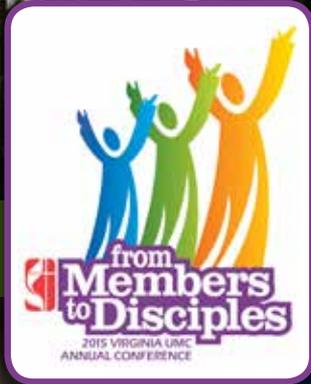


Advocate



AC2015



Wrap-up



Connecting with the



Virginia Advocate

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

FROM THE EDITOR

**Madeline Pillow**
Editor**I was alarmed by something at Annual Conference, and it's something that also alarms me in our society.**

It's the lack of respect for people around us.

At Annual Conference, we elected 2016 General and Jurisdictional conference delegates. We also talked about issues like human sexuality. Through these proceedings, I felt an undercurrent of hostility as those assembled faced dissenting and opposing beliefs, especially regarding human sexuality.

This is problematic.

Not because of the debate. Debate is healthy and is a foundation of democracy. Argue away! What is problematic are the ways some opinions were delivered.

When I hear a man yelling across the Berglund Center as a young woman tries to speak, I have a problem. Everyone deserves the chance to be heard.

When I hear a man compare homosexuals to molesters, I have a problem. While debating, we shouldn't spread fallacies in order to prove an argument.

No matter which side of this issue you are on, stick to your beliefs. Present your side. But afford others respect while presenting an argument, as others present theirs and even after a decision is made.

Just because someone else has a contrasting viewpoint, doesn't mean they are wrong or bad. Jesus says in John 13:34-35, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (NIV)

Jesus didn't say, love those that agree with you. And as followers of Christ, we know that he meant all people, even those that hurt us or have a different societal status.

Think about your family. Do you always agree with them? Get along? I doubt it. But nonetheless, we love them. This is proof that though different, we can be united in love.

We don't have to agree about everything, but we need to listen to others and grant those with different opinions a respect for their unique "humanhood."

As we continue through this conference year, I challenge you. Instead of closing your ears to something you may not like or agree with – open them. Don't let judgments cloud your mind just as someone begins to speak. It's hard to do, but worth it. Common ground is found through discussion and interaction.

Through this year, big decisions will be made in our church. It would be a shame if both sides of any debate feel disrespected for their feelings or if another side isn't willing to hear them out.

So take a breath. Listen. Try to see why someone feels differently.

And even if you still disagree, remember that respect shouldn't be granted to only those with whom you agree. It is this respect for one another that, at the end of the day, will keep us tied together rather than separated by hostility and hate.

R.E.S.P.E.C.T. Find out what it means. ☞



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Deadlines

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Advertising/Tributes

Rates for advertising and tributes are available upon request.

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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TABLE OF CONTENTS



SECTIONS

- 4-10 Virginia News
- 11 Imagine No Malaria
- 12-13 Local Church News
- 25 Events
- 26-27 Living the Word
- 28 Clergy & Diaconal
- 30 From the Bishop
- 31 One Last Word

SPECIAL SECTION

2015 - 2016 Mission Opportunities Guide

FEATURE

14 - 24 AC2015 Wrap-up

NEWS

- 4 Bishop hosts retreat for ordinands
- 5 Conference teaches faith and justice to youths
- 6 'Dimes and Dollars' program celebrates 40 years
- 8 Methodist bishop honored in Harrisonburg
- 10 Walmart awards grant to Park View Community Mission
- 18 Meet your 2016 General, jurisdictional conference delegates

CORRECTION: Please note the following correction of churches that paid 100% of the 2014 apportionment: **Cokesbury UMC, Prince William County, Alexandria District**



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The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Bishop hosts retreat for new ordinands

By Madeline Pillow



The Bishop's Chapel at Roslyn Conference Center.

Bishop Young Jin Cho hosted a two-day retreat, June 3-4, for 24 candidates for elder and one candidate for deacon who were ordained at this year's Annual Conference in Roanoke.

The purpose of this annual retreat is to give the ordinands a time for meaningful reflection and connection at the Roslyn Conference Center in Richmond.

This year the retreat had a new theme, "Remaining in the Vine: Longevity and Joy in Ordained Ministry." Every member of the ordination class of 2015 received a plant, grown from cuttings from a plant in the Bishop's office. The Bishop told the ordinands to take care of the plant.

"This retreat is a chance for the ordinands to see

how this isn't the end of their journey," said Meredith McNabb, conference director of the Center for Clergy Excellence, "it's just the beginning and we want to help them see how to keep it going strong."

Lindsey Baynham, candidate for elder, was excited about the chance for all the ordinands to get together, especially since she has been on this journey with many of her friends.

As a way to further connect, all the ordinands shared their ordination verse, a verse chosen because of a personal and pastoral significance. Don Gibson, candidate for elder, shared his verse from Lamentations 3:22-24, "Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'Therefore I hope in Him!'" (NIV)

For him, the verse gives

renewal, "In my calling, it has been a very meaningful verse for me because it can be consuming," Gibson said. "Life in and of itself is consuming, and ministry is consuming. But every morning God's mercy is renewed."

Throughout the retreat, there was time for worship, small groups, music and a chance for ordinands to get to know Bishop Cho better.

On Wednesday, June 3, two retiring clergy members, Roger Dowdy and Steve Jones, reflected on their ministries with the ordinands, the meaning of ordination in their lives and how they sustained their ministries as deacon and elder, respectively.

Dowdy focused on his love of music and how it sustained him throughout the years as a special bond with his family to using music to teach others. Jones shared the importance of one's health with the ordinands and how to effectively work not only for their congregations but also for their families. In order to do this, they must slow down and be sure they are healthy, Jones said.

Overall the retreat gave attendees the opportunity to sit back and spend time with those who will remain integral partners in their future ministries before officially taking on the honor of ordination at Annual Conference. 

— Madeline Pillow is editor of the Advocate.

Steve Jones, a 2015 retiree, talks to the ordinands about keeping on top of their personal health especially for their ministries.

Photos by Madeline Pillow.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

'Thy Kingdom Come' conference teaches young people how to join faith, justice

By Emily Ann Ellis

On April 17 and 18, the Spiritual Life office at Shenandoah University and the Winchester District of the Virginia Conference co-sponsored *Thy Kingdom Come* conference for high school youths, young adults and Shenandoah University students.

Guest speakers were Lisa Sharon Harper and Shane Claiborne who spoke about how issues of faith and justice intersect. The Keith Elgin Band led worship, and proceeds benefited Imagine No Malaria.

Speakers for this conference were chosen based on their passions and efforts in social justice.

Lisa Sharon Harper is director of Mobilizing at Sojourners, a Christian ministry and magazine focused on activating faith communities to address injustice.

Shane Claiborne lives in an intentional community in Philadelphia. He has worked alongside Mother Teresa and followed God's call to places as far away as Calcutta and Baghdad.

When Claiborne spoke, he told stories of his travels and the people he encountered. He presented the audience with a challenge: a challenge to love people back to life.

"For some strange reason God doesn't want to

change the world without us," Claiborne said, and he urged all to no longer be comfortable as bystanders, but to be active participants in bringing God's Kingdom to this earth through love.

Harper mentioned this in her talk as well. She explained that all human beings were created in the image of God. This means that all human beings have the ability to bring the Kingdom of God to earth. She then addressed the unjust ways the image of God is lessened in people. For example, God is not always seen correctly in people when equality is written on paper but not witnessed in practice.

Although a large part of the conference was dedicated to speakers, students participated in many other presentations and activities. One of them was Steve Jennings' TOPS (Teens Opposing Poverty) presentation. Maria Maxwell also presented on Imagine No Malaria.

One student leader designed a mission opportunity to educate students on the difference between free trade and fair trade products. Participants created kits full of fair trade materials to sell in their churches to raise funds for local charities.

Because of the activities, presentations and

conversations that took place during this conference, I feel more inspired than ever before to help bring God's Kingdom to this earth. I now understand that faith and justice are not independent from each other. God's Kingdom can reach this earth through the pursuit of social justice. 🍌

– Emily Ann Ellis is a junior Music Education major and Faith Seeking Justice Christian Leadership Program student at Shenandoah University.



Pictured below are Shenandoah University Faith Seeking Justice Christian Leadership students and speaker, Lisa Sharon Harper. Photos provided by Justin Allen.



Shane Claiborne urges participants at *Thy Kingdom Come* to be active in bringing God's Kingdom to this earth through love.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



UMW 'Dimes and Dollars' for VUMAC celebrates 40 years

By Dolly Porter

United Methodist Women from across the Virginia Conference will gather in Blackstone in October to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Dimes and Dollars program for the Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center (VUMAC).

The late Ethel Born in her book *Candlesticks*, writing about the history of United Methodist Women (UMW) in Virginia, reports that an estimated 700 United Methodist Women gathered in April 1975 at VUMAC to launch this program which has produced more than \$1 million for the Assembly Center over the last 40 years. More than \$31,000 was contributed by more than 300 local UMW units in 2014.

"The United Methodist Women have had a profound impact on

the development of the Conference Assembly Center," said the Rev. Tommy Herndon, chairman of the VUMAC board of directors. "No other organization has provided this level of sustained financial support."

The relationship of Virginia United Methodist Women with Blackstone began in the 1940s when UMW groups met at what was then Blackstone College. Reportedly, the United Methodist Women annual meeting has been held at VUMAC since 1973. The UMW conference president at that time said, "We are all increasingly excited about the possibility of making the Assembly Center at Blackstone into the kind of center which will truly serve the needs of the entire conference."

Subsequently, a delegation from Virginia visited the North Alabama Conference to talk with persons who had been involved in a program similar to Dimes and Dollars. Out of that visit came the call to United Methodist Women of Virginia to accept a similar challenge here. Born, in her book, cites these words that were a part of that challenge: "Once in a while we have an opportunity to dream a dream and catch a vision and perhaps a long while afterward, we can look back and say - wasn't that a great idea."

In 1979, the UMW began an effort to raise

funds for what would become the Goodson Lodge which was dedicated in 1989. In addition to these fund-raising efforts, the United Methodist Women, led by Mary Jordan, former president of Arlington District UMW, spent hundreds of hours making and installing drapes for guest rooms and other areas throughout the Blackstone facilities.

"The fall UMW Annual Meeting and the annual spring UMW Spiritual Life Retreat are special times for us at VUMAC," said Sam McCracken, VUMAC executive director. "We anticipate that the Annual Meeting this year, Oct. 23-25, will be a special time as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of this Dimes and Dollars program which has so greatly benefited VUMAC." 🍷

-Dolly Porter is the United Methodist Women representative on the Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center board of directors.

The late Ethel Born at a book signing event.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

UMFS continues to build strong families, communities

By Paul Evans

One hundred and fifteen years ago, before there was a public child welfare system, clergy and laity of the Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church envisioned an orphanage and a farm on Broad Street in Richmond to care for children who were in need.

In its early years, the orphanage flourished as a farming community that included a school, print shop and dairy. What was once a farm has evolved into 11 regional centers throughout the Virginia Conference where over 9,000 children and families continue to receive God's grace based on the Wesleyan value of works of mercy and is known as United Methodist Family Services (UMFS).

Though many things have changed at UMFS, one thing has not. The organization, which has been known by many names including "the Home" and "United Methodist Family Services," has adapted and grown to address the ever-changing needs of children and families.

Today UMFS' mission is to be an unwavering champion for high-risk children and their families, collaborating with communities to help them reach their full potential. UMFS President and CEO Greg Peters spoke about that mission at An-



Above: In its early years, 1910-1920, UMFS flourished as an orphanage that included a school, print shop and dairy. Below: UMFS serves high-risk children and families from locations in 10 cities throughout Virginia. This is made possible through improved campuses like the one seen below.

nual Conference in June. He explained, "We are not just a service provider—we are a community solutions provider." Peters added that this movement is led by partners with volunteers, churches, communities and other providers to give hope and opportunity for children and families and innovating solutions.

In 2014, UMFS' programs grew beyond expectations, creating the need for additional volunteer and donor support to serve the next generation of children and families. "Our message and our passion are the strongest they've ever been," Peters said. "We hope you

will join us in continuing our legacy of helping kids with challenging circumstances succeed."

Visit www.umfs.org to learn how you can become

an unwavering champion for children and families. 

— Paul Evans is
communications coordinator
at UMFS.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Methodist bishop honored with historical marker

By Samuel E. NeSmith

A Virginia highway historical marker honoring Bishop Edgar Amos Love, a Methodist bishop in the Central Jurisdiction, was unveiled at a dedication ceremony on April 18, 2015, at John Wesley United Methodist Church in Harrisonburg.

Bishop Love, son of the Rev. Julius C. Love and Susie C. Love, was born in Harrisonburg, Sept. 10, 1891. His father, a Methodist minister, was serving a pastoral appointment at the time of his birth.

The dedication ceremony brought together those touched by Bishop Love's life and legacy. John Wesley UMC members, their pastor, The Rev. Faith Evans, community representatives and a large group of fraternity members participated in the celebratory dedication. Invited guests included Bishop Love's son, Jon Love Sr.; Bishop Love's grandchildren and a great grandchild; Bishop Love's secretary, Thelma White, accompanied by her daughter and son-in-law, Brenda and Sam NeSmith.

Bishop Love's ministerial career spanned more than 40 years. During that time, he served as an Army Chaplain in World War I, held

several pastoral appointments in Maryland, West Virginia and Pennsylvania and served for 12 years with the Board of Missions – Church Extensions. He was resident bishop of the Baltimore Area, Central Jurisdiction of the Methodist Church, from 1952 to 1964. An activist in civic and social affairs, Bishop Love is remembered as a staunch advocate for human rights.

The Love BDD (Beta Delta Delta) Foundation, Inc., whose members belong to Omega Psi Phi fraternity, sponsored the marker and the dedication ceremony.

Bishop Love co-founded Omega Psi Phi at Howard University in 1911. The fraternity, now an international organization, embraces community service, character building and leadership development as its mission. ☞

– Samuel E. NeSmith is retired Virginia Conference elder.

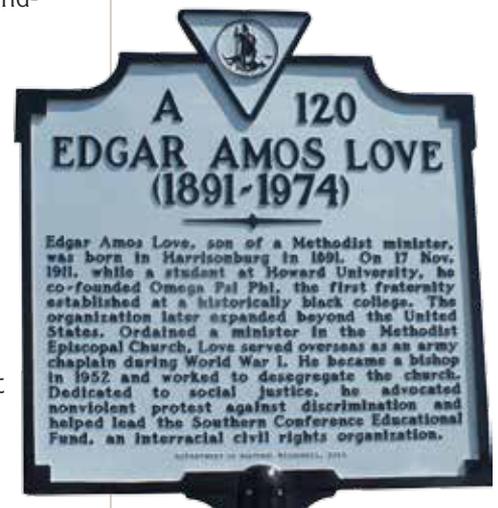


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The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



At the Bishop Love marker – from left to right: Randall Jones, Virginia Department of Historic Resources; Samuel E. NeSmith, retired Virginia Conference elder; Faith Evans, pastor, John Wesley United Methodist Church; Christopher B. Jones, mayor, City of Harrisonburg; Jon Love Sr., Bishop Love's son; Jon Love Jr., Bishop Love's grandson; a member of Beta Delta Delta fraternity.



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The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Walmart Foundation awards \$55,000 to Park View Community Mission for 'Food for Families' program



2420 Memorial Avenue • Lynchburg, VA 24501 • 434-845-8468

Park View Community Mission received a \$55,000 grant from the Walmart Foundation to be used for the church's "Food for Families" program. Situated in one of the poorer areas of Lynchburg, Park View Community Mission assists more than 700 families per month with a shopping cart full of eggs, meat, vegetables and canned goods provided by Walmart, the area food bank, churches and other local businesses. The \$55,000 grant given

to Park View Community Mission will be used to renovate the church building to better accommodate large truckloads of food using modern pallet jacks. This will make unloading easier and less strenuous and require fewer workers, freeing up dozens of volunteers to work in other areas where they are sorely needed.

"Without Walmart's continued generosity, it would be very difficult for the Park View Community Mission to provide desperately needed help for Lynchburg's poorest citizens," said the Rev. Larry Davies, Lynchburg District superintendent. "A big thanks to Walmart, area businesses and churches and hundreds of dedicated supporters for helping the miracle called Park View Community Mission

continue to serve the community."

"The Walmart Foundation is pleased to support the 'Food for Families' program," said George Joyner, Walmart market manager. "Through this grant, the Park View Community Mission will be able to renovate their building to accommodate large food deliveries and allow more volunteers to assist local families in need of nutritious food."

Park View Community Mission was founded with the goal of seeking to eliminate poverty in Lynchburg by offering a program of hope, wellness and wholeness to its neediest citizens. One way to achieve this goal is to provide two weeks' worth of food to 700 families every month.

In addition to being one of the area's largest food bank distribution centers, Park View Community Mission also houses a free clinic provided by Centra Health. United Methodist Family Services provides help for high-risk children and their families, and the church hosts several Narcotics Anonymous (NA) groups. Two members of NA began a communications company at Park View in order to provide low-cost Internet access throughout the area. A clinical psychologist donates one day a week to help Park View clients. Community events are regularly sponsored in the spacious sanctuary. 

Volunteers unload and set up food at the Park View Community Mission. Photo provided by Larry Davies.



Join miracle in the making

By Maria Maxwell

A year ago, the Virginia Conference committed to save 100,000+ lives from malaria, a preventable and treatable disease. Now we celebrate saving 92,901 lives!

We have worked hard in our churches and communities all year and continued that work throughout the weekend of June 19-21 at Annual Conference.

At Mulligans against Malaria, laity and clergy came together to play golf and raise support for Imagine No Malaria.

Children from the Floyd Charge in Roanoke hosted a lemonade stand on the Berglund Center Plaza on Friday, June 19. It was a beautiful picture of kids working to save other kids.

Artwork used during Annual Conference worship services was auctioned off and not only raised funds, but also brought joy to the buyers of the original pieces. The weekend itself brought in \$57,638 which equated to saving 5,763 lives.

I was completely humbled by the response of the crowd at Annual Conference during the impromptu offering.

During our Annual Conference presentation, a true highlight for me was having Isabelle Landon share her and her church's efforts for the cause. When we began this journey, it was

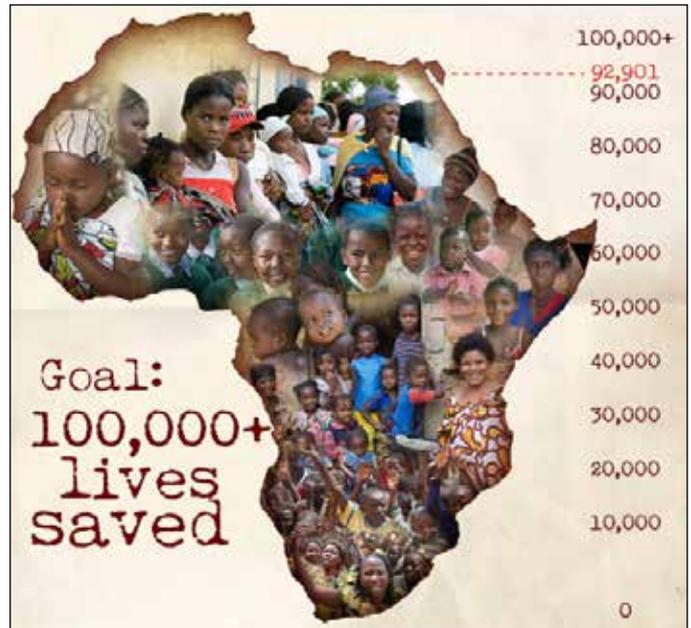
important for our team that children, youths and young adults help lead the way. When Isabella shared this journey on stage, I felt like she was the voice of the children of our conference. She represented the spirit of giving and incredible generosity. She was a faithful disciple who, when called to do the work of the Lord, responded and embraced it with joy.

The miracle is all around us! Our lives have been touched, our hearts have been super-sized and our churches are more educated, compassionate and aware of the needs in our world. We are so close to achieving what seemed to be an insurmountable goal.

Will you, your church and your community step up and save the remaining 7,099 sons and daughters, mothers and fathers and grandmothers and grandfathers from this preventable and treatable disease? Churches in the conference who have yet to join in this effort, each donating just \$150, can push the conference past its goal!

Only \$10 saves a life. To donate online or to learn other ways to give, go to vaumc.org/imaginenomalaria and join the miracle in the making. 

— Maria Maxwell is Virginia Conference Imagine No Malaria field coordinator.



Charles Sokolowski, Isabelle Landon and Adeline Sokolowski help collect money at Annual Conference to save more lives.

DISCIPLES HELPING TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD



▲ This winter, the **West Louisa Charge** had its first ever Scout Sunday. The Rev. Dr. Judy Janelle DeBres was then asked by one of the students if the church would do a 4H Sunday. On Sunday, June 28, at **Ebenezer UMC**, the church held its first 4H Sunday. Students assisted in worship leadership and recited the 4H pledge, motto and prayer. They shared favorite 4H moments and brought posters of their animals. The students and animals were also blessed. Building on the 4Hs and their meaning (head, heart, hands and health) made for a very meaningful service at the church.



▲ The 61 kits completed by members of **Andrew Chapel, Montross, in the Fredericksburg District** were blessed during the church service on May 31. Picture here are Evalyn Sanford, Peggy Burner, Joyce Hobbs, Cathy White, Jenny Fortney, Edith Davison, Bettie Lou McGinness and Pastor Shayne Estes.

The Ann Douglas Scholarship Committee of the United Methodist Women of **High Street UMC, Courtland** (formerly located in Franklin), awarded a \$750 scholarship to William H. Sloan, a second-year Master of Divinity student at the Candler School of Theology in Atlanta. Will is a lifelong member of Bermuda Hundred UMC and is pursuing Candidacy Certification in the Virginia Conference through the James River District. In addition to his work toward becoming an ordained United Methodist pastor, Will has been appointed student pastor to a small church in Marietta, Ga., for the remainder of his schooling.

▼ **Warrenton United Methodist Church** sent a group of 19 from their Youth Ministry to Reach Mission Trips in Scotland, Pa., over the week of June 21-June 27. The energetic group of youths and adults joined forces with

about 500 other campers to share the love of Christ with the community of Scotland. The main focus of the week was building relationships with Jesus, one another, each camper's church and the neighbors they get to serve. This is done through completing projects on homes such as painting, building ramps, installing flooring, drywall, roofing and anything else that is needed. The camp provides meaningful opportunities for all to grow in their faith and to love and serve others. It's something Warrenton UMC's youths and adults love and look forward to each summer.

▶ During Lent, the Rev. Keary Kincannon, pastor of **Rising Hope Mission Church in Alexandria**, told his mostly low-income congregation that malaria is a terrible disease that we almost never see here in the United States but is prevalent in third-world countries. He told them that millions contract malaria every year, and about 200,000 die every year from malaria even though it is completely curable. He said that as little as \$10 could save a life by buying mosquito nets and medicine.

Kincannon explained that if an individual put 25 cents in a jar every day for Lent then when Easter came you would have \$10.75, enough to save a life. "So think about putting whatever change you have every evening into a jar and bring it for a special Easter





offering to save lives from malaria," he said. "If five people saved a nickel a day, together you would save a life."

On Easter Sunday the clay pot used to receive the Easter offering as everyone came forward for Communion started clinking right away and continued through the serving of Communion.

"I was blown away," Kincannon said. "The special offering for Imagine No Malaria" on Easter was \$420. Granted, we had some middle class

visitors on Easter, but most of this special offering came from our members."

One older gentleman serves as an usher despite his developmental disability. He lives in a group home and on a fixed income. "He was so proud he had to tell me he gave \$50 to save five lives," Kincannon said. "I confirmed this with our tellers. Walter is his name, and he said he had been saving this money for something special. Imagine No Malaria was his something special. Truly a widow's mite."

"Many of our people made a special sacrifice because they wanted to help save lives and they wanted to participate with the rest of us in The United Methodist Church in this important effort," Kincannon said.

Rising Hope was established in 1996 with the mission of bringing the "power of Christ" and the "support of the church" to the community living in poverty south of Alexandria along the Route 1 Corridor of Fairfax County. 



MISSION

UMFS is an unwavering champion for high-risk children and families, collaborating with communities to help them reach their full potential.

VISION

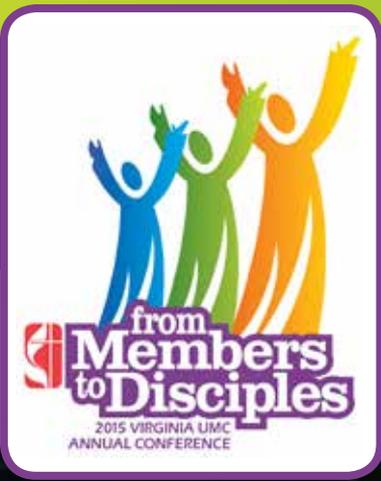
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me, fill me, use me.”



With the theme, “From Members to Disciples,” the 233rd session of the Virginia Annual Conference brought together nearly 4,000 United Methodists to celebrate and make decisions for their faith.

The conference was held at the Berglund Center in Roanoke Friday, June 19, to Sunday, June 21.

Not far from the minds of gathered laity and clergy were victims of the June 17 shooting of nine members of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Charleston, S.C. During the opening session, Bishop Young Jin Cho asked retired Bishop Charlene Kammerer, who led the Virginia Conference 2004-2012, to pray.

In her prayer, she lifted up the Rev. Clementa Pinckney, pastor of the historic AME church and a South Carolina state senator, who was killed in the shooting. She also prayed for Bishop Richard Franklin Norris, AME bishop of South Carolina, and “our brothers and sisters in our Wesleyan family.”

This touching prayer was a stark reminder of the pain that faces the larger community of Christians in the United States.





("AC2015," continued from pg. 15)



Another moment that solidified the body of United Methodists was the impromptu offering during Saturday's report on Imagine No Malaria.

Field Coordinator Maria Maxwell updated the conference about the initiative's year-long progress that placed the conference 13,546 lives short of the goal of saving 100,000 lives. With the goal so close, Bishop Cho urged the crowd to attain the

goal by the end of conference. After he and his wife made an additional pledge, others joined in, making additional pledges and bringing funds to the altar while Pharrell Williams' "Happy" played in the background. The new offering raised the number of lives saved to more than 91,606 lives. On Sunday, June 21, it was announced that the Imagine No Malaria effort would be continued until the beginning of September.



The votes are in

This year was a voting year for the conference in order to talk about petitions and resolutions for General and jurisdictional conference as well as electing clergy and laity delegates.

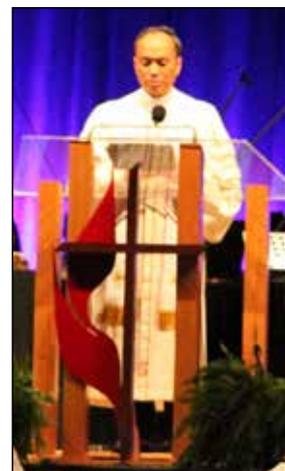
Using electronic voting machines for the first time, members of the Virginia Annual Conference elected 22 delegates to the 2016 General Conference (11 clergy and 11 laity) and an additional 11 clergy and 11 laity to join General Conference delegates for the 2016 Southeastern

Jurisdictional Conference.

By a 989-868 vote, the Annual Conference approved a petition urging General Conference to eliminate the sentence: "The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching" from the *United Methodist Book of Discipline*.

Members also voted to encourage all United Methodist general boards and agencies, annual conference boards and agencies and local churches to avoid investment in companies with revenues from the extraction and/or mining of thermal coal. The resolution also encourages investment in companies focusing on development and utilization of renewable energy sources and improved energy efficiency.

Speakers for the weekend included the Rev. Young Bong Kim, pastor of Korean United Methodist Church of Greater Washington, the Rev. Tim Bias, general secretary of Discipleship Ministries, and retired Bishop Kammerer who preached about missions on Saturday morning and at the evening ordination service.



Episcopal Address

In his annual Episcopal Address, Bishop Cho shared the progress in four areas that have been the focus of his ministry as bishop:

- ❖ leading All Things New-Equipping Vital Congregations
- ❖ strengthening the spiritual foundation of VAUMC's mission and ministries
- ❖ developing new faith communities and
- ❖ nurturing a culture of cooperation and coordination.

Bishop Cho said an important accomplishment during this conference year was the conference-wide conversation on human sexuality held Nov. 22, 2014.

"We sat down together and shared with one another our differences on this issue and sought a way that we can be one in our mission. It was not an easy process to plan and prepare for this conversation, but the Task Force team and Common Table did a great job in organizing and leading us in this conversation," Bishop Cho said. "Of course, not everyone was happy about this conversation, but we took the first step toward a holy conversation on this divisive issue. I hope we are more open to the guidance of the Holy



Spirit and humbly seek God's will to be done on this issue in our churches."

Bishop Cho acknowledged the upcoming year will have many challenges, and 2016 General Conference will be crucial for the future of the denomination. He expressed hope that in the midst of these discussions and conferencing, The United Methodist Church would not forget the most important thing: the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

The bishop said he will keep focusing on the necessity of prayer by spreading this culture to Virginia churches and challenging clergy and laity to devote at least one hour daily to spiritual disciplines. The bishop plans within this next year to visit each district to encourage this act of prayer.

Church Growth

Four new faith communities were started since last year: Restoration Church in Reston, satellite campus of Floris UMC in the Arlington District; Ignite UMC on the Old Dominion campus and surrounding community in the Elizabeth River District; People United in Christ UMC in the Staunton District; and The Inferno in the James River District. The Vine was chartered this year, and Spirit and Life faith community will start a satellite campus. Three new faith communities are planned with four renewal projects during the coming year.

Five churches were discontinued: Arlington UMC, Arlington District; Mount Hope UMC, Richmond District; Mount Zion UMC, Danville District; Ottobine UMC, Harrisonburg District; and Wesley Chapel UMC, Staunton District.

Conference Awards

Denman Evangelism Award for clergy was presented to the Rev. Paul Beighley, co-pastor of the Brodnax Charge in Brunswick County in the James River District, for his work in prison ministries. Denman Laity Award went to Patricia Hobbs, Outreach Ministry Team Leader at Franconia UMC in the Alexandria District. Denman Youth Award went to Anna Lopynski, member of Floris UMC, Herndon, Arlington District.

Ordination and Retirees

Thirty-one local pastors were licensed, 24 elders ordained, one deacon ordained, 21 commissioned as provisional members, one recognized as associate member, and four elders' orders were recognized. Forty-five clergy took retired status.

Giving Back

Annual Conference members brought 42,843 disaster relief kits for United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) to Annual Conference. Kits included 23,672 Health

Kits; 11,835 School Kits; 4,533 Birthing Kits; 1,965 Layette Kits; 180 Cleaning Kits; 111 Bedding Kits and 547 Sewing Kits. The total number of donated kits exceeded last year's offerings by more than 1,500.

Attendees of conference were also encouraged to bring at least four cans of food or boxes of dry food to be donated to the Rescue Mission in Roanoke that serves free lunch and dinner every day and just started a food giveaway on Saturday mornings for community residents. The amount received totaled 9,869 pounds of food.

A total of \$128,890 was received in a special offering to support the conference's partnership with the Methodist Mission in Cambodia, United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) Global Health Ministries to aid the Ebola-ravaged countries of Sierra Leone and Liberia and children in poverty projects in the Danville and Eastern Shore districts. As of July 1, \$152,125.75 had been received, surpassing the offering goal of \$150,000.

Conference year snapshot

Members approved a 2016 budget of \$32,315,000, down 1.24% from the 2015 budget.

At the end of 2014, membership stood at 327,647 down .92% from 2013. Worship attendance stood at 102,884, down from 104,231 at the end of 2013. Affirmations of faith were at 4,250.

In a session that required Bishop Cho to tell those assembled, "Shut up and listen to God" several times throughout the weekend, contentious issues were faced head-on by participants. Through this statement, Bishop Cho reminded all about the importance of prayer and looking to God during tough times, especially in these times of debate for The United Methodist Church. In his address, prayer was also on Bishop Cho's mind for the upcoming conference year and the effect it can have on the church, "Prayer changes the situation we face," he said, "but most of all, prayer changes ourselves."

Learn more at www.vaumc.org/AC2015.





Along with the North Georgia Conference, Virginia Conference will have the largest U.S. delegation to General Conference. General Conference is top policy-making body of The United Methodist Church, meeting every four years to consider revisions to church law as well as adopting new resolutions. The 2016 meeting will take place in Portland, Ore., from May 10-20.

ELECTED CLERGY GENERAL CONFERENCE



1. Tom Berlin, lead pastor of Floris UMC, Herndon: "I have interacted with districts and annual conferences beyond Virginia and gained an understanding and appreciation of the issues facing UMC across our connection. I have experience as a past delegate to General and Jurisdictional Conferences and serve on the Southeastern Jurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy."



2. Meredith McNabb, Virginia Conference-director of the Center for Clergy Excellence: "I want to work prayerfully to find ways for our whole connection to be more nimble and more ready for the people to whom God is and will be sending us in the decades ahead."



3. Denise Honeycutt, Deputy General Secretary of UMCOR: "I love The United Methodist Church and have a passion for God's mission in the world. I believe the Spirit of God is active in our day, calling us all to be about the inauguration of God's Kingdom."



4. Clarence Brown, senior pastor of Annandale UMC, Annandale: "Passionately committed to the unity of the church despite the obstacles."



5. Tammy Estep, senior pastor of Haygood UMC, Virginia Beach: "I believe United Methodists should be ONE in Christ even when we believe differently and are from different places."



6. Ted Smith, Fredericksburg District superintendent: "It is my prayer to leave the UMC better than I found it. I don't believe I'll single-handedly change the UMC, but I'm compelled to help the UMC at all levels."



7. Ileana Rosario, pastor of Wesley Chapel UMC, Suffolk: "I believe I bring a new perspective to the work of the General Conference and I have the experience and knowledge needed to be effective in this setting."



8. Peter Moon, Richmond District superintendent: "I am a strong believer in the transformational power and kingdom role of the local congregation. My focus is on the local church and how it will be impacted by various issues that come to General Conference."



9. Kendall Soulen, director of Master of Theological Studies and professor of Systematic Theology at Wesley Theological Seminary: "I have a passion for communicating the good news of Jesus Christ in a way that is true to the depths of our biblical and doctrinal traditions, and intelligible and relevant to the challenges of our day. I believe that following Christ today means bringing out of our storerooms "new treasures as well as old" (Matt 13:52). It also means having the wisdom

to tell which is which."



10. Mark Ogren, Virginia Conference director of Congregational Excellence: "I believe that we must address all the ways we can continue to be a global church as a witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ."



11. Rob Vaughn, pastor of Community of Faith UMC, Herndon, "I want to serve as a delegate for GC to maintain and expand the powerful witness and mission our denomination has within the world."

ELECTED LAITY GENERAL CONFERENCE



1. Martha Stokes, Shady Grove UMC, Glen Allen: "As our denomination faces difficult decisions, I have the knowledge and experience to effectively represent our Conference. A life-long Virginia United Methodist, my local church activities and work reflect my deep beliefs in the role of laity as full partners with clergy and in justice and care for all God's people."



2. Warren Harper, Wellspring UMC, Williamsburg: "My faith as a life-long Methodist is in our Lord, Jesus Christ, as I advocate for the laity of the conference in my daily life. Currently I serve as Conference Lay Leader and Council chair in my local church. My witness at this moment for our church family is crucial at General and Jurisdictional Conferences."



3. Shirley Cauffman, Cherrydale UMC, Arlington: "I feel I have the experience and knowledge of the church to help make decisions that will lead our church to once again being a strong and vital denomination."



4. Nathaniel L. Bishop, Asbury UMC, Christiansburg: "It has been my great privilege to serve the church both in the past and present in a variety of ways."



5. Darlene Amon, Monumental UMC, Suffolk: "Each experience, from the local church to the general church and beyond, has assisted me in the decision-making process required at General and Jurisdictional Conferences. My reliance is on God's continuous leading/guiding of the Holy Spirit in all matters."



6. Virginia Greer, Mt. Hermon UMC, Altavista: "My love for God and church family inspires me to participate in church polity."



7. Joyce Winston, First UMC of Fox Hill, Hampton: "I believe in UMC, its connectional system, and power of prayer."



8. Gene Mims, Gary's UMC, South Prince George: "As a United Methodist, I feel I have an obligation to bear faithful Christian witness to Jesus Christ, the living reality at the center of the Church's life and witness."



9. Beth Christian, Woodlake UMC, Staunton: "I truly believe in our connectional church. We are stronger when we work together, we are wiser when we learn from each other, and we can accomplish more Kingdom work when we all seek God's direction through prayer. Jesus called us to be a church that lives."



10. Alison Malloy, Sunset Drive UMC, Reston: "I pray the UMC will soon enter a season of partnering in ministry together to serve all God's people."



11. Marshall Bailey, Mt. Pisgah UMC, Richmond: "My hope for the church is that we will continue to work together to address the current needs of the world and where there are differences find ways to build bridges to address these conflicts."

(Continued on pg. 20: "Delegates")

Meet your Delegates!

("Delegates," continued from pg. 19)



SEJ CONFERENCE ELECTED CLERGY:

(pictured above)

1. Seonyoung Kim
2. Keith Boyette
3. Bob Cooper
4. Alex Joyner
5. Beth Givens
6. Tommy Herndon
7. Marc Brown
8. Jason Stanley
9. Jeffrey Mickle
10. Greg West
11. David Ford

SEJ CONFERENCE ELECTED LAITY:

(pictured below)

1. Larry Burian
2. Neill Caldwell
3. Janet Ayers
4. Willard Douglas
5. Jacob Paysour
6. Olivia Hinton
7. Michael Monge
8. Vicki A. Boger
9. Virginia "Ginger" Turner
10. Brenda Brooks
11. Aimee Hong

CLERGY ALTERNATES:

1. R. Bruce Johnson
2. Brenda Biler
3. Alan Combs
4. Thomas Barnard
5. Won Un
6. David McAllister-Wilson
7. Kathleen Overby Webster
8. Ed Walker
9. David Rash
10. John D. Copenhagen
10. Paulo DaSilva (tie)

LAITY ALTERNATES:

1. Rachel Wright
2. Zach Ferguson
3. Leon Newbanks
4. Lori Valentine de Segovia
5. Nancy Yarborough
6. Nina Winkler
7. Carlos Liceaga
8. Joel Joyner
9. Charles Pearre



Youths rise, shine for 2015 Annual Conference Potato Drop

by Andy Brock

Early in the pre-dawn hours on Friday, June 19, a load of potatoes from Caribou, Maine, pulled into the parking lot of Southview United Methodist Church in Roanoke. It carried 42,000 pounds (21 tons) of potatoes for distribution to food banks in the Roanoke Valley.

Shortly after arriving, more than a hundred volunteers began the process of transferring the potatoes to 10 lb. bags. Among the volunteers was a group of 40 youths and leaders which made them the larg-

est age group of volunteers. One youth, Noelle Schoemann, was a veteran of the event. When asked how many she had attended, she answered with a big

smile, "a whole lot." There were also families, like the Crosby family from Winchester (pictured below), with the youngest participant, Lucy, at the age

of three. This was her first potato drop. It was also an all-hands event for the Society of St. Andrew. Mike Waldmann, executive director, was at the helm of the fork lift. On the ground were Marian Kelly, director of Potato and Produce Projects, and Sarah Ramey, director of Virginia Gleaning Network. The event was co-sponsored by the conference office of Justice and Missional Excellence and Society of St. Andrew. According to Ramey, the potatoes are sent to food banks, local church



(Continued on pg. 29, "Potato")

Annual Conference Approves Petition 14

By a 989-868 vote, the Annual Conference approved a petition urging General Conference to eliminate the sentence: "The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching" from the *United Methodist Book of Discipline*. The vote was taken by written ballot on Sunday, June 21.

Following Annual Conference, Bishop Cho released a statement clarifying what this motion meant and its effect on proceedings at General Conference. The entirety of his letter can be seen below:



June 23, 2015

To the people of the Virginia Annual Conference:

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

Many of you have heard that by a 989-868 vote, the Virginia Annual Conference session approved a petition to General Conference to remove the following language from the *Book of Discipline*: "The United Methodist Church

does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching."

I want you to know that this vote took place in the midst of honest debate and prayerful discernment. Throughout it all, the expressed will of all participants was that we might know God's will for our church at this time.

Please note the following:

1) The current language in the *Book of Discipline* can only be changed by the General Conference which will meet next in May of 2016. This action is a petition of the Virginia Conference for the General Conference to take the action noted above. Nothing has changed.

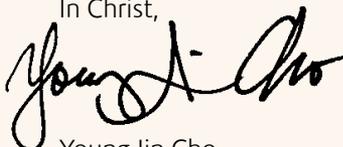
2) Other language in the *Book of Discipline* related to human sexuality, including the ordination of homosexual per-

sons and same-sex unions, is not addressed by this petition.

I know the results of this action will be received with widely varied responses. But whatever those responses, what has not changed is that we are a people who share a common heritage and a common ministry in Christ Jesus. We are called to live and work together as a family of faith.

Within this family we can celebrate many powerful things God has done through us, such as the Imagine No Malaria Initiative, which is nearing 100 percent of its goal, and the many other ministries we lifted up at Annual Conference. Just as every family has differences and disagreements, yet remains united in care and love; so within our family of faith we should remain committed to one another. This day, as yesterday, we are called to be in ministry together with all people and we are called to be disciples together of the God we meet in the Scriptures.

I encourage you to join me in praying for our mission and for the future of our church looking for the guidance of our Good Shepherd on this issue. I am grateful for each one of you.

In Christ,

Young Jin Cho



Annual Conference Bible study focuses on discipleship

By Eileen Gilmer

Anual Conference Bible study followed the theme of the entire Annual Conference, “From Members to Disciples.” The Rev. Dr. Timothy Bias, general secretary of United Methodist Discipleship Ministries, wove current events, his experiences as a child and observations from a pastoral perspective into the bishop’s chosen theme.

The tragic shootings at the Charleston, S.C., AME church clearly weighed heavy on Rev. Bias’ heart as he spoke of the grace and forgiveness shown by family members of the victims. He called on all present to keep the victims in our thoughts. “When we pray, we will name them before God and be thankful for their lives,” he said.

The book of Matthew was the primary scripture focus of the morning Bible study, beginning with Matthew 28. Bias focused on Jesus’ commissioning of the disciples, and recalled his first encounter with this scripture. It was his fourth grade Sunday school teacher, Mary Hanley, who told the class of 10-year-olds, “Someday, you’re going to need to know this. One day one of you will go someplace else in the world and you’ll tell someone else about Jesus.”

Bias offered up this definition of a disciple, “A grace-filled Christ follower who puts faith into action.” He went on to explain, “So as you go, we are engaging people in God’s grace – God’s faith into action with all people. For me, it’s a matter of hospitality.”

Bias used other Matthew passages as examples of this faith in action: forgiveness, integrity, avoiding the trappings of worldly things and providing for the least and the last.

Bias told a story of a mission trip he made to Africa in 1986. His host took him to a family of three sisters who lived with their extended families in Ghana – 40 people living in a small house. The sisters brought the family matriarch to meet him. As she sat on a bench in front of Bias, the woman began to sing in her native tongue, “In Christ there is no east or west, in him no south or north, but one great fellowship of love throughout the whole wide earth.”

“Do you know who I thought of?” Bias asked the gathering. “Mary Hanley, my fourth grade Sunday school teacher. She told me I was going to do that. I was 10 years old and Mary Hanley was making disciples.”

He closed the Bible study with words for those present to consider: “If we aren’t making followers of Jesus Christ in the communities where they live, what are we doing?”

Clergy Retiring in 2015

NAME	SERVICE YRS
GREGORY LEE ADKINS	38.50
JOHN WESTON ASHLEY	34.00
BETSY CHAMBERLAIN BASEHORE	17.00
KENNETH BEALS	46.00
JONATHAN LEON BENNETT	30.00
STEPHEN G. BRAY	41.00
TILDEN BRIDGES	15.00
DAVID R. BURROUGH	44.50
KATHLEENE MARIE CARD	12.75
JOHN S. CHADSEY	43.00
DAVID E. CRAIG	23.00
GAIL LYNN DIETZE	8.00
ROGER C. DOWDY	34.00
REGINALD A. EARLY	22.00
JAMES A. EDWARDS	8.50
WILLIAM M. ENRIGHT	1.00
JOHN ALEXANDER FAIR	13.00
JUDITH GILKISON FENDER	14.75
ALFRED M. GREEN	44.75
STEVEN WAYNE GREER	34.00
WILLIAM T. GREER JR.	47.00
BARBARA GROSS	18.00
CHARLIE S. HALEY JR.	14.00
JUDITH T. HALL	7.00
PAUL A. HANAK	35.50
DAVID M. HINDMAN	42.00
ELIZABETH ANNE HOUGH	16.00
EDWARD HARVEY JOHNSON	34.00
STEVEN REILLY JONES	42.00
ROBERT FRANKLIN JUSTIS	33.00
BOB LEWANDOWSKI	17.00
MICHAEL L. LYLE	32.75
MILTON E. MARKS	43.00
JAMES M. MELSON	34.00
JAMES O. RADFORD	30.50
ARTHUR RAJANAYAKAM	22.00
ROBERT LEE RUSSELL	34.00
SUE ANN ELY SALMON	19.00
KAREN SANDOVAL	14.00
BOBBY SHIVELY	8.00
ROCHELLE SHOEMAKER	21.00
JEFFREY B. SMITH	16.00
LOUIS M. STRICKLER	33.00
ROBERT M. THROCKMORTON JR	37.00
EDWARD WINKLER	17.00

Let's talk: Pub Theology creates safe space for fellowship, faith-based questions

By Madeline Pillow

On Thursday, June 18, as part of pre-Annual Conference events, the Roanoke District sponsored Pub Theology in downtown Roanoke. The event was organized by Ted Sutton.

Sutton said the group has been gathering in an upstairs room over Cornerstone Bar and Grill beginning in January 2014 and moved to Corned Beef and Company in September 2014.

"We started Pub Theology as an outside-the-church ministry hoping for diversity among people who may never or seldom go to a church service. We wanted a safe place where anyone could ask the hard questions and never be preached to or have any expectations," said Sutton.

This is reflected in a quote that sums up the group, "We don't have all the answers. We wonder the questions too."

Since its start, the group has had 30 gatherings that have included speakers from other faiths including the Jewish faith.

Pub Theology is a concept that is taking hold across the country as a creation of Bryan Berghoef, who has also written books going into detail about the concept. In his own words, from a blog featured on the Huffington Post, he sees it as a worthy conversation. "Pub theology is not the newest trendy outreach effort. It is open, honest conversation, wherever that leads," said Berghoef.

In Roanoke, Pub Theology was begun as a direct inspiration from the efforts of the Rev. Jason Micheli of Aldersgate UMC in northern Virginia.

On Thursday night before Annual Conference, a large

group gathered to hear Dr. Kendall Soulen from Wesley Theological Seminary answer questions posed from the audience.

These questions ranged from "Why do we still suffer from racism?" to "What causes evil?"

While Soulen left the floor open to interjections and comments, he drove the conversations from these questions.

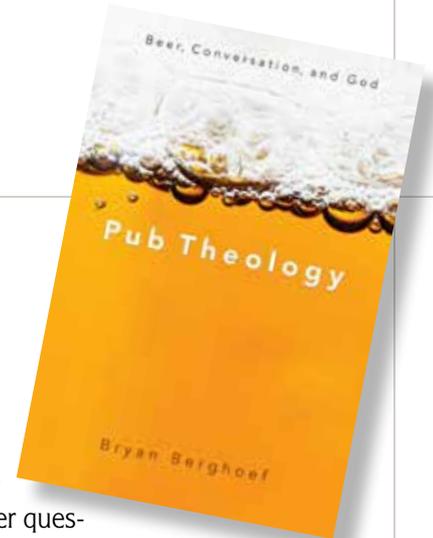
In response to the presence of evil in the world, Soulen noted that it was too easy to lay the blame on the Devil who, at one time, was a good being. "The source of bad in this world is the abuse of freedom. The result is what we call 'evil,'" said Soulen.

The conversation led to gay marriage, a topic that is currently a big discussion in the conference.

Though Soulen knows that both laity and clergy are divided on the subject, he believes that no matter what side of the spectrum, believers should stick to those beliefs. "The church should find ways to honor these differences in belief," said Soulen.

The beauty behind Pub Theology is that every meeting allows for discussion between a variety of ages and among believers of other faiths.

Though the air-conditioning was broken, the crowd enjoyed drinks and shared conversation. When Soulen took a break after a barrage of several long questions, he took a drink of water to the applause of the crowd. "I don't know how much beer John Wesley drank, but he did have a wine merchant he was in contact with," said Soulen. ☞



“We are Kingdom people.”

—Rev. Young Bong Kim at Friday night's Service of Remembrance and Holy Communion



(Top 3, clockwise) Laity and Clergy gathered in the Berglund Coliseum; Patrick Pillow, associate pastor at Chester UMC, prepares to dig into July's issue of the Advocate; Holy Communion is arranged for Friday's service.



(Bottom 3, clockwise) William E. Moberly brings his own chair to the coliseum as he listens in; Genesis Praise Band, First UMC, Roanoke, led attendees in worship throughout the weekend; the clergy session on Friday morning gets underway under the leadership of Bishop Young Jin Cho; Susan Reaves, conference secretary; Edward Walker, chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry; and Meredith McNabb, director of Clergy Excellence at the Virginia Conference.





EVENTS

August

Kaleidoscope

Aug. 3-7, Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center, Blackstone

Kaleidoscope Music, Worship Arts and Missions Week for children entering grades 3-6 will be Monday, Aug. 3, through Friday, Aug. 7, at Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center in Blackstone. For 37 years, the Virginia Conference chapter of the Fellowship of United Methodists in Music and Worship Arts has sponsored Kaleidoscope to offer children outstanding opportunities in worship leadership and participation, singing and learning under an accomplished guest conductor, experiencing handbells, Orff instruments, drama, movement, scripture and worship class, outdoor water fun and musical games – all in one week. Campers create and learn how to use their hands and feet to do God's work in the world. All activities are planned and supervised by adults. For more information, contact Selina B. Heslep, co-director, Kaleidoscope 2015, at sheslep@stmarksmidlo.com.

September

School for Children's Ministries

Sept. 12, Timberlake UMC, Lynchburg

The School for Children's Ministries is on the road again featuring the same school at four different locations on four different dates. The second will be 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 12, at Timberlake UMC, 21649 Timberlake Rd., Lynchburg. Learn "Extraordinary Lessons from Ordinary Objects" plus three more workshops. A .5 CEU offered. Only \$20 per person. For more information and to register online, go to the conference website, www.vaumc.org, click on "Conference Calendar" and the date.

Goodson Preaching Academy

Sept. 21-24, Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center, Blackstone

The Bishops' Foundation will sponsor the 2015 Goodson Preaching Academy, "Craft and Creativity: Preaching in the Context of a Rapidly Evolving World," Sept. 21-24 at the Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center in Blackstone. Presenter will be Dr. Paul Scott Wilson, professor of Homiletics at Emmanuel College, Toronto, author of many books on preaching and past president of the Academy of Homiletics. This ministry venture for clergy seeking excellence in the craft of weekly preaching was modeled after the former Goodson Academy for Preaching and approved by the Bishops' Foundation which is assuming most of the costs of

the event. The event is designed to energize your preaching and help you find creative ways to build disciples in your church. 1 CEU will be awarded. For more information and to register, go to the conference website, www.vaumc.org, click on "Conference Calendar" and the date.

October

Five Day Academy for Spiritual Formation

Oct. 4-9, Roslyn Retreat Center, Richmond

The Five Day Academy for Spiritual Formation is a program of Upper Room Ministries, providing an opportunity for clergy and laity to deepen their relationship with God through a daily rhythm of prayer, worship, learning and reflection. Each day will include teaching by Dr. Robert Mulholland and Dr. Roberta Bondi. It will also include periods of silence, morning and evening prayer, Eucharist, covenant groups and community time. Focus of this academy is Sacred Journey: Shaped by the Spirit. For more information, go to the conference website, www.vaumc.org, click on "Conference Calendar" and the date.

Annual ARMS Retreat

Oct. 7-8, Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center, Blackstone

"Journey of a Lifetime" will be the theme of the Association of Retired Ministers and Spouses (ARMS) annual retreat Oct. 7-8 at Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center in Blackstone. Dr. Joseph Eldridge, chaplain at American University, will speak on "Looking Back/Looking Forward: Viewing Justice Inter-Generationally." Dr. Kenneth Patrick, chaplain at Blue Ridge Hospice, will speak on "Journeying through the Winter of Life with the Lord." Fee is \$50 per person (\$25 if this is your first ARMS retreat.) For more information, e-mail Harry Kennon at RevHarry@aol.com.

LIVING THE WORD



Bill Bolling and his wife, Jean Ann, are members of Shady Grove United Methodist Church in Mechanicsville. Bill has held a number of church offices, and has taught an adult Sunday school class for the past 34 years. From 2006-2014, Bill served as the Lieutenant Governor of Virginia.

August 2, 2015

God Is Still in Charge
Isaiah 59: 15-21

Today's lesson focuses on a passage of scripture that was likely written during the Babylonian captivity, more than 2,500 years ago. But when you read it, you realize that it could have been written yesterday.

In the midst of their captivity, the children of Israel looked around them and saw nothing that reminded them of God. They were living in a foreign land, and on every side it appeared as though they were surrounded by violence, cruelty and immorality. In short, they felt that God had forsaken them, and they didn't know why.

Have you ever felt that way? Have you ever looked around and thought you were living in a foreign land? I sure have. In fact, there are many aspects of our society today that look nothing like the world I grew up in or the kind of world I think God would have us live in. But the good news is that God is still in charge, and ultimately, things will work out God's way.

In Isaiah 59: 1, we are told that even when we feel like we are in captivity and the world around us reminds us little of God, we should not be discouraged because: "the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither is His ear heavy, that it cannot hear." Even when we are surrounded by violence, cruelty and immorality, we should not faint.

In his famous poem, "If," Rudyard Kipling wrote: "If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs ... yours is the earth and everything that's in it."

No matter what is taking place around us, our job is to continue living steadfastly in accordance with God's word and pray for those who choose a different path with the assurance that God will ultimately bring judgment where it is needed, and righteousness will ultimately prevail over unrighteousness. That is God's promise to us, and God does not break promises.

August 9, 2015

Life Is About Choices
Jeremiah 7: 1-15

I have two sons. When they were growing up, there were certain things I tried to teach them, things I thought would help them live

a better life. If you asked either of them what I tried to teach them, they would probably tell you that lesson #1 was:

"Life is about choices. If you make good choices, good things usually happen. If you make bad choices, bad things usually happen. Life is about choices."

I truly believe these are good words to live by. They also reflect a deep, spiritual truth.

As Christians, we are told that our most important job is to live a life that becomes the gospel. In other words, to live a good and decent life, consistent with the teachings and example of Christ. When we do that, good things usually happen. But when we lose our way and begin living in sin, bad things usually happen. Life is about choices.

In Jeremiah's day, the children of Israel didn't always live consistent with their faith. So the Lord came to Jeremiah and told him to stand in the gate of the Temple and challenge the children of Israel to amend their ways and their doings. (v. 3) They were told that if they did, God would come and dwell with them in the Temple.

Today, we are sometimes like the children of Israel. There are times when we live the way God would have us live, but there are other times when we lose our spiritual focus and fail to live up to God's expectation for our lives. When we're living the way God wants us to live, good things usually happen, but ...

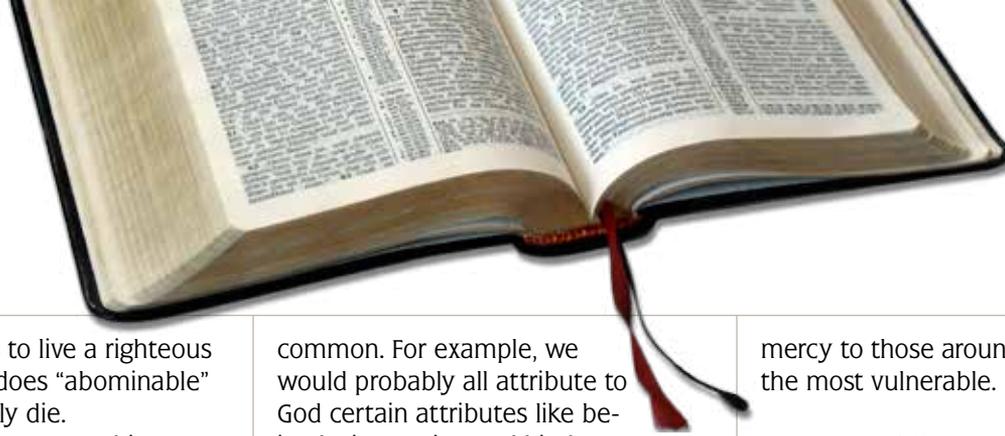
If we want God to come and dwell with us, the message is simple – amend your ways and your doings. In everything and in all things, make certain that your life reflects the teachings and example of Christ. Then, and only then, can you receive the fullness of God's blessings.

August 16

The Secret To Living An Abundant Life
Ezekiel 18: 1-13 and 30-32

Do you want to live, or do you want to die? Surely, if we had to choose between life and death we would choose life. But the scripture we have before us today makes clear that many people have chosen death through the way they live their life.

In today's scripture, Ezekiel, one of the great Hebrew prophets, tells us that if a man is righteous and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live. But Ezekiel also warns us that



the man who fails to live a righteous life – a man who does “abominable” things – shall surely die.

Clearly, there is more to this passage than physical life and death, for we know that we will all die someday, at least physically. However, the Bible tells us that those who live for Christ will never die. They will experience everlasting life.

But, if we choose to live for God we are promised more than everlasting life. We are also promised abundant life. Everlasting life has to do with the length of our life. Abundant life has to do with the quality of the life we live.

That’s the great thing about being a Christian. When we choose to live for God, the Bible tells us that we are set free from the law of sin and death, and it is only then that we can enjoy life to the fullest, or what scripture calls abundant life.

Many people seem to stagger through life in a cloud, weighed down by troubles of one sort or another. That’s not the kind of life God has in mind for us. God wants us to live a life that is full of happiness and joy. That can only be experienced when we live life for God.

The good news is that it’s never too late to change direction and experience abundant life. Verse 30 gives us the formula. If you’re not currently living for God, you must repent and turn from your transgressions. God will then fill you with a new heart and a new spirit and you can begin to experience the abundant life you were intended to enjoy.

August 23 A God of Love and Judgment Zechariah 7: 8-14

If you had to paint a portrait of God, what would it look like? We probably each have our own image of what God looks like, but our portraits would probably have many things in

common. For example, we would probably all attribute to God certain attributes like being loving, caring and kind.

Indeed, the Bible makes clear that God is a god of love and great compassion, and we’re told that we should emulate those attributes as well. In fact, in today’s lesson the Lord comes to Zechariah and tells him that we are to show kindness and mercy to one another and support one another in times of need.

But there’s another side of God that we don’t talk much about. It is a side characterized by vengefulness, judgment and wrath. Carefully read verses 11 and 12 again. When the children of Israel failed to listen, God unleashed great wrath on them and scattered them among the nations.

If you’re having a hard time accepting this side of God, take a few minutes to read Psalm 2. In this dramatic passage, we are told that God shall unleash wrath on those who take counsel against God and “break them with a rod of iron and dash them into pieces like a potter’s vessel.” (v. 9)

Make no mistake, God is a God of great love who wants us to be a people of great love as well. But the Bible tells us that there is coming a day when we will all stand before God’s judgment seat and give an account of our lives, “according as our works have been.” (Rev. 22:2) We will be judged!

I don’t know about you, but I can’t wait to see that loving, caring and compassionate side of God – face to face. But I sure don’t ever want to be accused of refusing to listen and run the risk of experiencing God’s wrath.

Not to worry, this is not a puzzle without a solution. To experience God’s love and compassion, we must do three things: 1) accept Jesus Christ as the Lord of our life, 2) live in accordance with Christ’s teachings and example and 3) render kindness and

mercy to those around us, especially the most vulnerable.

August 30 A God of High Expectations Malachi 3: 1-10

If there is one word that sums up God’s relationship with the children of Israel it would be patience. There were times when they were faithful, and they were blessed because of their faithfulness. And there were times when they were unfaithful, and they were cursed because of their unfaithfulness.

I truly don’t understand how God was so patient with the children of Israel. If it had been me, I would have forgotten about them and found someone else who was more worthy of the covenant. Fortunately, God did not deal with them that way, and God does not deal with us that way either.

Malachi was a Jewish prophet who prophesied about God returning to the Temple, but he was worried about whether or not the children of Israel would be found worthy when God returned. The passage of scripture we have read this morning makes clear that many of God’s people were not living the way they should.

But in the midst of his concerns about whether or not the children of Israel could “endure the day of (the Lord’s) coming,” Malachi gives us a glimpse of what God expects from people. God expects us to present offerings that represent the best of what we have.

God has high expectations for us. God expects faithfulness in everything we do. God expects us to make our relationship with God the highest priority in our life. God expects us to give God our first fruits. God expects us to “walk worthy of the vocation to which we’re called.” (Ephesians 4:1).

In this sense we serve a jealous

(Continued on pg. 29: “Living Word”)

CLERGY & DIACONAL



DEATHS



The Rev. Dana Wellman died June 9, 2015, in Greeley, Colo., after a long battle with cancer. A retired clergy member of the Virginia Conference, he

worked at the Weld Mental Health Center from 1971 to 2013. He is survived by Robin Wellman, of Boulder, Colo., (they were married 1968-1995); son Jeffrey Wellman of Boulder; daughter Sarah Wellman McNaughton of Boulder; granddaughters Fiona McNaughton and Neala McNaughton of Boulder. He was preceded in death by his son, Christopher Wellman. Services were held June 16 at the First UMC in Greeley, Colo.



The Rev. Dr. Steve Rettenmayer died unexpectedly on June 28, 2015. A member of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, Steve was

adjunct faculty at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., and at Eastern Mennonite University. He also served as a mentor for United Methodist clergy in the Shenandoah Valley. He is survived by his wife, the Rev. Linda Rettenmayer, also a member of the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

The Rev. Prince Edward Thornton Jr., of Boones Mill, died Sunday, June 14, 2015. A celebration of his life was held Aug. 2 at Red Valley UMC. He began his ministerial career in 1959 at Lafayette and then served Locust Grove. In 1964, he became a professor at Polk Junior College. In 1966, he served as a professor at Paine College. In 1969, he became a professor at Ferrum College where he stayed until retirement in 1999.

Mrs. Marian Lewis Redd, 91, widow of **the Rev. Henry Allen Redd**, died June 22, 2015. She is survived by her son, Stephen Redd; daughters, Lynn Cullingsworth (Kenny), Libby Williamson (Phil) and Cindy Thompson (Scott); 10 grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her husband, Henry Allen Redd.

Mrs. Nancy Sandall Jennings, mother of **the Rev. Frank Jennings**, died June 15, 2015. Frank is the pastor of Covenant UMC, Elizabeth River District.

Jack Davenport, 89, died June 7, 2015, in Harrisonburg. He was the father of **Linda Davenport Mahaffey**, wife of **the Rev. Jim Mahaffey**, retired. Jack served in the Army medical core in WWII and later graduated from William and Mary. The Davenports were active members of First UMC, Hampton, before moving to Maryland.

Barbara Nan Yarrington Foster, mother of **Rev. Eileen Foster Gilmer**, died on July 9, 2015. The funeral took place in Richmond, Texas. Rev. Gilmer is associate pastor at Trinity UMC in the Arlington District.

Frances Blalock Rodwell, mother-in-law of **Rev. Matt Bates**, died June 24, 2015, in Rocky Mount, N.C. Rev. Bates is based at Centenary UMC in the Richmond District.

Ethel Weaver, mother of **Rev. Lee Seibert**, died July 8, 2015. Rev. Seibert is senior pastor at Community UMC in Virginia Beach. The service was held July 13 at Beyers Funeral Home in Florida.

Evelyn Coleman Wallace, sister of retired minister, **Rev. C. Douglas Pillow** died June 17, 2015. She was a dedicated member of Timberlake UMC in the Lynchburg District. Services were held at Timberlake on June 19.

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("Living Word," continued from pg. 27)

God who expects us to have no other gods. God wants to be the most important thing in our lives.

While some may see this as a sacrifice, it's not really. It's the natural order. It's the way it should be. And when we dedicate our lives to God in this way, we will be found worthy, and we can rest assured that God will open the windows of heaven and pour down for us an overflowing blessing. (v. 10) ☞

("Potato" continued from pg. 20)

pantries, soup kitchens and other local feeding agencies in the Roanoke area. The potatoes should provide more than 120,000 servings of food for the hungry.

The Society of St. Andrew, a national, non-profit food salvage hunger-relief program, sponsors more than 80 potato drops across the nation each year.

For more information, contact Sarah Ramey, Society of St. Andrew, at vaglean@endhunger.org or call (540) 362-1767. ☞

-Andy Brock is pastor of the Greenwood Montague Avenue charge in Winchester.

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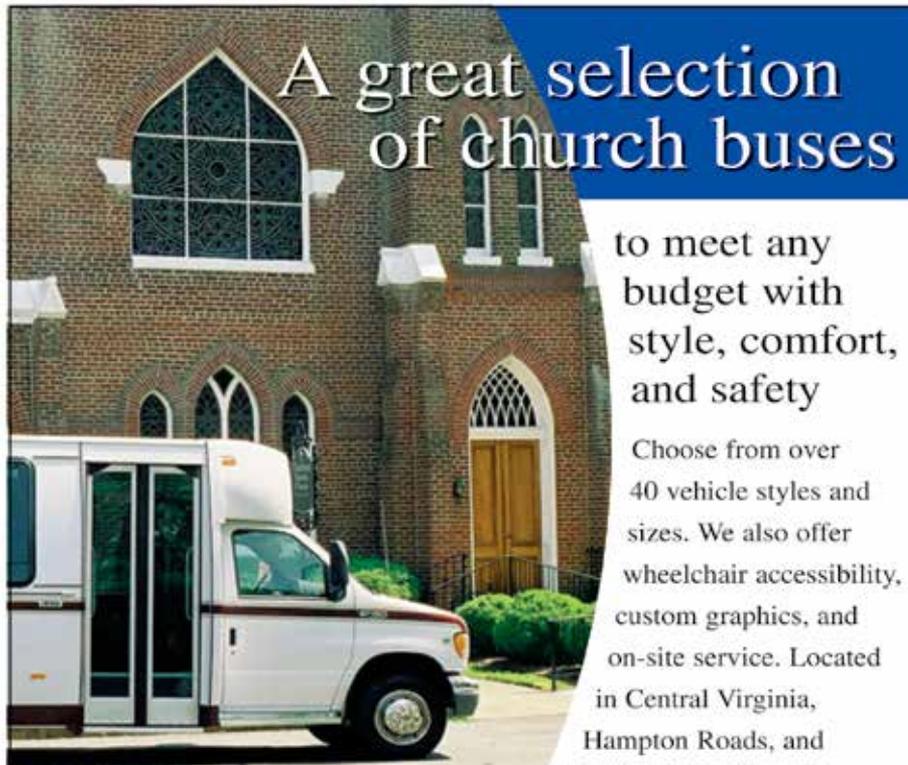
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FROM THE BISHOP



Starting the final year

This month I would like to share the second part of my Episcopal Address which I delivered on June 19 during the 233rd session of our Annual Conference in Roanoke. It was slightly edited.

Soon I will start the final year of my ministry as your bishop. During the upcoming final quarter, I will continue to focus on four areas of my ministry: All Things New-Equipping Vital Congregations, strengthening the spiritual foundation of our mission and ministries, developing new faith communities and nurturing a culture of coordination and cooperation. However, I would like to emphasize the following two important things.

(1) The upcoming conference year will have many challenges, especially over the issue of human sexuality. The 2016 General Conference will be crucial for the future of our denomination. My prayer is that in the midst of all these discussions and conferencing, The

United Methodist Church will not forget the most important thing: our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

This is the reason I have chosen “From Members to Disciples” as the theme for this 2015 Annual Conference. Growing from members to disciples is the most important change we need today. During this Annual Conference session, and in the months to come, we will think about and define the meaning of “disciples.” What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Another question we need to ask ourselves is whether our churches have road maps to make disciples of Jesus Christ. I want to challenge all the churches in our conference to wrestle with this question: Do we have an intentional or discerned disciple-making system? How do we make disciples of Jesus Christ?

“From Members to Disciples” will also be the theme for our 2015 charge conferences. I encourage the districts to start more Discipleship Circles and invite the churches to two important plans that the office of Congregational Excellence is preparing. One is the Five Talent Academy on Nov. 10. The topic will be “Stir up the Fire: Wesley’s Way of Making Disciples.” And the other is “Real Discipleship Survey” created by the Rev. Phil Maynard. This program will soon be available to our local churches.

(2) Many of you know that my election to the episcopacy was a miracle. Nobody, including myself, expected me to be elected. But by the grace of God, I was elected, and by another grace of God, I was assigned to the Virginia Conference. From the beginning of my ministry as bishop, my prayer has been, “Lord, I believe that you chose me because you have a reason or a plan for me and for our church. What is this plan? What is your expectation for my ministry? What do you want me to do?”

My discernment of this question

has been prayer. This is the reason I have been teaching or preaching on prayer wherever I go. Henry Nouwen said, “Prayer is the center of the Christian life. It is the only necessary thing. It is living with God here and now.” For the upcoming conference year, I will keep focusing on the only necessary thing: prayer.

I will continue to challenge clergy and laity to devote at least one hour daily for their spiritual discipline. I will continue to invite the churches to become Prayer Covenant Congregations. And during the new conference year, I will visit each district to meet the clergy and laity of the Prayer Covenant Congregations and to encourage them to keep on praying.

Although our beloved church faces many challenges, if we pray, if we humbly seek God’s will, we can overcome these challenges. We are called to be more than conquerors. A crisis is dangerous, but in Christ a crisis will be an opportunity. A crisis will help us to open ourselves more to God and to changes. Prayer changes the situation we face, but most of all, prayer changes ourselves.

I am very excited about what our God will do when we kneel down and surrender ourselves to the Lord. The past was good, the present is better, but the future will be best if we continue to build our ministries in prayer. So, in closing I would like to invite you to join me in singing my favorite prayer:

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 on me. Amen.

In our Lord,

Young Jin Cho

ONE LAST WORD



Tweets heard 'round Annual Conference 2015

Bert Cloud @bertcloud

Sporting my Imagine No Malaria bow tie to [#vaumc15](#)



Lauren Lobenhofer @Chafinhofer

Voting at [#vaumc15](#): Waiting for the Creator to bring order out of this chaos!

Kathleen Royston @Kathleen-Royston

When we decide who is in and who is out, we are not being the church. [#vaumc15](#)

Thomas G. James @ThomasGJames

God is God because God is in first place. If not in the first place, the god we are worshipping is an idol. [#BishopCho](#) [#vaumc15](#)

slkcalv @slkcalv

[#vaumc15](#) I'm kinda proud of us for having this discussion openly. I crushed my baby bird I'm afraid, but we survived, and now we vote.

Morgan Guyton @MAGuyton

Notice the contrast in ages of the

people speaking for and against the sexuality petition. [#vaumc15](#)

Carly Sawyer @Carly_Horse12

YOUTH. YOUTH. YOUTH. [#vaumc15](#)

Lauren Lobenhofer @Chafinhofer

Homosexuality is NOT the same thing as pedophilia. Such comparisons are harmful and offensive. [#vaumc15](#)

Heather Hincer Wray @HeatherL-HinWray

Also she's a young woman not a girl. Respect her voice. [#umyf](#) [#vaumc15](#) [#feminism](#)

Keith Elgin @keithelgin

Hey [#vaumc15](#), be unified in Spirit. I think the event in Charleston shows that we are all brothers and sisters first. We are interdependent.

Kathleen Royston @Kathleen-Royston

Sometimes the Holy Spirit sounds just like a 16-year old young woman. May we have ears to hear. [#vaumc15](#)

Michelle Hettmann @chellebugthree

"Um, can I order a pizza?" [@revgresh](#) [#vaumc15](#) [#balloting](#)



Andrew Ware @Pastor_AndrewW

Dream came true today. I started a wave that went around at least two times...and it happened at [#vaumc15](#)

Tara Ferris @taraferris09

That awkward moment when the bishop says... Shut up... [#vaumc15](#)

Jonathan Page @jonathanpage

Mercy doesn't require an advanced degree. -Bishop Charlene Kammerer [#vaumc15](#)

Michelle Hettmann @chellebugthree

Love that we're incorporating different languages into the worship services at [#vaumc15](#)!

Bert Cloud @bertcloud

I went to annual conference and got a free phone [#vaumc15](#)

Jim Smith @smithgym

"[@SassyTheologian](#): Look at all those young people on staff with the Common Table! [#VAUMC15](#)" its great!

Betsey Davis @SiGodJourney

Welcoming double bow [@Roanoke Civic Center for VA UMC Annual Conference](#) [#vaumc](#)



Michelle Hettmann @chellebugthree

Go Carol! [#shortestfinancereport](#) [#vaumc15](#)

Patti Money @pattimoney

The average UM member invites someone to worship every 38 years. I am 38 years old. [#vaumc15](#)

Andrew Book @AndrewHBook

"Something happened during the first laity ballot"/ does not bode well [#vaumc15](#)

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