

Advocate



2014 ANNUAL
CONFERENCE:

*Washed in
the Spirit*

2014-2015 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
Editor

Can I get a
second?

It's always my favorite moment of Annual Conference.

It's the point where, at the close of the Service for the Ordering of Ministry, the bishop asks for those who have an interest in the ministry to come forward.

From a photography standpoint, it's one of the best opportunities at conference for good pictures. There are a few tears and expressions of raw emotion on the faces of the people coming forward, and on the faces of the clergy who have just been ordained, licensed or commissioned – who meet with these folks one-on-one to pray and take down their contact information. This year a woman who's been attending my local church came forward, so it was extra special. But no matter who is involved, I love the tradition. The call of the Lord on people's lives is never more obvious to the rest of us than it is at that moment.

I heard a lot of positive comments on 2014 Annual Conference and how "spiritual" it was. While recent Annual Conferences come off as being tightly-scheduled, for the most part the train again ran on time. And while the Imagine No Malaria celebration was well-planned, there was sense of fun and spontaneity, mainly thanks to our bishop's smile!

While I am at it, let me offer a short list of things that bother me at Annual Conference:

❖ I continue to decry the use of Robert's Rules of Order...not that anyone abused them or did anything wrong this year. I understand the need for structure and order in a large group. I just feel like we spend a lot of time on motions and counting speeches for and against and whether that was an amendment or not. In the (few) meetings I get to lead, I try to use a discernment process, but even then people fall into the habit of trying to make motions. It's what we're used to.

❖ Speaking of time, I know the very condensed schedule of the most recent annual conferences saves money, and that is important. But still, there is something lost, including the space for the movement of the Holy Spirit. And it presents the problem of having three lunches you need to go to all scheduled at the same time. For those of us who are working at conference, it becomes a marathon, because there's not much time to rest.

❖ And then there's the problem of Resolutions. There is simply not enough time in the present schedule to have discussion on more than a couple of them. Those that don't get discussed simply go away, and it's up to the makers of the motions to decide whether or not they want to bring them back in the following year, when again they may not be discussed. It's time the Virginia Conference reconsider the process. I think the option of Resolutions – having a voice in the world at large – is important enough not to eliminate. But perhaps each resolution should be assigned to an appropriate conference committee at the front end, and then if it does not get discussed during conference then it would be put on the agenda of that committee at its next meeting.

❖ Oh, and it was too cold inside the giant meat locker known as the Hampton Roads Convention Center.

But all in all, Bishop Cho did a great job in keeping us on track and reminding us that Annual Conference is not just a business meeting, but a spiritual celebration. ☞

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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*Please note the following corrections for the churches
that did pay 100% apportionments in 2013:*

Oakland UMC – Danville
Lambs UMC – Lynchburg
Mount Zion – Lynchburg

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LETTERS & COMMENTARY

Be not anxious

"Be not anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

- Philippians 4:6

This is a good word for us in The United Methodist Church these days. Our denomination continues to have an ongoing conversation about issues related to human sexuality. Most of the recent media hype is focused on same-gender marriage. The difference of opinion in our church reflects the division in our secular culture. As we draw closer to the 2016 General Conference in Portland, the debate will only grow louder and more intense.

I talk to many of our clergy and laity who are quite concerned about where our church is going and what the future holds for us. There are many voices in our church speaking about the issue in strong and defiant ways. Some talk about schism in our denomination while others vehemently oppose such notions.

The truth is that the vast majority of our clergy, laity and bishops are staying focused on our mission of disciple making. In fact, I want to encourage all of us to not be distracted from our mission by all of the conversations surrounding human sexuality. We can waste valuable time and



By
Bishop Lindsey Davis

energy on social media sites, obsessing about what is happening in the United Methodist connection. But using our time this way does not make one new disciple nor does it provide any transformation in our local church or community. So fear not. Stay focused on helping our people grow toward spiritual maturity and fruitfulness for the Kingdom of Christ.


I am very traditional in my views on marriage and human sexuality. I keep the covenants I make including my promise to uphold *The Book of Discipline* of our church. At my consecration as a bishop I made a vow to be a "sign of unity" in our church. That is a hard job these days.

However, it means that I also love those who might disagree with me on these controversial issues.

I have no appetite for division of our church. I will strive with all my being to find a way to hold our diverse church together. I am


actively working with two groups of United Methodist leaders to discern ways of keeping us together. I ask for your prayers for me and our church. But let us not fret away our days of grace.

As a person who has dealt with cancer now for 10 years, I am keenly aware of my mortality. Living with cancer has taught me many important lessons. One of the most important lessons has been to value each day and every precious moment as God's gift to me. I do not want to waste God's gift, so my prayer each day is that I will do exactly what God wants me to do. I want to spend my life doing things that will make an eternal difference in the lives of the people I am called to serve. I do not want to waste God's gift by anxious hand wringing. And I want the same thing for you.

So fear not! Stay focused on God's mission. I am confident that the Lord will lead us through this time. 

-Lindsey Davis is bishop of the Kentucky Conference

Wesley guidance

The May issue of the Advocate was an inspiration. John Wesley led his societies in doctrine and discipline to be a powerful force for God. The church today is yearning for that. Our church is heading in that direction, I'm encouraged to believe. 

*The Rev. David Willis
Stuarts Draft*

Letters to the Editor are printed on a space-available basis. Letters may be e-mailed to NeillCaldwell@vaumc.org by the first of the month.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



SoSA celebrates 35 years of caring for the hungry

By Mike Hickcox

In the spring of 1979, three young United Methodist ministers brought a plan to Bishop Kenneth Goodson of the Virginia Conference.

The Rev. Ken Horne and his wife, Jean; the Rev. Ray Buchanan and his wife, Marian; and the Rev. Jeff Allen and his wife, Susan, wanted to create an intentional Christian community dedicated to alleviating hunger in the world. They had worked on the concept for a year.

Endorsing the plan, Bishop Goodson appointed Horne and Buchanan to a special appointment beyond the local church. With the blessing of the conference, the families founded the Society of St. Andrew (SoSA). The Horne and Buchanan families, including their five children, moved into a farmhouse on Sweet Hollow Road in Big Island. The farm is in Bedford County, nestled into the foothills of the Appalachians.

The goal of the group was to live a lifestyle of Christian responsibility, to avoid consumerism, and to teach others about hunger issues and responsible living.

In the fourth year of this intentional life, the focus was changed forever during a presentation on the Eastern Shore. SoSA's leaders were questioned

by a farmer about the real extent of food waste in America, raising the thought of diverting this good-but-surplus food then left in the fields. It could, instead, be sent to agencies that feed the hungry. These Eastern Shore farmers estimated they had 500 tons a year of good potatoes left behind to rot.

On June 3, 1983, farmer George Wooten donated a tractor-trailer load of sweet potatoes, and SoSA

GLEANING:
the act of collecting leftover crops from farmers' fields after they have been commercially harvested, or on fields where it is not economically profitable to harvest.

delivered them to the Central Virginia Food Bank in Richmond – and a new ministry was underway.

Over the next month, the farmers provided and SoSA delivered to food banks, 320,000 pounds of white and sweet potatoes.

This ministry came to be known as the *Potato Project*, and later, the *Potato and Produce Project*. Since that first truckload in 1983, SoSA has delivered more than 450 million

pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables to food banks and food pantries, ultimately to hungry families in 48 states. Hundreds of farmers and packing houses contribute food in this way every year.

In 1985, SoSA's ministry of education and service was extended in a new direction with Harvest of Hope, a summer camp engaged in gleaning and hunger education for youths. The first event was held on the Eastern Shore. Since then, almost 14,000 youths and adults have attended

(Continued on next page: "SoSA")



The Horne and Buchanan families moved to the sheep farm in Big Island, Virginia in 1979 to begin the intentional community known as the Society of St. Andrew.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



This is the sheep shed that served as the office for the Society of St. Andrew for many years. This was after it was expanded by adding the room at the far end in 1986. In 1990, the office was moved to a small building across the street.

partnership between SoSA and the General Commission on United Methodist Men. In this partnership, UMMen in 16 annual conferences provide a "Hunger Relief Advocate" who coordinates gleaning projects in their own area.

In addition, the Gleaning Network is coordinated in a number of states by staff working year-round in regional offices. They coordinate thousands of volunteers in the growing season, and meet with farmers, churches and donors in the off-season.

Over the past 35 years, the Society of St. Andrew has been blessed by its close ties to The United Methodist Church. Recognized in 1984 as an Advance Special ministry of the General Board of Global Ministries, SoSA is also commended in Resolution 4093 in the 2008 *Book of Resolutions*.

As "home conference" to SoSA, the Virginia Conference has played an important role in the growth and success of the organization's work. Nearly every congregation in the Virginia Conference has partnered with SoSA in some way, through financial contributions, through gleaning, through Harvest of Hope or through crop drops. Virginia United Methodist churches have given \$5.8 million to SoSA, effectively putting nearly 300 million servings of healthful, nourishing food on the tables of the hungry in Virginia and across the United States.

According to the Holiness Code and the Deuteronomic Code of the Torah, farmers should leave the corners of their fields un-harvested, and they should not attempt to harvest any left-overs that had been forgotten when they had harvested the majority of a field. This food should be left for the needy.

Virginia United Methodists have made, and continue to make, a profound impact on the lives of millions of people in need through their support of the Society.

The Society of St. Andrew takes its name from the feeding of the 5,000 in the Gospel of John. The disciple Andrew brings a boy with just a few loaves of bread and some small fish to Jesus. It seems so little, yet through that small act of generosity, thousands of hungry people are fed.

Through SoSA, a gift of just 2¢ provides a serving of fruits or vegetables. A gift of \$100 feeds 5,000 – a miracle of biblical proportions. And in Christ's name, both giving and receiving are blessed. 🍎

-Mike Hickcox is the director of Communications for the Society of St. Andrew

("SoSA," con't from previous page)

Harvest of Hope camps in 13 states, gleaning more than four million pounds of food, and learning about solutions to hunger and food waste in America

In 1988, SoSA expanded the practice of gleaning, using it as the basis of the Gleaning Network. In single-day gleaning events, volunteers from churches, civic groups, schools and other organizations gather in the field of a local farmer. They spend several hours picking food left after the harvest, and they deliver this food to area food pantries. The Gleaning Network has grown quickly. Currently, more than 5,000 SoSA gleaning events happen every year. This program has delivered more than 260 million pounds of food, directly from the fields, often delivered to hungry families that same day.

The Gleaning Network was expanded in a 1999



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Each year, a potato drop is held at the Virginia Annual Conference session. Here, volunteers bag sweet potatoes that will be picked up by food banks later in the morning.



Three generations of women were part of the crew gleaning apples this day in Northern Virginia. Family groups are often among the gleaners who arrive from churches, schools, civic groups and other organizations.



Harvest of Hope campers spend some of their time gathering food. Their experience also includes study, worship and working with a food bank or food pantry.

Learn more about
the Society of
St. Andrew at
EndHunger.org

Each year:

- ❖ About 100 million servings of food are provided
- ❖ 30-35 million pounds of food are collected
- ❖ More than 5,000 food collection events are held
- ❖ More than 35,000 people volunteer

SoSA Gleaning offices
established:

1992: Durham, N.C.

1994: Dallas

1995: Orlando

2005: Birmingham

2005: Mathiston, Miss.

2007: Tifton, Ga.

2008: Kansas City

2010: Nashville

Listen to contemporary
accounts of SoSA history
at [www.endhunger.org/
history.htm](http://www.endhunger.org/history.htm).



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Mount Olivet team works to modernize school in Haiti

A 10-person mission team from Mount Olivet UMC in Arlington recently went to Haiti to help create a modern learning environment at an impoverished school in Arcahaie. The school, Institution Mixte Edouard Charles, has 130 students, ages 6 to 16, and before this project had no electricity or clean drinking water.

Working with the Thomas Food Project (TFP), a joint Haitian-U.S. initiative, the Mount Olivet team worked with its Haitian hosts to:

- ❖ purchase and install a self-powering solar street light;
- ❖ deploy a mobile utility cart with a solar panel to provide electricity to the school;
- ❖ purchase and install a 125-gallon water tank;
- ❖ deploy a portable water

purification system (1 gal. per minute);

- ❖ deploy ruggedized laptops with classroom software;
- ❖ conduct laptop and software training with teachers;
- ❖ conduct basic first aid training with teachers from four area schools;
- ❖ measure and map the school property, building and resources;
- ❖ conduct interviews with the principal, teachers and several students (to establish a database with baseline information on the school and community); and
- ❖ purchase and serve a hot lunch for the entire school on the last day.

"The average person in Haiti lives on \$2 a day or less," said Mount Olivet

team leader Kenn Speicher. "Education is a vital path out of poverty, and we are excited to play a role in making this happen for these children and their community."

The food began as a hot lunch program for a school in Thomas, where many children had no food during the day. The program was launched by Warren McGuffin and other members of San Ramon Valley UMC in the California-Nevada Conference, which sent a mission team to help with the recovery effort after the 2010 earthquake.

The TFP has evolved into a locally-based education and community development initiative, focusing on infrastructure and sustainability. The goal was to create a program that would become self-sustaining and led by Haitians for Haitians.

This represents a new type of church mission pro-

Children, teachers and the Mount Olivet team pose at Institution Mixte Edouard Charles in Haiti.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Young Haitian students in their yellow school uniforms form a line.

gram, focusing on sustainable development.

It also works in tandem with United Methodist Communications' ICT4D initiative in applying information and communication technology to empower communities in developing countries like Haiti.

Today, the TFP is identifying schools in this region of Haiti, where it can apply its development model. "These are the poorest of the poor," says McGuffin.

The Mount Olivet team was the first church mission team from outside the California-Nevada Conference to work with one of the schools. The team provided infrastructure and gathered data to identify further needs and assist future teams. Team members explored possibilities for further support, including a daily hot lunch program, microfinancing opportunities, playground-construction and helping the school pursue small business initiatives to help raise funds.

"Serving with our neighbors in need to make a difference now ... this is the true meaning of living our faith," said Speicher. "If we let it happen, God works through us. And as our team learned to say in Creole, 'Bondyé se toujou avèk nou.' God is always with us."

This is the fifth team that Mount Olivet has sent to serve in Haiti since 2011. The first four teams assisted with earthquake response projects. 🍀

-Kenn Speicher, Mission and Outreach, Mount Olivet UMC



"If we let it happen, God works through us. And as our team learned to say in Creole, 'Bondyé se toujou avèk nou.' God is always with us."



Above, Marilyn Traynham of Mount Olivet poses with Cardinypierrelouis "Caz" Souffrant, one of the translators who has worked with other Mount Olivet mission teams in the past. At left, children play with some of the team members.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



United Methodist is keynote speaker at conference on aging

LYNCHBURG - The Older Adult Ministries Committee of the Lynchburg District of the Virginia Conference was one of the sponsors of an annual conference on aging held at Lynchburg College in June.

"Aging Well in Mind, Body and Spirit" conference also had a United Methodist flavor, as United Methodist Missy Buchanan was the keynote speaker. Buchanan is a member of First UMC in Rockwall, Texas, and writes a regular column for the *United Methodist Reporter*.

Her books include *Living with Purpose in a Worn-Out Body: Spiritual Encourage-*

ment for Older Adults, *Talking with God in Old Age: Meditations and Psalms*, *Don't Write My Obituary Just Yet: Inspiring Faith Stories for Older Adults*, and *Aging Faithfully: 28 Days of Prayer*. All are top sellers for Upper Room Books. Last year she released *Joy Boosters: 120 Ways to Encourage Older Adults*.

Those books also led to a friendship and writing partnership with a fan named Lucimarian Roberts, mother of ABC-TV's "Good Morning America" co-anchor Robin Roberts. Buchanan co-wrote the book *My Story, My Song - Mother-Daughter Reflections on Life and Faith* with the two Roberts women.

Buchanan is now a national expert on aging but didn't set out to be that. She became passionate about the topic while caring for her parents. She talked about "stitching yourself into the lives of others" to help make a difference in their lives.

That's what happened with Lucimarian Roberts. "My name and hometown was on the back of the 'Living With Purpose' book," Buchanan said, "so (Mrs. Roberts) called me up and asked 'how did you know what I was thinking?' She became my biggest cheerleader. ... Her memoir was so powerful because she had taken all the bad things that had happened to her and turned them to good."

Buchanan talked about Mrs. Roberts' "home-going" service in a tiny church in

Mississippi. As the casket was carried out at the end, the church was filled with the sound of Lucimarian Roberts' own voice, a recording of her singing "When We All Get to Heaven."

Buchanan encouraged attendees to capture older person's stories on audio or video tape.

"Every person has a story," she said.

Baby Boomers like herself are getting face-to-face with their own mortality as they care for their parents. Otherwise, they don't want to talk about it. "We dread it (aging), fear it... we're so lost in dealing with it," she said.

She also talked a lot about people's attitudes as they age. "Old age is not a license to be a critical spirit. We don't want to be remembered that way. Is your behavior supporting or detracting the legacy you want to leave behind?"

Buchanan quoted United Methodist pastor Adam Hamilton: "The finest sermon ever preached can be the last years of your life."

"If you take away any idea today I hope it's this one," she said. "Whatever happens (with the last years of my life) I will live faithfully because people are watching me and I can still teach them."

"We can't separate life and faith," Buchanan added. "There's no expiration date on being a follower of Christ." 🌸

-Neill Caldwell

United Methodist Missy Buchanan was the keynote speaker at Lynchburg College's aging conference in June.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

Arts can be vessels that carry the good news

By Louis Caddell

"For you O lord have made me glad by your work, at the works of your hands I sing for joy. How great are your works, O Lord!" Psalm 92:4-5

For those of us who have "dabbled" into the possibilities of an arts ministry, started one or are still seeking information, I hope you will continue on your path. Currently, since we are immersed in so many creative ways and means, why should we not be willing to explore and effectively initiate those innovations through word, deed and vision in our churches?

Why should we not be willing to critique our present ways of communicating the gospel to see how the arts can fit? Visual art, dance, drama, poetry and the spoken word are not to be considered as ends within themselves but rather understood as "vessels" that carry the good news to the minds and hearts of people. These arts are gifts and have particular "values" which can effectively take communication beyond stale verbal repetitions into being refreshments of the good news.

For those who assume they can do well without an Arts ministry, please understand that artistic expression is a powerful gift from our inventive

God. Such ministries open our minds to experience creativity, beauty and transcendence. The arts have, over time, brought about sacred experiences in worship, outreach ministries and educational experiences for youths and adults, even in counseling.

Understanding the arts as vessels means they are subject to sharing the processes of God's creativity. Such creativity is given to us because it keeps us from becoming stale. Our church's mission is to give as meaningful as possible (through God's grace), love (*agape*) and teaching assistance for faith development. But there's an old temptation in church life: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." How many of our churches go on the same paths until those well-traveled roads have created "gullies" so deep we can't see over them? Because of innovations, societies change. Thus, we will continue (as people) to see, hear and feel our world differently.

The strength of our senses also varies per individual; therefore faith development continues to prove challenging. It takes discipline, risk and trust through *agape* (basic requirements) for faith development and transformation to happen. Here, the arts have an advantage for growth in faith because they also require discipline, risk and trust for effective-

ness sake. They have, over time (because of their power), been used by the church to explore the infinite and present indifferent ways a "therefore perfect" life to those who were spiritually thirsty. They have brought resurrection to those spiritually dead simply due to their innovative and creative ways.

The arts have reached many who otherwise would not have heard, seen or felt the Gospel.

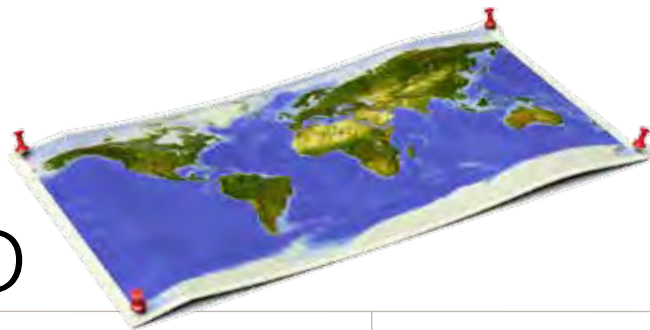
But it takes us (sometimes the chosen few) who are interested in moving our churches beyond their traditionalisms to utilize the arts. Melvin Butler in "Crossing Boundaries in Music" says: "The Body of Christ is an extraordinarily diverse place, and music has great potential to reach people in the midst of their differences." 🌸

-The Rev. Louis Caddell serves Randolph Street UMC in Lexington.

Rev. Louis Caddell imagined John Wesley riding through the streets of Lexington in this original art.



Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD



Schaefer heads to California after he is reinstated as United Methodist pastor

By Kathy Gilbert and
Heather Hahn

The Rev. Frank Schaefer had his ministerial credentials reinstated by an appeals committee June 23.

The denomination's Northeastern Jurisdictional Committee on Appeals restored his credentials and ordered the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference to compensate Schaefer for all lost salary and benefits dating from Dec. 19, 2013.

The nine-member panel unanimously ruled the lower church court's penalty against Schaefer was "illegal." An eight-member majority of the committee supported a penalty modification to the 30-day suspension Schaefer had already undergone. The

committee's ruling still could be appealed to the Judicial Council, the denomination's top court.

Following the decision Bishop Minerva Carcaño said that Schaefer will transfer to the California-Pacific Conference. Carcaño appointed him to Isla Vista Student Ministry in Santa Barbara, Calif., a ministry that will build on the work of Santa Barbara Korean United Methodist Church in that community.

The new appointment became effective July 1.

The former pastor of Iona UMC in eastern Pennsylvania, Schaefer was defrocked after a November 2013 church trial found him guilty of violating *The Book of Discipline* by conducting a same-sex marriage ceremony for his son in 2007.

The court suspended Schaefer from his ministerial duties for 30 days and declared that if he could not "uphold the *Discipline* in its entirety" at the end of the suspension, he would surrender his credentials. He refused to do that, and on Dec. 19, the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference Board of Ordained Ministry asked him to give up his credentials.

In a statement immediately after the decision was released, Schaefer expressed happiness over his "re-frocking" by the committee.

"I never did understand the severity of my punishment for an act of love for my son Tim," Schaefer said. "The committee of appeals understood that my defrocking sought to penalize me not for what I did but for what I might do in the future."

The Rev. Christopher Fisher – who served as counsel for the church, the equivalent of a prosecutor – said he will "be prayerfully examining the appeal ruling to determine if it is in compliance with church law." Fisher said he had no further comment.

Tim Schaefer, Frank's son who now lives and works in Boston, said he knew something significant had happened "because my phone would not stop vibrating on my pocket for almost an hour with texts, calls and Twitter updates."

"I am thrilled about the decision and I'm incredibly proud of my dad for

The Rev. Frank Schaefer appears at a press conference following his reinstatement.
The New York Times photo



fighting to remain with The United Methodist Church to be an advocate for the LGBT community," he said.

The committee's 11-page ruling stated that "errors of church law vitiate the penalty imposed by the Trial Court," including "the mixing and matching of penalties that are designed to be distinct" and predicating the imposition of a penalty on "a future possibility, which may or may not occur, rather than a past or present act."

The Rev. Thomas Lambrecht, the vice president and general manager of the unofficial evangelical caucus *Good News*, said he was "disappointed but not surprised" at the committee's decision.

"The appeals ruling leaves no room for trial courts to give grace to those found guilty of an offense. When Rev. Schaefer declared during the trial his refusal to uphold *The Book of Discipline*, he was renouncing his ordination vows, and the removal of his credentials was an appropriate step to take," he said.

The trial court gave him 30 days to reconsider his decision, Lambrecht said.

"An act of grace on the part of the trial court is now deemed to be inappropriate."

Many will see this as another example of bishops and clergy not being held accountable to "live with the parameters of our covenanted way of discipleship," he added.

"This ruling will unfor-

nate and will only add to the chaos engulfing The United Methodist Church," he said. "I believe this decision is a willful misreading of the original verdict which graciously extended every opportunity to Schaefer to avoid being defrocked."

The Rev. Scott Campbell, counsel for Schaefer,

Church shaking our heads in amazement."

"Frank Schaefer's faithful, hope-filled, loving journey continues to inspire the rest of us, breathing new life into every corner of the church – even corners that contain trial courts and appeals committees," Campbell said. "I know that I speak for countless others when I say that we are grateful and overjoyed at this outcome."

Schaefer called the decision "a hopeful sign." Many in the church already have been "moving toward love over legalism," he said.

"Indeed, people throughout The United Methodist Church, who invited me into their pulpits, sat with me at their dinner tables and supported my family with their donations, have re-frocked me already. Their movement of love embraced me, and together we are moving forward to bring about that day when our denomination no longer excludes any of God's beloved children. And I will continue to work toward that goal." ❧

-Kathy Gilbert and Heather Hahn are reporters for United Methodist News Service

"Indeed, people throughout The United Methodist Church, who invited me into their pulpits, sat with me at their dinner tables and supported my family with their donations, have re-frocked me already."

The Rev. Frank Schaefer

tunately only strengthen the calls for some form of separation, in an attempt to resolve the current crisis in our theology and church government."

The Rev. Rob Renfroe, president of *Good News*, echoed that sentiment.

"This ruling is unfortu-

praised both the decision and the pastor he represented.

Campbell described Schaefer "as a country preacher from a modest church in Pennsylvania" who "is leaving veterans of the movement to change The United Methodist

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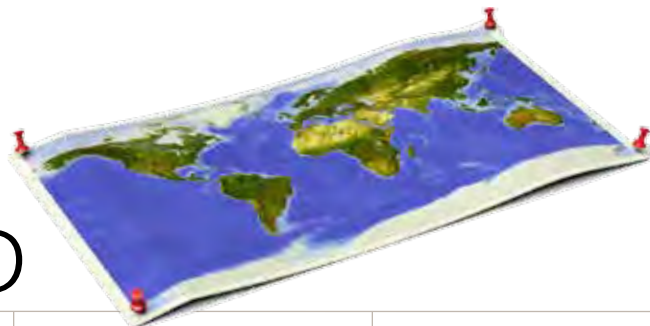
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Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD



Poll: Making disciples tops United Methodists' priorities; sexuality ranks low

A poll of United Methodists in the United States shows that issues related to human sexuality rank significantly lower than other concerns, and members want the church to engage on this issue and bring a positive perspective to the discussion.

RANK:

1. Creating disciples of Christ

2. Youth involvement

3. Members' spiritual growth

4. Decline in membership

5. Poverty

6. Children at Risk

7. Social Injustice

8. Sexual issues

Poll by Corporate Research of Greensboro, N.C., and Research Now of Dallas, Texas.

Creating disciples of Christ, spiritual growth and youth involvement are among the top priorities for U.S. church members, according to the survey, commissioned by United Methodist Communications. The research is based on a survey of United Methodist members in the United States. The research was conducted by Corporate Research of Greensboro, N.C., and Research Now of Dallas. It had a 4.4 percent margin of error.

"We found that regardless of a person's position on homosexuality, members felt strongly that the church could offer a positive and different voice to the broader conversation occurring in society today," said John Deuteran, president of Corporate Research. "They overwhelmingly reject the idea that the disagreements over this issue were justification for splitting the church."

Seventy-six percent of members said the church "should engage and bring positive perspective" to society's discussion of issues related to sexuality.

More than 90 percent of respondents said The United Methodist Church should not split over issues related to human sexuality. Sixty-three percent said the issue of sexual orientation and same-gender marriage is "diverting the church from more important things." They ranked it 8th in importance among issues facing the church today.

The most important issues, according to members, are creating disciples of Christ (39 percent of respondents ranked it as first or second in importance); youth involvement (27 percent); members' spiritual growth (24 percent); decline in membership (19 percent); poverty (17 percent); children at risk (17 percent); and social injustice (16 percent). Sexual orientation and same-gender marriage drew 11 percent.

"This poll shows what really matters to the members of The United Methodist Church," said the Rev. Larry Hollon, general secretary of United Methodist Communications. "It also clarifies that the people in the pews are more concerned about faithful living and changing lives for Christ than they are about some of the other issues that we hear so much about."

The poll is helpful as The United Methodist Church looks ahead to its legislative assembly in 2016, Hollon said. "As the church wrestles with issues related to human sexuality leading up to 2016, this is a hopeful reminder that our connection is strong and that people in the pews are neither ignoring this discussion nor letting it distract from our effort to answer Christ's call."

-Diane Degnan,
United Methodist Communications

United Methodists tend to immigrant minors

By Kathy Gilbert

United Methodists are joining with other religious leaders to provide hospitality and basic needs for hundreds of Central American women and children entering the United States illegally and dropped off at bus stations in Tucson and Phoenix, Ariz.

The Rev. Sherry Brady, her daughter, Candace, and Barbara Haralson, a deaconess, from First United Methodist Church, Safford, Ariz.; the Rev. Beth Rambikur, First United Methodist Church, Tucson; and Marjie Hrabe, a deaconess from St. Mark's United Methodist Church, Tucson, participated in an interfaith training session sponsored by Casa Mariposa, a Tucson organization that works with detention centers. The session was held at Holy Trinity Catholic Church.

"These women have been incarcerated by ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) but are dropped off with paperwork that gives them 'human parole.' This means that they are allowed to go to different places in the U.S. where they have relatives," Brady said.

"But they are only given a certain amount of time to get in touch with the local immigration office. If they don't check in, they are immediately deportable."

In recent months, the numbers of unaccompanied minors from Central

America crossing the U.S. border has surged, drawing both concern and criticism.

A makeshift processing center set up by the U.S. Border Patrol in Nogales has been overwhelmed, *The New York Times* reported. As of June 18, 900 children from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras were being held there, officials said.

More than 52,000 unaccompanied minors from the three countries have been caught trying to sneak over the border since October, double the number from the same period the year before, Reuters reported.

Brady and United Methodists from other local churches quickly started putting together health kits after they saw Arturo Garino, mayor of Nogales, Ariz., talking about the children who were fleeing from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador because of political persecution and drug cartels.

"No matter what side of the immigration debate you're on, no one wants to see a child suffering or in need," Brady said, adding that the news "hit me between the eyes."

The 184 kits assembled by youths and adults from local United Methodist churches were delivered to Nogales City Hall. At that time, the mayor gave the group a briefing on what is happening.

"Mayor Garino shared that he was only given 48

hours (notice) by the (U.S.) Border Patrol before all the children were to be delivered," she noted.


Garino and his wife, Cathy, gathered supplies from local churches and other donors in Nogales. "We did ask him what we, as United Methodists, could do for these children," Brady said, "and Mayor Garino replied that we needed to tell our church people to hold off right now on donations. He would let us know when more things could be given."

Kevin Courtney, a lead organizer with the Pima County Interfaith Council and Interfaith Community Services, is working with clergy and church leaders in this crisis and another one occurring at the border in Texas, where many unaccompanied minors are crossing the border.

Training included a list of basic steps in assisting immigrants including bringing hygiene products, clean clothes and jackets or

sweaters for cold bus stations; providing a hot meal and assistance buying bus tickets for final destinations and offering to let them use cell phones, Brady said.

"The Casa Mariposa's facility was packed to capacity so they are looking for people that would possibly be able to take them overnight until they could get on the next bus," she said.

Before leaving Tucson, Haralson bought diapers with leftover donation money, and she and Brady made plans to return with more health kits, coordinating distribution with Catholic Family Services. 

-Kathy Gilbert is a reporter for United Methodist News Service.

In recent months, the numbers of unaccompanied minors from Central America crossing the U.S. border has surged, drawing both concern and criticism. In this file photo, an abandoned sandal lies just across the border from Mexico near Friendship Park in San Diego. Photo by Mike DuBose, UNited Methodist News Service.



EVENTS



AUGUST

SERVE

Aug. 3-5, Randolph-Macon College, Ashland

This event will help high school students explore a calling to ministry. "SERVE: A Missional Exploration for Ministry" will have a work camp focus and include small groups, Bible study, recreation, special worship services and more. For more information, call the Rev. Margie Turbyfill at (804) 368-7276 or e-mail margieturbyfill@rmc.edu. The program is co-sponsored by the Bailey Pre-ministerial Program at Randolph-Macon College and the Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.

Early Response Team training

Aug. 16, Trinity UMC, Richmond

Aug. 22-23, St. John's UMC, Norfolk

Early Response Team (ERT) training for anyone interested in disaster ministries will be held 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 16, at Trinity UMC, 903 Forest Ave., Henrico. Cost is \$55 (includes background check, t-shirt, badge, manual, snacks and lunch). To register, e-mail Michele Michaelian at mlskcs@aol.com. Deadline to register is **Aug. 2. ERT Recertification Class** for anyone who currently has an ERT badge that is ready to expire will be 6 - 10 p.m. Friday, Aug. 22, at St. John's UMC, 2709 Greendale Ave., Norfolk. Cost is \$40 (includes background check, t-shirt, snacks) Contact Michele Michaelian at mlskcs@aol.com with any questions about this class. Deadline to register is **Aug. 8. ERT Basic Training** will be held 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 23, at St. John's UMC, 2709 Greendale Ave., Norfolk. Cost is \$55 (includes background check, t-shirt, badge, manual, snacks and lunch). To register, e-mail Michele Michaelian at mlskcs@aol.com. Deadline to register is **Aug. 8.**

Lay Supply Training

Aug 15-16, Blackstone Retreat and Conference Center

The Virginia Conference Cabinet and Board of Ordained Ministry require an orientation for all new persons assigned as lay supplies (laity who are serving as pastors of churches). This is mandatory for all lay supplies in the Virginia Conference. If you are a continuing lay supply and have not attended previously, or if you are a first-time lay supply, you are expected to attend this event. The Rev. Rob Colwell, James River District superintendent, will lead the orientation. For more information, contact the Center for Clergy Excellence at (804) 521-1127 or 1-800-768-6040, ext. 127. Or you can visit the conference website www.vaumc.org, under "Events" and the date.

Helping Hands

Aug. 25-26, Springfield UMC

"Helping Hands" is a two-day, mission-focused event for rising 4th-6th graders open to all churches of the Virginia Conference. Children learn the importance of being a caring Christian. The cost is \$36 per person, which includes a t-shirt, meals, snacks and overnight stay. The direct link to register online is <http://tinyurl.com/sumc-helpinghands>.

SEPTEMBER

UMVIM Team Leader Training

Sept. 13, Brosville UMC, Danville

This conference-sponsored United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) team leader training event will meet the requirements for all first-time leaders. Others interested are welcome to attend whether scheduled to lead a team or not. Deadline to register is **Sept. 8**. Visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org under "Events" and the date. To learn more, contact the Center for Justice and Missional Excellence at 1-800-768-6040, ext. 144; (804) 521-1144; or contact Forrest White, conference UMVIM coordinator, at VirginiaUMVIM@gmail.com or (804) 938-1026.

UMVIM Team Leader Recertification Training

Sept. 19, Culpeper UMC

Team Leader recertification is required for all UMVIM team leaders who completed basic team leader training five years ago or more. The focus of this training is to update leaders on the Virginia Conference UMVIM policies and guidelines, to share best practices, and to answer any questions. There is a \$25 registration fee. The deadline to register is **Sept. 15**. For more information, contact the Center for Justice and Missional Excellence at 1-800-768-6040, ext. 144, (804) 521-1144; or contact Forrest White, conference UMVIM coordinator, at VirginiaUMVIM@gmail.com or (804) 938-1026. Visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org under "Events" and the date to register.

School for Children's Ministry

Sept. 20, Greenville UMC

Nov. 8, Grace UMC, Manassas

The School for Children's Ministries is an annual training event for local church leaders. Come alone or bring a team to share ideas, experience creative workshops and make new connections. Contact Beth Christian for more information at bethchristian@vaumc.org or (540) 932-1055. To register, visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org under "Events" and the date. Greenville is located on Highway 11 between Staunton and Lexington.

OCTOBER

5 Talent Academy

Oct. 4, Floris UMC, Herndon (and live streamed throughout the conference)

Registration is now open for the 5 Talent Academy “Evangelism, Communication and Church Growth” event on Saturday, Oct. 4, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at Floris UMC in Herndon, and broadcast to nine additional locations across the conference. Maria Dixon Hall, associate professor of Organizational Communication at Southern Methodist University, will explore evangelism through the lens of solid and fruitful communication practices. Registration is open to all Virginia Conference churches regardless of affiliation with the 5 Talent Academy. Visit www.vaumc.org/5Talent to register; registration deadline is **Sept. 19**. Registration is \$25 per person and includes lunch. Live stream sites are: **Blacksburg UMC, Franktown UMC, Timberlake UMC in Lynchburg, Fairview UMC in Danville, Woodlake UMC in Chesterfield, Bridgewater UMC, Francis Asbury UMC in Virginia Beach, Macedonia UMC in White Post and St. Luke’s UMC in Yorktown.**

‘Lord, Teach Me to Pray’

Oct. 25, St. Thomas UMC, Manassas

“Lord, Teach Me to Pray – Practical Applications for Prayer” will be offered again in October. The main speaker will be Dr. Wendy Miller, professor emeritus of Spiritual Formation at Eastern Mennonite Seminary and adjunct faculty at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill., and Perkins School of Theology in Dallas. Visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org under “Events” and the date.

Virginia Chapter PAUMCS event

Oct. 29, Virginia United Methodist Center, Glen Allen

Experience your conference connection as speakers from the conference Board of Communications address the need to communicate in a technology-infused world, including social media, website design, web hosting and blogging. For more information, contact Bev Myers, the Professional Association of United Methodist Church Secretaries (PAUMCS) Virginia Chapter president, at BevMyers@vaumc.org or call **1-800-768-6040, ext. 134** or **(804) 521-1134**. You can register on the conference website at www.vaumc.org under “Events” and the date. 📖

Mount Vernon UMC donates book on Virginia Methodism

Mount Vernon UMC, located in Toano, has donated the book, *James City Chapel Cemetery*, to Randolph-Macon College in Ashland. The book includes the histories of James City Chapel, Mount Vernon and the Kelton Methodist Church, as well as documentation on those interred in the James City Chapel Cemetery.

On Nov. 15, 1789 Bishop Francis Asbury spent the night at the home of Edmund Taylor and influenced the establishment of the James City Chapel, which opened its doors in 1791. On March 12, 1812, Asbury noted in his journal: “We came off this morning to James City, and preached in the chapel to many people. We had an evening meeting.” He added that he spent the night at John Taylor’s, Edmund’s son, who apparently was strongly influenced by Asbury’s visits in the family’s homes. John Taylor became a Methodist preacher, riding circuits in Ohio from 1817-1836.

In 1883, the railroad from Richmond to Newport News passed through Burnt Ordinary (present day Toano), making it into a growing community. To serve the people coming there, the chapel was partially dismantled and moved to Toano by railcar, then pulled to the top of the hill by a team of oxen. The chapel building was rebuilt and organized in 1887 as Mount Vernon Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The remaining portion of the chapel served those living in the Kelton community (present day Lightfoot) until they built the new Kelton Methodist Church, which served the area for 28 years.

The first person buried in the cemetery in 1843 was the infant grandson of Edmund Taylor. Over the years since, his burial has been followed by many Methodist church and community leaders of upper-James City County. Today, Mount Vernon continues to use its portion of the James City Chapel as the main part of its sanctuary, honoring the rich history of Methodism in upper-James City County to the Glory of God. 📖



From left, Carole Dishman, Mount Vernon UMC historian; Bob Dishman, chair of the church’s Cemetery Committee; Laurie Preston, head of Reference, and Mary-Virginia Currie, Special Collections and Archives, McGraw-Page Library, Randolph-Macon College.

2014 Annual Conference p

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me;
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.
Spirit of the living God,

Fall afresh



Participants feel the Spirit

on me).



Virginia United Methodists were water-washed and spirit born at the 232nd session of Virginia Annual Conference, held June 20-22 at the Hampton Roads Convention Center.

Presentations centered on the theme of “Lord, Renew Us With Your Spirit,” with most speakers touching on how the presence of the Holy Spirit can renew us and our local churches. Then during the closing worship, the 3,000 attendees remembered their baptism by touching water in small basins throughout the hall.

Several times throughout the schedule, Bishop Young Jin Cho led the body in singing “Spirit of the Living God,” with the a cappella singing by thousands providing very moving moments.

(Continued on next page)



(AC2014 wrap-up continued from previous page)

Members voted to “postpone indefinitely” a resolution that would have asked the 2016 General Conference to change language in the *Book of Discipline* related to human sexuality.

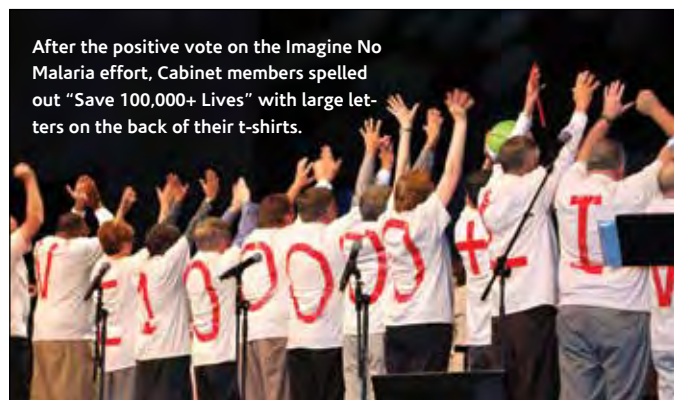
In his Episcopal Address during the opening session on Friday, Bishop Cho called for a period of discernment throughout the conference on the sexuality issue over the coming church year. Cho said he changed his mind about dealing with the issue after speaking with members of the conference’s Common Table. “I had hoped to spend more time on mission and revitalizing the churches,” Cho said. He called the issues of same-sex marriage and other matters related to homosexual inclusion a “gathering storm” for the church, mentioning talk of schism and the counter proposals to keep the church together.

“This is a time when we surely need to pray and seek guidance from our Lord,” Cho said, also asking members to “pray for the future of our United Methodist Church very seriously.”

The proposal was part of a look at things coming for the conference in the new church year. The others include the expansion of the new Discipleship Circles model (creating small groups composed of laity and clergy participants from more than one church or district for spiritual vitality, personal accountability and collaborative learning); the start of new faith communities; and the conference’s jumping into the denomination’s Imagine No Malaria effort.

Cho challenged everyone to take on Imagine No Malaria as a spiritual discipline rather than just another fund-raising drive. The bishop said he would also like to see every church in the conference participating

After the positive vote on the Imagine No Malaria effort, Bishop Cho donned a t-shirt and broke into dance with youth and others to Pharrell Williams’ “Happy” song. Conference Director of Justice and Missional Excellence the Rev. Glenn Rowley introduced Maria Maxwell, who will be the conference field coordinator for Imagine No Malaria. Cabi-



After the positive vote on the Imagine No Malaria effort, Cabinet members spelled out “Save 100,000+ Lives” with large letters on the back of their t-shirts.

net members spelled out “Save 100,000+ Lives” with large letters on the backs of their t-shirts. Bishop Cho then asked “after dancing, what next? ... Open your checkbooks!” The bishop then said he and his wife, Kiok, would give \$3,000 to save 300 lives.

In recapping this past year, Bishop Cho also announced that more than 200 churches had signed the bishop’s Prayer Covenant, and his Convocation on Prayer was very well attended.

Three new faith communities were introduced, bringing to 26 the number of new faith communities that have been started since the adoption of an emphasis on planting churches six years ago.

Members approved a resolution calling for an “immediate and significant” increase in the federal minimum wage. A measure asking the conference pensions and benefits



The Rev. Rhonda VanDyke Colby, Dr. Elmer Coyer and Bishop Robert Hayes from Oklahoma were all guest speakers at AC2014.

agency to divest from fossil fuel companies was sent back to the conference boards of Pension and Health Benefits and Church and Society for additional study.

Preaching for the Service of Remembrance, the Rev. Rhonda VanDyke Colby, vice president at United Methodist-related Shenandoah University, imagined Jesus as a gardener, not a carpenter. “It makes sense,” she said. “God’s world started in a garden. ... Jesus says a sower went out to sow, not a strategic planter. ... Jesus is betrayed in a garden and on the third day after his death, where does Mary go? (Murmurs of “a garden” throughout the crowd.) Of course she does. That was not a mistake.”

Dr. Elmer Coyer, professor of systematic theology and Wesley Studies at the University of Dubuque (Iowa) Theological Seminary, led “teaching sessions” during conference. After hearing of the Virginia Conference’s financial successes in the past year, Coyer said the conference must be doing something right. “Virginia is bucking the trend and you ought to be proud of it,” he said.

But there is a malaise that is disturbing the larger Church, he said. “Fear propels congregations into survival mode. It’s often a self-fulfilling death spiral.”

Political battles and cultural controversies “hinder the church from moving forward,” he said. Coyer suspects the



Gabby Burge, 12, of Wellspring UMC, performs a liturgical dance during the Laity Session.



greater problem is “connection,” not *The Book of Discipline*. John Wesley said connection is deep and utterly real – a union and communion that unites us with God and others, Colyer said. “Connection is a gift that comes to us from God.”

Bishop Robert Hayes from the Oklahoma Area led Saturday morning worship and preached for the Service for the Ordering of Ministry. Hayes told ordinands that “there are no easy jobs in God’s kingdom if you do it right. We may as well say that here and now.”

George Howard, deputy general secretary of the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM), presented awards to the Virginia Conference for having the highest giving to The Advance for Christ and His Church (\$2.5 million) in 2013, and for leading the Southeastern Jurisdiction in giving to missionary support. Howard also praised the conference for contributing \$1.1 million to the United Methodist Committee On Relief (UMCOR).

As Bishop Hayes said later, “Virginia is one of the most outstanding – if not the most outstanding – conferences in the denomination in terms of reaching out to people.”

Bishop Cho commissioned the Rev. Pat Watkins as a missionary with GBGM, working on the “Care of God’s Creation” through the Council of Bishops. Deaconesses Laarni Bibay and Anselma Samson were also commissioned; they were consecrated as deaconesses in April.

Members, as always, brought disaster relief kits collected for UMCOR to Annual Conference. The total number of kits collected was 41,218, with a total value of \$533,834. Specifically: 20,844 Health kits, 11,306 School kits, 5,325 Birthing kits, 1,666 Layette kits, 228 Cleaning kits, 394 Bedding kits, and 1,455 miscellaneous kits. They also collected more than 85,000 pounds of non-perishable food items for the Peninsula Food Bank.

At the Service for the Ordering of Ministry, 13 were ordained as elders, one ordained deacon, 22 commissioned as provisional members, and 27 licensed as local pastors. One elder also had her orders recognized. Forty-one clergy took retired status this year.

Denman Evangelism awards went to the Rev. David Burch, pastor of Vision of Hope UMC, Harrisonburg District; David Bailey of Trinity UMC, James River District; and Casey Heinlein, who attends Burnt Factory UMC, Winchester.

Members approved a 2015 budget of more than \$32.7 million, down by one percent from the 2014 budget.

Conference membership stands at 330,696, down 1,735 from the previous year. Worship attendance stands at 104,231, down by 897 persons.



Courtney Joyner is ordained deacon during the Saturday Service for the Ordering of Ministry. Photo by Barbara Lewis

In his sermon for closing worship, Bishop Cho talked about coming to the U.S. in 1979 from Korea. He compared that adjustment to how our churches are struggling in a new way of being that is very different from the culture of 20 or 30 years ago.

“We are losing touch with the world and the communities in which we live,” Cho said. “Truly, we are living in a foreign land. (Churches) are not gaining new members. They do not know how to reach out into their community. They sit and wait for people to come to them.

“Please, do not stop praying,” he urged. “Now, we go back to our mission field. If we truly listen and discern the will of God in prayer, we can faithfully and effectively sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land.”

Learn more at www.vaumc.org/AC2014.

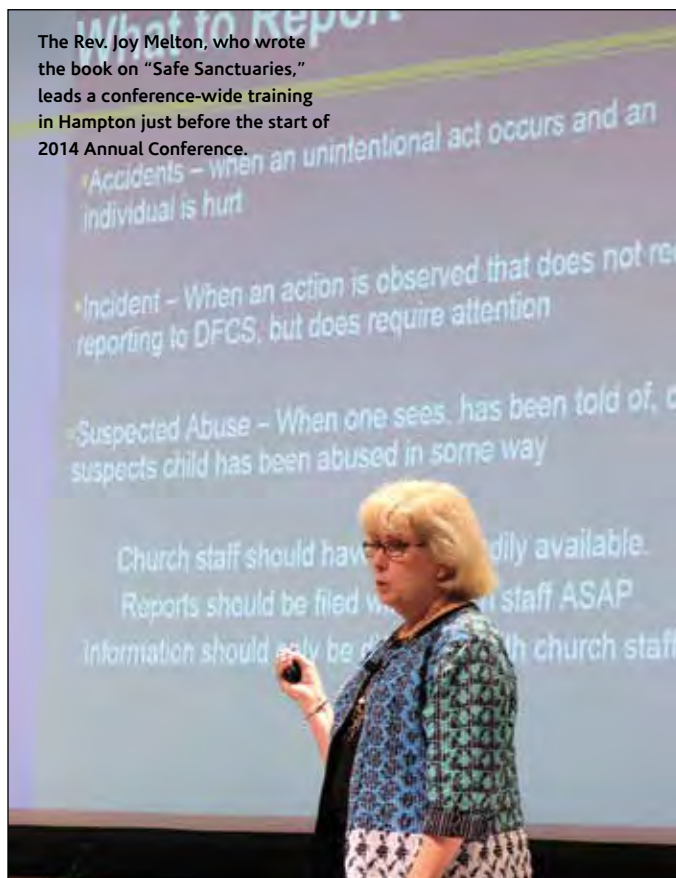
-Neill Caldwell is editor of the Virginia United Methodist Advocate. Photos by Caldwell unless otherwise noted.

Expert outlines steps for churches to be Safe Sanctuaries for the vulnerable

By Martha Stokes

The Rev. Dr. Joy Thornburg Melton, an attorney and ordained deacon in The United Methodist Church, has devoted her law practice and ministry to the protection of vulnerable individuals – children, youths and older adults.

Yet she shared with the 104 participants at the *Safe Sanctuaries* training event prior to this year's Annual Conference session that her mother could not believe she was writing a book about the risk of abuse in the church. Her mother encouraged her to write stories that people would want to read – love stories and novels.



The Rev. Dr. Joy Melton, who wrote the book on "Safe Sanctuaries," leads a conference-wide training in Hampton just before the start of 2014 Annual Conference.

However, when Melton delivered a "hot off the press" copy of the first *Safe Sanctuaries* resource to her mother, she was handed a stack of local newspapers reporting on a crisis that had happened at a nearby church. Her mother's response to the book: "I understand now why you had to write this."



Through the sharing of personal experiences, facts and stories, Melton offered guidance to assist local churches in developing and evaluating protection policies for children, youths and vulnerable adults appropriate for their ministry contexts. The facts are staggering:

- ❖ **There are 5.7 reports of child abuse per minute in the United States. This means one report is made every 10 seconds.**
- ❖ **Each year, one in 7 older Americans is victimized physically, emotionally, or financially.**

Churches must face these tragic realities in our communities and place priority on reducing the risk of abuse within and connected to our congregations. According to Melton, we as faith communities must "teach to the Gospel, but be prepared to defend our actions according to state law."

Policies and procedures that are developed and implemented must fit the size and context of the congregation, she said.

What should churches do? Melton outlined six steps and talked in detail during the 10-hour training about procedures which should be considered:

1. Establish a Safe Sanctuaries Task Force for your church:

This Task Force should include representatives of ministry areas focusing on children, youths and vulnerable adults: nursery, children, youths, older adults, disability ministries and leisure/recreation ministries. Church leader-



The Rev. Rob Vaughn asks a question during a session.

ship should also be involved, especially representatives of Staff-Parish Relations, Trustees and Finance. Other church members who work within the medical, legal and law enforcement fields can bring important expertise.

2. Evaluate what is being done currently:

If you have a protection policy in place, evaluate it based on your current membership needs, insurance requirements, state legislation and community setting. If you do not have a policy in place, start by looking at the policy and procedures adopted by the Virginia Conference Common Table for Church Vitality for conference events and sample policies found at www.vaumc.org/SafeSanctuaries.

3. Determine areas of weakness:

This requires that you evaluate current ministries and anticipate future needs.

4. Write a policy statement:

The Covenant. Melton calls this your theological statement and intent of the congregation to reduce risk.

5. Write procedures to support the policy:


The Commitment. These procedures should address application and screening procedures for staff and volunteers, orientation to service, supervision of participants, use of facilities by outside groups, reporting requirements and regular review of procedures.

6. Implement the plans:

This may not be easy as you are called upon to address the challenges presented by the “Yes, but...” members of

your faith community. The “Yes, but” folks are those who will question why protection policies and procedures are needed and may be hesitant to follow guidelines once they are in place. Education and awareness will be required to address their concerns.

The Rev. Sherry Cothran Woolsey, pastor of West Nashville (Tenn.) United Methodist Church, led the group in times of singing, prayer and devotion. She shared stories and original songs about little-known women of the Old Testament including Huldah the Prophetess, the Witch of Endor, Rahab of Jericho, and the Wise Woman and Strange Woman of Proverbs. Through all of her devotions, Cothran Woolsey emphasized that we are called to respect the worth and dignity of every individual, and strive as congregations to become places of justice.

For those unable to participate in the training, all of Melton’s booklets in the *Safe Sanctuaries* series of resources can be purchased from Cokesbury or other on-line book retailers. For more information about Virginia Conference protection policies and resource links, visit www.vaumc.org/SafeSanctuaries. 

-Martha Stokes is the conference director of Inclusivity and Lay Leadership Excellence



The Rev. Sherry Cothran Woolsey sings as part of the Safe Sanctuaries training.

More AC2014 in pictures



Photo by Shan Sixbey



Top, binoculars help bridge the long distance to the stage from the back of hall. Above left, during the 'Imagine No Malaria' celebration, Bishop Cho breaks out the 'Nothing But Nets' basketball made famous at the 2007 Annual Conference. Above right, sisters Jennifer Dickison Coffey (left) and Deborah Dickison Porras were both ordained elder during the Service for the Ordering of Ministry. Below, ordinands take their places.



2014 Retirees

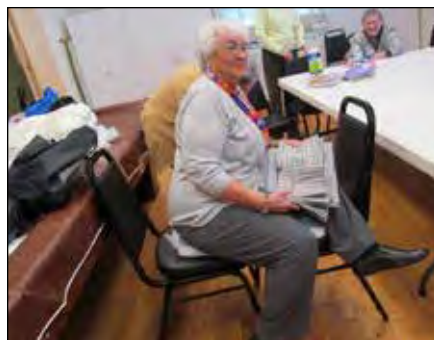
Name	Years of Service
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EARL W. ALLEN JR.	22.00
HARLAN R. BECKLEY	45.00
ROBERT C. BLINN*	32.25
JOHN S. BRENNEKE	21.00
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LOCAL CHURCH NEWS



▲ **Kenbridge UMC, Richmond District**, – in cooperation and partnership with **Antioch UMC, Williams UMC, Perseverance Christian, The Episcopal Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew, Victoria UMC, Victoria Baptist, First Baptist of South Hill and Kenbridge Supply Co.** – held the Fourth Annual Neighbors Helping Neighbors construction ministry day in May. More than 120 people came together over a two-day period to do painting, light construction and repair to seven homes in Lunenburg County. Some of the specific projects included yard clean-up, rebuilding handicap ramps, painting homes, replacing aluminum siding and gutters, repairing windows, stabilizing a porch, masonry work, repairing wood rot and replacing steps.



▲ Members at **Main Street UMC in Suffolk** committed to making 150 bedding kits to bring to Annual Conference for UMCOR. Women of the Needlework Guild were asked to package all the kits, which included getting the air out of all of the pillows so they would fit in the box. Pictured, Lenora Holland, one of the members of the Needlework Guild.

The Ann Douglas Scholarship Committee of The United Methodist Women of **High Street UMC in Courtland** announced that a \$750 scholarship has been recently awarded to William H. Sloan, a first year Master of Divinity student at the Candler School of Theology in Atlanta. He is a lifelong member of **Bermuda Hundred UMC** and is pursuing certification in the Virginia Conference through the James River District.

▼ In April, members of **Court Street UMC, Lynchburg District**, delivered Easter Bags filled with goodies to the participants of the Adult Care Center of Central Virginia. Pictured: Court Street's Sharon Brooks (center) and some of the center participants.



An art exhibit hosted by **Trinity United Methodist Women in Richmond** had 100 in attendance. There were items on display from more than 90 participants, adults and children. Janet Hill, UMW Program Coordinator, led the way in creating this event.

▼ Girl Scouts from **Main Street UMC in Suffolk** recently delivered 900 boxes of cookies to veterans at Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington, D.C., and the VA Hospital in Hampton. 🍪



EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY



Tips can help seniors greet young visitors in church

By Missy Buchanan

Several Facebook friends recently posted something that caught my attention. It was a newsletter from the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (UUAC) offering advice for older adults who are greeting young adults at church. Though United Methodists may differ with the UUAC on many theological issues, I wondered if the suggestions for older adults might spark important conversation in our own congregations.

First, the writer cautions older adults not to greet young people by asking how old they are. It's important to be sensitive to their desire for privacy.

Instead of asking what year they are in school or college, invite them to share something about themselves. This approach is less intimidating and more engaging, especially for young adults who are not attending school or who are unemployed or underemployed. Older adults are also advised not to ask

a young person if they are new to the church since it is quite possible that they've been attending for months and that the older adult has not met them. To ask if they are new might be interpreted that the older person thinks they don't belong in church. Instead say, "I don't think we have met. My name is . . ."

The UUAC piece also encourages older people to think twice before greeting a young adult with a comment about the church needing more young people. Like people of all ages, young adults are anxious to be seen for who they are rather than as a token for a particular age group.

Just say how great it is to meet them. Period. Welcome them into the community of faith and fellowship that encompasses all ages.

As I read the UUAC suggestions for interacting with young adults, I wondered if the ideas might not also be applicable to middle and high school students.


Gavin Richardson, youth pastor at Good Shepherd UMC in Hendersonville, Tenn., and creative partner at Youth Worker Circuit, pointed out another mistake that older adults make when they think they've got to be cool when interacting with their younger counterparts. Instead of trying to act young and hip, he encourages older adults to be authentic and sensitive and to remember a tidbit

of information about the young person that can be used in a future encounter.

He also reminds older generations to tell stories as a shared experience, not as a pointed lesson or to one-up younger adults.

Jason Huffman, director of youth ministries at First UMC in Palestine, Texas, adds that as mature adults and church leaders, the older generations should take the initiative in getting to know the youths. He asks older people to remember that teenagers are just that – teenagers, and encourages them to meet youths where they are when it comes to their behavior, their dress and their quirks.

"Be glad that they are in church," he says. "There are a thousand other places these kids could be on a Sunday morning. Thank God that they are worshipping with you."

He also asks older adults not to be critical when students take on leadership roles in ministries. Just because the younger generations will do things differently doesn't make their ministry or worship ungodly or second-rate. Instead, thank God for molding a new generation of church leaders and support them in their ventures. 

-Missy Buchanan, a member of FUMC Rockwall, Texas, is the author of Aging Faithfully: 28 Days of Prayer.






Celebrating
80 years
of service

Welcoming involves three priorities



ship practices, apart from Sunday-morning worship services, are central to the life of your congregation? Do you have a prayer ministry? Do you have a mission trip? Do you have an adult Bible study? Do you have a caregiving ministry? Are these practices newcomer-friendly? Can newcomers learn to participate in practices by showing up to the practice? Identify "oldcomers" within these practices who are willing to facilitate newcomer participation and non-defensively entertain their questions.

Learn your congregation's story:

Finally, you must take time for the newcomer to learn the unique ways of your very particular congregation. What is the history of the way things are done? What is important and why? In the telling or retelling of these stories with a newcomer, in the course of engaging in discipleship practices together, the very particular story of the local congregation will become essential to participating in this practice. The practice is local and personal and does not look like any practice anywhere else in the world. What makes it distinct makes it worth learning about. 

-Jessica Krey Duckworth is the author of Wide Welcome

How can you best welcome the next newcomer who crosses the threshold of your congregation? Consider Jesus' call to the disciples. When he said, "Follow me," at least according to the gospel writer Mark, the disciples did so immediately.

So do not wait until your brochure is finished. Do not wait until your website is public. Do not wait until your membership database is up-to-date. Stop procrastinating! The very next newcomer who arrives in your congregation is bearing a promise for you.

Welcoming this newcomer involves three priorities – listening to the newcomer's questions, facilitating the newcomer's participation in discipleship practices alongside "oldcomers," and taking time for the newcomer to learn the culture and ways of do-

ing things in your church.

Listen to the newcomer's questions:

To listen to your newcomer's questions, you need to find people who have skills to listen well. Newcomer questions may not be what you expect. Some questions may be trivial, some may be very weighty, some may be practical and some may be deeply theological.

Newcomer questions may challenge what you know to be the case in your congregation or in Christianity. But do not be defensive. Their unsettling questions can be a means of grace and a revelation of the image of Jesus.

Facilitate newcomer participation:

Discipleship is learned through participation in Christian practices. So, ask first, what disciple-

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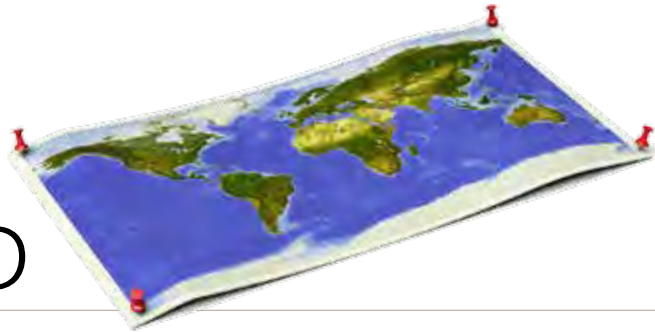
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Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD



Hamilton's 'A Way Forward' gets support, pushback

By Sam Hodges

The idea of letting United Methodist churches and annual conferences choose to depart from church law regarding homosexuality is gaining support. But it's also seeing heated opposition from those who say "local option" would violate Methodist connectionalism and merely shift longstanding conflict to the church and conference level.

In June, the Rev. Adam Hamilton and others offered "A Way Forward," a proposal to let churches vote to depart from the *Book of Discipline* by hosting same-sex unions and welcoming gay pastors. The proposal also calls for letting annual conferences decide to depart from the *Discipline* by ordaining self-avowed, practicing homosexuals.

Hamilton said he hoped to provide an alternative to a call by some clergy and theologians to begin consideration of an amicable split of the denomination. That group, self-described as traditionalist, argues that differences over homosexuality within The United Methodist Church are irreconcilable.

The local option proposal by Hamilton, pastor of the 18,000-member United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kans., debuted with endorsements from a range of large-church pastors, includ-



The Rev. Adam Hamilton

ing the Rev. Mike Slaughter of Ginghamburg Church in Ohio.

Thousands of clergy and lay people had added their names in support of "A Way Forward."

But then a group of nearly 80 clergy, theologians and laity, again from a more conservative perspective, responded with "An Open Letter to Revs. Adam Hamilton and Michael Slaughter." That letter praises Hamilton and Slaughter for trying to address divisions in the denomination. Then it says: "Your proposal will only extend, localize and exacerbate the acrimonious debate over the issue by forcing every congregation and annual conference to continue arguing about it for years to come. Your solution would pit many pastors against laity in local churches, friends against friends in our congregations, members against members at every annual conference, and bishops

against pastors in the appointive process, all without any assurance that it will really resolve the issue."

The letter also holds that local option would turn The United Methodist Church from a connectional to a congregational model of polity.

I have not given up on the hope that our leaders can work through the Connectional Table, the Committee on Central Conference Matters and the Commission on General Conference and find a more holy way forward at the 2016 General Conference."

Rev. Bruce Robbins

"That is the end of Methodism as we know it," said the Rev. William Abraham, professor of Wesley

studies at Perkins School of Theology and a signer of the letter.

The group earlier calling for amicable separation put forward four pastor representatives for comment, but did not release the names of others supporting the effort. The letter to Hamilton and Slaughter contains nearly 80 names, including three of the four publicly identified with amicable separation.

Abraham said "amicable separation has to be on the table," but added: "I don't think there's any consensus among conservatives that they're all ready to go with amicable separation."

But he also said that if local option were to be approved at General Conference 2016, some conservative churches would leave The United Methodist Church.

"It beggars disbelief on my part that someone like Adam Hamilton and company don't realize this is going to split the church," Abraham said.

On June 13, Hamilton responded with a letter of his own, addressed to the Rev. Rob Renfroe, president of Good News, an unofficial conservative caucus within the church. Renfroe is one of those who drafted the letter to Hamilton and Slaughter.

Hamilton and Slaughter offered "agree to disagree" legislation at the 2012 General Conference. That proposal, which did not

Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD

suggest a local option, failed to pass.

Their latest effort brought qualified support from some who strongly favor changing church law to allow for ordination of homosexuals and to allow clergy to officiate at same-sex unions.

"I prefer the local option to a formal fracture of the connection in our precious church," said the Rev. Bruce Robbins, a retired pastor and former top executive of the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns. "Yes, a local option would wound us and need great healing. But we are promised grace!"

Robbins added: "But I have not given up on the hope that our leaders can work through the Connec-tional Table, the Committee on Central Conference Mat-ters and the Commission on General Conference and find a more holy way forward at the 2016 General Confer-ence."

As more states have legalized same-sex mar-riage, more United Method-ist clergy have defied church law by performing such unions. Considerable main-stream media attention has accompanied the church's response, including a com-plaint filed against retired Bishop Melvin Talbert for officiating at the wedding of two men in Alabama, and the defrocking of the Rev. Frank Schaefer for perform-ing the wedding of his son to another man. 

-Sam Hodges reports for
United Methodist News Service

UMC Giving launches new website

United Methodist Communications has launched an all-new, redesigned website at UMC-Giving.org.

The new site offers Biblical perspective to help United Methodists across the globe align their giving practices with their per-sonal faith.

With easy navigation, there is a section dedicated specifically for church lead-ers and pastors that offers tools and downloadable resources to help inspire giving within local churches. It also highlights necessary information to equip lead-ers to discuss giving with members.

The section for church members focuses on the Biblical reasons for giv-ing and highlights several unique opportunities such as Special Sundays, in which the denomination pulls to-gether and focuses financial resources toward key issues that are important to The United Methodist Church. These include disaster relief readiness, scholarships to equip the next generation and advocacy for social justice issues.


Additionally, through feature stories and poi-gnant videos, the site emphasizes stories of how United Methodists have positively affected lives through generosity.

Safe, secure and easy giving opportunities are available across the site so that anyone can participate



and join United Methodists' efforts to make a difference and change the world.

Watch a short introduc-

tion video about the site at www.umcsgiving.org/impact-articles/umcsgiving.org-introduction-video. 



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Devotions from International Lesson Series

LIVING THE WORD



Pastor John Hemming serves Powhatan UMC in the Richmond District. He entered the Virginia Conference as a provisional member in 2008, serving as the Associate Pastor at Cave Spring UMC in the Roanoke District for four years. John and his wife, Karen, are blessed with three children – Luke (7), Aaron (5), and Anna (9 months). Hemming is a graduate of Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Ky., where he received his M.Div. in December 2007. In May 1999 he received his BBA from The College of William and Mary and worked as a defense contractor for five years in Northern Virginia.

Aug. 3

2 Cor. 1:3-11

The rescuer

Watching television recently, I was drawn to a show titled “Combat Rescue” on the National Geographic Channel. It followed a U.S. military group stationed in Afghanistan. The video depicted people doing their thing, living their lives and walking around town. It didn’t seem like a war zone. However, in the midst of that area some people were making it their mission to harm others – to kill.

The focus of the program was on a group of soldiers who were charged to fly into the battle zone and rescue the wounded. Typically two helicopter teams flew together and brought the injured to the U.S. combat hospital at Bagram Air Base. These people were trained to provide comfort and aide for the wounded, tending to their medical needs.

Those caught in a war zone are not the only ones who need a rescuer. All of us need to be rescued, and Paul dives into this subject matter. In verse 10 from this passage, Paul credits God as the one who came onto the scene and saved him and his companions from death. Truly, God was their rescuer. Paul’s experience provided hope amidst the trials of life. Without a doubt, that is an important message to know – that God was with Paul during those difficult times. While that is vital for us to realize, we must understand it goes beyond God’s actions. Our actions in response to crises are critical as well.

To be sure, we cannot minimize God’s presence in the midst of trials, providing comfort and relief. As a matter of fact, the Lord needs to be the focus all the time. In turn, it is our job to recognize that fact and share our stories with others about how God transformed crisis situations into healing comfort. This is one way for us to proclaim the gospel message to others – sharing our sorrows and recounting how God rescued us in the midst of those trying times. Without a doubt, Christ is our rescuer.

Aug. 10

2 Cor. 1:23-2:11

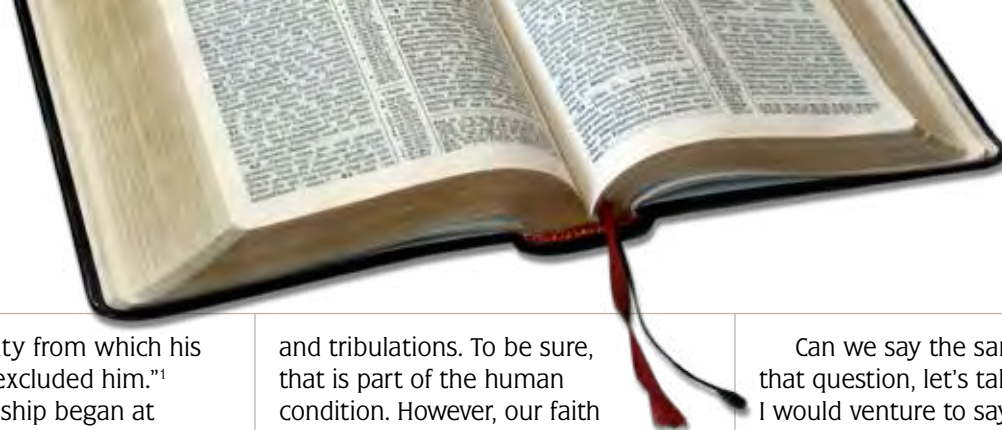
God’s answer to harm

Pain, hurt and suffering are three words familiar to the human condition. Things happen in life that cause such feelings. Sometimes they are inflicted by others. Sometimes we inflict such things on ourselves. Sometimes these difficult experiences occur from natural circumstances out of our control. All of us encounter these feelings and these problems at some point in our lives.

The author of 2 Corinthians also encountered such issues. Someone caused pain in Paul’s life. We aren’t told all the details of what occurred in the church in Corinth. However, we understand that Paul’s absence from this community allowed one or more people to teach things contrary to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Doubt and suspicion entered into the minds of these people, and they began to question Paul’s teachings and authority.

Without question, this caused strife and conflict in their community, and Paul was not physically present to quell the situation. Pain, hurt and suffering. When those things happen, it’s easy to have the desire to lash out at the offender. It’s easy to run from the circumstance. It’s easy to deny or pass blame. It’s more difficult to face the pain, deal with the hurt and talk about the suffering.

The best way to tackle such complicated problems is head on – facing them directly. That’s what occurred with the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) in South Africa. Listen to this compelling story from Bishop Desmond Tutu and Mpho Tutu’s book, entitled *Made for Goodness*: “After ten years of repeated denials, two police officers came to the TRC to admit their roles in the premeditated slaughter [of seven boys]. After the hearings, one of the policemen, Thapelo Mbelo, asked to meet with the mothers of the slain boys. ‘Ndi cel’uxolo,’ he said. ‘I ask for your forgiveness.’ Literally, ‘I ask for peace.’ The Xhosa locution recognizes that forgiveness not only establishes peace between the offender and the injured party; it also creates the possibility of peace in the offender’s psyche. One of the mothers began her response ‘Mtan’am,’ ‘My child.’ With that simple phrase she re-membered him. She drew Thapelo back



into the community from which his own cruelty had excluded him.”¹

A new relationship began at that point – one that began from pain, hurt and suffering. Gratefully, it did not dwell there. Instead, the Lord transformed the situation by starting the healing process through forgiveness and wholeness. Is it easy? No, but with God’s help all things are possible.² That’s the journey Paul challenged the Corinthians to pursue. We, too, must seek that path.

Aug. 17

2 Cor. 4:2-15

It’s not about me

For multiple years I had a license plate that read 2COR45: “We don’t preach about ourselves. Instead, we preach about Jesus Christ as Lord, and we describe ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake.” (Common English Bible) What a great reminder, especially as one who is called to preach every Sunday. It’s not about me. It’s about Jesus Christ and how He is using me for His glory and honor.

This message is certainly important for pastors, but truly every follower of Christ needs to remember Paul’s words in this passage. This verse is focused on preaching Christ and not ourselves, but it is easy to get hung up on the phrase “slaves for Jesus’ sake.” In this context, we must replace the horrible recollections of the word *slave* from U.S. history and recall the biblical understanding of this word. The Greek term *doulos* refers to “believers who willingly live under Christ’s authority as His devoted followers.”³

We are called to serve Christ, not ourselves, and make sure we do it every day. As we continue down that road with God, there will be trials

and tribulations. To be sure, that is part of the human condition. However, our faith in God teaches us to not rely on our own strength and perseverance. Instead, we are called to trust in Christ, who gives us an extraordinary power to live – despite the hardships.

There’s a wonderful song that conveys Paul’s words very well. It’s called “Trading My Sorrows” by Darrell Evans. Part of the lyrics say this: “I’m trading my sorrows, I’m trading my shame, I’m laying them down for the joy of the Lord ... I’m pressed but not crushed, persecuted not abandoned, struck down but not destroyed, I’m blessed beyond the curse for his promise will endure, and his joy’s gonna be my strength.”⁴ God’s joy is our strength, no matter what life throws our way. That’s why we need to preach Christ and not ourselves because – it’s not about me.

Aug. 24

2 Cor. 6:1-13, 7:2-4

Authenticity

In these passages, Paul expressed himself quite well to the community in Corinth. He intentionally shared his life, his thoughts and his feelings with them in order to demonstrate his authenticity. Paul was first and foremost a follower of Christ and he knew the importance of practicing what he preached. “Our work as God’s servants gets validated – or not – in the details. People are watching us as we stay at our post, alertly, unswervingly”⁵ He opened himself to the Lord’s work and in turn to his neighbor as well. He then called the Corinthians to do the same. There is no doubt Paul talked the talk and walked the walk.

Can we say the same? To answer that question, let’s talk about prayer. I would venture to say every church agrees that prayer is a good thing. In the church, we understand the importance of being connected with God. We understand that prayer is more than simply stating our thoughts to the Almighty; it’s about listening to the Lord as well. We also realize the significance of personal and corporate prayer – both are vital as we seek to be more like Christ. Prayer is a good thing.

That being said, how often do you pray? How often does your church pray? How do you connect belief and action? After all, if we say prayer is a good thing, shouldn’t we practice it? Perhaps you pray once a day. Maybe during meal times or bedtime. Prayer has always been an important part of my life. My parents taught us about prayer by living it out. As I’ve grown up – physically and spiritually – I’ve recognized the need for more prayer time in my life. Typically, every day I set aside time with God by using the Book of Common Prayer. There are certainly other times when I pray during the day, but that is dedicated prayer time.

I have also recognized the need for more corporate prayer. We certainly pray during Sunday morning worship but what about the remaining six days of the week? At Powhatan UMC we designate 9:05-9:35 a.m. Monday-Friday as our corporate prayer time. Without question, it has been a joy to spend time with God and one another. We still have much to learn, but we are attempting to talk the talk and walk the walk. In our church we talk a lot about prayer. Now, not only do we talk about it, but we do it as well. What a joy to connect with our Triune God and one another during prayer.

¹Bishop Desmond Tutu and Mpho Tutu, *Made for Goodness: And Why This Makes All the Difference*, HarperOne, 2010, 152-153

²Matthew 19:26

³<http://biblehub.com/greek/1401.htm>

⁴<http://www.elyrics.net/read/d/darrell-evans-lyrics/trading-my-sorrows-lyrics.html>

⁵2 Corinthians 6:3-4 (The Message)

(Continued on page 33, “Living Word”)



CLERGY & DIACONAL

Deaths



ton District, and retired in 1991.

The Rev. Joon Sup Han, 87, of Springfield, died June 22, 2014. He began his ministry in 1982 at Korean UMC of Greater Washington in the Arlington District, and retired in 1991.



The Rev. Clyde D. Nuckols Sr., of Louisa, died June 23, 2014. He was predeceased in death by his wife, Catherine. Nuckols served The United Methodist

Church for 44 years as pastor in Holly Spring, Ga., Baltimore, Md., Stoney Creek, Riverton, Richmond, Strasburg, Poquoson, McLean, Colonial Heights, Chesterfield, Suffolk, Charlottesville and Fluvanna.



Washington, D.C., and began her ministerial career in 1996 as the associate pastor at Herndon UMC. She went on to serve New Kent, Marvin and Crums. She retired in 2006. In retirement she continued to serve as Associate Pastor

The Rev. Sandra H. Stamey, 70, of Richardson, Texas, died June 19, 2014. A native of Alabama, she attended Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., and began her ministerial career in 1996 as the associate pastor at Herndon UMC. She went on to serve New Kent, Marvin and Crums. She retired in 2006. In retirement she continued to serve as Associate Pastor

at First UMC in McKinney, Texas, and later at First UMC of Richardson. Her husband of 50 years, David O. Stamey, died in 2013.

Stella St. Clair Drinkard, 93, died June 25, 2014. She was a member of Trinity UMC in Appomattox and the mother of the **Rev. David Drinkard**, senior pastor at New Creation UMC, Chesapeake.

Virginia Powell Harris, 89, died June 18, 2014 in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. She was the widow of the **Rev. Archie Virgil Harris** and the daughter of the late **Rev. George Edward Powell** of Louisa.

Anne Conrad Temple Unruh, 83, of Blackstone, the widow of **Rev. Jack Unruh**, died Friday, June 13, 2014.

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("Living Word," continued from pg 31)

Aug. 31

2 Cor. 8:1-14

Contagious Generosity


This passage "... is not primarily about money; it is rather about being a living expression of God's gracious love that in this case happens to result in giving money."⁶ What a fantastic summary of these words from the Apostle Paul. He was collecting money for the saints in Jerusalem. Paul doesn't simply pass the plate, count the offering, and then pass the plate again because it wasn't enough. The apostle focused his stewardship sermon on Christ first and foremost. They had experienced grace from Jesus, and in turn, they needed – and they strongly wanted – to reciprocate.

The word used to describe this reality is: *contagious*. This is not a devotion about tithing, church budgeting or financial pledging. It's about contagious generosity. Paul informed the Corinthians about the churches in Macedonia. He shared about the difficult circumstances they encountered – their severe ordeal of affliction and their extreme poverty (verse 2). Now, that sounds like a bad situation to me. Despite their hardships these folks found abundant joy through their generous giving. Not only that, these churches pleaded for the privilege of helping the saints in Jerusalem.

Why would these churches do such a thing? Here's what Paul tells us – because they gave themselves first to the Lord (verse 5). When the people in Macedonia said yes to becoming followers of Christ Jesus, their lives were transformed, including their "checkbooks." They desired to help others in need because that is what their faith commanded them to do; it was not out of obligation. Their generosity did not stem from a desire for their actions to be noticed and lifted

⁶ The New International Lesson Annual, Lesson 14, Aug. 31, page 468.

up for all to see. Their giving blossomed from their faith and it brought abundant joy.

What an awesome example of grace. I witnessed a similar situation during our 2014 Annual Conference. Bishop Cho and his wife, Kiok, donated a gift to help save 300 lives from malaria – a check for \$3,000. Without question, their generosity was contagious because others quickly pledged their support as well. Due to their example, my wife and I have pledged to save 50 lives – donating \$500 toward this worthy effort of imagining no malaria. Do you think generosity is contagious? 



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FROM THE BISHOP



“Lord, You have done it!”

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

Our 2014 Annual Conference is over! By the grace of God and through the preparations of conference staff, members of the Annual Conference Planning Committee and the York River District, we had a great time. I give thanks and praise to our Lord for His blessings and presence among us, and I am deeply grateful to those who prepared for this conference on the stage and behind the scenes. I cannot thank enough the many people who prayed for our gathering and for me.

I think the Lord sent us very appropriate and powerful speakers. Bishop Robert Hayes gave us truly inspiring sermons, and Dr. Elmer Colyer did a great job in teaching us about the renewal of our churches today. I also want to express appreciation to the Rev. Rhonda VanDyke Colby and to the Rev. Jim Noland for their messages. We

are truly blessed by their ministries.

I was deeply touched by the overwhelming support for “Imagine No Malaria.” When the committee prepared for the launching of this initiative, we tried to make it a joyful celebration, not a burdensome time. I thank all the members of that committee, led by the Rev. Glenn Rowley, for their creativity and dedication to their task. Now, the happy dancing is over. The time has come to open our checkbooks!

As our approval of this initiative indicates, we want to save more than 100,000 lives from malaria. We can make a difference on the other side of the world through this initiative. We invite every church in the Virginia Conference to join this mission. Our plan is that this mission will be led by the children, youths and young adults in our churches. If your church does not have this rising generation, anyone who feels God’s call to this mission may lead this effort.

My hope and prayer is that this initiative will be far more than another fund-raising event. I proposed this initiative as a way of doing a spiritual discipline. Please begin with prayer and humbly seek God’s wisdom and guidance. The Lord always has a better idea than what we have. I want the churches to be blessed by this mission. Throughout this conference year, I want our hearts to be filled with joy and meaningfulness. I pray that all of us will truly learn and experience what our Lord said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35)

Before our gathering, many people shared with me their thoughts on Resolution No. 1, which asked us to submit a petition to the 2016 General Conference to change the current language on homosexuality in our Discipline. Not everyone was happy about our decision to postpone our discussion on this resolution, but the overwhelming majority supported the motion to postpone. As I proposed

to Common Table, we will have a conference-wide conversation on this issue during the 2014-2015 conference year. My prayer is that this conversation will help us discern God’s will on this issue and enable us to find a way of carrying out our mission together, although we have differences.

In our gathering, we reaffirmed the importance of Discipleship Circles. Dr. Colyer taught us that the renewal of our churches could begin with small groups with accountability. This is a great legacy of the Methodist movement and is still effective in today’s church. I am glad the Steering Team of All Things New-Equipping Vital Congregations introduced Discipleship Circles to the members of Annual Conference. I encourage and invite each of you to pray for this initiative and to join a Discipleship Circle when it is introduced in your district.

In preparing for Annual Conference, I prayed that our holy conferencing would be more than a business meeting. I dreamed that our gathering would be a time for renewing our faith and our commitment to the mission Jesus Christ entrusted to us. I hope we experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit who still leads our churches. I want all of us to learn, to encourage one another and to share in the fellowship of Christ.

If we had a great time during our gathering, first of all, it was because of God’s grace and blessings. It was also because of our prayerful and thoughtful preparations for this holy conferencing.

In the beginning of my Episcopal Address, I shared with you my prayer for our Annual Conference. It was “Lord, You do it! Please, You do it!” With deep gratitude to our Lord, now I pray, “Lord, You have done it! You did it!” Thanks be to God! 🇺🇸

In our Lord,



ONE LAST WORD

Tweets heard 'round #vaumc14

Katherine B. Anthony @ktbanthony
Vanity license plates seen on highway: "RevUMC" "LayLdr" Could I be going to a #umc annual conference in Virginia?

Patti Money @pattimoney 20% is a great start, but it's kind of sad that 80% of our congregations do not have a commitment to prayer.

Dale Jones @OnceAnEngineer
"The One who loves us just the way we are loves us far too much to leave us that way." -Rev Rhonda VanDyke Colby, Memorial Service

Andrew Hudgins @andrew_hudgins
Rhonda drops the mic and walks away. Beautiful/powerful message of death/resurrection, despair/hope.

slkcalv @slkcalv #vaumc14 Please vote for the malaria resolution, or we'll have to swat you!

Heather Johnson @hfj07 Our Bishop does the #happy dance and takes selfies. What about yours?



Carl M. Chapman @chap78 I wonder how they finish DVDs before conference is adjourned? #amazing #time travel#billandtedsbogusconference #seemsfishy

Alexandra Woody @AlexWoody10
We need music like at the Oscars that cuts people off when their time is over.

Dan Elmore @revdanelmore I think the Happy dance break proved we need more dance breaks during Conference.

Patti Money @pattimoney
Yay! A story of renewal from a small membership, rural congregation!!

Jill Gaynor @jwgaynor
A small group can "put you straight in your nonsense." Fun yet truthful words from Dr Colyer this morning.

Lindsey Baynham @lmbaynham
Bishop Hayes could sell a ketchup popsicle to a woman in white gloves. #storyteller #compelling #connection

H.E. White @HaroldWhiteJr
Bishop Hayes: "credit was so bad I needed a co-signer when paying cash" really....

Megan Harrison @MeganHarrison23
I love Clarence Brown so much

Sara Jo @sarajosawyer I'm currently in the world's largest walk-in refrigerator

Lauren Lobenhofer @Chafinhofer
Next year we should skip the seat cushions and go for Conference snuggies. Brrr!

Lauren Lobenhofer @Chafinhofer #vaumc14 No dance lessons, but Bishop Cho's got moves! #acdanceparty

Alan Combs @thricemantis
Props to Bishop Cho for calling lay members members and not delegates. #membersnotdelegates #vaumc14

Carl M Chapman @chap78
Take a drink (of coffee) whenever a resolution is postponed or tabled #conferencedrinkinggame

Sheila Martin @sheilarmartin
Does the Book of Discipline also prohibit clergy from eating shrimp?

Joshua Blakely @RCLAssocDirOn
This service gets me every time. Seminaries should set up tables with admissions packets in the lobby #vaumc14

Charlie Baber @cfbabar
If anyone wants CDs we're called "Between 2 Drews"

Bert Cloud @bertcloud
How about we tweet a roll call for everyone who was clergyfied under the #bethdowns administration

Kristin Holbrook @HolbrookRev
how about next year in 'Noke we have fitness options? Zumba, yoga, kickboxing? W/ a healthy box lunch? Anyone?

Sara Jo @sarajosawyer
The Advocate dispersement is like Black Friday shopping for Methodists lol

Emma J @ejhnstn
10 hours of sleep after #vaumc14 sounds about right

Alan Combs @thricemantis
My advocate smells like appointments

Ethan Adams @EAgiants24
I danced and took a selfie with the Bishop at annual conference! My weekend = complete #chillinwithcho



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