

While it is true that Hokie Nation, the students, the campus and the community are all stronger because of what we all went through, we cannot let this keep us from continuing to work for the prevention



of gun violence here and throughout our country.

One misguided reaction to April 16 was to advocate for the presence of concealed weapons on campus. This is clearly not the answer.

Imagine if the first-responders had entered Norris Hall to find numerous weapons in evidence. Imagine if others had been killed in the crossfire.

No, the lasting lesson of April 16 for us all should be, "Never again."

Like the remembrance of the Holocaust, let us first say, "We will always remember." More importantly, let us do all we can do as Christians and Americans, here and elsewhere, so we can say "Never again." 🇺🇸

-Former Virginia Tech campus minister the Rev. Glenn Tyndall is a retired elder living in Blacksburg.



'Hokie Nation' much stronger after 2007 shootings

By Bret Gresham

When I graduated from Virginia Tech in 2001, I understood *Ut Prosim* ("That I May Serve") as a motto – my university's motto to be exact – but just a motto. Coming back to my alma mater in 2009 to be the campus minister of the Wesley Foundation, I have had the opportunity to witness a change in the spirit of the university community. Instead of service just being a part of our motto, it has become a way of life – an aspect of the community to be embodied

by every student, faculty and staff member.

April 16, 2007, was a day that forever changed Virginia Tech and the Blacksburg community. The tragedy that occurred that day could have broken our community, creating division and hatred. However, through all the pain, grief and struggle that followed the shootings, Virginia Tech has become a closer community intent on serving one another and others, symbolizing our unity, resolve, and that "We will prevail ... We are Virginia Tech."

Over the past four years

that I have served as the campus minister at the Wesley Foundation, there are fewer and fewer students who were on campus the day of the shooting. The few that remain in school, in some capacity, still struggle going to class due to fear, are still trying to process a new "normal" in their college routine, and find it difficult when there are other shootings in the news.

The majority of our students are a part of the tragedy only through relationships, the sharing of stories, and being a part of a community that has ex-

perienced tremendous loss. However, all of us together proclaim that we will "neVer forget" and share a commitment to be a community that is strong, passionate and intentional.

In April, I perused a Facebook group called "VT Confessions," in which comments about the shooting ran the gamut: from those feeling that we should remember the 33 students who died that day to those who don't want to acknowledge the shooter as a Hokie; from pleas for more mental health awareness and gun

(Continued on page 6: "Hokie")

Plans for recruiting young people are long overdue

The June issue of the *Advocate* “rang my bell,” as my neighbor at Penhook Church would say when something spoke to her. It was another great *Advocate*... outstanding editorial, informative and good articles.

The plans for recruitment (of young people) are long overdue. “In my day,” encouraging full-time Christian service was promoted at Youth Conference, held annually at Randolph College in Lynchburg in the

1950s.

I married a student Methodist minister who received his first appointment in 1957 and retired in 1999.

This (current) generation is creative, intelligent, shows sensitivity to others and seems on the threshold of receiving a “call.”

Our Board of Ordained Ministry needs to examine their role – providing resources and encouraging people who are choosing the ministry. Many candidates come away from board interviews discouraged and defeated. Recently I heard a young man say,

after being turned away by the board, “I don’t know why anyone would want to be a minister.”

We did not invent this faith. We are caretakers and disciples of it. The clergy must be well-prepared in the studies of the past: to know the Bible and the people of the Bible. Fifty years ago the government removed religion from our schools. Two generations or more are spiritually undernourished. Jesus said “Feed my sheep.”

Alouise Ritter, Lower UMC, Hartfield,

Shining light into the darker regions of the world

I would like to see the *Advocate* keep us better informed concerning the persecution of Christians around the world.

We need to stand with these Christians – let them know we are aware of their plight and that we are telling their story to the world. This could happen to us and we might have no one to speak for us.

Evil thrives in the darkness; let us shine light.

Rachel Donald, Kernstown UMC, Winchester

The 2013 3.2-Mile Run in Remembrance was held April 13 on the Virginia Tech campus. Nearly 8,000 runners and walkers participated in the event. Photo by Amanda Loman and Jim Stroup.



(“Hokie,” continued from page 5) control to the need for more security and protection; from passionate words of remembrance and pain to words of hope and love.

In a unique situation for a public university, Virginia Tech welcomes faith communities and campus ministries into the life of its students. As a result, the Wesley Foundation

and the students that are a part of the ministry have an amazing opportunity to witness to the profound blessings that community can bring, to live out their faith journey in concert with their collegiate experience, and to embody a love for God and neighbor that can transform the lives of those who need it most.

Our students live out their understanding of community by welcoming all people into ministry, gathering with other faith communities to share in understanding and a vision for reconciliation, and being an integral part of the university.

Using initiatives within the Division of Student Affairs, like Strengths Quest, students are able to see how their faith plays an important role in their vocational and educational develop-

ment. Blending the two dynamics of their college lives helps to create a positive experience throughout their years in higher education.

Probably the most influential role the Wesley Foundation has played in the healing, grieving and rebuilding process is through the desire to serve one another.

Whether it is participating in the Run of Remembrance, interfaith immersion trips to the Dominican Republic, the creation of 209 Manna Ministries (a food bank for students run out of Wesley), or assisting with the RAFT Crisis Hotline, our students seek to live out their call to “Love Out Loud” in service and mission to the university and community, the nation, and throughout the world. 

-The Rev. Bret Gresham is campus minister at Virginia Tech



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

Honeycutt to head church's global relief agency

Conference pastor to lead UMCOR

By Melissa Hinnen

The Rev. Dr. Denise Honeycutt, a pastor from Virginia and former Global Ministries missionary who has a background in the local church, global mission and theological education, has been nominated by the personnel committee of the General Board of Global Ministries to serve as the new deputy general secretary of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR).

The action is subject to the affirmative vote of the full board of directors at the end of October. In the meantime, Honeycutt has been appointed by Thomas Kemper, the general secretary (chief executive) of Global Ministries, to head up the agency's relief and development unit on an interim basis, effective Sept. 16.

Noting her eight years as a director of Global Ministries, including serving on the UMCOR board, Kemper said, "I have known Denise for many years, since the time she served as a missionary in Nigeria, sharing the simple life of the community in Bambur. I am excited to have her on our leadership team at Global Ministries as we work to be an expression

of the worldwide mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church."

UMCOR is part of the General Board of Global Ministries. It is well known for staying on the scene of disasters to help with long-term restoration of lives and communities. UMCOR, which operates internationally, often remains in a disaster area after most other humanitarian organizations have gone.

A number of years after being ordained in the Virginia Conference, Honeycutt and her husband, the Rev. Pat Watkins, answered a call to missionary service. They were appointed to a remote village in Nigeria, where Honeycutt taught biblical studies and theology at Banyam Theological Seminary, and Watkins taught vocational training for mechanics.

Recalling their service as the "hardest best years of our lives," Honeycutt says that, as the only missionaries in the immediate area, they were able to truly become part of the community. "I learned so much from the people about what it means to be financially impoverished but spiritually rich." She continued, "One of the gifts of the United Methodist connection is that mission doesn't just go one way. The community in Bambur filled our lives with so much love and joy."

Explaining the impact



of UMCOR kits, Honeycutt told the story of sitting on her porch one evening in Bambur. She heard people chanting and realized they were saying, "The kits are coming. The kits are coming." The next day a big truck pulled up to the elementary school and each child received a school kit.

"I had always been part of putting kits together in the local church," Honeycutt said. "But this was the first time I experienced the joy of what it meant for a child to receive one. The children were amazed—so thrilled to have their own schoolbag, full of supplies."

After training one of the local seminary students to replace her position in

Nigeria, Honeycutt and Watkins returned to the U.S. In her role as a mission interpreter in residence for the Southeastern Jurisdiction and later as the director of Mission and Global Justice for the Virginia Conference, Honeycutt continued to engage in connecting missionaries with local churches and sharing the work that United Methodists are doing through UMCOR.

"Everything that UMCOR does is possible because of the faithfulness of people in the local church," Honeycutt said. "United Methodists in Virginia, Nebraska, California and around the world love Jesus, give to

(Continued on page 11: "Honeycutt")

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Fredericksburg District sends UVMIM team to El Salvador

By Teresa S. Smith

A field of hope is located on a corner lot in Ahuachapan, El Salvador, all because God moved the Fredericksburg District to raise \$20,000 for the purchase of land for El Shaddai Evangelical Methodist Church.

But God didn't stop there. God moved 14 people from age 15 to 60-something to reach out to the people in the El Shaddai neighborhood.

We were met with warm welcomes as we went door to door, letting people know that Vacation Bible School would be held beginning the next day. Children with their mothers



traveled the dirt roads past trees laden with mangoes to the community center. "Christo, Christo" filled the room as we sang to the beat of the drum. Children and adults alike joined us on the floor to make coil pots and cardboard harps. Games and snacks finished out the morning and afternoon sessions.

As many as 60 children, from infants all the way to age 12, and adults at-

tended and shared in the delight. Day by day, God led us deeper into relationship with our neighbors, our El Salvadoran volunteers (some of whom are local pastors): Emerson, Jonathon and Fernando; our UVMIM coordinator, Brian Dubberly; and our hosts, the de Dios family: Ana and Carlos, Juan and Joanna, Carlos Jr., Matteo and Jaymie.

One evening, we worshipped God on the new El Shaddai property surrounded by the vision of reaching more people for Jesus, filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit as Pastora Marta preached. Another day we were given tours of the Evangelical Methodist Clinic for low-income people as well as other Evangelical Methodist churches and clinics. We concluded our time with worship at one of the Evangelical Methodist churches in San Salvador before departing for the U.S. Our goal was met: build relationships and share hope with God's people. 

-Teresa S. Smith is pastor at New Hope UMC.

District team members, front row, from left: Teresa Smith, William (interpreter), Lisa Fravel, Shirley Allen, Kelly Desclos-Estes, Gabrielle (interpreter); second row: Rose Teague, Connie Barnes, Debbie Broeking, Bob Waugh, Katie Shrader; third row: Ted Smith, Joseph Fravel, Tim Hares, Brittany Bolick, Greg Sokolowski.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

The prizefighter of Park Place



By Mike Crockett

On Easter morning, a small group of worshippers met at an old Norfolk church to listen to the perennial holy message of love, death, resurrection and hope – a celebration carried out in scores of other churches throughout Hampton Roads, but at no venue more extraordinary.

Park Place United Methodist Church, a legendary crusader for compassion that traces its roots to 1902, stands proudly on the corner of 34th Street and Colonial Avenue. But, like an old and weary prizefighter, it's also arrived at the crossroads of hard times and reality.

In the 1940s, more than 2,400 worshippers attended services, making it the largest Methodist congregation in the Commonwealth. At the time, the neighborhood of Park Place was home to a thriving middle class.

In the 1960s, residents began an exodus to the suburbs. Church membership declined, and the neighborhood's demographic shifted to predominately African American.

Instead of closing, the shrinking, aging and mostly white congregation did something illogical – it opened its doors wider to the hungry and the hopeless, paying its “widow’s mite.”

Despite only 20 active members remaining, the congregation, with the help of volunteers from many other organizations, serves about 350 people each week in the Park Place Community Suppers program.

I helped in the serving line last month and had the opportunity to tour the four-story building, 55,000 square feet of memories and hope.

The sanctuary is a place of both majesty and melancholy. There are 40-foot vaulted ceilings, lime green walls trimmed in elaborate, white crown molding and multi-colored stained glass windows that refract sunlight like kaleidoscopes. The sound of the organ no longer reverberates, the pipes in disrepair, unaffordable and mute. A grand balcony wraps around the rear of the room like a opera house, its emptiness haunting.

Now, the sanctuary is used only for funerals and other special services

because of prohibitive heating and cooling costs.

Down the hall in the church's History Room were dozens of old black and white photos of past Sunday school classes, most taken on the front steps of the church. In each snapshot, the backdrop remained the same, but the faces and clothing changed through the years. I looked into the eyes staring back at me and wondered how the church's story would end.

Would it be one final, warm meal and a kind word to a stranger? Could there be more?

If Norfolk's strategic vision for the year 2030 were a movie script, it could easily have been written with the old church in mind. The city plan includes: envisioning strong and safe neighborhoods, addressing homelessness, exploring partnerships with universities, ensuring a rich history reflected in architectural and cultural resources, creating and maintaining healthy and vibrant neighborhoods, using historic landmarks and religious institutions, building a viable real estate market, improving neighborhood character and safety, and more effectively involving traditionally underserved individuals such as youth.

The church is two steps ahead of the plan and ready to audition for more roles. The YMCA already uses part of the church for an after-school program, and monthly food distributions have been provided on site in conjunction with the Community Suppers program for years.

Other regional resources offer even greater potential to ensure the church's viable future in Park Place.

The old church still stands there on the corner, defying the odds-makers for yet another year: Relentless, inspiring and eager to continue the good fight. 

-Mike Crockett, a retired naval officer, lives in Norfolk. This article first appeared in the Virginian-Pilot.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Recent graduate, former Bailey Scholar, is well on his path toward ministry

Recent Randolph-Macon College (R-MC) graduate Randy Timmerman is spending his summer interning at Bethany United Methodist Church in Wanchese, N.C., near the Outer Banks.

The internship is coordinated through the Duke Divinity School's Pre-Enrollment Internship Program. It's another step toward Timmerman's ultimate goal of becoming a pastor. "As a pastor, I will work

with a diverse group of people," says Timmerman, a Mechanicsville native. "At R-MC, where there are people from all kinds of places, domestic and international, I have really been able to see how people interact. Everyone is different and has his own story."

A religious studies and computer science major and ethics minor, Timmerman was also a Bailey Scholar. Randolph-Macon's A. Purnell Bailey Pre-Ministerial Program for Ordained Ministry is a unique program that encourages students who express an interest in spiritual formation and community service to pursue careers in ordained ministry.

This fall, Timmerman will begin his three-year seminary education at Duke to earn his Masters of Divinity.

"Following that, I will come back to the Richmond area and finish my ordination within The United Methodist Church," he says.

Timmerman's 2013 January Term internship offered Timmerman a glimpse into what his future profession will hold. He shadowed Pastor ReNe'e Teague at Andrew Chapel UMC in Stafford. Timmerman delivered a sermon and led worship, and he got a behind-the-scenes view of the planning behind worship, funeral arrangements and Bible studies.

"The Bailey Program and my J-term internship

really provided great pre-ministerial opportunities," he said.

R-MC's Bassett Internship Program has been successfully placing students in internships in the U.S. and around the globe. The program works closely with students to help identify their interests and match them with an appropriate internship opportunity. Randolph-Macon's alumni provide a strong network of support for students throughout their time at the college or in assisting them after graduation with career direction and opportunities.

Students may choose to pursue academic, paid or volunteer internships in a wide variety of settings. Recent internships have seen R-MC students gaining valuable knowledge and experience in fields including health care, finance, non-profit, communications and media, education, politics and law, and the arts. 

-Kathryn DiPasqua for Randolph-Macon College



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Central Virginia LPM's 2013 graduates: (front row, from left) Augusta Arthur, Annie Heckel, Kristin Schussler and Susan Morgan. Communion service leaders: (back row) Ruth Partlow, Eric Moehring and Justin Williams. Williams and Morgan are from Hillcrest UMC in Fredericksburg, and Schussler directs Music Ministries at Chamberlayne Heights UMC, Richmond.

Two United Methodists are among music program graduates

Two United Methodists were among the most recent recipients of the prestigious Leadership Program for Musicians Certificate of Church Music.

Four women completed all required seven courses from this national teaching ministry, which is cosponsored by The Episcopal Church USA and The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Musicians from all churches are welcome to the two-year program, which aims to give church musicians increased vocational awareness and the tools and resources to help their congregations sing well and participate actively in worship.

The Rev. Justin Williams, pastor at Hillcrest UMC in Fredericksburg,

assisted at the Communion service in which the graduates both designed and performed. The 2013 Leadership Program for Musicians graduates are Susan Morgan, organist at Hillcrest UMC; Kristen Schussler, director of Music Ministries at Chamberlayne Heights UMC in Richmond; Augusta Arthur, choir member and assistant musician at John's Memorial Episcopal Church, Farmville; and Lutheran Annie Heckel-harpist, violinist and singer from Unionville.

For more information about Virginia's Leadership Program for Musicians, visit www.lpm-va.org or e-mail Central Virginia Coordinator, Nellwyn Beamon, at nbeamon@ascension-norfolk.org.

("Honeycutt," continued from page 7)

the One Great Hour of Sharing, and create kits to distribute in disasters. UMCOR and Global Ministries are extensions of the work they are doing to live out God's mission."

Honeycutt's current appointment is at St. Matthew's United Methodist Church in Fairfax, VA, a church, she said, that has a wonderful congregation that loves mission. While she was not looking for a reason to leave, Honeycutt told her congregation, "When I was in college I put an index card on my mirror with the word 'yes,' which represented my stance in life toward God." This openness, she said, has freed her to be available for how God will use her. "It is amazing how God uses ordinary people to do God's good work. Every day I pray that I will live today so that I'll be ready for whatever comes tomorrow."

The granddaughter and great granddaughter of Baptist pastors in North Carolina, Honeycutt first felt called to mission at age 9. She knew she wanted to give her whole life to God and made a covenant that if God "kept the joy and excitement for ministry alive in me, then I would take that as a sign that God wanted me to continue working for God's mission, grounded in Christ, lived out in relationships." And she noted, "Joy has been a constant companion in my ministry."

She was ordained a United Methodist deacon in 1989 and an elder in 1991. Her husband, Pat, is also a United Methodist pastor and currently is a United Methodist Church and Community worker serving as executive director of Caretakers of God's Creation.

In 2007, Honeycutt received a Doctor of Ministries from Wesley Seminary in Washington, D.C. 🍷

-Melissa Hinnen is the director of content and public information for the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



The point of church

Church learns all about replacing its steeple

By Bill Pike

On a beautiful spring day in 2011, our church's electrician invited me to climb to the church's steeple. Having been on the job for a few months as property manager, I had not explored the steeple.

Using two different ladders, we reached the steeple landing. Quickly, I saw why I had been invited. Completed in 1955, the exterior had been pounded by nature. Paint was peeling, once-tight joints were fissured, coatings in gutters bubbled, and wood rot appeared along the balustrades.

At the next Trustees meeting, I reported my findings. As our research process started, Hurricane Irene arrived. Irene's winds and rain created water intrusion and moderate damage in the sanctuary's west foyer. This increased our pace.

Our research formed important questions. Was the interior steeple structure sound? How could we assess the upper exterior? Were simple "Band Aid" re-



pairs possible? What would a complete restoration cost? What options existed for a new steeple?

The Trustees started with safety. A local engineer, Paul Muller, found the structural integrity to be sturdy. Next, we attempted to assess the extent of the exterior damage by pinpointing the water intrusion sites.

Inquiry conversations were initiated with local architects, contractors and demolition companies. Tours were made to the steeple, where it was photographed and poked. Those inspections brought appreciative comments for the craftsmen who built the steeple.

From these assessments, the Trustees eliminated any short-term repairs. Nature's pounding

and infrequent maintenance had combined to cause exterior damage. A full restoration would cost at least \$250,000, not including unexpected discoveries.

Now, they pursued alternatives.

Based in Utah, but with a shop in Waynesboro, Munns Manufacturing is a builder of custom aluminum steeples and was recommended to us. References from Radford University and the College of William and Mary were positive, so with 1953 blueprints in hand, a visit was paid to Munns.

A meeting with the foreman and his craftsmen was productive. We were schooled in their process, but more importantly we saw their materials and craftsmanship.



Munns Manufacturing, a Utah-based company with an office in Waynesboro, replaced the steeple at Trinity UMC in Richmond in what was a multi-year process.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

The Trustees were pleased with the essentials from Munns. Now, we needed a local contractor to oversee the demolition, new deck preparation and installation.

By July 2012, Taylor and Parrish was chosen to coordinate the project. That fall, Munns completed the steeple design, while Taylor and Parrish coordinated the details for the plan. The Trustees monitored this still-preliminary work. By December, permits and blueprints were approved, and meetings followed with the subcontractors.

In the heart of a Richmond winter on Jan. 7, the gamble was begun.



Demolition started slowly; but gradually, the plan to remove the steeple in three sections moved forward. Perhaps the demolition's most remarkable part was removing the cross. When the cross was cut away from the spire and lowered to the construction workers on the ground, it was interesting to watch the gentle manner these burly looking men took with the cross. Ten feet long, 150 pounds, it had been long battered by the elements. Lead-coated copper gloss was gone and a soldered seam separated, leaving an opening for a wound of rust to develop. Despite a worn appearance, the cross never surrendered during 57 years of unpredictable weather.

Emphasis with the new steeple was to reduce maintenance. Weather-resistant materials for the steeple, roof and balustrades accomplished this goal.

Interruptions from cold rain and fickle Richmond snow didn't stop progress. By March 4, the site was ready.

By mid-morning, the steeple base, resembling an Apollo space capsule, had arrived. Crane staging took place late Monday, while the spire and cross arrived Tuesday morning.

March 5 was overcast; cold gray clouds felt like snow. With the crane

Trinity's old cross stood atop the church for 57 years.

in place, installers from Munns communicated protocols. The steeple's base was secured to the crane's steel cables, workers were assigned positions on the roof, and a successful lift occurred.

Next, the spire was lifted and connected. The final lift was the new cross. Constant weather exposure prohibited using the original cross, but the new one was placed without a hitch.

Early Wednesday morning, the steeple was baptized as a vigorous weather system generated a downburst of frozen precipitation, thunder and snow.

Shortly after the removal of the steeple, our Director of Communication, Keri Marston, shared an observation by her three-year old daughter as they drove into the parking lot. Her daughter asked, "Where's the point of the church, Mommy?"

Luckily, the point of our church returned safely, and as a church we also felt the grace of the good Lord's work. While the Trustees were researching steeple options, our Finance Committee was notified of a substantial financial gift from a former member's estate. That gift was another measure of the Lord's caring vision. 🍷

-Bill Pike is the director of Facilities and Administration at Trinity UMC in Richmond. Clint Smith, the Facilities assistant, helped with the article.

Lucas joins Advocate team

Boyd Lucas has joined the *Virginia United Methodist Advocate* team as an independent contractor selling advertising and subscriptions for both the print and online editions of the monthly magazine.

The conference Board of Communications approved the contractual arrangement



Lucas

with Lucas as a way to strengthen the 183-year-old magazine.

Lucas was introduced at Annual Conference at the Communications display. He also had the idea to donate a tithe of *Advocate* subscriptions sold during the month of June to the Annual Conference Offering.

Formerly a high school English teacher, Lucas has previously worked for MetLife and at the Cokesbury store in Richmond's West End.

He is a clergy spouse. Lucas' wife, the Rev. Debra Lucas, is pastor at St. Peters UMC in Montpelier. He is also vice president of the conference's Historical Society and part of the publishing team for *Heritage* magazine. 🍷

Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD



Sports leagues help wounded warriors on path to healing

By Kathy Gilbert

Deep in the heart of the Pentagon in Arlington, warriors are warming up for several rounds of fierce volleyball competition.

The gym is an assault on the ears: dozens of volleyballs hitting the hardwood floor, deep baritone shouting of teammates pumping up teammates, shrill whistles.

This is the second annual Wounded Warriors seated volleyball tournament, and it includes all branches of the military pitted against each other – and each team is in it to win.

Many of the men and women on the floor today are missing arms or legs or have scars across their heads and bodies.

Everyone competing in this tournament is wounded, ill or injured. Most are young men with shaved heads, but there are a few women competing or on the coaching teams. The Special Operations Forces stand out because many have long hair and beards.

An announcer points out before each round that the rules of the game for seated volleyball are the same as regular volleyball except for three things: The net is lower, size of the court is slightly smaller, and some part of the player's torso must maintain contact with the floor at all times or a "butt lift" will be called.

Cpl. Dylan Kelley, 22, of the Marine Corps, is participating for the first time today.

"It's very motivating, especially to see double amputees, other people fighting cancer, just coming out here and giving it their all, you know, putting their whole heart and soul into the game," he said. "You know, just everybody comes away winners, all the time."

Some injuries are "in-your-face" apparent but for others like Kelley, the wounds are not visible.

Invisible wounds are hard to mend and anyone who has gone to war is wounded, says the Rev. Laura Bender, a United Methodist Navy chaplain who serves at the United States Marine Corps Wounded Warriors Regiment in Quantico.

"War changes everyone ... some of us are better able to manage the changes in our lives. But some have physical ways in which they are not able to manage as well."

Invisible wounds can include traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder or a serious illness such as



cancer. Sports competitions like this seated volleyball game are part of the treatment for these service members.

Bender describes it as a pathway or transition to another stage in their lives and a way to stay connected to other veterans. She is in a three-year assignment as the regimental chaplain for Wounded Warriors, a Marine unit charged with the administrative and non-medical care for all wounded, ill and injured Marines.

She is here today, cheering on two teams of Marines. Bender spends a lot of time at events like this. She also goes to cowboy challenges, cycling races, wheelchair basketball and ice hockey. These games are a chance to build camaraderie, teamwork and to enliven their spirits, she

Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD



Far left, wounded, ill and injured current and former members of the military compete in a sitting volleyball tournament in the Pentagon gym; an Army coach (left) and player celebrate a victory; below, the Rev. Laura Bender, a United Methodist Navy chaplain and regimental chaplain for Wounded Warriors, shares a moment of laughter with Lance Cpl. Damaso Soto at the Pentagon in Arlington. Photos



gram. One man started lagging behind until he was alone with the chaplain.

"He looked over at me and he said, 'You know chaplain, I ... I killed a child.'"

Medication, new prosthetic legs and mental health treatment had given him almost normal movement and helped with his depression, but he still had that issue. "Those kinds of issues would make a person come to the door of a church and say, 'Am I really welcome here? I know these people have called me a hero, but am I really?'"

Those harsh memories make someone wonder if God still hears their prayers, makes them ask, "Am I still loved by God?"

"I think addressing soul wounds is one of the major areas that the church needs to figure ways to get

said.

Many times warriors with invisible wounds begin to self-medicate, or they engage in thrill-seeking behavior, or look for an opportunity to return to combat – all ways to keep them from feeling that pain, she said.

"But there comes a point for most people when coping mechanisms that they have been using

are not sufficient any longer. And at that point then they need to seek some assistance.

"When you talk about wounds that are invisible, I think one of the greatest wounds is the soul wound," Bender said.

She gave an example. Recently she was riding bicycles with some of the wounded warriors in an athletic-conditioning pro-

To learn more about what your congregation can do, visit www.umc.org/military

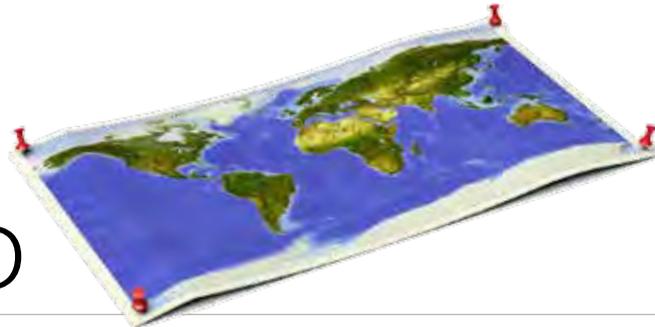
at, and certainly it is something that I, as a chaplain, spend a good deal of time working with service members about," she said.

People of faith – churches – can be instrumental in helping someone heal from soul wounds and traumatic body wounds.

Bender, 53, has spent a lot of time working with congregations and many of The United Methodist Church agencies to provide resource material on welcoming home the warrior.

Military members and their families are not projects to be fixed. That is the first thing congregations need to remember, Bender said. 

-Kathy Gilbert is a reporter for United Methodist Communications



Oklahoma bounces back after tornados



Homeowner Connie Boevers (right) is comforted by the Rev. Tish Malloy in Oklahoma City. At left is the Rev. Adam Shahan. Malloy is pastor of First UMC in Moore. UMNS photos by Mike DuBose

“I grew up in Oklahoma and I’ve seen many tornadoes, but I’ve never seen the sky so dark. I knew this thing had to be huge.”



By Linda Bloom

The shelter at St. Andrew’s United Methodist Church in Moore, Okla., set up for survivors of the previous week’s tornado, shut down at 4 p.m. May 31. Six hours later, the shelter reopened after yet another twister swept through the Oklahoma City metropolitan area.

“They really had not gotten everything out of the door when the storm started hitting,” said the Rev. D.A. Bennett, St. Andrew’s pastor.

To the west of Oklahoma City, his cousin, the Rev. Barry Bennett, had no doubt the approaching storm would be bad.

“I grew up in Oklahoma, and I’ve seen many tornadoes,” Barry Bennett, the pastor of Wesley United Methodist Church in El Reno, explained. “But I’ve never seen the sky so dark. I knew this thing had to be huge.”

He and others crowded into the shelter at the El Reno church, which escaped with minor damage as the twister veered from the center to the south side of town. Several church members did lose their homes, he said.

On the north side of Moore, the Rev. Richard Norman was ushered into a shelter in FEMA’s joint field office. The tornado skipped over the mostly shuttered

shopping mall where the office is located.

For Norman – serving in twin roles as the United Methodist Oklahoma Annual Conference’s disaster coordinator and president of the statewide Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters – the new storm just complicated the situation. “It slowed down the response effort we were doing for the previous disaster,” he said.

The El Reno tornado later was confirmed as the widest U.S. tornado on record.

The cycle of extreme weather, which drew national attention with the May 20 tornado that destroyed a good part of



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This program has been made possible by the gift of homes and funds willed to the Corporation for this purpose. Other contributions come through the Covenant of Gratitude whose members contribute \$1.00 a year for each person ordained a commissioned probationer at the Virginia Annual Conference.

If you would like to consider willing your home to the Retired Clergy Housing Corporation of the Virginia Conference or if you would like to share through the Covenant of Gratitude, please mail in the coupon below with your name and address.

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Moore and accounted for 24 storm-related deaths, has continued with torrential rains and flash floods.

"It wasn't just one tornado, it wasn't just one day and it wasn't just one area," noted the Rev. Jeremy Basset, the Oklahoma Conference's director of mission.

As a result, Oklahomans, generally accustomed to tornado season, are on edge. The Rev. David Wilson, superintendent of the United Methodist Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference, is among the many who admit to being rattled even as he assists those whose homes were damaged or destroyed.

"Normally, we are used to this," he said. "But just because there have been so many... it's been very challenging for us to deal with."

Oklahoma's United Methodists are appreciative of support from the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) as well as the financial donations and prayers that have come from across the country

and as far as Japan.

Busy with the relief efforts, D.A. Bennett said he's thankful to hear that other churches are praying for Oklahoma because "they're really praying in our place."

About 5,500 of the 6,600 relief cases registered with FEMA were in Cleveland County, where Moore is located, with the other cases scattered through four other counties. The final tally could range from 10,000 to 12,000 cases, Basset estimated.

Working with other community and faith-based groups, United Methodist are taking the lead in the Oklahoma tornado response. Already, the state's two conferences are:

- ❖ Opening long-recovery offices at First UMC in Moore and St. Paul's UMC in Shawnee, which will coordinate aid to outlying areas.
- ❖ Dispatching local teams for debris removal and having accommodations and transportation in

place to receive out-of-state volunteer teams.

- ❖ Participating in multi-agency resource centers that provide "stopgap" assistance to storm survivors.
- ❖ Coordinating with FEMA and working with other volunteer organizations on donations management, volunteer placement, project management and spiritual care.

Greg Forrester, U.S. disaster response coordinator for UMCOR, joined conference officials to survey the "unbelievable" damage. He watched newly hired staff of the conference's long-term recovery center, now based at the church, work with homeowners needing assistance and coordinate local cleanup teams.

The conferences plan to make a joint grant application to UMCOR, which is raising funds for this year's U.S. tornadoes. 🍀

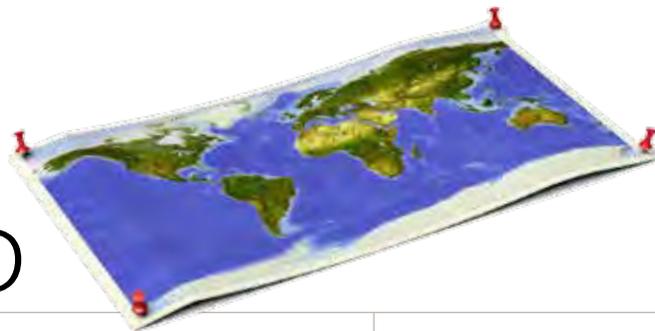
-Linda Bloom is a United Methodist News Service reporter.



Left, the Rev. D.A. Bennett surveys tornado damage at the home of parishioner Trent Steward in Moore, Okla. Bennett is the pastor of St. Andrew's UMC. At right, Mel Rogers clears tornado debris at a home in Moore, Okla. Rogers was part of a volunteer team working out of First United Methodist Church in Moore.



Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD



The 'One Mile' model for mission

Targeting area around church helps congregation focus

By Mary Jacobs

For years, members of First UMC of Grapevine, Texas, tried to organize a Wednesday night supper – with little success.

People were too busy. Volunteers were hard to find. They tried having the meal catered. Nothing worked.

Then, in 2009, the church launched “One Mile Mission,” encouraging every group in the church to find some way to serve within a 1-mile radius of the church. That new focus led leaders to try giving the Wednesday night suppers a new spin.

“We realized we were trying to feed people who weren’t hungry enough,” said the Rev. Cindy Ryan,

associate pastor of FUMC. “We asked, ‘What if we did a good meal for people who needed it, who were hungry, or lonely?’”

The result was “Be Our Guest,” where elderly, low-income, homeless or lonely people in the community were invited for a free monthly dinner, served on china and white tablecloths. Soon, up to 180 people were coming to eat, and 150 people – from the church as well as the community at large – signed on as volunteers.

“For our own meal, we couldn’t get volunteers,” Ryan said. “Once we started feeding others, we had 150 volunteers.”

FUMC Grapevine, which averages around 1,200 in weekly worship, has always been a mission-minded church, Ryan said. But the idea of designating an area of roughly 1 mile around the church created a loaves-and-fishes effect.

That simple idea arose out of desperation, according to the Rev. David Mosser, senior pastor of First UMC of Arlington, Texas. He came up with “One Mile Mission.”

When he was appointed to the Arlington church in 2008, Mosser says, his congregation was mired in internal conflict. Some members compared their own church, unfavorably, with other UMCs in affluent suburban areas that were growing quickly. Members

had few connections with the church’s neighborhood – its residents, schools, nursing homes and non-profit agencies. The majority of the church’s 800 regular attendees live several miles from church; at the time, most drove in for worship or meetings, and then drove back out.

And that neighborhood was declining. What had been a middle class community 30-40 years ago had become the second poorest part of Tarrant County. Pawnshops and cheap motels littered the streets. Houses had fallen into disrepair.

People in the neighborhood didn’t know much about the church, either, even though its campus occupies 14½ acres in downtown Arlington.

“If you stopped someone on the street and asked, ‘Can you tell me where the United Methodist church is?’ I suspect they’d answer, ‘I don’t think they have one here,’” Mosser said.

Both presented a simple proposition to their respective congregations in early 2009: Picture a circle with a 1-mile radius, centered on the church’s sanctuary. Challenge every group in the church, large and small, to find some way to serve people in that geographic area. Maps of the community, with a big red circle, were posted around the church, and One Mile Mission was launched. 

-Mary Jacobs writes for The United Methodist Reporter

Members at Farmville UMC volunteer at a welcoming event for incoming freshmen at neighboring Longwood College.



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MEMBER FDIC





Bishop Cho ordains Lynda Harding as a deacon during the Saturday evening Service for the Ordering of Ministry.

Rookie of the Year

Bishop does well leading Annual Conference, participants agree

BY NEILL CALDWELL

Bishop Young Jin Cho presided over his very first annual conference session, saying at the close that attendees had “been so nice to this rookie bishop.”

Using the theme “Lord, Teach Us to Pray,” more than 3,000 United Methodists gathered at the Hampton Roads Convention Center in Hampton for the 231st meeting of the Virginia Annual Conference.

“We pray that this holy conferencing will be an opportunity to encourage and challenge the churches to take our prayer life more seriously, and spread the culture of prayer,” Bishop Cho said during the June 21-23 gathering.

(Continued from previous page.)

Cho offered an inspiring Episcopal Address, speaking about having hope for a positive future of The United Methodist Church. The foundation of that hopeful future, the bishop said, would have to be prayer. “Of course, all of us pray. But just saying hello to Jesus a couple of times a day is not enough. We, United Methodists clergy and laity, should pray more. We need to pray harder, longer and deeper in such a time as this. We need to learn to do our ministry on praying knees.”

“Ministry as usual is no longer an option,” the bishop stated forcefully. “If you repeat the same things, you get the same results.”

We, The United Methodist Church, are not on a sinking ship, because our captain is the risen Christ. -Bishop Young Jin Cho

Bishop Cho announced a clergy leadership program that will be launched in 2014. Twenty-four clergy will be selected to “learn deep spiritual maturity,” he said. “If the clergy can change, the church can change.”

The bishop also said that the Cabinet would continue to use an appointment process that focuses on the missional needs of the local churches.

All of this, Bishop Cho said, is to strengthen the foundation of the annual conference. “It’s more than boards and agencies, it’s a faith issue. Through ‘All Things New’ I want to see us restore a biblical and vital church. That movement will begin with us letting Jesus Christ be the Lord! ... Christ is the owner of The United Methodist Church. If we are not connected to the true vine, Jesus Christ, we cannot bear fruit. We can do nothing.”

Part of the coming year will be spent cultivating a “culture of cooperation” between conference boards and agencies. “We have not been very effective in working together,” Cho said. “We have lacked a ‘balcony view.’”

Dr. Steve Harper, professor emeritus at the Orlando campus of Asbury Theological Seminary, invited by the bishop to be the 2013 Bible study leader, also spoke on the importance of prayer. Harper titled his three talks “Igniting the Flame,” “Fanning the Flame” and “Spreading the Flame,” and in each session allowed time for attendees to get together in small groups of two, three and four to respond to specific questions he had raised.

“How do you see your life modeling the priority of prayer?” asked Dr. Harper. “Jesus modeled prayer for us by his life and ministry and is the best example for us to follow. ... If the Son of God couldn’t get through the day without prayer, how can we?”



The 2013 Annual Conference approved a new, streamlined structure for its Common Table, and a new method in electing clergy delegates in 2015. Responding to an amendment offered by **Andrew Ware**, the inclusion of youth and young adult voices on the Common Table was also approved.

A new conference Mission Statement was approved: *“The mission of the Virginia Annual Conference is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by equipping its local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church; all to the glory of God.”*

Members also approved a 2014 conference budget with a 3.35 percent increase over last year, due mainly to a 50 percent jump in the clergy pension liability assessment (pre-82), which former Pensions board chair **Betty Forbes** called “huge.” Ministry programs saw reductions, a trend that was continued since 2009.

“Prayer can transform our outlook. We are utterly and entirely dependent upon God. If we shut up for a moment, God might speak to us.”

-THE REV. CLARENCE BROWN

Eleven recommendations presented by the Pensions board also were approved with no debate. New conference Pensions director **John Fuller** was introduced.

The conference approved a resolution condemning predatory lending practices, the only one of three resolutions that was brought to the floor.

All four proposed Constitutional amendments from 2012 General Conference passed by huge margins.

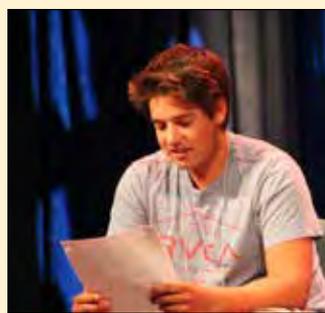
Bishop Cho led the commissioning of new General Board of Global Ministries missionaries **Kip and Nancy Robinson** (pictured below), who are being assigned to Sierra Leone.



The Annual Conference Offering will go to children's ministries in Brazil, Mozambique, Cambodia, and in three locations in Virginia. The bishop recognized the "**Holy Rollers**," (pictured below) a group of cyclists in the conference who bike to Annual Conference each year to raise awareness and funds for the offering.



Harry Denman Evangelism Awards went to the **Rev. Dr. Clarence Brown**, senior pastor of Annandale UMC (clergy); **Brent Staul**, member and youth leader at Tabernacle UMC in Poquoson (laity); and **Tim Hares**, member of Fredericksburg UMC (youth).



A time of Saturday morning worship featured the conference's new Initiatives of Hope partnership with the Methodist Church of Cambodia. Worship was led by the **Rev. Dr. Romeo "Romy" del Rosario**, (above left) director of the United Methodist Mission in Cambodia. "We want to change love into mission. Our prayer is the Holy Spirit will set our feet in mission in the world as the word becomes flesh," he said. He thanked the Virginia Conference for "stepping up to the plate" in its strong and ongoing support for mission.

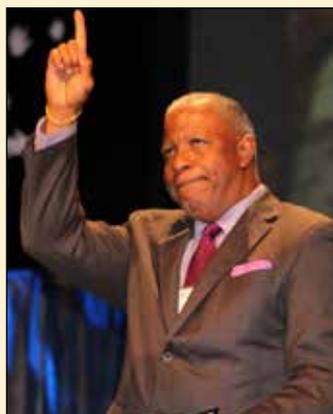


Brent Staul accepts the Denman Award from the Rev. Mark Ogren; **Bishop Cho** adjusts the mic for the Rev. Ray's Wrenn's opening prayer.



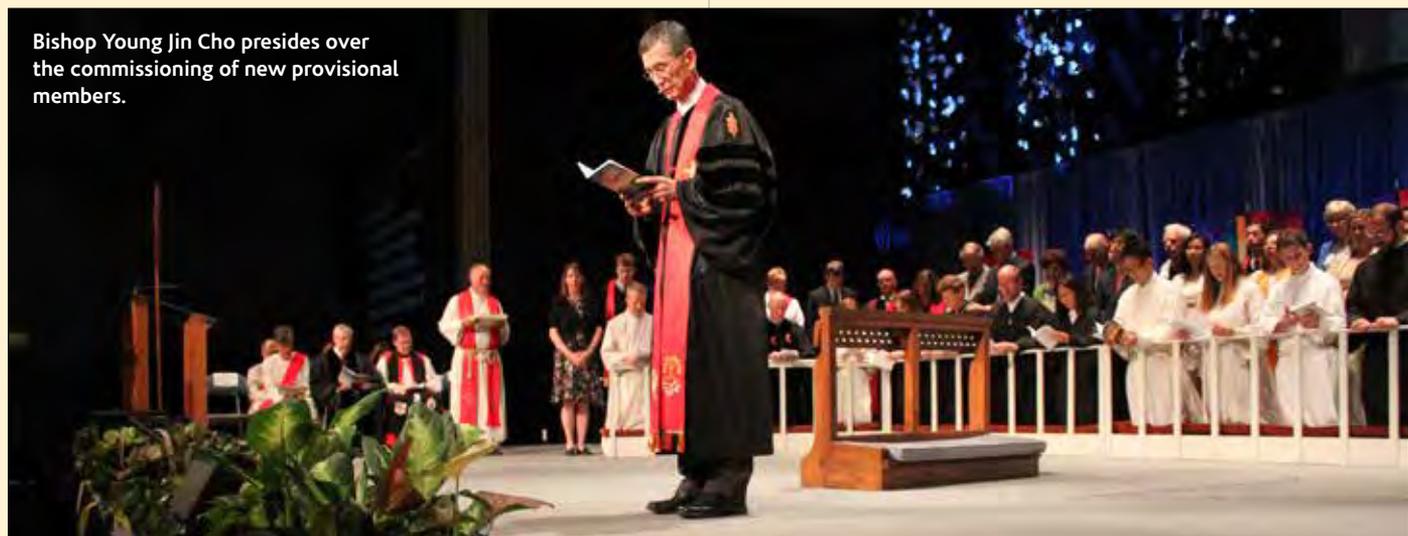
CWT from Sterling UMC was among the music providers,

Members also joined in the celebration of Ferrum College's 100th anniversary. United Methodist Women founded the school as Ferrum Training School in 1913, said **Dr. Jennifer Braatan**, Ferrum's president. Shenandoah University President **Dr. Tracy Fitzsimmons** (below left) spoke for the presidents of the five United Methodist-related colleges within the Virginia Conference.



Dr. Clarence Brown (above right) was the preacher for the evening Service of Remembrance. He said now that he is getting older, many names on the list have been personal friends and mentors. "These are the saints of God. They did all kinds of wonderful things that stayed with us. They did it in the face of a lot of adversity." Brown urged that we be joyful enough "that young folks might actually want to come."

Twenty-nine Virginia clergy who have died in the past year were remembered, including **Bishop Leontine T.C. Kelly**, who was serving Asbury UMC in Richmond when she was elected to the episcopacy.



Bishop Young Jin Cho presides over the commissioning of new provisional members.

The conference also rose to welcome the pastors of five new faith communities begun this year. Since 2008, the Virginia Annual Conference has started 26 new faith communities.

In his Laity Address, conference Lay Leader **Warren Harper** (right) said there have been times when he has felt challenged in being a Christian. "At times I'm frustrated and disappointed with the church," Harper said. "Then I remember WHO I should be listening to. I can pray and I do pray for forgiveness and I listen."



The Rev. Larry Davies presented the "All Things New-Equipping Vital Congregations" Task Force report. The conference is developing a system that will eliminate the replication of data entry while providing real-time data use by congregations. This process is projected to begin in January. Davies asked each member of Annual Conference to reach under his or her chair and retrieve a card that had the name and contact information of a faith community in the conference. They were asked to take that card and begin praying for that faith community.

EQUIPPING VITAL CONGREGATIONS

Dr. Stephen Mansfield gained big applause for conducting an extremely efficient meeting of the conference Historical Society.

At the Service for the Ordering of Ministry, 13 were ordained as elders, 5 ordained as deacons, 19 commissioned as provisional members, and 28 licensed as local pastors. **The Rev. Tom Berlin**, (below left) senior pastor at Floris UMC in Herndon, was the preacher, and told the new ordinands of the need to have joy as they perform the many phases of their ministry. "I don't trust members of any type who lack joy," Berlin said. "You can smell them coming a mile away. Stay away from them, because they will steal your joy."

But a life in ministry was "not always going to be a load of fun," he added, mentioning that in two days he had to officiate at the funeral of a 14-year-old.



Images from the Service for the Ordering of Ministry (above and below).



"There is no halfway, there is no little bit... Be not just committed, but be *undeniably* committed so you never ask yourself, 'Was I really committed?'" -THE REV. TOM BERLIN

Forty-six retiring clergy were thanked by the Bishop and the conference for their service to the church. **The Rev. Margaret T. Kutz** preached from Isaiah 40:8 and, employing the image of sandcastles, said that while much of what we build in life is temporary, what we do in service to the Word of God endures forever. "Why did we spend all that time building something to have it wash away like the sand castle on the beach?" she asked. A symbolic mantle was passed from **the Rev. Mike Houff**, representing the retiring class, to **the Rev. Rachel May**, representing the incoming class of ordinands.

Music was provided by the Cross Purposes band from Wellspring UMC in Williamsburg, CWT from Sterling UMC, along with other musicians and soloists. 🎵

-Neill Caldwell is editor of the Virginia United Methodist Advocate



Deacons in the Virginia Conference pose for a rare group photo.





Praying hands formed beautiful backdrop for Annual Conference

It began at the place Bishop Cho encourages us all to begin, prayer. On the evening I received the 2013 Annual Conference logo, I found myself praying that God would help me see a powerful image that would touch our conference and connect us in prayer.

That night I dreamt of a stage and above it were doves made out of children's handprints and on the stage were children praying together. So I put out a call on ClergyNet and LaityNet for handprints from children and youth from across the conference.

The response was incredible. More than 230 churches provided the 2,300 handprints that were hung as a backdrop for Annual Conference. They began arriving within a week of my request. Some congregations sent one or two or 10, while others sent hundreds. My husband and daughters helped with the cutting and pasting and we enjoyed being able to pray for the churches and missions that sent them. The strands ranged from 16 feet long to 10 feet long and each represented churches in every district in our conference.

It was a privilege to be able to represent the children of our conference and to know that God is working in powerful ways to connect us all together. 

-The Rev. Christina Perkins is serving on loan to the Iowa Conference

A Prayer for the Hands of the Virginia Conference

Dear God, Thank you for the many things we have. I would list them all, but you probably know them all anyways. I want to especially thank you for all the other children, older and younger than me. Each of them have different talents and personalities. Thank you for the many friends I have too. They have brought me a lot of joy. Sometimes it's hard to get through something and friends are always there to help. Bless all the children who are handicapped, sick or struggling through a hard time. Put other children in their lives to be their friend and to help them through their challenges. Please help children who are having a hard time make friends. Amen.

Hannah Perkins, age 11

By the #s:

The conference collected 10,216 school kits, 17,996 health kits, 5,878 birthing kits, 1,698 layette kits, 343 cleaning buckets, and 345 other kits for the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), for a total of 36,476 kits.

More than 9,000 pounds of canned and boxed food was brought to the Convention Center for the Virginia Peninsula Food Bank through the "4 Cans 4 Conference" food drive, which has become a regular part of Annual Conference.

Volunteers bagged 50,000 pounds of sweet potatoes for area food pantries at the "Potato Drop" sponsored by the Society of St. Andrew and the Virginia Conference.

The Youth Service Fund Offering collected \$4,427.95.

At the end of 2012, membership stood at 332,431, down 2,140 from the previous year. Worship attendance was 105,103, down 3,727.

Professions of faith were up, however, and ethnic membership climbed by 26 percent.

Small churches from around conference celebrate their special ministries

Editor's note: The Small Church Leadership Team display at Annual Conference included a flip chart for church members or pastors to share their stories. Here are some of the highlights:

- **Woodlawn UMC** in Roanoke celebrates 20 years of sharing with "Aftercare," a community of persons who are unable to live independently. They gather together for dinner and activities (and) the faith of those needing care strengthens the servants of Woodlawn.

- **Mountain Valley UMC** reaches out to their community knitting prayer shawls, making "ugly" quilts and distributing them, tutoring, working with a parish nurse to serve the homeless, supporting prison ministry and recently began offering family movie nights to get to know their neighbors.

- **Dumfries UMC** just celebrated 210 years!

- **Belview UMC** packs 131 backpacks for school children every week during the school year. "We are a small church with a BIG heart!"

- **Ashwood UMC** wrote that in 2005 they had no VBS. In 2013, five teenagers and 18 adults served 56 children at VBS. They put together 60 health kits and provided 256 canned soup meals for the food pantry.

- **Whitehall UMC** shared that six years ago there were just five people in worship, now there are more than 20.

- **Macedonia UMC** in Blackstone has a love for mission. Their 20 members adopted a family with a Downs Syndrome child to help care for them and assist with medical bills.

- One church who did not leave a



A member the Designed By God liturgical dance team dances during the Laity Session.

name reports that though they are a small church, for the last 30 years their first Sunday offering is given away each month. They also ask each week in worship, "Where have you seen God this week?"

- **Middleburg UMC** opens its doors on Saturday for "Walk In Meditation," open to all.

- **Shiloh UMC** in Milford offers an agape meal to her community every month.

- **Melfa UMC** on the Eastern Shore offers tutoring and friendship to their Hispanic neighbors through "Una Familia."

- **Page UMC** in Luray connected with five other local churches spanning several denominations to provide a backpack program for school children in their community.

- **Bowling Green UMC** has 12 servants who feed 40 families each month.

- **St Luke's UMC** in Arlington holds interfaith meditation gatherings and shares in multi-ethnic community every week. They also nourish and educate 80 children in a preschool program.

- **Jollivue UMC** reports four people have accepted Christ through their ministry this year!

- **Dahlgren UMC** started a "lunch bunch" program with a UMC grant to feed the children through the summer months. Five years later, many churches have joined this ministry and together they serve 200 lunches every Tuesday and Thursday.

- **Parkview UMC** reports that age has not diminished their ministry, they celebrate their per-

sistence, faithfulness and love.

- **St Matthews UMC** reports that their Scout program, "God and Me," brought unchurched families into their welcoming congregation. Their Girl Scouts are refurbishing a playground facilitating the development of supportive and faithful relationships between the community, congregation and trustees.

- **Wesley UMC** in Alexandria supported one expectant mom whose husband was deployed in Afghanistan with a baby shower. They offer "Heroes Care," to families dealing with deployment. They are also reaching out to the community by offering the church's stage for use by the local middle school for student productions. 



Blake Mitchell passes out the appointments issue of the Advocate.

LOCAL CHURCH NEWS



▲ The “Holy Rollers” bike tour stopped at **Fairfields UMC** in Burgess for a brief rest on their three-day journey to Annual Conference in Hampton. The group began their ride in Chincoteague, stayed overnight on Tangier Island and had breakfast at Bethany UMC in Reedville. They also spent a night in Yorktown before arriving at conference. The group of about 20 riders shared snacks and water with members of Fairfields before leaving on the next leg of their journey.



▲ On June 2, **Christ UMC** in Fairfax Station hosted a groundbreaking ceremony at their new site at 7600 Ox Road. The people sang “Greater things are yet to come; greater things are still to be done in this city.” Families joined together in praying for the construction crew, and everyone brought their own shovels so that they were

reminded that this effort was only possible through the sacrifice of many. As people were leaving, they filled jars with dirt as a reminder to pray for the safety of those working on the site and for the people that would one day step foot into the new building. It was the fulfillment of a vision that God gave Pastor John Speight more than 20 years ago that one day Christ Church would be in a visible location so that the good news of Jesus Christ could be shared with as many people as possible.

The Elementary Sunday School Class of **Chestnut Hill UMC** in Lynchburg recently collected items and assembled 32 birthing kits for Annual Conference. Pastor Becky Cloud blessed 78 total kits during morning worship. Pictured (from left) are class members Autumn Hendricks, Samantha Allen, K.J. Ruhland, Brittany Harris and Naomi Levin. ▼



Neighbors are welcoming, giving, friendly, bold and forgiving. These were the key words for the children who gathered over two weeks for the “Everywhere Fun Fair” VBS at **Shady Grove UMC-Short Pump**. “We like to offer VBS for two weeks,” says Beanie Kelly, director of Children and Family Ministries, “because it creates lots of opportunity for children to attend and for volunteers to serve.” Rev. Teresa McRoberts, Associate Pastor, agrees, “People who are engaged in serving the community through VBS are nurturing their own discipleship as well – becoming better followers of Christ.” ▼



Top 5 memories from VBS 2013:

- ❖ Hearing an adult say, “This is my thing. I look forward to it every year – and this year I have the privilege watching my teenage sons help with the children!”
- ❖ The teenage volunteer who texted the director of Children’s Ministry after the week was over to say, “I had the best time, please call me to help again.”
- ❖ There is a place for everybody in the congregation to teach, learn and grow all at the same time – all for the purpose of bearing witness to the good news of Christ in the world.
- ❖ When a parent tells you that her child woke up Saturday morning begging to come to church!
- ❖ Watching a third grade boy experience the joy of Bible stories, music, song and recreation along with his peers who either did not notice or did not mind his autistic mannerisms.



EVENTS

AUGUST

All God's Children camp

Aug. 4-9 Camp Highroad

Aug. 4-9 Occohannock on the Bay

Aug. 11-16 Westview on the James

The All God's Children camps provide a week of sanctuary for children age 7-12 who have a mother or father who is incarcerated. For more information, contact camp director Casey Torrence at **(804) 521-1138** or **1-800-768-6040 ext. 138**; or caseytorrence@vaumc.org.

Youth Workers Retreat

Aug. 8-11 Eagle Eyrie, Lynchburg

"Finding Your Own Way" is a three-day personal growth retreat for youth workers sponsored by the Virginia Conference. The leader will be the Rev. Robert Davis of Joplin, Mo. The retreat is limited to the first 40 people to register. Cost is \$300. For more information, contact Becky Tate at BeckyTate@vaumc.org or **(804) 521-1139**.

Basic Training "Boot Camp" for Church Planters

Aug. 27-29 Virginia United Methodist Center, Glen Allen

This event, to be led by Jim Griffith, is specifically designed for pastors and their key lay leaders who are planning new churches or for those who recently have planted a new church. It is being co-sponsored by the Virginia Conference Church Development Team and PATH 1. For more information, contact Pat Hickman in the Virginia Conference office of Congregational Excellence, **1-800-768-6040, ext. 155**; PatHickman@vaumc.org, or visit www.vaumc.org/Boot-Camp2013.

SEPTEMBER

UMVIM Team Leader Training

Sept. 14 Trinity UMC, Richmond

Sept. 28 Vision of Hope UMC, Harrisonburg

Oct. 12 Fredericksburg UMC

Virginia Conference United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) Team Leader Training session will be from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., with registration beginning at 8:45 a.m. Team Leader Training is required for all first-time team leaders, but all interested persons are welcome to attend whether leading a team or not. There is a \$55 registration fee for each participant. For more information, contact Terri Biggins in the conference office of Justice and Missional Excellence at TerriBiggins@vaumc.org or **1-800-768-6040, ext. 144** or **(804) 521-1144**.

OCTOBER

5 Talent Academy

Oct. 15 Ebenezer UMC and 5 remote locations

Ideal for those involved with planning and designing worship, musicians, key lay leadership, and clergy, this event will provide you with immediate, practical and useful ideas to help your church design a worship experience with both the member and visitor in mind. The speaker will be the Rev. Dr. Constance Cherry, the author of *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* who currently serves as Professor of Worship and Pastoral Ministry at Indiana Wesleyan University, where she directs the major in Christian Worship. This event will be live-streamed to five locations from the Stafford site. Visit www.vaumc.org/5talent to register.

Sexual Ethics Training

Oct. 15 & 26 Virginia United Methodist Center, Glen Allen

This training is designed for new clergy (first-time appointments) and other church professionals. An introductory workshop on the unique needs of clergy and religious professionals engaged in United Methodist ministry exploring concepts of how to maintain healthy boundaries along with issues of access, power and control, vulnerability, and transference. An orientation to our conference policy on sexual ethics and the process utilized for seeking reconciliation and resolution upon the occasion of boundary violations is also explored. Registration is required 48 hours prior to the event in order to ensure sufficient materials are available for all participants. For more information, contact Beth Downs at BethDowns@vaumc.org or call **1-800-768-6040, ext. 127** or **(804) 521-1127**.

Midsized Church Leadership Training

Oct. 22 Warwick UMC, Newport News

By invitation to churches with average worship attendance, as recorded by the Cabinet, of between 150 to 349. The goal of this event is to provide training specific to the mid-size church. The dynamic of the mid-size church is often the desire for the warmth of a small church and the program of a large church. You will have an opportunity to interact not only with persons from your own church but also with persons in similar roles from other churches. Even with the great diversity within this group of mid-size churches, the goal is for each church to be challenged, stimulated and equipped with new "best practices" for your context. The Rev. Janice Virtue, senior vice president for Leadership Development, United Methodist Foundation of Western North Carolina, will be the leader. This event is for lead pas("Events",

("Events", Continued on page 33)

Devotions from International Lesson Series

LIVING THE WORD



Adam Hall grew up in Campbell County and is a 2011 graduate of James Madison University. For the past two years he served as the associate pastor for the four-point Pamplin Charge in the Farmville District. Hall is beginning his first year as the pastor of the three-point West Buckingham Charge, also Farmville District. He recently transferred from the School of Theology at Virginia Union University to complete his master of divinity degree at Wesley Theological Seminary. He also serves on the conference's Russia Initiative Committee.

August 4

Nehemiah 8:13-18

"Giving a church social function a spiritual twist."

I find myself just now getting settled into a new parsonage in a new appointment, learning new customs and traditions and finding myself being invited to an increasing number of social functions. They tend to be fun and the food is always good, but the purpose is for fellowship. There are no commands mandating a spaghetti dinner on the fourth of July or a bounce house for the back-to-school cookout (though those would be good excuses!). They are practices that have developed through time and are intrinsic to the life of the congregation/s. Although enjoyable, are such celebrations spiritual?

The Festival of Booths introduced in Nehemiah 8 was a celebration but not the kind that I am used to as a pastor. It didn't involve the baked macaroni I would subtly request or the apple dumplings I secretly longed for. Instead the people were behooved to build what some interpret as a little hut. Until I was eight I wanted to be an architect and sought to live out my calling in creative ways. Building huts out of cardboard was an outlet for me. This might sound cute, and I frequently did use branches and leaves, but no one had told me what materials I had to use. For Nehemiah's audience the Law was very specific that specific things were needed to build a suitable little hut for this festive occasion.

When I think "anthropologically," my experience as a child building little forts and my experience as a pastor learning new customs really aren't much different than the Festival of Booths except that they are worldly. What traditions are intrinsic to you and how are they significant? For those of you reading this, I hope you can continue to celebrate the things you do from time to time as a church – a community Thanksgiving worship service or a soup luncheon to benefit a Relay for Life team. In the process, I challenge you to take those social functions and see if you can't give them a spiritual twist. Before long you may find a little Festival of Booths going on in your congregations and community.

August 11

Nehemiah 9:2, 6-7, 9-10, 30-36

"Nehemiah, the United Methodist Hymnal and watching a summer night sky."

I have always found our hymnal to be a true masterpiece. It has a happy mix of classical and folk hymns, with a number of ethnic selections and spirituals. As a pastor of rural congregations, the hymnal provides critical resources for weekly worship such as canticles and psalters. The music, though, is where the true beauty lies. The titles alone can reflect what is being said in the scripture lesson. This particular passage reminds me of "God Has Spoken by the Prophets" #108 and "Let My People Seek Their Freedom" #586. A personal favorite is #150, "God Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens." Its tune can be switched with the last two hymns I mentioned and it will sound much nicer!

I must admit that this text from Nehemiah isn't the most uplifting; after all, the people were being indicted for their ancestors' transgressions. Yes, the text is speaking about prophets and people seeking freedom but in the middle of its doom and gloom nature I am reminded of the first verse of hymn 150, "God who stretched the spangled heavens infinite in time and space; flung the suns in burning radiance through the silent fields of space."

We live in a world that likes to get caught up in the transgressions of the past, and there are plenty of prophets out there (if you follow the lectionary, I encourage you to read the recent lessons from 1 Kings). We need verses like these from Nehemiah for they show us that we aren't alone in our struggle with forgiveness and moving on. More importantly, the praises of Ezra, affirming that while we are human we have a God who, as the hymn says it best, "stretched the spangled heavens, flung the suns in their radiance into the silent field of space."

Stargazing is a favorite activity for some, especially in the summer. When you have some time one summer night if the mosquitoes aren't too bad, get a lawn chair or a picnic blanket and glance at the night sky, seeing all of the stars and witnessing God's creative power evidenced in the universe. You might just find yourself being as awestruck as Ezra.



August 18 Nehemiah 12:27-36, 38, 43 “Lessons from Uncle Walter”

I will admit that Walter Cronkite was a bit before my time, but I still know who he is. He had a decades-long career on CBS news and, from what I understand, was endearingly known as “Uncle Walter.” His death a few years ago caused mourning for many in society. However, I can only imagine the experiences he had reporting on things like Vietnam and the oil crisis during the 70s. I wonder what it would have been like to ask him about the places he’d been, the leaders he’d met and the difficulties he reported to millions whom he would never meet. I can read about anything in a newspaper or a blog but to truly get the news about something it’s best reported by a person talking about it. For me Nehemiah is “Uncle Walter.”

The first few verses of the chapter 12 reading are just like the generic news that I mentioned. It’s Nehemiah’s use of “I statements” about his personal experiences that help me relate better to places I wouldn’t know and people I wouldn’t recognize. I don’t know where Geba is nor would I know a Hoshaiiah if I saw him, but I can relate to Nehemiah’s experience of working with leaders or following a crowd to see some great piece of architecture or work of art. As a preacher, especially a lectionary preacher, I fear that the Minor Prophets are undervalued in our sermons and rarely addressed outside of Advent. Despite this I am convinced that through their use of “I statements” about personal experience, the characters of these few-chapters-long Old Testament books could become endearing to us.

The next time you find yourself bored with the Minor Prophets or even some of the more difficult or

uninteresting Old Testament texts, look for the “I statements” that can let you step into the shoes of the other person. We could all use a Nehemiah to be our Uncle Walter, putting the foreign and the unknown into a perspective we can understand.

August 25 Nehemiah 13:15-22 “A Teetotaler Methodist and the importance of the Sabbath”

At Annual Conference I was eating with a large group and the waitress offered us wine. I almost said, “No, we’re Methodists,” but I kept the comment to myself. I could have been justified in saying it though. Historically, we Methodists were known for our abstinence from alcohol, and the original Board of Church and Society was known as the Board of Temperance, Prohibition and Public Morals. The slang term “Teetotaler” referred to those who totally abstained from alcohol. Alcohol use by the faith community was an issue long before prohibition and a few stereotypes. In Nehemiah’s faith community, teetotalism wasn’t an option. Drinking wasn’t done for recreation but for sanitary reasons. The necessity for this “safe beverage” was not outweighed by that one important thing that made it into “Moses’ Top Ten”: to honor the Sabbath. According to Nehemiah, nothing was so obligatory that it negated the need of the Sabbath. As a man of faith called to be a prophet, Nehemiah recognized the importance of Sabbath-keeping despite the seemingly pressing material needs of the community.

As a pastor I find myself being guilty of what Nehemiah preached against. Is there anything so important that I have to do that can’t be put on a calendar to be done on Friday or put off until Monday? Sun-

days certainly aren’t days of rest for preachers, but I do have to admit that Saturdays make for a good day to get work done. In all honesty it would probably do us all good to be locked out of our workplaces sometime and take the break that God commands. ☞

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CLERGY & DIACONAL



Deaths



The Rev. Omar R. Fink Jr., 95, died June 22, 2013, in Durham, N.C. He began his ministerial career in 1948 in the Northwest Indiana Conference and was associate

at St. Paul, South Bend. He then served Hamlet, Ind. He joined the North Georgia Conference in 1953 as the associate at First UMC, Athens. He joined the Virginia Conference in 1955 and served as associate pastor at Fairlington. Fink was a missionary in Rhodesia from 1957-1964, when he returned to the Virginia Conference and served as the minister of education at Graham Road, then Mount Olivet. In 1969, he was named the director of Lay Research. In 1971, he was named the Program Coordinator for the Arlington District. In 1978, he was named conference Program Director. He retired in 1982.

The Rev. William Albert Jester, 80, of



Roanoke, died June 19, 2013. Jester graduated from Randolph-Macon College in Ashland and Candler School of Theology in Atlanta. He became a member of the

Virginia Conference in 1956, and was ordained an Elder in 1960. He served for 40 years at: Buckroe Beach; Broadway; Rappahannock Charge (Charlottesville District); Rodes; Beth Horon; Wayne Hills and Oak Hill; Grace and Hites Chapel (Winchester District); Glen Charge (Harrisonburg District); Brookville; Market Street; Trinity (Ashland District); Grace at Rollins Fork; and Luray before retiring in June 1996. In retirement he served Lawrence Memorial UMC (Roanoke District) for 15 years. He is survived by his wife of more than 55 years, Kay Loflin Jester. A service was held at Greene Memorial UMC.



The Rev. Marilyn L. Spencer, 69, of Nokesville, died June 25, 2013. She was a retired United Methodist minister who served previously as associate at Bethel

in Woodbridge, and pastor of Gordonsville and the Barboursville Charge. She is survived by her husband of 46 years, Henry Spencer, a daughter and a son. A service was held at Nokesville UMC, followed by interment at Quantico National Cemetery.

Nancy Greenstreet Crittenden died June 19, 2013. She was the mother of **Tracy Crittenden Forrester**, wife of **the Rev. Doug Forrester**, pastor of Crozet UMC.

Gwendolyn Justice Cosslett, 81, of Colonial Heights, died June 28, 2013. She was the wife of **the Rev. Carl Cosslett**, who is retired.

Amy Krysteen Doyle, 38, of Lynchburg, died July 2, 2013, at Duke University Medical Center. She was the daughter of **the Rev. Ray Buchanan** of Raleigh, N.C., and **Marian K. Kelly** of Big Island, co-founders of the Society of St. Andrew. Buchanan is also the co-founder of Stop Hunger Now.

Jack Vernon Felumlee, 92, the father of **Rev. Alan Felumlee**, senior pastor at Centreville UMC, Arlington District, died June 30, 2013.

Jeff Foster, 45, died July 12, 2013. He was the husband of the **Rev. Keiko Foster** of Good Shepherd UMC, Woodbridge.

Marjorie Dodson Quinlan Hundley, of Figsboro, died June 20, 2013. She was the widow of **the Rev. Ronald Quinlan**, who died in 1979, and James C. Hundley.

Philomena Novicky, of Hermitage, Pa., died June 16, 2013. She was the mother of **the Rev. Rita Staul**, pastor of Salem-Olive Branch Charge, York River District.

Margaret Ragsdale Tucker, 92, died June 9, 2013. She was the mother of **the Rev. Rudy Tucker**, pastor of Grace UMC in Manassas (Alexandria District).

Henriette Lajoie von Trapp, 85, died April 13, 2013, in Fall River, Mass. She was the mother of **the Rev. Tizzy von Trapp Walker**, pastor of the Fairfield/Emory Charge.

Virginia H. Barnes Widgen, 84, died June 17, 2013. She was the widow of **the Rev. A. Parker Barnes**.

Births

Chinhyo "Dan" Kim, associate pastor at River Road UMC, and wife, **Esther**, had a son, **Micah Minjae Kim**, born June 26, 2013, in Chesapeake.

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continued from page 29)

tors and other appointed clergy, ministry staff and key lay leadership. For more information, contact Beth Downs at BethDowns@vaumc.org or call 1-800-768-6040, ext. 127 or (804) 521-1127.

Large Church Lead Pastor Annual Gathering

Oct. 29 Reveille UMC, Richmond

A time of networking and learning for the large church lead pastors in the Virginia Conference. You may register for this event only if your average worship attendance for 2012, as recorded by the Cabinet, is over 349. The Rev. James Howell of Myers Park UMC in Charlotte, N.C. will be leading. The topic for this year is "Preaching in the Large Church." For more information, contact Beth Downs at BethDowns@vaumc.org or call 1-800-768-6040, ext. 127 or (804) 521-1127.

NOVEMBER

Middle School Retreat

Nov. 8 Eagle Eyrie, Lynchburg

High School Retreat

Dec. 6 Eagle Eyrie, Lynchburg

In these weekend retreats, youths are challenged to grow as disciples of Christ through powerful worship, Bible study, and small groups while building friendships with youth from all over Virginia. You can e-mail the names, ages, and gender of participants to Becky Tate at Becky-Tate@vaumc.org.

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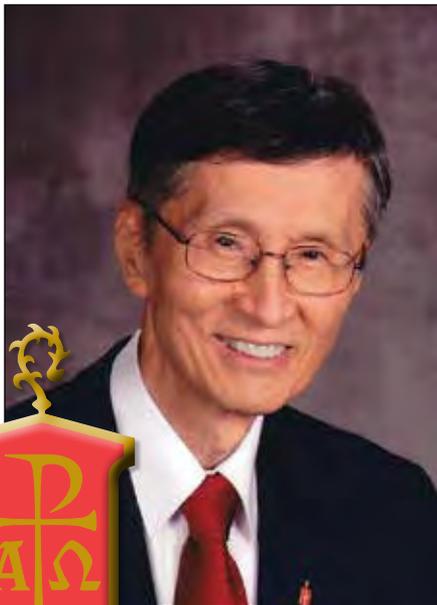
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FROM THE BISHOP



Thanks be
to God!

May the grace and peace of our risen Lord be with you.

Our 2013 Annual Conference is over! When I gave the final benediction in our closing worship service on June 23, my heart was filled with deep gratitude and joy. I could not thank enough our God and all the members of the Annual Conference.

I think our Annual Conference went well. It was due to God's abundant grace and blessings and to the thorough preparations of the York River District, the Annual Conference Planning Committee and the staff of the Conference Center.

As a rookie bishop, it was my first time to preside. When I started preparing, my prayer was that our gathering be more than a business meeting. I really wanted our holy conferencing to be an opportunity to experience God's presence among us.

I really wanted our Annual Conference to be a time to encourage one another. I really wanted us to go back to our churches after conference with uplifted spirits and hope. I know I cannot give all these blessings. I know only our Lord can bless us in this way. This is the reason I prayed and asked the churches to pray also.

I heard many positive comments from conference members who appreciated my leadership. But without God's help and guidance, I could not have led. All glory, honor, and thanks should go to our God. God heard our prayers and responded to our needs.

The Bible Study leader and preachers were truly a blessing to us. Their messages were powerful and inspiring and what we needed. The worship leaders and praise team were also great! I thank God for using these persons for our conference.

During this time I learned how thorough and thoughtful preparation is needed for a successful and smooth Annual Conference. So many people dedicated their time, energy, and creativity to the glory of God. Because of their sacrifices and devotion behind the scenes, everything went smoothly. Before conference, we were concerned about the sound system and an echo issue, but the leaders worked very hard to solve these problems. I think everything worked extremely well, except for a couple of areas.

I delivered an "Episcopal Address" for the first time in my life. Of course, this should have been the first time, because this year is my first year as a bishop. I have heard the president's State of the Union Address on many occasions and read the episcopal addresses of more experienced bishops a couple of times. Even so, at first, I did not have any clear idea of what to say in my address. But later I just decided to share what I and conference leadership have discerned as what should be the focus of my four years

of ministry as your bishop. The Lord was truly my helper in the preparation and delivery of this address.

I think this Annual Conference is a good example of what can happen if we pray together. If we humbly open ourselves to our Lord and seek God's wisdom and guidance, we will see and experience the difference.

To continue to implement the theme, "Lord, Teach us to Pray," the leadership of our conference is preparing a follow-up plan. Basically, we will continue to invite the clergy and laity of the Virginia Conference to set aside one hour daily for the spiritual disciplines. We will also invite congregations to become a "Prayer Covenant Congregation." More detailed information will be shared with you as the plan is developed.

If there was one person who did not need to pray, it would have been Jesus Christ. He said, "My father is in me, and I am in Him." What Jesus said were the words that God had given Him. Even so, Jesus prayed regularly and fervently. How can we do our ministries without praying also? In prayer our faith will be strengthened, and our mission will be empowered to bear much fruit. The praying church will have a new future.

Our 2013 Annual Conference is now over. But we must let this be, not an end, but a new beginning. Let us keep on fanning the flame of prayer. Let us keep on strengthening the spiritual foundation of our mission and ministries with prayer.

Apart from our Lord, we can do nothing. No spiritual vitality, no vital congregations! 

ONE LAST WORD



Tweets heard 'round the conference

Will Bonnell @Wbon96

Still thinking about Bishop Cho's words. Keeping a warm heart and a cool head.

Hannah Lambert @hannahbanana004

I'm pretty sure I can see my breath....
#frozen #socold #arctictundra

Justin Allen @justinallen21

True Christians are identifiable by how they treat other drivers leaving conference.

Daniel Wray @WrayDaniel

This weekend was truly holy, traffic on the way home was not.

Emma J @ejhnstn

My first pastor is about to become a District Superintendent #YayDave

Bill Greer @Pastor_Bill_G

Why yes, that was one of my daughters helping to lead singing at
#vaumc13 #prouddad

Dan Elmore @revdanelmore

I move that these reports are given next year in the form of a musical

Eric Vaudt @EVaudt

Taking the day off after #vaumc13 to recover from all those kits!

zrferguson @zrferguson

Best benediction ever! "Get out of here!" #bishopcho #vaumc13



Sleep in a box to help the homeless



Teens Opposing Poverty's "Night in a Box" will be held Aug. 9-10 on the football field at Admiral Richard E. Byrd Middle School near Winchester. The event, which is open to all ages, is a fundraiser similar to a "Relay for Life," except participants will spend the night in a cardboard box instead of walking around a track.

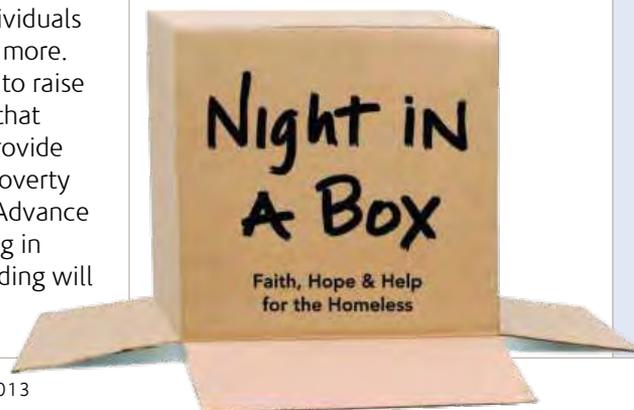
Registration is \$20 for individuals and \$175 for groups of 10 or more.

Night in a Box is designed to raise awareness of the challenges that confront the homeless and provide support for Teens Opposing Poverty (TOP), a Virginia Conference Advance Special. In addition to sleeping in cardboard boxes, those attending will

eat a "homeless awareness" meal, and they will learn about the realities of life on the street from homeless and former homeless people.

Those who prefer not to spend the night may attend for the evening activities only, which include music, games and a time of worship as participants light the Cross of Light, a luminaries display. Anyone can order luminaries in honor or in memory of someone. They are \$5 apiece or three for \$10.

Details are available at www.NightinaBox.org or by calling TOP at 1-866-955-6260. 📞



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Appalachian Christmas
December 13 & 14 2013

Gather with family and friends at Lake Junaluska and experience the beauty of the Appalachians! Weekend festivities include the Lake Junaluska Singers Christmas concert, a special performance by The Cockman Family, and Handel's Messiah! Two and three night packages available starting at just \$143 per person. Lodging, meals, and concert tickets included.



New in 2013 ... Appalachian Christmas with Biltmore Estate Visit!

Come early or stay late and tour the exquisitely decorated Biltmore Estate. Packages with Biltmore Estate visit start at \$208 per person.



Book today!

All Biltmore Christmas packages must be booked at least 3 weeks in advance to secure house visit.

www.lakejunaluska.com/christmas

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