August 2017

ANNG INTO AND THING

dvocate

The Virginia United Methodist

Annual Conference 2017

PILLOW TALK



Madeline Pillow Editor

From prayer to vision



"Vision is the art of seeing things invisible." Jonathan Swift

I hope if you were not able to attend Annual Conference that you have viewed it through the archived live stream at https://livestream.com/ VAUMC/AC2017. (Due to some Internet issues we encountered, every session is there except the Laity Session).

At the time of writing this, AC 2017 is two weeks in my rearview mirror but I'm still having a hard time articulating my feelings. It was that powerful.

Bishop Lewis shared her vision for the conference with us: for the Virginia Conference to be **Disciples of Jesus Christ who are lifelong learners who influence others to serve**.

Bishop Lewis said this vision was a nine-month-long process as she held her "Chat and Chew" sessions with clergy and laity in our 16 districts.

Ironically, over the last two months, I have been reading a book entitled *Visioneering* in my own journey of professional and personal growth. (Never stop learning!)

Through this book, I have been learning about vision-making, how dreamers differ from visionaries and how vision-making is a long process.

In the book, author Andy Stanley shares that God is using your circumstances to position and prepare you. You have no idea how God is working behind the scenes of your life. "You don't know how close you are to a breakthrough."

This idea was highlighted for me when Bishop Lewis said during her Friday Episcopal Address, "Bishop Cho had you praying for four years. You didn't know he was preparing you for me!"

Part of what made Annual Conference so powerful was Bishop Lewis' passion. I sensed her excitement of being there and being present. When she spoke, she was engaged, and when she walked off the podium to the floor of AC, it was because she wanted to be with her annual conference – she wanted to bring her vision to her sheep.

She was the shepherd who was going to find the one sheep who especially needed to hear her words. During one of the altar calls, she stated that she felt there were still some people who needed to come forward.

In the Book of Nehemiah, Nehemiah's vision started as a concern, which author Andy Stanley shares in his book is how a vision starts. As Stanley said, "Every significant nonprofit organization that has positively impacted this world began with a brokenhearted leader."

Bishop Lewis has a heart and a concern for disciple-making in our world today. If you missed her passion and heart for this conference after barely a year, then you weren't/haven't been paying attention.

Over the next few years, my office will be helping to share resources and the bishop's vision with our conference. My hope and prayer is that you take an active role in joining Bishop Lewis and her vision.

Madeline C. Fellon

Connecting with the Fracebook

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

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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 Chrismon 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 spaceavailable 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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STORIES

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Conference office changes name

Correction: Mount Horeb, Rappahannock River District, paid 100 percent of their apportionments which was not noted in the July Advocate Appointments issue.

The Virginia Advocate Staff

Madeline Pillow | Editor, Director of Communications Cathryn Huff | Graphic Designer

Pam Culler | Administrative Secretary

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Scan this code to go to the conference website: www.vaumc.org

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

Church launches online campus By Madeline Pillow

new church launch is happening out of Christ Church UMC, Alexandria District, through the form of an online campus.

For lead pastor John Speight, the online campus is an extension of the traditional Sunday morning service.

"Everything that we do here that can be done online is going to be done. So when people "come" to the service online there will be those who welcome them and greet them just like our parking lot ushers or our front door greeters," Speight said.

Online participants will be encouraged to print off the Sunday program and will have opportunities to discuss the Sunday message during the week especially through small groups.

These online small groups will be conducted through a ZOOM, video conferencing, call where the online pastor and other persons can see each other and participate.

The online campus will feature the same Sunday

service from the physical campus but, as Speight said, the online feature is for interaction for those who can't join as well as to continue church and be church throughout the week.

"We don't want this to be an anonymous type of experience where users drop in and they are doing it by themselves," said Speight. "We want the opportunity to develop relationships, and we feel that is going to be the biggest advantage to the way that we are trying to do church



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

today."

Speight added that at Christ Church, the leadership works hard to get people connected to the church and for persons to be in relationship with one another. Speight wants this same experience for the online campus.

This new campus will be launched in October or November 2017 depending on how and when Tony Arnold, newly-appointed pastor to the online campus, gathers together his volunteers to serve as online ushers and greeters. Other small details and ideas will also be hashed out before the campus is launched.

A meaningful appointment

Arnold's appointment is especially meaningful because Arnold went into the ministry from Christ Church.

"Just five years ago, he came to Christ Church at the invitation of his girlfriend and he was strictly an agnostic. But he was open to the idea that God might exist. He found Christ here," Speight said.

Arnold then felt the call to ministry, and he attended Wesley Theological Seminary. He graduated in May 2017 with his Masters of Divinity and attended licensing school soon after.

"One of our own is com-

ing home," said Speight sharing that when he announced Arnold's appointment to the congregation, they roared in applause.

Sensing a culture change

The impetus behind the online campus comes from a societal culture change.

"We realized the culture around us is changing. There are those who, for a variety of reasons, will not step across the threshold of the church. They are embarrassed, afraid or work 80 hours a week and are too tired to leave the house on the weekend," said Speight.

The surrounding area also has a large military population and with deployments scattering members across the world, Speight shared that the online feature will allow the church to maintain relationship with these members wherever they are.

Speight said this online campus is also for those who are physically incapable of coming to church.

"We have been thinking about how to minister to people who cannot get to the church like people in prisons," Speight said.

Meeting with one of the heads of the state Department of Corrections, there has been discussion surrounding the church's ability to broadcast the Sunday morning worship service into state prison facilities.

So far, reaction to this possibility has been enthusiastically supported by the state and as far as Speight knows, this would make Christ Church the first and only church that the state has allowed network access through which to broadcast into the prisons.

The possibility has Speight seeing greater impact especially if prisoners could join small groups online.

"That would be an even greater impact where they are able to form some relationships and to be in small group with people who will care about them," said Speight.

A new thing

Speight describes the response from the congregation surrounding the online campus as tremendous and excited.

With opportunities for congregants to join into weekly small groups via online, schedules and jobs will no longer be a deterrent.

"This will be a way for them to carve out that hour and be either in worship on Sunday morning or be in small group during the week whether online or in person," said Speight. **C**

– Madeline Pillow is editor of the **Virginia Advocate.**

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Conference office changes name



By Madeline Pillow

There is a newlynamed office in the conference center as the Center for Next Generation Ministries replaces Ministries with Young People. As director Paulo Lopes said, the change comes because of evolution within the office and their priorities.

The office's name has changed several times over the years as job descriptions changed and as staff positions within the office were merged and down-sized.

In March 2016, the office started an initiative that involved launching a team composed of leaders from around the conference tasked to imagine what the office could look like within their unique context. This team was also focused on aligning with the All Things New initiative on leadership development.

After meeting for over 18 months, the team has developed a Ministry Action Plan and their newlystated mission is "to raise up next generation spiritual leaders to follow Jesus Christ into the world." Following Annual Conference 2017 and Bishop Sharma D. Lewis sharing her ministry vision for the conference, the team is even more excited about the changes.

"The Next Gen Lead Team is encouraged by and committed to Bishop Lewis' vision for the Virginia Conference, and we are working on ways to continue aligning our work with the purpose of connecting, equipping and sending Next Gen Spiritual Leaders, who are lifelong learners, influencing others to serve," said Lopes.

Through this process, the team has identified three strategic steps to help them carry out their mission: Connect (opportunities that identify, gather and discover leaders), Equip (opportunities that resource, train, coach and develop leaders) and Send (opportunities whereby leaders are mobilized and commissioned to live out their call).

The name change also comes as a result of a realization that within such a large conference of differing dynamics that efforts would need to be multiplied in order to carry out ministries by launching area-specific teams.

In order to do this a Campus Minister Operational Team in partnership with the conference Board of Higher Education



and Campus Ministry (BHECM) was launched in October 2016. The office is currently preparing to launch a Children's Ministry Operational Team in the fall.

Get Involved

Lopes shared that there are ways for leaders across the conference to get involved with the office. Over the next 10 months the Next Gen lead team will focus on the "connect" portion of their strategy. This will involve listening events in the fall, and a Next Gen "On Tour" event in March. The Next Gen "On Tour" event will be one event in five locations.

"We hope to connect with leaders from across the conference, offering relevant resources and opportunities for partnerships," said Lopes.

Additionally, connect with the office at the handle @VaUMCNextGen through Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

As this is a time of change and renewal, Lopes shared, "We are committed to posting resources, information about upcoming events and opportunities for feedback."

If you believe you might be called to this kind of strategic work, contact Next Generation Ministries. They are currently recruiting spiritual leaders for their kid's ministry lead team and also have plans for several new teams that will tackle young adult ministries, youth ministries, All God's Children camps and support ministries (media, marketing, communications, etc.). Contact them through social media, email them at nextgen@vaumc.org, call 804-521-1139, or go to www. vaumc.org/nginformation. *Second*

– Madeline Pillow is editor of the Virginia Advocate.

Lay Servant Academy shares feeling of togetherness

by Beth Christian

In early April about 140 people gathered on beautiful Smith Mountain Lake for the Virginia Conference Lay Servant Academy. Many of our participants were attending for the first time and our seasoned lay servants helped them feel welcomed. One of the best things about Lay Servant Ministry is that we are all in this together. We are trying to become serving Christians and effective evangelists by investing in trade craft learning and by seeking a higher level of accountability through certification.

The classes offered this year were varied, offering creative, in-depth and personalized approaches to ministry. The Rev. Nathan Decker always holds the record for the greatest number of tissue boxes used in a classroom when he teaches Leading Prayer. Martha Stokes brought vibrant new ministry ideas to those seeking to be in ministry with older adults. Beautiful artistic expressions of faith came out of Betsey Davis' class on spirituality and the arts. We offered exceptional classes on being Methodist with Richard Speirs teaching Basic and Rev. Andrew Ware teaching Polity. The class on music in worship led by Rev. Norman Ramsey and Tianna Durbin equipped music leaders with tools and practical resources for a meaningful worship experience. The class led our closing worship service on Sunday and it was fantastic.

We also heard three inspiring messages by Rev. Dorothee Tripodi, David Meyr and Jill Riddle (both fairly new to Lay Servant Ministries). We experienced many creative elements in worship including a prayer ribbon tree that carried us through the weekend. This was used in a way to respond to God's call on our lives. We ended our time together with Roanoke District Superintendent Rev. Kathleen Overby-Webster presiding over Holy Commu-

(Con't. on page 9: "ACADEMY.")





SNIPPETS



Shenandoah University and Wesley Theological Seminary partner for fast track program

Shenandoah University and Wesley Theological Seminary agreed to a fast-track 3 + 3 program to benefit students and the denomination after years of hashing out the details on Saturday, June 17 at the Virginia Annual Conference. This agreement will allow Shenandoah University undergraduate students to forgo their senior year and take classes at Wesley Theological Seminary instead. The credits will then transfer back to Shenandoah as electives. The program will begin in Fall 2018. Learn more at www.su.edu or www.wesleyseminary.edu. §

VUMH transitions to new name, Pinnacle Living

Effective June 19, Virginia United Methodist Homes, Inc. (VUMH), changed its name to "Pinnacle Living," reflecting its long-standing commitment to better serve its senior living residents. Founded in 1948 by leaders of the Virginia Methodist Church, the organization has grown from a single community to seven communities across Virginia. Pinnacle Living is home to more than 1,240 residents in Richmond, Williamsburg, Roanoke, Norfolk, the Eastern Shore and Northern Virginia. It employs more than 1,000 team members. "We realized our former name simply did not reflect who we are today," explained Christopher P. Henderson, president and CEO. "Today's seniors are more active and engaged. The people we serve want the very best out of life. For the last several years, we have been working to create a culture where age does not define a person. Our new name better represents our focus to provide the very best in partnership with our residents, their families and our team." Learn more at www.pinnacleliving.org.

PINNACLE LIVING

SNIPPETS

Fredericksburg District changes name

On March 4, the Fredericksburg District voted to change its district name to Rappahannock River District (RR) during a called district conference. The change is now effective following Annual Conference 2017.

District Superintendent Ted Smith shared that the change was as a result of different factors. The district wanted a name to better reflect their 13 geographic regions as well as a tribute to Native American persons who are represented in this region.

After the decision was made, Smith said he appreciated the discernment of the gathered group and the way they uplifted each other.

"I'm totally thrilled with the way my folks conducted themselves," said Smith. "Our conference meeting was so full of grace and overtly spiritual."

To reach the district, you can email them at **Rappahannockriverdistrict@** vaumc.org. ****



York River District of The United Methodist Church and Monitor Merrimac District of Colonial Virginia Council BSA, are proud to present the United Methodist Cross and Flame award to Pastor Tom Tipton of Christ United Methodist Church, Eagle Scout Brain Sixbey of First United Methodist of Fox Hill and Spiritual Leader Robert M. Chapman. These three pastors make Scouting part of their church ministry and work with the youth to help their faith grow in using the PRAY program in the church. Congratulations to these three pastors.

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

nion and in a very uplifting commissioning as we were sent back out to do the work of God's church.

Plans are already underway for next year's Lay Servant Academy. We will announce the date and location within the next few weeks. We hope you will encourage laity in your church to come. This learning experience is not only for those seeking to become a Certified Lay Servant or Certified Lay Speaker. This academy is designed to equip and empower laity to do more for the kingdom and to find their strengths in ministry.

> - Beth Christian is the director of Lay Servant Academy.



www.vaumc.org/Advocate

DISCIPLES HELPING TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD



For years, the folks at **Skipwith UMC**, **Richmond District**, have collected school supplies for their next door neighbor, Skipwith Elementary School. In 2014, a backpack ministry was established to benefit children in need at the school.

In recent months, guided by a weekly prayer session focused on God's will for the church, the realization has come that what was missing was relationship with the people at the school. Talks between the church's new pastor and the school's new principal (who, by the way, have the same name!) began the development of this relationship.

In December, one of the teachers made the church aware of needs of families who had just arrived in the Skipwith area with little or nothing, and the church helped to pull together furnishings and clothing for five families. In March, several of Skipwith's members helped celebrate Dr. Seuss' birthday by kicking off a reading program for students, and now partner with the teachers on a regular basis in the classroom. In April, Skipwith hosted some of the recipient families of the backpack ministry and a significant number of the school's teachers and staff to an Italian feast which was complimented by singing,

crafts and games. The school even provided an interpreter to assist with better communication among families where English is a second language. The event was a rousing success!

The "two Skipwiths" plan to continue building this relationship, with future plans for a Teacher Appreciation morning and a joint Rise Against Hunger event. Working together, they anticipate many more opportunities to serve the community around the school and church.

Pray and Stitch Group of **Pros**pect UMC, Farmville District, was organized in September 2010. Meeting each month, they enjoy devotions, prayer, refreshments, and being together, while they work on their projects. Their creations are given to shut-in members of the church as well as the outside community. Some have gone to Evergreen tornado victims, Sarah Cannon Cancer Center in Richmond, Germany, friends of families and to Centra Hospice.



"Honoring our past, celebrating our present and embracing our future." is the theme of **Lower** United Methodist Church as they celebrate 300 years of service in Middlesex County. This strong and vibrant congregation has survived 300 years and still stands firm. On Oct. 21 their grounds will become an "Historic Site" as they reenact the history of this church with wares on display, music and reenactors throughout the field that will resemble a Colonial Market day. On Sunday, Oct. 22, they will celebrate worship with former pastors and commit to a future of service to the community.



EVENTS

JULY

Mission Encounter

Jul. 28-29, Bon Air UMC, Chesterfield Mission Encounter is a cooperative event sponsored by the Virginia Conference Missional Ministries Board (formerly the Board of Global Ministry) and the Virginia Conference United Methodist Women.

This event offers a wonderful opportunity for your whole congregation to come alive to mission by participating in an exciting weekend mission education experience. There are classes for adults where men, women, clergy and laity alike come to learn and be involved in mission groups by choosing one class out of three choices — a spiritual growth study, geographical study or social issue.

This year from Jul. 28-29, the classes offered will be climate justice, living as a covenant community and the missionary conference of The UMC in the United States (Red Bird, Oklahoma and Alaska). Contact Gail Sutcliffe with questions at **703-490-3381**. Event will be held Bon Air UMC in Chesterfield.

AUGUST

ALL IN: Children's Faith Formation Intensive event

Aug. 17-19, Atlanta, Ga.

What happens when you bring 75 children's ministers together for a two-day intensive event? We go ALL IN! The ALL IN: A Children's Faith Formation Intensive event will be held Aug. 17-19, 2017, at Peachtree Road UMC in Atlanta, Ga. This conference is specifically designed for people working in local church and extension (camp/retreat) ministries. Children's



ministers will spend 12+ intensive hours in small groups learning from a team of academics, experts and practitioners to create a plan for having courageous conversations with children, parents and church leadership as well as to develop practices of pastoral care of children in congregations and communities. Registration is \$178 and is limited to the first 75 registrants. For registration and information, visit: **http://bit.ly/ALLInUMC**. Email questions to: childrensministry@ umcdiscipleship.org.

OCTOBER

5 Talent Academy Oct. 19, 10 locations around Virginia

Registration is now open for the 5 Talent Oct. 19 event, "How to Structure your Church for Evangelism" with Jacob Armstrong. Armstrong will lead the event in exploring key principles for evangelism in local church including crafting a vision that fits your mission field, rethinking worship and leadership development and structure. The event will be streamed to nine locations across the conference from the live site at Woodlake UMC in Chesterfield. Gather a team from your church to take part. Early bird pricing as well as team discounts are available. Visit https://vaumc.org/5talent for more information and to register.

The Advocate magazine publishing schedule requires that information be compiled sooner than the month for which it is published. For events you are interested in, please contact those listed for the events as points of contact for the most up-to-date information and for questions.

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EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY

Identifying your church's key risks

By Robert Lane

For your church's leadership team. At your next meeting, ask each member to list your church's top five risks. Chances are you will discover three things: there is very little consistency in what members perceive as your church's top risks; risks identified will not be terribly specific; and you discover who doesn't have good handwriting.

Following the exercise, share the results with the team and discuss.

Every organization, churches included, faces a variety of risks. Members of your leadership team may be familiar with it in their respective workplaces, especially if they work in banking, insurance and finance.

Now that your team has taken an initial stab at identifying your church's key risk, there are some additional steps.

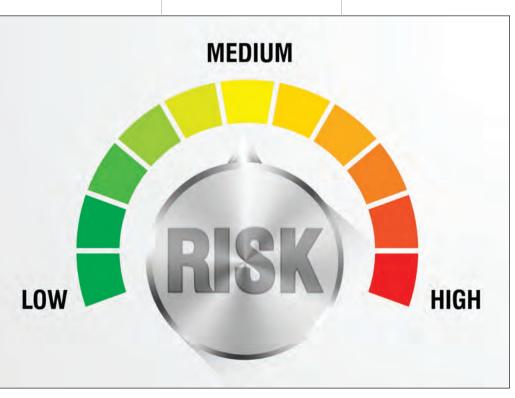
Step 1: Personalize definition of risk

Ask the team to agree upon its definition of risk. Consider the following definition at the right. Expand it or shorten it based on definition entries in *Merriam-Webster* or other sources. The team can use definition provided as a starting point and expand or shorten it. Risk: The potential that events will have an adverse effect on an organization's current or projected goals, objectives and resilience. Risks can involve a loss of reputation and monetary losses.

Step 2: Brainstorm potential church risks

Using your risk definition, ask members to brainstorm risks facing your church. Ask members to be as specific as possible. For example, someone may volunteer that ineffective communication is

fective communication is a risk. Pursue this thought. Specifically, what is it that makes communication ineffective? Is it too much or too little communication? Is communication untimely? The more specific the description of a risk, the better. Since this is a brain-



EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY

storming exercise all ideas are worthy of consideration.

Step 3: Categorize risks

Once risks have been identified, categorize them. In which broad category does each risk reside? Examples of risk categories might include:

Spiritual: Congregation has become too insular and inward focused.

Financial: Church is in a situation where it could find itself unable to fund ongoing church operations and strategic initiatives. Financial internal controls may be deficient.

Operational: Church software is outdated and/ or internal controls are inadequate. Operational risks could also include weaknesses relative to privacy and data intrusion.

Legal/compliance: The church is not in compliance with laws, regulations and/ or accounting standards. Instances of noncompliance might include adherence to the Book of Discipline.

Physical Security:

Weaknesses relative to intrusion, child safety and/ or background checks.

These are not meant to be all-encompassing, but to provide an example of risk categories that may be appropriate for your church. Again, once you've brainstormed your risk, categorize them.

Step 4: Prioritize risks

Once your team has identified and categorized your church risks you should determine how "risky" an identified risk is and prioritize it from highest to lowest.

For example, is the risk high or low? A basic risk framework contains three levels of risk. These are: high, moderate and low risk. Rankings are important as it assists leadership in ensuring sufficient resources are allocated to remediate those weaknesses associated with high risk areas. An example of risk definitions might look something like this:

High Risk: A weakness that must be addressed immediately. Left unresolved, this weakness could have a significant adverse impact on the organization's reputation and continuity of operations. This weakness could expose the organization to litigation and/or have a significant financial impact.

Moderate Risk: A weakness that requires leadership's attention during the normal course of business. Left unresolved, this weakness could have a moderate adverse impact on the organization's reputation.

Low Risk: A weakness that, if left unresolved, would have limited impact on an organization's operations or reputation.

Step 5: Tackle risks

Tackle the higher risk items first and be intentional in monitoring your progress. If left unresolved, the higher risk issues have the greatest potential to sidetrack your church from fulfilling its mission. Tracking the progress toward resolving risks will assist in the resolution for underlying weaknesses. For this reason:

- Assign responsibility for addressing the risk
- Request action steps needed to address the risk
- Request due dates for ultimate resolution
- Request progress reports

Step 6: Maintain riskassessment meetings

Initiate quarterly risk assessment reports that detail your church's highest risks and efforts taken to remediate the risks.

Getting leadership on the same page is a critical step in remediating your church's key risks.

– Robert Lane is a member of New Song UMC in Mechanicsville, Va., where he serves on the Leadership Council and is the chair of the Financial Management Team. His background is in bank regulation, risk management and finance. He served as a national bank examiner for 32 years. ISAIAH 43:19



















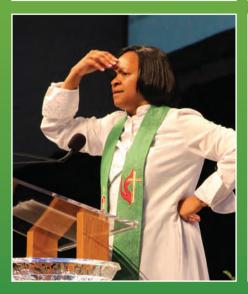
2017 VIRGINIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE













he theme for the 2017 Virginia Annual Conference. held June 16-18 at the Hampton Roads Convention Center in Hampton, Va., was "A New Thing." The conference theme was based on Isaiah 43:19, "Behold I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."

It truly was a new thing as Bishop Sharma D. Lewis presided over her first annual conference. The proceedings kept with the theme and was Spirit-filled through unscripted altar calls and powerful preaching.



Episcopal Address

Bishop Lewis shared what she had learned in her nine months of being bishop in the Virginia Conference. She stated that her vision was formed through her visits to the 16 districts for listening sessions called "Chat and Chews." At these sessions, Bishop Lewis met with clergy for one session and laity for a second session, adding up to a total of 32 listening sessions and 7,823 miles since September 2016.

She questioned the body, "How many of you would agree with me that it's time to be intentional about creating a culture of disciple making? How many of you would agree with me that it's time for us to identify, equip and deploy "emergent" leaders sitting on pews by fostering a culture of call?"

Bishop Lewis stated that she knew God wanted to do a new thing in Virginia and that in order to do this, first the conference must change its focus, then clarify the focus and finally commit to God's plan. Lewis said that in order to capture this new thing in the conference then the focus must change and not look backwards. She took this time to also apologize.

"As I listened and engaged with several clergy groups and received letters from laity, some of you have been hurt by clergy, by laity, by the system or just disappointed in The United Methodist Church. I stand before you as your bishop to apologize for the hurt and pain that some of you have endured and to challenge us together rewrite some new narratives in the Virginia Conference," she said. "We are covenant brothers and sisters in ministry, laity will be valued, that women are called to lead large churches, that young clergy will have a denomination to serve, that small churches can grow and we will respond to human suffering."

Lewis shared that she would share her vision for the conference during her Sunday closing worship sermon.

Lewis ended by talking about the commitment that this new thing would require.





"The overall question for us this afternoon – have we committed ourselves to the work of the Kingdom? Not your church, not your district. Have we committed to love our brothers and sisters – no matter what color, race, gender or sexual orientation? Have we committed as United Methodists to practice scriptural holiness?"

Bible Study

Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett, North Alabama Annual Conference, led Bible Study on Saturday and Sunday mornings.

Service of Remembrance and Holy Communion

The Rev. Tom Joyce, assistant to the bishop, preached for the Service of Remembrance and Holy Communion in which 35 conference clergy and laity who died since the last Annual Conference were remembered.

One Matters Award and Harry Denman Awards

The One Matters award was given to Bethel UMC, Elizabeth River District. Representing the church were Pastor Barbara J. St. Jean, church council chair Frances Dixon and member Sarah Seeley.

The clergy Denman award went to the Rev. Reggie Tuck, senior pastor of Messiah UMC, Alexandria District. Laity award went to Johnnie Morris, member of Journey UMC, Farmville District. Youth award went to Nicole Kent, member of Cunningham UMC, Charlottesville District.

Rev. Glenn Rowley, Bishop Sharma D. Lewis and Warren Harper accepted awards from the Rev. Denise Honeycutt.

Virginia Conference presented awards from GBGM

The Rev. Denise Honeycutt, senior connectional engagement specialist for the General Board of Global Ministries, (GBGM) addressed the conference and shared a video about Global Ministries' move to Atlanta to reduce costs and deepen connections to conferences.

She shared, "The people of the Virginia Conference are mission people. They are making a positive impact around the world and in their local communities. Mission is about relationships," she said.

Honeycutt presented an award to the conference for being the highest giving conference to mission in the Southeastern Jurisdiction to the Rev. Glenn Rowley, conference director of Justice and Missional Excellence for the Virginia Conference. Honeycutt presented to Bishop Lewis an award for the Virginia Conference having the highest total giving to designated gifts. A third award was presented to Conference Lay Leader Warren Harper, having the highest number of missionaries supported in the Southeastern Jurisdiction.

"Thank you for continuing to put your faith into action," Honeycutt said.



Conference Business

Seven churches were discontinued in five districts. Five new faith communities and their pastors were introduced including two online campuses.

The body discussed two of five resolutions on Sunday morning.

- Resolution 5 Hydraulic Fracturing Oil and Gas. The committee recommended concurrence. The resolution passed.
- Resolution 4 Resolution on Holy Land Travel. The resolution passed.
- Fredericksburg District Superintendent Ted Smith announced the district's name change to Rappahannock River District effective Jul. 1.
- The body voted to keep the 2016 delegates for the special 2019 General Conference.
- Conference Treasurer David Dommisse shared that membership is down but giving is up. The conference reserves have risen from a negative to a positive.

Update from Commission on a Way Forward

The Rev. Tom Berlin, member of the Commission on A Way Forward, presented a report on the progress of the commission. The commission, which is a 32-member group with representatives from nine countries, held its first meeting in January 2017.

Proposed by the Council of Bishops and approved by the 2016 General Conference in order to examine and suggest possible revisions to the paragraphs in the *Book of Discipline* concerning human sexuality, the group's additional goal is to "explores options that help to maintain and strengthen the unity of the church" according to their page on the www.umc.org.

Berlin said that this topic is an important issue. He shared that it needs to be talked about and that leaders, whether clergy or laity, in the local church can't



push off the conversation about human sexuality. He urged leaders to be "self-feeders" to research more about the commission and its work if they are concerned about the future of the church; he said that all this information was

available by visiting www.umc.org and searching for "Commission on a Way Forward."

Berlin mentioned that the denomination's connection is showing some signs of brokenness. The commission, he said, has been encouraged to look at new forms and structures "that will allow us to possibly walk together more loosely in a newly-envisioned connectionism."

Berlin also provided resources for leaders searching things to do alongside the commission in the process. He encouraged those gathered to read *The Anatomy of Peace* by the Arbinger Institute which the commission has read during its work. He also encouraged going to his website at www.revtomberlin.com to view his presentation about a third way on the topic of human sexuality.

Bishop Lewis introduced a new feature to Annual



Conference this year. Called "Glory Sightings," this video series was shown throughout conference to highlight mission and ministry throughout the Vir-



ginia Conference. In her meetings around the state, a common theme she heard from both clergy and laity was not knowing enough about what was happening in the conference in mission. These videos included a school-church partnership, a drumline ministry with youth and women's ministry in Cambodia.

Swanson talked about his mother being born in segregated Mississippi. She left Mississippi and met Swanson's father. Her father was an itinerant local preacher in the local church. Bishop Swanson didn't know this until he went to Mississippi to serve as bishop because his grandfather died the year the bishop was born. His grandfather held him at 6

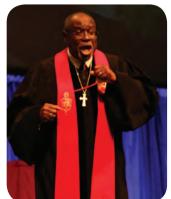


A Service for the Ordering of Ministry

Fifteen men and women were ordained elders, one was ordained deacon, 15 were commissioned as provisional members, one recognition of associate member and 40 were licensed as local pastors in the Saturday evening Ordering of Ministry service.

Bishop James E. Swanson Sr., Mississippi Annual Conference, delivered the sermon, preaching about the Holy Spirit.

"The Holy Spirit is anxious today to fall on people. It's anxious to transform people who will transform the world," he said. Addressing those especially who are preparing for ministry, "If the Holy Spirit is not working through you, it's not because the Holy Spirit doesn't want to. It will only work when you allow the Holy Spirit to do its work."



months old and didn't know he was holding a future bishop in that segregated Mississippi.

He called on the body to listen for the word of God.

"It is God's word that sets people free, that liberates the oppressed, the

liberates you to preach in a hostile church, and heals the church and raises the dead. It is the word of God. Don't be duped into abandoning God's word," he said.

Bishop Swanson then said, "I know I'm out of order," and invited Bishop Lewis to stand beside him and issued an altar call to any who felt God calling them. After a time of people coming forward to answer that



call, the service continued with Bishop Lewis conducting the Licensing of Local Pastors, the Commissioning of Provisional Members and the Ordination of Deacon and Elders.

Closing Worship

Bishop Lewis reflected on how God has chosen her to lead the Virginia Conference and how humbled she was to be in this position.

She clarified her vision for the conference over the next four years: For the Virginia Annual Conference to be Disciples of Jesus Christ who are lifelong learners who influence others to serve.

Lewis emphasized that every person in the conference, whether clergy or laity, has a circle of influence, and the ability to keep learning in which to attain this vision.

"Wouldn't it be powerful if all of Virginia is on the same page with our intentional discipleship making?" she asked. "Where's your circle of influence? Golf course, nail salon, friends, church?"

She said a person of influence enlarges people, navigates for other people, connects with people, empowers people and reproduces other influences.

Walking among the people, then standing on a chair, the bishop said, "I need you. Young adults, I need you. Older adults, I need you. You don't always learn what to do. You learn what not to do.

"I know it's not prim and proper to be standing on a chair, but I'm going for broke," she said. "I'm going to let you in on a secret. Many of you are saying you don't see it. That's okay. I'm going to be here four years and I'm going to help you see it!"

"Jesus is my thing. Discipleship is my thing,"

WRAP-UP STATS



Health Kits	26,599
School Kits	12,987
Birthing Kits	4,479
Layette Kits	1,397
Cleaning Kits	366
Bedding Kits	390
Sewing Kits	540
Misc. Kits	254



Attendees of conference contributed 7,025 pounds of canned goods and boxed dry foods as part of the "4 Cans 4 Conference" drive. In addition, 5,090 pounds of produce was directed toward the Peninsula Food Bank.

Members approved a 2018 budget of \$31,800,000, down from the 2017 budget.

A conference offering was collected of more than \$118,000.

The offering will be benefit Cambodia, Brazil, Mozambique, Virginia Long Term Disaster Recovery, Ethnic Minority Missional Ministries and Virginia Volunteers in Mission.





ifty clergy took retired status at Annual Conference 2017. The Rev. Janet Knott, representing the retirement class, gave the sermon for the service entitled "Be an Ambassador."

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*Ad-Interim



Devotions from International Lesson Series



Nancy Stallard Yarborough was born and educated in Southwest Virginia (Abingdon, to be exact).

She was born and raised in the Methodist Church. Her Methodist roots run deep as her great, great, greatgrandparents housed Francis Asbury when he rode the circuit in this area of Virginia.

Her love for mission began at an early age when her mother was president of the WSCS. Nancy followed suit by being president of the York River District UM Women. She has held many offices in the local district and conference levels. She is currently chair of nominations for the Conference UM Women and also lav leader for the York River District. Her love for family and mission and serving Jesus Christ are her priorities. Nancy enjoys going on international mission trips to spread the good news of Jesus Christ

Aug. 6, 2017 Acts 6: 1-8 The Exceptional Man

e never know what God has in store for us. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever imagine that I would be traveling to a Third World country to spread the good news of Jesus Christ to unbelievers.

As the Scripture said, we meet certain persons on these journeys that have a lasting impact on us both spiritually and emotionally. I met such a person in Cambodia. His name is the Rev. Dr. Romeo I. del Rosario, affectionately know as Romy.

Not only is he the country director for The United Methodist Church in Cambodia, he is also a teacher at the Cambodian Methodist Bible School where he trains new pastors. He is a very learned person who speaks nine languages among other attributes, but that's not the Romy I want to share with you.

I want you to know the caring, loving, compassionate, empowering man who would go to every length to help the hurting, to pray for the sick and dying. The one who would be on the ground to help a child. The one who would cheer you up when you were in the depths of despair. The one who would love you in spite of yourself.

This is truly who God wants us to be — be like Romy, a true man of God in every sense of the word.

Romy has impacted my life so very deeply that every day I pray to God for the strength and wisdom he shares so lovingly with everyone he meets. God bless this beautiful man.

Aug. 13, 2017 Acts 8:26-39 Are you Afraid?

"Then Phillip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus."

we easy is it for you, or any of us to testify about Jesus Christ? It takes courage but also a personal relationship with this man called Jesus. If you're speaking about your best friend, it's easy, but so few can speak of Jesus as a personal friend.

In my travels to Central America, Asia and the United States, I am often reminded of Bible verses I learned as a child. Why do these give me more courage and assurance than things I have learned since childhood? I feel it's because I grew up in a loving, Christian home and was taught from an early age to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

We are called to live as Christ would have us live: love one another, and live and share that love with everyone.

Jesus tell us he is with us always and to "fear not."

Aug. 20, 2017 Acts 9:10-20 Opening our eyes to Christ's offer

"So Ananias went and entered the house, he laid his hands on Saul and said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.'"

Here we have this man Ananias who is a firm believer in Jesus Christ and has been asked by Christ to help Saul.

Saul is a man who is destined to be a great powerhouse in spreading the word of Christ.He has been commissioned by Jesus Christ to preach the word throughout all the lands.

How many of us are blinded, unable to see Christ and afraid to spread the word? How many of us cower in darkness when we are asked to turn on the light of goodness and salvation?

I will never forget the first time I was asked to speak. My mouth became dry and the words on the paper in front of me looked as if they were written in a foreign language. I took a deep breath, looked out at the congregation and asked them if they would join me in prayer.

Strange how after asking God's guidance, I had no trouble speaking. As a matter of fact, I didn't even refer to my notes. The words flowed from my mouth as if someone was speaking for me, and they were. The Holy Spirit had opened my eyes, my mouth and my heart.

It's all so easy if we prepare our heart for Jesus Christ to be the teacher and we become the vessel. As Saul regained his sight, we too can open our eyes to all that is offered to us through Jesus Christ.

Aug. 27, 2017 Acts 10: 19-33 Becoming all-inclusive

"He said to them, 'You all realize that it is forbidden for a Jew to associate or visit with outsiders. However, God has shown me that I should never call a person impure or unclean.'"

This is a very profound Scripture passage as we have been given a distinct rule. God has shown us how to treat our neighbors.

Have you ever heard the story of the man that showed up at church very dirty, in torn clothing and needing a shave? And if that wasn't enough, he smelled as if he had been sleeping with the animals in a barn. Well, this wonderful "Christian" congregation was very incensed that this person would dare enter into their pristine sanctuary! Of course the lay leader approached him and "suggested" he must be in the wrong place.

The man looked up at the lay leader and asked, "Is this where I can worship God?" The lay leader responded, "It's where WE worship God, "implying that only members of that church could worship there.

The disheveled man rose to his feet and extended a hand to receive a handshake. The lay leader stood there prostrate and refused the man. The man walked to the front of the church and announced, "I am your new pastor and wanted to see if this was a real house of God."

Everyone was in shock as to what had just happened, but the good part of the story is that this congregation had their eyes opened and saw what they were missing. Today this is one of the most diverse churches in the state!

What will it take for us to become an all-inclusive congregation?

CLERGY & DIACONAL

DEATHS



The Rev. Barbara Ward, a retired deacon in full connection, died May 21, 2017. A memorial service will take place at River Road UMC

in Richmond on Sunday, Aug. 6 at 2 p.m. Survivors include her husband, the Rev. Gerould Ward, retired.

Jose Bonilla, father of the Rev. Norma Aguilar, associate pastor at Ramsey Memorial UMC, Richmond, died May 30, 2017. The family traveled to El Salvador for his burial.

Dona Marie Pillow Forehand, 67, died May 20, 2017. Forehand was the daughter of retired **Rev. C. Douglas Pillow** and Mrs. Eleanor Smith Pillow who resided in Lynchburg.

Alongside her parents, Forehand is survived by her husband, James Butler Forehand Jr.; children, James Butler Forehand III and Sarah Douglas Forehand; brother and sister-in-law Richard Douglas Pillow and Amy Stevens Pillow; and grandchildren, Brenna and Nolyn.

A graduate of Lynchburg College, she earned her degree in education. She taught elementary education at then-named Brookville Elementary in Lynchburg. Forehand was proud to have been Miss Lynchburg and Miss Virginia 1972.

A Celebration of Life service was held at Peakland UMC in Lynchburg on May 26. The Rev. John Vest, Peakland UMC; the Rev. Bill Burleigh, Court Street UMC; and the Rev. Patrick Pillow, Chester UMC, officiated the service. **Eva Mayes Lee**, 95, of DeWitt, Va., died May 25, 2017. She was preceded in death by her husband of 58 years, Travis Taylor Lee Jr. and by her eight sisters.

Lee is survived by her three children, Travis Young Lee (Kathy), **the Rev. Dr. Virginia A. Lee**, and Daniel Dillon Lee (Alicia) as well as grandchildren and great-granddaughters.

The Rev. Dr. Virginia Lee is a former staff member of Reveille UMC, Richmond, and maintains her charge conference connection at Reveille. She is currently serving an extension appointment as an associate professor in Christian Education and Director of Deacon Studies at Garrett Theological Seminary.

A funeral service was held May 28 at Rocky Run UMC in Dewitt, Va., with the Rev. Cindy Lee and the Rev. Bryan Carper officiating.

Leda J. Wisor, of York, Pa., died May 16, 2017. Wisor is the stepmother of the Rev. William T. Mackey-Wisor, appointed to Watson Memorial UMC, Danville District. Wisor was a member of Bigler UMC. A memorial service was held May 20 in Pennsylvania.

Pauline Carr died May 8, 2017. She served the Staunton District and the Virginia Conference in many different positions.

Thomas G "TG" Gearheart Jr., 86, of Radford, died April 28, 2017. He was a member of Central UMC in Salem and was retired from Harvey Chevrolet. Gearheart was a U.S. Army veteran serving during the Korean Conflict.

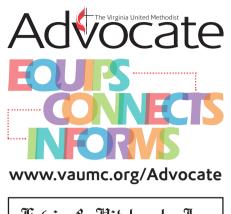
Survivors include his wife of 42 years, Mary Chapman Gearheart; sons and daughters-in-law, Tom (Vickie) and Tim (Becky) Gearheart, and Chris (Janice); daughter, Sara; five grandchildren and one great-grandson; and several nieces and nephews.

His son, **the Rev. Tim Gearheart**, is pastor at Wesley Memorial UMC in Martinsville.

Carlton J. Robertson, 58, brother of Brenda Harris and brother-in-law to retired **Rev. Ralph Harris Jr.**, died on Dec. 1, 2016, in Roanoke, Va. Robertson was a member of Halesford UMC, Danville District.

BIRTHS

Jayden Jihoon Huh, was born at 12:15 a.m. on June 2, 2017, in INOVA Fairfax Hospital. Parents are **the Rev. Keon Huh** and **Michelle Huh**. This is the second child for the couple. The Rev. Huh is an associate pastor at Korean UMC of Greater Washington, Arlington District.



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FROM THE BISHOP



Writing the vision

Dear Virginia Annual Conference.

s I reflected on my first Annual Conference, the only words I could utter were "Look at God!" The Spirit of the Lord was moving and electrifying all over the convention center as I witnessed people engaged in conversations, smiles, hugs and anticipation as we began our work.

As I shared in the Episcopal Address, Annual Conference is like a family reunion, a barbeque where people come together in one place. I felt a little nervous as I stood before 3,000 to share my journey for the last nine months. I could only imagine what was going on in their minds – "how will she preside, will we get to the resolutions this year and how should I vote on the five constitutional amendments?"

The Episcopal Address came from

Isaiah 43:19 "... See. I am doina a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." I shared that I felt a "stirring" of the Spirit and God wanted to do "a new thing," in the Virginia Conference since my installation this past September. I highlighted that to capture this "new thing" in the conference, we must change our focus, clarify our focus and commit to God's plan.

Interestingly, Sunday came very guickly! There was business, resolutions, unfinished business, closing worship and Fixing of the Appointments to be completed. However, I could still feel the joy from the Service for the Ordering of Ministry as individuals took the first step in accepting their call to ministry on Saturday evening.

As the conference began to wind down, it was time to share the vision of the Annual Conference for the upcoming quadrennial. As I preached from Habakkuk 2:2 "... Write the vision and make it plain on tablets..." I prayed, "God, I hope they will see it and receive it." This vision came after much prayer, discernment, sharing and compiling the data from the 32 sessions.

Our ministry vision for the Virginia Annual Conference is to be "Disciples of Iesus Christ who are lifelong learners who influence others to serve." All United Methodist churches in Virginia will have a process of intentionally forming disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by their influence and their acts of servanthood by 2020.

Now the work begins! If you don't see it, that's okay. I'm going to be here for four years, and I'm going to help you see it!

Peace and Bleyjing, Bishop Sharma D. Lewis

Bishop's Bible Challenge readings for August

August 1	Isaiah 18-22
August 2	Isaiah 23-27
August 3	Isaiah 28-30
August 4	Isaiah 31-35
August 5	Isaiah 36-41
August 6	Isaiah 42-44
August 7	Isaiah 45-48
August 8	Isaiah 49-53
August 9	Isaiah 54-58
August 10	Isaiah 59-63
August 11	Isaiah 64-66
August 12	Jeremiah 1-3
August 13	Jeremiah 4-6
August 14	Jeremiah 7-9
August 15	Jeremiah 10-13
August 16	Jeremiah 14-17
August 17	Jeremiah 18-22
August 18	Jeremiah 23-25
August 19	Jeremiah 26-29
August 20	Jeremiah 30-31
August 21	Jeremiah 32-34
August 22	Jeremiah 35-37
August 23	Jeremiah 38-41
August 24	Jeremiah 42-45
August 25	Jeremiah 46-48
August 26	Jeremiah 49-50
August 27	Jeremiah 51-52
August 28	Lamentations 1:1-3:36
August 29	Lamentations 3:37-5:22
August 30	Ezekiel 1-4
August 31	Ezekiel 5-8

- See more at: http://backtothebible.org/ reading-guide/15/7#sthash.Cl2yx6KJ.dpuf

ONE LAST WORD



Creativity just like any good practice needs to be exercised regularly. Making time to invest in creative opportunities can help you on tough projects and are good ways to ward off against future creative blocks. Below are some ways you can tap into your creative side.

SIGN UP FOR A CLASS

Do you have an interest for something you've never tried before? Ever wanted to try ballet, a survival class or American Sign Language? Cultivating new passions expands the brain and adds experiences to your life's scrapbook.

GET MOVING

Having trouble solving a problem? Don't just sit in your chair. Work standing up, stretch or take a brief walk to see a new angle on the situation.

30 CIRCLES

Pick up a pen and draw 30 circles on a piece of paper. Then try and turn each circle into a different object. Drawing helps you be more engaged in your projects and work your brain in a different way.

KEEP A JOURNAL

Whether you record the activities of your days, jot down quotes and ideas that occur to you during the day or make sketches of things you've seen and don't want to forget, your journal can become a treasure chest of inspiration.

SPEND TIME OUTSIDE

Fresh air, sunshine and even cleansing raindrops can be just the break you need in your routine. Step away from technology and take in the world that God created.

PLAY

When is the last time you went bowling? Or rode a bike? Or played a board game with your kids? Let yourself go on a water slide, or play kickball in the cul-de-sac with the neighborhood kids. You'll be surprised by good old FUN!

BRAINSTORM

Make a list of ideas and solutions, either on your own or with a group. Allow yourself to write down everything you think of, whether it seems impossible or silly — Don't edit! Set a goal of 50 or 100 ideas, and see how they start flowing when the sky's the limit.

PRAY

Why not take your creative challenges to the One who created everything to begin with? Pray for inspiration, for an open mind, for obstacles to be removed, for discernment, for a NEW THING to be revealed! **C**

