



The Virginia
United
Methodist

\$2

February 2014

Advocate



21ST CENTURY SLAVERY

Human
trafficking
remains a
major crime

Connecting with the



VirginiaAdvocate

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

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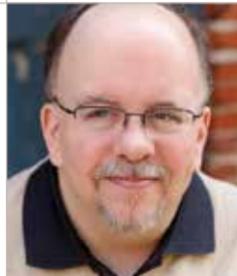
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FROM THE EDITOR



Neill Caldwell
Editor

When I went to Cambodia, I was not surprised to learn that hu-
man trafficking was a major problem in that third world country.

After all, Cambodia is one of the poorest nations on earth, and
right in the middle of a region that is known for its sex tourism. And
there's the problem of the devaluation of girls, who are sometimes
sold into slavery by their own parents because "that's all they're good
for."

As part of the fact-finding tour that my UVMIM teammates and I
experienced a year ago, we sat down with a woman who works at
an agency fighting against human trafficking in Cambodia. She told
us how Cambodian women and girls are sent to Thailand, Vietnam
and other countries, while women from other Asian nations are
brought into Cambodia.

But then a couple of weeks ago I picked up a copy of *Style* maga-
zine, which for the most part covers Richmond arts and restaurants,
and there was a cover exposé on the human trafficking crisis in
Virginia!

This is not just a third world issue, after all. It's happening all
around us. According to the U.S. State Department's "Trafficking in
Persons Report 2010," the number of adults and children in forced
labor, bonded labor and forced prostitution is 12.3 million. Human
trafficking is not always about sex, as people are being forced into
agricultural and domestic worker jobs.

Fortunately our United Methodist Women (UMW) and other ele-
ments of the denomination have worked for years to prevent traffick-
ing and prosecute those involved in buying and selling other human
beings around the world. Through education, partnership and action,
the church is working with other faith representatives, politicians, law
enforcement and community groups to build awareness and create
hope for those who are being trafficked.

UMW members will be among the volunteers who are approach-
ing hotels in the New York metropolitan area to raise awareness
about potential sex trafficking during Super Bowl XLVIII in New Jersey.
UMW is promoting an "Intercept the Traffickers" campaign to create
awareness surrounding the Super Bowl on Feb. 2.

The current laws in the Commonwealth related to human traf-
ficking are pretty weak, but hopefully things will change with a new
attorney general. And then-Governor Bob McDonnell did call a special
summit meeting on the topic last fall, and called it a "horrific crime."
He also established a new panel to take a look at the growing prob-
lem.

In the meantime, you can visit the website www.unitedmethod-istwomen.org to find lots of resources, including Bible studies, a
PowerPoint presentation and other downloadable materials from the
Intercept Human Trafficking campaign. And your gift to the Advance
#3021325 will support the ongoing work of the United Methodist
Women Human Trafficking Team. 📧

Slaves still
among us



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Above: Members of Annandale UMC's team working against human traffick-
ing march together in a local parade.

The Virginia Advocate Staff

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The mission project by youth at Belview UMC to Henderson Settlement in Kentucky, described on pg. 24 of the November *Advocate*, greatly reveals how we should do mission. It is so inspiring that I think everyone would want to read it again.

*Pete Costello
Winchester*

An epigram by the famous 16th century English poet and writer John Heywood says, “wolde ye bothe eate your cake and have your cake?” The United Methodist Church is not quite that old, but since I can remember she has been trying to do exactly that.

I say this in reference to the article in the (November 2013) *Advocate* about Obamacare and our “distinctly Methodist dilemma”



about who employs the clergy. When it comes to pay taxes, Social Security and travel expenses, the conference says I am self-employed. When it comes time for me to be paid, they say I am an employee of the local church. When it comes time for me to be moved, then I belong to the conference.

I think that it is a crying shame that the I.R.S. will have to solve this dilemma, but our church agencies love to dabble in politics, so we will see how this plays out.

I wonder what else will come out of this can of worms... If I am employed by the conference or the local church, then I guess that they will have to pay half of my Social Security withholding that I have been paying. If I am an employee of the local church or the conference, I think it is only fair that they pay for my travel expenses that I have been paying. Maybe if I work for the conference they might consider giving me a “company car.”

At least I will know who to ask for a raise. I’ve been asking my wife since I thought I was self-employed, and she has the checkbook, but that hasn’t worked very well.

The Board of Church and Society loves to lobby for social justice, so maybe they will come to my aid.

Allan Murphy is a local pastor for New Hope and Southall Memorial UMCs, Farmville District

Thanks so much for the clear, cogent and I believe truly Christian presentation the Rev. Morgan Guyton made in the January *Advocate* (pg. 5). My own view is that both Jesus and Paul suggested different ways of dealing with disagreements and varying scriptural interpretations.

The issue of sexuality is just one item on a number of societal concerns that the church, United Methodist and others, refuse to deal with in a grace-filled manner. We live in the 21st century, an age of fantastic cosmological understandings, and yet the Christian church, catholic and protestant alike, is still operating theologically speaking from 15th and 18th century understandings of the world we live in.

I long for reasoned, polite engagement in the truly important issues of faith in our time. You have opened, or at least invited Christians to consider a way to move the faith we confess in a meaningful way for today.

The Rev. Richard Worden is a retired elder living in Luray

Broken church, broken heart

By Sarah Wastella

My church is broken, perhaps not fully torn asunder, but well on its way.

I am not talking about the local church to which I am appointed, but the church which I serve: The United Methodist Church. It has been fractured, not by disagreement, but the way we act when we do. We turn on one another, rather than stopping the debate and arguing long enough to come together in Christ’s name.

When we should be breaking bread in Holy Communion, we attack one another verbally and in writing. When we should embrace those with whom we disagree as brothers and sisters in Christ, we assume their intentions are unholy and label them the problem. Both sides of many debates within the church engage in this behavior, and worse.

The church is broken, and if we do not make a conscious effort to stop this course of action and cycle of reaction, then it will disintegrate.

I do not believe anything that happens in the hierarchy of the church does not impact the lower levels. I cannot accept that the behavior in which

we engage there does not trickle down and poison the local church. It just takes longer to appear. What is visible now is despair, confusion, anger and hurt over what is being played out on a nationwide scale. I see conflict without resolution, and I know that this is being seen by those who feel they have no recourse. No one is unaffected, but many feel disaffected. I see the state of my church, and worse, the people in it, and my heart breaks. It breaks for the pain and suffering. It breaks for the loss of love and fellowship of believers. It breaks for the attacks and assumptions. It breaks because we are modeling the ways of the world with regards to oppositional thinking rather than striving to be of one mind in Christ. We see opponents when we should see siblings in Christ. We vilify when we should seek understanding. All we accomplish is to dig in our trenches a little deeper, and reveal the seedy underside of the church that does not have to exist.

Both sides disgust me. They get louder and more obnoxious. They make each other out to be heartless and cruel. They engage in secular factionalism, rather than the convergence of the Body of Christ. They get sarcastic, and the bitterness is palpable.

Both speak truth. Both are striving to go on to perfection. Both are comprised of Christians trying to find their way. Both are beloved



by God. So why can’t we act that way? Why can’t we see that in one another? We tear one another down, and we tear the church apart, brick by brick. We bash one another, and we throw rocks through stained glass windows. We hate the other side, and we spit on the cross, the ultimate symbol of God’s love: grace embodied.

Where is the grace for the other?

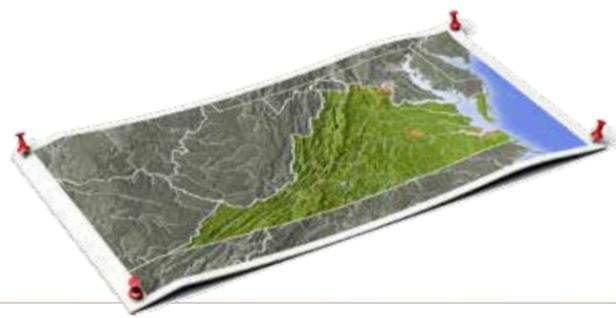
We need to stop. We need to step back. We need to seek first the Kingdom and relationship, or we will destroy what is left of this great denomination, at least in the United States.

How can we expect local congregations to reconcile within their parish, if we are unwilling to model it on a nationwide and global level? If you make me choose a side, then I choose Christ’s. He came

to love, heal and forgive. That is what I believe, in what I trust. In that I can find hope, but this tragedy playing out in the church leaves me broken and more like Job than I ever want to feel. I do not think I am alone in this. 

-The Rev. Sarah Wastella serves as an associate at Larchmont UMC, Elizabeth River District. She blogs daily at <http://sheofferedthemchrist.com>.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



New year means a bunch of events are coming soon

By Neill Caldwell

Ringing in the new year may be old news, but a flip of the calendar onto 2014 means that there's a lot of conference-sponsored events ahead in the coming weeks.

There are more details about logistics, start times and registration on our "Events" page of the Advocate (pg. 25 this month) and on the new and improved conference website, www.vaumc.org.

You can register online for all of these events by going through the website under "Events" and the date.

First up is a **Leadership Training Day** specifically for our larger membership churches. This newly created event will be held Feb. 1 at Woodlake UMC in Chesterfield. **The Rev. Dr. Lovett Weems**, executive director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary, will be the keynote speaker. There will be workshops offered by pastors and staff of some of our conference's more successful larger churches; even **Bishop Cho** will lead a workshop on prayer.

The annual **United Methodist Day at the General Assembly** (Thursday, Feb. 6) is one of the largest single-day events each year in the conference, always involving more than 300 people. Par-



Elvira Shaw was a familiar face at the General Assembly for decades but passed away in 2013. This will be the first United Methodist Day held without her. File Photo by Neill Caldwell

ticipants gather for breakfast at Bon Air UMC and then are bused down to the legislative office building on Capitol Square in Richmond for a time to meet with lawmakers or sit in on committee hearings. At noon they can attend the daily session of either the state Senate or House of Delegates, then it's back on the bus to Bon Air for lunch and a series of speakers. **Marco Grimaldo**, CEO of the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, is one of the speakers. This year there will also be a conference call on Sunday night, Feb. 2, where participants will be briefed on some of the key issues and bills before the legislature.

On the weekend of Feb. 7-9, the conference will offer a **Cultivating Young Leaders event at Camp Overlook** in Keezletown near Harrisonburg. This training is based on the "Living Your Strengths" model of identifying your own individual talents and published by Gallup. The idea

is to identify and affirm a person's unique talents, and then help use them to enrich their faith community. The gathering will be facilitated by **Alison Malloy** and **Tim Dayton**.

The annual **Lay Servant Academy** will happen at Blackstone Feb. 21-23. The 2014 academy will follow the Annual Conference theme of "Lord, Renew Us with Your Spirit." Basic, advanced and mini-courses will prepare lay servants for their ministries of caring, leading and communicating. The course list for full and "mini" offerings is very full this year.

The Clergy Spouses' Annual Retreat will be held Feb. 27-March 1 at Blackstone. The theme of this year's retreat is "Faith, Family and Forgiveness," focusing on the correlation between loving one's neighbor as oneself and forgiving one's debts as one is forgiven. **Dr. Carol Fletcher**, a social worker in Virginia, New York and Pennsylvania, will be

the retreat leader. As is the tradition with this event there will be time for special interest groups, including Zumba dance, tai chi, walking the labyrinth, golf or knitting. **Libby Wright** will also lead a workshop on creating first-person dramatizations of biblical or historical characters.

February is also the start date for a new conference **Clergy Leadership Program**. The first cohort will start with a retreat Feb. 11-13 under the leadership of the **Rev. Russ Moxley**, co-creator of the Royce and Jane Reynolds Program in Church Leadership of the Western North Carolina Conference. Elders who will start the course include: Beth Anderson, Chris Bennett, Fran Cooper, Tom Crosby, Clark Cundiff, Brad Dulaney, Chip Geissler, John Hemming, Donna Holder, Donald Jamison, Seonyoung Kim, Hyo Lee, Teresa McRoberts, Craig Newman, Pat Riggs, Janet Salbert, Tim Tate, Stan Thompson, Justin White and Judy Worthington. The program will continue with meetings in June, August and November of this year, and into 2015. The program is designed to help sharpen vocational competencies in evangelism and disciple making, worship leadership and preaching, and mission through reading and reflection, spiritual disciplines and peer learning groups. Among the key focus areas will be cross-cultural ministry and moving congregations from maintenance to mission.



Clif Christopher, President of Horizons Stewardship Company (above), will be the keynote speaker for the next teaching session of the **5 Talent Academy**, to be held Saturday, March 8, beginning at 8:30 a.m. Christopher is probably the "go-to" United Methodist on stewardship right now and the author of the very successful books "Not Your Parents' Offering Plate" (2008) and "Whose Offering Place Is It?" (2010). Participants will learn how to convince potential givers about the real significance and impact of their gifts. Leaders of the 5 Talent Academy recommend that churches gather finance committees and stewardship committees and plan to attend this event together as a team. Christopher, an ordained United Methodist pastor, will speak live from Floris UMC in Herndon, but the day will again be live-streamed to sites in Lynchburg, Martinsville, Richmond, Winchester, the Eastern Shore and the Tidewater and Shenandoah Valley areas.

On March 26-27, the **Virginia Conference Diaconate** will come together at Richmond Hill for a time of retreat, fellowship and growth. The theme for the retreat is "The Deacon Bridge: Connecting the Gaps" and will be led by **Dr. Margaret Ann Crain** of Garret-Evangelical Seminary in Evanston, Ill. The retreat is open to all candidates for ordination as a deacon, provisional deacons, ordained deacons, deaconesses, diaconal ministers and home missionaries in the Virginia Conference.

The many **Extension Ministers** from around the conference will spend a day with **Bishop Cho** on March 24 at the Roslyn Retreat and the author of the very successful books "Not Your Parents' Offering Plate" (2008) and "Whose Offering Place Is It?" (2010). Participants will learn how to convince potential givers about the real significance and impact of their gifts. Leaders of the 5 Talent Academy recommend that churches gather finance committees and stewardship committees and plan to attend this event together as a team. Christopher, an ordained United Methodist pastor, will speak live from Floris UMC in Herndon, but the day will again be live-streamed to sites in Lynchburg, Martinsville, Richmond, Winchester, the Eastern Shore and the Tidewater and Shenandoah Valley areas.

The second annual **Bishop's Convocation on Prayer** will be held Saturday, March



Bishop Young Jin Cho talks about the importance of prayer. File photo by Neill Caldwell

29, at Trinity UMC in Richmond. Bishop Young Jin Cho has put a greater emphasis on prayer since his election as bishop two years ago. The **Rev. Tom Albin**, Dean of the Upper Room Ministries and Ecumenical Relations, will be the plenary speaker. There will also be small group learning opportunities in the areas of prayer and Wesleyan spiritual disciplines.

An **"Exploration" event specifically geared to African American and Latino high school students** will be held at the Pace Center on the campus of Virginia Commonwealth University on Saturday, April 5.

Finally, on May 1-3, Virginia will host the nationwide **Cambodia Consultation**. In 2013 the Virginia Conference introduced the growing Methodist mission church in Cambodia as its newest Initiatives of Hope mission partner. An eight-member fact-finding team went to Cambodia last January to explore potential mission partner sites, and then a second team went to Cambodia in January of this year, led by the Rev. Sam NeSmith. This bi-annual gathering will be a chance to learn more about the growing Methodist presence in Cambodia. It will be hosted by Aldersgate UMC, Alexandria District. The last consultation was held in California in 2011.

-Neill Caldwell is editor of the Advocate.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

Roanoke church continues to pray for its city

"Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you.... Pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.... For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."

Jeremiah 29: 7, 11

By Liz Mortlock

WEDNESDAY NOONDAY SERVICES

Praying for the City

GREENE MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

402 Second Street at Church Avenue, Downtown Roanoke
www.gmumc.org Phone: 344-6225

Each week we will lift up in prayer different areas of city government and service.

12:05-12:30pm

Greene Memorial United Methodist Church is honored to host the Wednesday Noonday Services. These 25-minute services begin at 12:05 and offer messages of faith and hope from Roanoke's area clergy. With the home-cooked lunch that immediately follows (suggested donation, \$6) you can come to the service, eat lunch and be back in your office in less than an hour!

January 8	Joy Sylvester-Johnson, CEO, The Rescue Mission
January 15	Donna Hopkins Britt, Pastor, Calvary Baptist
January 22	Walter "B" Failes, Senior Pastor, Thrasher United Methodist
January 29	Brent Williams, Pastor, Colonial Presbyterian
February 5	Joe Dunagan, Associate Rector, St. John's Episcopal
February 12	Charlie Evans, Pastor, All Nations Church & Chaplain, Rke. City Fire Dept.
February 19	Tim Harvey, Pastor, Central Church of the Brethren
February 26	Joanna Paysour, Associate Pastor, Cave Spring United Methodist
March 5	Gary Heaton, Pastor, Greene Memorial United Methodist
March 12	Bob Garner, Pastor, Boones Mill United Methodist
March 19	Will Robison, Senior Pastor, Salem Presbyterian
March 26	Joe Lehman, Pastor, Our Lady of Nazareth Roman Catholic
April 2	Elizabeth Link, Associate Pastor, Second Presbyterian
April 9	N.L. Bishop, President, Jefferson College of Health Sciences
April 16	Kenneth Wright, Pastor, First Baptist, Gainsboro
April 23	Ellen Anderson, Minister, Presbyterian Church U.S.A.
April 30	Joe Cobb, Pastor, Metropolitan Community Church of the Blue Ridge

The City of Roanoke and its neighboring Roanoke County, Salem and Vinton are full of blessings and challenges. Some children excel in science and math while others drop out of school in their teens. Children may enjoy school cultural programs at the Jefferson Center, the Roanoke Symphony or the Taubman Museum, only to return home to a place where there is not enough money to keep the lights on at night.

The area is blessed with the beautiful mountains of the Blue Ridge, but when there is a natural disaster such as the 2012 "direcho" wind storm, service workers with chain saws and electrical workers struggle in high temperatures to restore a city strewn with downed trees and damaged homes and cars. Much of the city is safe and orderly, but police, firefighters and ambulance crews deal with arson, domestic violence and even murder.

Every Wednesday at noon, right in the middle of the city of Roanoke, church bells ring out over nearby government and office buildings, inviting the community to "Prayer for the City," a weekly interdenominational service hosted by Greene Memorial UMC. Ever since the 1970s, this weekly service has been a time of community worship and midweek spiritual refreshment for city

workers and others. There is a half-hour service with local guest preachers – Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Church of the Brethren, Episcopal, Jewish – followed by a light lunch in the Fellowship Hall.

New this year are specific prayers for the city. Week by week specific departments of the city are lifted up in prayer, and the gathered congregation signs cards for those who have been prayed for.

The idea for these weekly Prayers for the City came with the Rev. Gary Heaton, who began his ministry at Greene Memorial UMC in July 2013.

"I spent a week at Richmond Hill Retreat Center" says Heaton. "I was inspired by their regular cycle of prayer for the city. So often we pray for our cities or our country only at election time or when there is a crisis, but this is regular, steady prayer. It is not reactive but proactive."

Heaton sees these prayers in the spirit of leitourgia, the ancient Greek word for liturgy which is often translated "the work of the people." "It is important 'work' to come together each week to pray for the city and area in which we live," he says.

This work of prayer is linked with the congregation's hands on work in the city throughout the year. Debbie Brown, director of Program Ministries at Greene Memorial, notes

that much of this work is collaborative with other religious and community organizations. Greene Memorial UMC participates in the Interfaith Hospitality Network, providing volunteers to cook and offer overnight hospitality to families who are currently homeless and getting back on their feet. Through Congregations in Action, Greene Memorial partners with Highland Park Elementary School to provide mentoring, lunch buddies, school supplies, a fun day, emergency clothing and weekend food. Through the Saturday's Child summer feeding program the church provides a

warm Saturday lunch for children who gather at a community meeting place and enjoy lunch and story time. The church hosts a moving annual Homeless Memorial Service through collaboration with HAT, the Homeless Assistance Team in Roanoke.

The church also hosted a Big Day of Serving for youth across the country to come and work on home repairs, and teamed up with the City of Roanoke and Rebuilding Together to work on home improvement in the city's West End. Greene Memorial provides an annual "Trunk or Treat" event for some 200 children from the Roanoke

Rescue Mission and the community. There is a first Sunday food collection for a designated agency each month. The church's Crib Ministry provides diapers and supplies on an emergency basis to new mothers. The church supports Roanoke Area Ministries and the United Methodist Community Outreach Program through contributions, volunteering, gifts and meals. In the summer Greene Memorial partners with seven other city churches to sponsor a free day camp for at-risk children through the Summer Enrichment Program.

Beyond that, the church recently completed extensive renovations and makes space available for free to area businesses, agencies and the city for meetings, workshops and conferences. In addition, retired United Methodist clergy the Rev. Hunter Mabry, who attends Greene Memorial, heads up the newly formed Roanoke District Church and Society Committee to promote and foster justice and mercy ministries in the district.

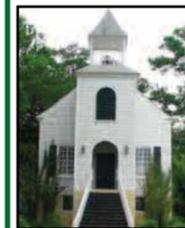
One recent Wednesday, several community members gathered around a lunch table at Greene Memorial to enjoy a home-cooked meal provided for all who attend the Prayer for the City services. The meal is planned and cooked by church staff member Carol Worley and church volunteers. During that day's service, Greene

Memorial organist and director of Music and Fine Arts Richard Cummins had opened the worship with a prelude of the hymn "I Vow to Thee My Country." Reading from Genesis, the day's guest preacher from the Church of the Brethren had named God's calm and abundant grace even among the most chaotic waters, certainly a word of peace to the city. The entire congregation prayed for the city government and, this week in particular, for all transportation workers. At lunch that day strangers from throughout the city sat together and shared a sense of community.

"I believe this regular and intentional time of prayer for the city is fruitful if people drive down the highway and see a plane taking off and think of the crew and airport workers," said Rev. Heaton. "Or if they see a sanitation truck and think of those who drive and pick up garbage throughout the city. People may or may not have noticed or thought about these people much before. If they do now, and pray for them as individuals and as part of our city, then we have accomplished something important."

-The Rev. Liz Mortlock is a retired pastor in the Roanoke District.

Springtime By The Sea



An Event for Older Adults *How Firm a Foundation, Part 2*

Tour more historic churches of various denominations in coastal Georgia & Florida.

May 5-8, 2014

Epworth By The Sea ~ St. Simons Island, Georgia

Also...take an excursion aboard the St. Mary's Express Railroad at a speed of 10 mph and enjoy a hymn sing in Lovely Lane Chapel.



Visit our website to register online and for a listing of these places of worship: www.epworthbythesea.org or call 912-638-8688

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



United Methodist student knows a lot about high achievement

by Jessica Neupane

Madeline Chafin, a senior at Randolph-Macon Academy (R-MA) in the Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps program, has found success in nearly every aspect of life at this United Methodist-affiliated boarding school.

Chafin is currently Squadron Commander of 1st Squadron, which means she is responsible for all three flights of the squadron – essentially every girl in grades 9-12 at R-MA.

She periodically checks on each hallway, ensuring the girls' safety, satisfaction and academic performance. She is also the drill team commander, a military performance team that competes around the region. Chafin also finds time to play three varsity sports: cross-country, soccer and basketball, the latter of which she is the captain. She is also in High Flight, a demanding and athletic military academy prep program that meets twice each week.

Even with all of this going on, Chafin manages to perform well academically. She is a member of National Honor Society, National Spanish Society, and National English Honor Society, and she has won the Outstanding Student Award for the 20th Century Warfare elective class.

Oh, and she's participated in the British Exchange Program and is co-editor of the R-MA yearbook.

Given all that she is involved in (and successful at), Chafin could be

the poster child for "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:13) She grew up in a religious household, with her mother a Roman

Catholic and her father a United Methodist. She regularly attends both services whenever she has the chance to go home on breaks.

Attending a United Methodist-affiliated institution has allowed her to continue to grow her faith.

"I really admire the fact that we actively pray before every meal and that we go to chapel every Monday," she said. For Chafin, singing the familiar hymns each week is her favorite way of talking to God. Her active schedule doesn't allow for much quiet time, so she shares with God as she goes about her day. "When I talk aloud, it is my version of praying and talking to God so He can hear me."

Chafin said that she really enjoys attending R-MA because it has given her the opportunity to be independent and prepare for college. After graduating, Chafin hopes to go to the United States Coast Guard Academy or the United States Military Academy. "Overall," she said, "I really just want to serve my country."

Chafin is the daughter of Elizabeth and Christopher Dukes of Wake Forest, N.C., and Micheal and Debbie Chafin of Raleigh, N.C.

Randolph-Macon Academy in Front Royal, founded in 1892, is a college-preparatory, coeducational day and boarding school for students in grades 6-12.

-Jessica Neupane is a junior at Randolph-Macon Academy.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

Virginia Wesleyan professor to lead seminar for clergy

Dr. Terrence Lindvall, professor of Communications and Christian Thought at Virginia Wesleyan College in Norfolk, will be the presenter for "Sanctified Laughter: A Theology, History and Practice of Humor and Satire," a two-day continuing education seminar March 17-18.

The Virginia Wesleyan series began in 1999 and offers one continuing education credit for clergy. Virginia Wesleyan is one of five United Methodist-related colleges in the Virginia Conference.

Lindvall has been the

C.S. Lewis Chair in Communications and Christian Thought since 2006. His publications include "Surprised Laughter: The Comic World of C.S. Lewis" and "The Mother of All Laughter: Sarah and the Genesis of Comedy." He is currently writing a book on depictions of prayers and hymns in films. A frequent speaker and lecturer, he has previously taught at Duke University and the College of William and Mary.

Lindvall says the seminar will focus on "biblical and historical perspectives, theological implications

and practical benefits of laughter, not only in the pews, but from the pulpit."

The seminar will begin at 8:30 a.m. on Monday, March 17, and conclude at noon on Tuesday, March 18. Registration cost is \$75. Registration materials are being sent to pastors. Registration may be conducted vial mail or on-line at www.vwc.edu.

For more information, call (757) 455-3217 or e-mail jbryant@vwc.edu.



Dr. Terrence Lindvall



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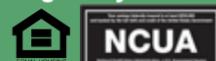


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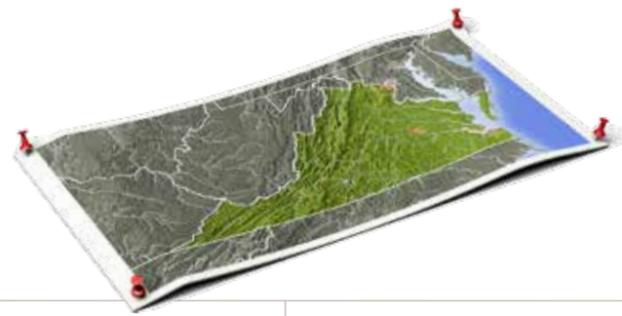
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The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Reveille youths blaze a trail of service

By Clare Mills

Last summer more than 70 youths from Reveille UMC in Richmond headed to the Swansboro neighborhood in South Richmond to help build a house with Richmond Metropolitan Habitat for Humanity.

The youths braved the heat to begin construction of a home for a Richmond family and to perform much needed home repairs for neighbors of the build site.

Reveille's ministry in the Swansboro area started in the 1990s when members of the congregation began mentoring students

at Swansboro Elementary School. Their involvement with the people of Swansboro has grown to include a commitment from the whole congregation to partner with RVA Habitat to build a house from start to finish.

"A few years ago, our congregation felt we needed to invest more fully in the entire neighborhood, but we were never quite sure how to get a foothold," said Dwayne Stinson, director of Youth Ministries for Reveille UMC.

"Our hope is that this summer, the many ways in which we are engaged in the Swansboro area will create relationships and partnerships that will allow us to be more engaged with the community as a whole, beyond the elementary school. Sponsoring the

Habitat home is simply one way we hope to establish a presence in the neighborhood that will lead to other ministries."

Usually the youths travel during the summer on mission trips as far away as El Salvador. This summer, the aim is for them to participate in mission in their own city. This local initiative allows them to build relationships with those they serve, to stay connected and to stay involved.

That goal seems to make sense to the young people who spent their days swinging hammers, hauling furniture and tires from alleys, planting a community garden at Swansboro Baptist Church, and painting porches for Swansboro residents.

"I want to see the impact our work makes on Richmond after our year-long project," said 17-year-old Harvey Creasey.

"I love seeing how a house is built and look forward to returning to see a family living in it. We want to help to improve the neighborhood and life for the family," said 18-year-old Danielle Lewis.

Though the construction of the Habitat home is a project funded and supported by the whole congregation at Reveille, the involvement of the youths is vital to this labor of love.

The youth service project connects with the young people's call to serve God by serving

Youth pastor Dwayne Stinson (back center) shepherds a paint-spattered crew.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



others in the community. "I really experienced the importance of helping people in need this week," said 14-year-old Grayson Rainey.

Deepening their relationships with Christ by deepening relationships with neighbors in Swansboro made an impression not only on the youths but also on the residents.

Cate Salmon, a rising 7th grader, recognized the joy of giving and receiving through this summer of service. "We enjoy connecting with the people we're helping. They really appreciate what we're doing. They keep us going!"

A team spent hours working on the build site's neighboring property that belongs to Juanita Fleming. They painted her front porch, repaired her back porch, built a picnic table for her yard and repaired her fence.

"These people are wonderful. That fence had been worrying me and I didn't know what I was going to do. This is a God-send," said Fleming.

-Claire Mills is the editor of faithinrichmond.com.

Follow your heart

February is Heart Havens Month.

In communities across the Virginia Conference and right next door, men and women with intellectual disabilities are increasing their independence with the support of Heart Havens.

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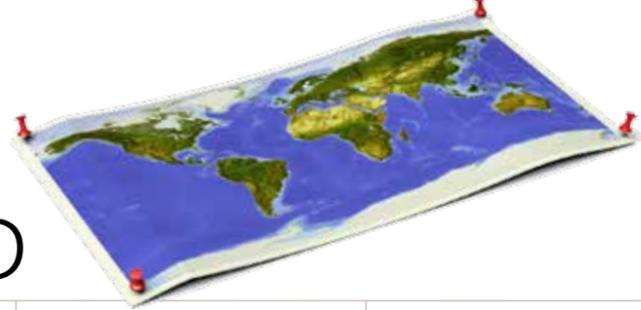
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"Do all the good you can."
- John Wesley



Stop Hunger Now aids Typhoon Haiyan survivors

By Linda Bloom

Stop Hunger Now was already in the process of setting up an office in Manila when Typhoon Haiyan struck in November. Using established relationships has made it easier for the United Methodist partner and hunger relief agency to respond, says the Rev. Ray Buchanan, Stop Hunger Now founder.

As of early December, Stop Hunger Now was in the process of shipping more than 1.8 million meals from the U.S. and its office in Malaysia, the agency announced. Hundreds of thousands of additional meals and other aid was being packaged and distributed

Typhoon victims in the Philippines line up to get water and food.
Photo from WorldHelp.net

through partners in Singapore and the Philippines.

A small group that included Buchanan and Allen Renquist, Stop Hunger Now's chief program officer, also made a trip to the Philippines, arriving Nov. 17, to hand deliver 1,100 water filters in partnership with Wine to Water, a nonprofit devoted to providing clean water and sanitation to people in need.

Buchanan, who kept a blog of the trip, said he found the typhoon's destruction in northern Cebu – roofless or destroyed homes, downed trees, damaged infrastructure – to be similar to if not as intense as Tacloban, which has received more media coverage.

Many were homeless and seeking shelter any place they could find it. Buchanan pointed out that

burials in the area are above ground because of water table. "We saw numerous families living in the crypts... because it was shelter," he said.

The government in Cebu has promised to restore power by Christmas, but many have lost their livelihoods. Buchanan believes there is still a great need for food and fresh water.

Part of the reason for the on-site visit, he said, was to verify that partners on the ground could receive as much aid as Stop Hunger Now was shipping and to encourage those partners to move forward with assisting typhoon survivors.

"The most exciting thing, for me, was working with our partners in Rotary (International)," he said. "They organized a meal packaging event in Manila in response to the typhoon. From start to finish, from organization to cleanup, they did the whole thing themselves."

About 500 volunteers packaged 120,000 meals at the Nov. 22 event in Manila.

Buchanan said the experience of responding to Typhoon Haiyan has reaffirmed the organization's plan to establish additional international offices. The office in Malaysia, for example, was able to ship 400,000 meals to the Philippines. "Already that strategy of trying to start offices in other parts of the world to respond to crises more immediately is paying off," he noted.

-Linda Bloom is a United Methodist News Service multimedia reporter



Online Communion: Sacrament or sacrilege?

By Valerie Bauerlein

A North Carolina church's new plans for breaking bread are also breaking with its denomination's wishes.

Central United Methodist Church in Concord, northeast of Charlotte, has launched a "virtual campus" complete with streaming services, webcam Bible study, counseling via live chat and a dedicated online pastor.

The church also planned for virtual users to be able to regularly take Holy Communion when it is being offered during services. Online users can simply grab some grape juice and any bread or crackers they have in the house, and consume them after the pastor, in the sanctuary, blesses the juice and bread as representing the blood and body of Christ.

The practice, common in many evangelical churches, could help make Christianity more accessible, especially to young people who read the Bible on an app, if at all, the century-old church says.

"We believe that God is not bound by space and time," said the Rev. Andy Langford, Central's senior pastor. "We believe that when we bless the bread and

the cup in one place, if there are others who are worshipping with us, God will bless that bread and cup wherever they are."

But Central has run afoul of the United Methodist hierarchy. The Council of Bishops has declared a moratorium on all online sacraments, including communion, and called for further study of which practices would be acceptable online. The moratorium was declared at the request of an influential group of United Methodist ministers and theologians, who said in a statement that communion is understood to be celebrated "within a physically gathered community."

Central Methodist was planning to offer online communion for the first time on Christmas Eve, at the launch of the virtual campus.

"The wait may be a week, it may be six months, but we are going to gather a community of people electronically, we are going to worship with them, pray with them, and if it seems natural and right for communion to come out of that, we'll serve it to them," Langford said.

Gordon Mikoski of Princeton



The Rev. Andy Langford, Central UMC's senior pastor, left, talks with the Rev. Daniel Wilson, the church's online pastor.
Photo by Kate Lord for *The Wall Street Journal*

Theological Seminary said Protestants have proved they can adapt to the times and technology, as they owe their existence to the invention of the printing press, which helped spark the Reformation. But Mikoski opposes offering communion online because, he said, physical, human presence is a critical component of Christianity.

"God spoke through voices and thunder and lightning and burning bushes and all kinds of things," Mikoski said. "But the highest, most complete way that God communicates is, God takes on human flesh and becomes human. From a Christian theological point of view, that's significant."

Evangelicals tend to view communion as a representation of the body and blood of Christ, making the leap online less problematic than for Christians who view communion as a sacrament and holy mystery, like the Methodists. God has always leveraged technological channels to spread the

Gospels, said the Rev. Tim Lucas, the founding pastor of Liquid Church, an evangelical church in Morristown, N.J. The apostle "Paul said, 'By any means possible, will I share the Gospels,'" Lucas said.

Langford is hardly a rabble-rouser. The 61-year-old is the author of several influential books on church teachings. He also is the editor of the United Methodist Book of Worship, the liturgical handbook for worship services world-wide.

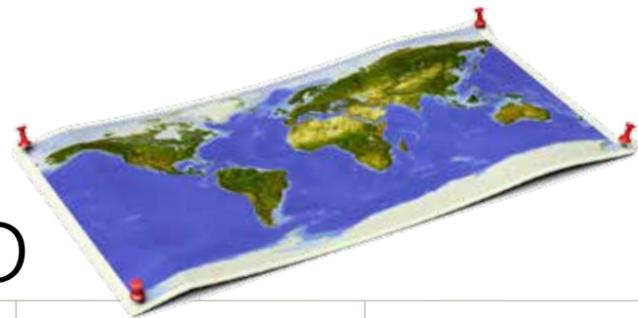
But while he said he respects church elders, he said he is inclined to offer communion if online attendees ask.

"The way we operate now, if you want to receive [communion], you have to come to my church sometime between the hours of 9 and 12 on Sunday morning," Langford said. "I don't think there's any other institution in our country that can survive on that kind of business model."

-Valerie Bauerlein for the Wall Street Journal



Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD



Diverse group of young adults considers God's call to ordained ministry

By Vicki Brown

Speaker after speaker told the 429 young adults gathered to explore ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church that God is calling them to go change the world and the church.

"This is not your momma and daddy's church. We have to be about making disciples, not members," Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey told those

attending Exploration 2013 in Denver.

Harvey, the episcopal leader of the Louisiana Conference, asked the diverse group — 27 percent of young adults were racial-ethnic — what would happen if "we stopped worrying about saving the church and focused on saving souls?"

"I want you to be unleashed by the Spirit to listen to where God might be calling you. I'd love to see you all discern a call to ordained ministry, but I know discerning a call to lay ministry is equally important," Harvey said during her sermon at Saturday night's commitment service.

"All God wants or needs

is for you to be the best YOU that you can be," she said. "Listen. God might just be calling your name."

The event, sponsored by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM), aims to help young adults hear, discern and respond to God's call to ordained ministry and to explore their gifts for service as a deacon or elder in the UMC. Total attendance was 676 individuals, including chaperones, workshop leaders, speakers and members of the planning team.

The Rev. Trip Lowery, GBHEM's director of Young Adult Ministry Discernment and Enlistment, told his own story of teaching high school, co-managing a surf shop, and playing professional soccer before he accepted the call to ordained ministry. "I wandered a lot, and I wish that as I explored and wandered around that I had reached out to someone. You are surrounded this weekend by people who want to help you."

Lowery said he was pleased that the young adults who attended were such a diverse group and noted an effort was made to have speakers, workshop leaders and small group leaders from all walks of life in The United Methodist Church.

The Rev. April Casperson, co-chair of the team that plans Exploration, said she thinks those who attended Exploration 2013 came from more diverse locations than in years past.

Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey prays with young adults who are considering God's call to ordained ministry. Harvey preached during Saturday night's commitment service at Exploration 2013 in Denver. Photo by Vicki Brown.



Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD



Casperson, who is also director of Enrollment Management and Scholarship Development at Methodist Theological School in Ohio, said she would guess that undergraduate colleges and universities, as well as seminaries, are becoming more diverse.

"This means good things for the church. It is important to have leaders who can serve in different ministry contexts," Casperson said.

Bishop Harvey, who attended a late-night gathering for young adults who self-identify as people of color to discuss issues they face in The United Methodist Church, said growing up in a barrio allowed her to keep a foot in two worlds. She told the group that she thinks they are uniquely placed to lead the church. "Most of you speak more than one language; you have an ability to keep a foot in both worlds. You are the best hope we have. If we can't do it with you, we'll never do it," said Harvey, who is the first Latina bishop elected in the South Central Jurisdiction.

Worship, small groups and workshops were all aimed at answering questions young adults have about how God is calling them and what steps to take.

Bill and Lyndsay Cupp, a young couple who are youth leaders at Lehman-Idetown UMC in Lehman, Pa., said they felt the small groups especially were helpful.

"I definitely want to be involved in the church, especially youth ministry," Lyndsay Cupp said. But she added that she was thinking about certification and was not yet sure about ordination.

Bill Cupp liked the small, intimate setting of small groups. "It was nice to get with other people who are on the same track," he said.

Sarah Craven, a pastoral intern at two United Methodist churches in Missouri, said she learned

"This is not your momma and daddy's church... Listen. God might just be calling your name."

more about her options at Exploration. "I come from a small town, and I didn't even know what a deacon was. I thought pastor was the only option you had."

Joshua Shaw, a student at Bethel University and member at Alamo First UMC in Tennessee, said he most enjoyed being with people his own age who are discerning their own call. "They understand how hard it is to answer that call at this age," he said. "My family supports me, but my friends don't understand why I'm choosing this. They say I could be doing something else."

The Rev. Jorge Acevedo, lead pastor of Grace Church — a multi-site UMC congregation in southwest Florida — warned young adults that family and friends will question the choice to go into ministry. "They'll tell you that you won't make any money. They'll tell you ministry is hard, and God won't take care of you," he said.

"But I'm telling you that for every heartache, God will give you 10 explosions of joy. . . . If God has called you into ministry, you will be miserable until you say yes," Acevedo said.

He told the group that Jesus' favorite word was go. "If you follow Jesus, you are supposed to teach and make disciples. It doesn't matter how many your

church seats; it matters how many you send," he said.

The Rev. Beth LaRocca-Pitts, senior pastor at Saint Mark UMC in Atlanta, Ga., told of watching a priest serve Mass in her father's Catholic church. She suddenly realized "that I wanted no other life." When that was followed by the thought — I'm a girl — which meant she could not become a Catholic priest, she got up and walked two blocks to her mother's church, Athens First UMC.

"Don't spend your life currency on anything less than what God has called you to do. Don't just go work; answer the call," LaRocca-Pitts said.

The Rev. Eric Huffman, who with his wife and co-pastor leads a multi-site faith community of about 500 in Kansas City, urged the young adults to be utterly reliant on Jesus and said ministry is a "glorious and joyous" life.

"I know you are being called to do great things, but don't let it go to your head. My prayer is that you spend the rest of your life pointing people toward the only shepherd, Jesus Christ." 

-Vicki Brown is associate editor and writer, Office of Interpretation, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

CHURCH AGENCIES BATTLE HUMAN TRAFFICKING

By Linda Bloom

WHEN MARIA,
AN ARMENIAN CITIZEN,
ENDED UP IN DUBAI, SHE
RESISTED ATTEMPTS
BY HER TRAFFICKERS
TO FORCE HER INTO
PROSTITUTION.



IN RETALIATION, THEY
THREW HER OFF THE
TOP OF A THREE-STORY
BUILDING.

(Continued on next page, "Maria")



("Maria," continued from previous page)

Maria survived the fall, eventually escaped her captors and was repatriated to Armenia, where police referred her to the Anti-Human Trafficking Project run by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR).

To date, the UMCOR project has helped 93 women move on to new lives after becoming entangled in what is considered the second-largest and fastest-growing global criminal enterprise, said Kathryn Paik, UMCOR's Armenia program officer.

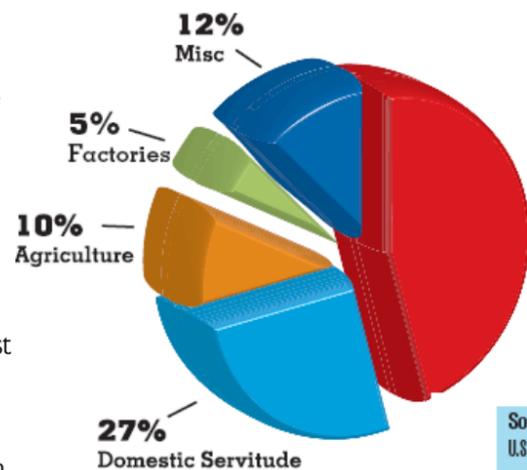
Paik and two staff executives with United Methodist Women, Carol Van Gorp and Susie Johnson, spoke about how United Methodists are addressing the human trafficking problem during a discussion at the offices of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries.

United Methodist Women and its parent organization, the board's Women's Division, have focused on human trafficking for more than a decade and started the current campaign, "The Protection Project," in 2009.

The United Nations defines human trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of people – by threat, abduction, deception or abuse of power – for the purpose of sexual or labor-related exploitation. Eighty percent of those trafficked are women and girls, and half of all trafficking victims are under the age of 13.

UMCOR was the first nongovernmental organization to work with Armenian authorities in all regions of Armenia to reintegrate trafficking survivors back into society, Paik said.

At UMCOR's shelter, survivors receive medical services, legal counseling, vocational training and psychosocial support. The length of stay varies by individual case, but about 90 percent of participants have success-



• 14,000 - 17,500: estimated number of people trafficked into the United States each year

• 50% of the people trafficked into the U.S. each year are children

• 800,000 people are trafficked worldwide each year

• East Asia/Pacific is the region that is the largest source of people who are trafficked into the U.S. each year

46% Prostitution

Sources: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Justice; Free the Slaves

fully returned to society. "Shelter staff also have ongoing contact with the victims and their families," Paik said.

But the successes are not without effort. "We have many challenges in Armenia for this program," she explained. "The greatest is probably economic empowerment."

Without other viable options for employment, it is difficult to break the cycle of trafficking. And societal changes are needed to address populations vulnerable to trafficking. In Armenia, for example, more than 10,000 "extremely vulnerable" children living in boarding schools and orphanages are often left without a home or social support as they grow older.

So, in addition to the shelter, UMCOR Armenia has established a toll-free anti-trafficking hotline, conducted awareness campaigns through presentations, community outreach and mass media, and advocated for victims' rights.

On a denomination-wide level, General Conference, the church's top legislative body, first adopted a resolution calling for the abolition of sex trafficking in 2004. The church also has supported "global efforts to end slavery" since 2000, and has long called for the eradication of abusive

child labor.

For United Methodist Women, "The Protection Project" offers training to educate its members about human trafficking and offers practical suggestions for actions they can take in their own communities.

Van Gorp develops resources and leads workshops on the issue for UMW members. "The first thing we do is make people understand they are not all going to go out and do rescue missions," she explained.

Instead, church members are educated about how to identify where trafficking victims may be working and how to interact with local law enforcement.

United Methodists can also advocate for better laws related to trafficking, support plans for more shelters and other programs for its victims, and investigate how immigration patterns and policies play a role in the problem, Van Gorp said.

The project gained larger visibility in January, when UMW used an event that all Americans have heard of – the Super Bowl – as a way to increase awareness, particularly among men.

-Linda Bloom is a United Methodist News Service reporter

UMW OFFERS ALTERNATE GAME PLAN FOR SUPER BOWL

By Linda Bloom

Long before it was ever determined who would be squaring off in the Super Bowl Feb. 2, members of United Methodist Women had decided on their game plan.

As the organization has done the last three years, United Methodist Women is working with local groups and law enforcement to find a teachable moment about human trafficking during the pre-Super Bowl festivities. Visitors may notice messages about human trafficking: how crimes can be reported and where victims can find help.

The United Nations defines human trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of people – by threat, abduction, deception or abuse of power – for the purpose of sexual or labor-related exploitation. Eighty percent of those trafficked are women and girls, and half of all trafficking victims are younger than 13.

Through its "Intercept Human Trafficking" effort, the UMW human

trafficking team is addressing both an opportunity and a concern.

"There is no documented evidence of large athletic events causing trafficking, but incidences can escalate because those victimized by the crime are engaged in all aspects of commerce – related to any highly attended activity," explained Susie Johnson, executive secretary for public policy for the Women's Division, United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, which is UMW's administrative arm.

"What we do know is that men are principally the perpetrators of this crime, and using a male-centered event like the Super Bowl affords us the opportunity to engage with boys and men and expand their knowledge about a morally reprehensible crime that denies all persons to live free and to live whole."

United Methodist Women has been involved with the trafficking issue for more than a decade, often working ecumenically. Through its awareness programs at churches, community



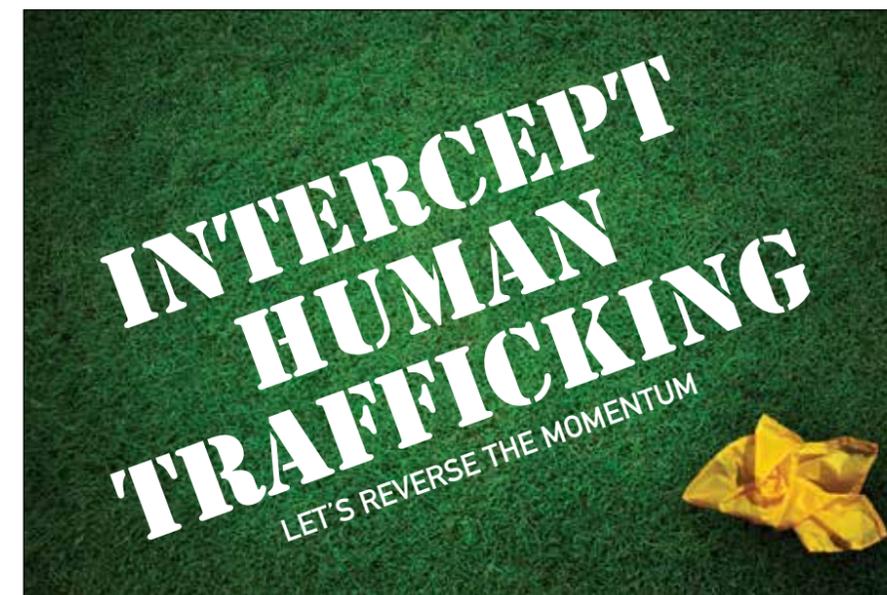
centers and conferences, the organization has educated an estimated 10,000 men, women and youths on trafficking facts, Johnson said.

Trafficking has become more of a U.S. problem in recent years. In its "2010 Trafficking in Persons Report," the U.S. State Department acknowledges that by ranking the United States with those countries fully complying with the minimum standards for protection of trafficking victims and providing information on domestic efforts to combat human trafficking.

In the U.S., people are primarily being trafficked for labor-related situations, the report said, including domestic servitude, agriculture, manufacturing, janitorial services, hotel services, construction, health and elder care, hair and nail salons, and strip-club dancing. However, U.S. citizens themselves, including runaway and homeless youths, are more likely to be found in sex trafficking.

On its human trafficking website, United Methodist Women offers a downloadable Human Trafficking Resource Guide and other tools for educational and advocacy work, including a bulletin insert, flier, postcard, list of partners and action suggestions.

-Linda Bloom is a United Methodist News Service multimedia reporter based in New York.



Women's pigskin football high heel shoes at Herstar.com

CHURCH MEMBERS CAN ADDRESS TRAFFICKING LOCALLY

By Linda Bloom

Mary Streufert has a blunt assessment of human trafficking. She calls it “human retail.”

A theologian and member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, she often addresses congregations “to connect them in their heart and their head” on the evils of trafficking and what they can do to make a difference.

During an ecumenical conference on human trafficking at the United Methodist-owned Church Center for the United Nations, Streufert shared with participants her presentation for congregations.

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 defines sex trafficking as “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act ... induced by force, fraud or coercion or in which the person forced to perform such an act is under the age of 18 years.”

Labor trafficking is considered to be the same type of actions “for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery.”

Church members tend to become involved after they realize that traf-

ficking is a local issue, according to Clare Chapman, a United Methodist and executive with the National Council of Churches, which co-sponsored the conference with the Women’s Division, United Methodist Board of Global Ministries.

She advocates an ecumenical approach. “We (churches) are going to have a much greater impact if we do this together than if we do it individually.”

Linda Bales, who fights trafficking as an advocate with the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, agreed. “We do need to educate churches on the issue,” she said. “They could be very pivotal in identifying people who are being trafficked.”

The Board of Church and Society works with the Department of Health and Human Services and its “Rescue & Restore” program, which helps identify and assist victims of human trafficking in the United States.

Church Women United has a resource, “Human Trafficking: An Education and Action Resource,” that can be ordered from the organization’s Washington office or downloaded from www.churchwomen.org.

-Linda Bloom is a United Methodist News Service reporter.



Mary Streufert describes human trafficking as “a form of human retail” during an ecumenical conference at the United Nations in New York. UMNS photo by Philip Jenks



Young girls like these in a village outside Phnom Penh, Cambodia are raped as many as ten times in one night. Photo: Agape International Missions



Born into poverty in Cambodia, Somaly Mam (above and below) was sold into slavery as a young girl. When she escaped she formed a rescue mission, and now a foundation. Her efforts have helped 7,000 young women in Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Laos get out of the sex industry.



GANGS IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA INCREASINGLY SELL CHILDREN FOR SEX

By Matt Zaposky

She was a month shy of her 17th birthday when the gang’s leader approached her outside a hotel, engaging her in playful banter. But soon “Chyna,” as she would come to be known, was traveling up and down the Eastern Seaboard with the gangster and his friends, having sex with strangers for cash.

At a trial in federal district court in Alexandria this month, prosecutors said Chyna was one of at least four teenagers sold as sex workers by the “Cold-blooded Cartel,” a Georgia-based gang that found Northern Virginia to be an especially lucrative territory to prostitute children. Their case, prosecutors say, is indicative of a disturbing phenomenon in the Washington area. More and more gangs are prostituting teens, finding it a bigger moneymaker than drugs or weapons.

“The profit margin, the income stream that comes from selling the bodies of children ... is enormous,” said then-U.S. Attorney Neil MacBride.

Federal prosecutors in the Eastern District of Virginia have recently handled several cases involving gang members and juvenile prostitutes. A leader of the Cold-blooded Cartel was sentenced to 25 years in prison in June, before the trial this month of two others involved in his prostitution ring. A member of the Mara Salvatrucha street gang, also known as MS-13, was charged last month and accused of helping others in what prosecutors called an “underground prostitution business” involving four female runaways.

The office has prosecuted 27 defendants in gang-related trafficking cases since 2011 and at least 28 juvenile victims have been identified, authorities said.

“This is an emerging trend, and the gangs, we think, have made a horribly wrong business calculation that they can make a lot of money and get away with it,” MacBride said.

Prosecutors say that members of the Cold-blooded Cartel plied the girls with marijuana and ecstasy to make them more receptive. The gang exerted control through a combination of violence – at least one member carried a gun – and affectionate overtures.

Prosecutors and advocacy groups say that MS-13 seems to have pioneered juvenile sex trafficking as gang business – even stepping away from traditional violence and turning to prostitution. MacBride said the endeavor is especially profitable because girls, unlike drugs, can be sold more than once, and the costs to recruit and prostitute them are minimal.

The concern, though, is that other gangs have started to follow MS-13’s lead, and they have started using more sophisticated online recruitment through social networking sites. Last year, a man affiliated with the Underground Gangster Crips was sentenced to 40 years in prison for running what prosecutors described as one of the largest underage prostitution rings in the Washington area’s history. And that apparently did not deter the Cold-blooded Cartel.

By prosecutors’ account, the group prostituted women and high school girls in at least seven states, including Maryland and Virginia. It advertised services on the Web and had girls meet clients at hotels in Sterling, Ashburn and Herndon.

Chyna testified this month that she advocated moving the operation to Northern Virginia, saying Herndon was the most lucrative place she ever worked.

“There is a lot of money here,” she said.

-Matt Zaposky covers crime and punishment for The Washington Post.



Members of Annandale UMC’s team working against human trafficking march together in a local parade.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING FAQs:

United Methodist Women provide answers to your frequently asked questions about human trafficking: "Human trafficking is a crime. United Methodist Women from across the nation have joined this sacred mission by taking a stand to prevent, protect and prosecute those impacted by this trade in human beings that occurs everywhere in the world. Through education, partnership and action, United Methodist Women are working with faith representatives, elected officials and other community groups to build awareness and ignite flames of hope for those who are trafficked."

—Susie Johnson, Women's Division
Washington Office of Public Policy

WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery, and is the second largest criminal industry in the world after drug trade. The United Nations (U.N.) Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons defines human trafficking as the recruiting, transporting and harboring of persons by use of threat, force or deception for the purpose of exploitation. Traffickers take advantage of vulnerable persons with false promises or physical abduction, forcing them into contract slavery, forced labor and sexual trafficking.

WORLDWIDE STATISTICS

According to the U.S. Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report 2010, the number of adults and children currently in forced labor, bonded labor and forced prostitution is 12.3 million. Worldwide, 1.8 per 1,000 persons is a victim of human trafficking, increasing to 3 persons per 1,000 in Asia and the Pacific. Sixty-two countries have yet to convict a trafficker under the U.N. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, and 104 countries have yet to establish laws or regulations regarding human trafficking.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Our current global economic system continues to reward wealth and exploit the poor. Sexual trafficking is connected to the feminization of poverty. Seventy percent of the world's poor are women and girls, most of whom live in developing countries with limited options available to them. Women comprise 56 percent of the 12.3 million trafficked adults and children, according to the Trafficking in Persons Report.

WHERE CAN VICTIMS BE FOUND?

Male and female victims of human trafficking can be found in all types of establishments and locations, in rural, suburban and urban settings in the United States and worldwide. You'll find victims on the streets, in houses, in trailers and on farms. Victims of human trafficking can be landscaping and agricultural workers, panhandlers, day laborers, factory and sweatshop workers, hotel workers and housekeepers. Victims are exploited by the service industries in restaurants, bars, strip clubs, nail salons and similar businesses. You'll find many victims on "adult services" Internet sites; the commercial sex industry relies heavily on human trafficking victims. Prostitutes, strippers, escorts, and workers in massage parlors, brothels and for phone chat lines are often victims. Right now traffickers in many American cities are exploiting workers and sexually abusing women and girls.

WHY HELP?

The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church ¶161 states that United Methodists "deplore all forms of the commercialization and exploitation of sex, with their consequent cheapening and degradation of human personality. To lose freedom and be sold by someone else for sexual purposes is a form of slavery, and we denounce such business and support the abused and their right to freedom. We call for strict global enforcement of laws prohibiting

the sexual exploitation or use of children by adults and encourage efforts to hold perpetrators legally and financially responsible. (p. 104)

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- ❖ Your unit can host an education forum to help educate others on the realities of human trafficking. Call the United Methodist Women Washington Office of Public Policy at 202-488-5660 to identify a program facilitator. Invite local law enforcement agencies, friends and other faith-based and humanitarian groups to your program.
- ❖ Contact your local law enforcement agency about human trafficking in your community. How does your local agency prevent and prosecute trafficking? How can you help?
- ❖ Watch for signs of trafficking. Be aware, and report possible trafficking to local authorities and the U.S. Department of Justice, 1-888-428-7581.
- ❖ Share the signs of human trafficking with youth groups and other groups in your church and community.
- ❖ Create a community task force.
- ❖ Buy fair trade. Know where the products you buy come from and how they are made.
- ❖ Support education and business opportunities for women and girls.
- ❖ The United Methodist Women website provides many tools for your use, including human trafficking Bible studies, action alerts and a PowerPoint presentation as well as downloadable fliers and materials from its Intercept Human Trafficking campaign.
- ❖ Nationwide you can call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 1-888-373-7888.

For more ways to help, visit United Methodist Women: www.united-methodistwomen.org/act.

FEBRUARY

Large Church Leadership Training Day Feb. 1, Woodlake UMC, Chesterfield

All size churches matter. There is no question. But, ministry styles are unique to church size. Therefore, we invite you to a day of training specifically designed for you as clergy, staff, or lay leadership within a large church. With solid and experienced speakers and workshops that are designed to be relevant and practical, this will be a day well spent for you and your congregation. You will network with congregations around your ministry area to discover new resources and inspiration to continue and multiply this vital ministry of the large congregation. Cost \$15 per person. To register, visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org under "Events" and the date.

United Methodist Day at the General Assembly Feb. 6, Bon Air UMC and the State Capitol

The 22nd annual United Methodist Day at the General Assembly is an opportunity to help faith communities become empowered to serve as missionaries of justice, as well as the more traditional missionaries of mercy. United Methodist Day and other avenues of faithful advocacy help us to look beyond mercy ministry to ask: "What causes this problem?" By joining together and establishing relationships with our elected officials, we empower members of our congregations to wonder, "How can I make a difference?" Participants will begin with breakfast at Bon Air UMC at 7 a.m. and then travel together by bus to the General Assembly. They will return for lunch and an opportunity to hear speakers. Cost is \$35; register at the conference website, at www.vaumc.org under "Events" and the date.

Cultivating Young Leaders Feb. 7-9, Camp Overlook

This two-day event will help young people identify their strengths through the "Living Your Strengths" model. Facilitators will be Tim Dayton and Alison Malloy. Cost is \$140. For more information, e-mail alisonmallow@gmail.com or register online at www.vaumc.org/youth.

School for Children's Ministry Feb. 22, St. Luke's UMC, Yorktown

The School for Children's Ministries is an annual training event for local church leaders. One great event at four different locations so that we can equip and inspire as many teachers and leaders as possible. Come by yourself or bring a team. We will share ideas, experience creative workshops, and make new



EVENTS

connections. Cost is \$20. Contact Beth Christian for information at bethchristian@vaumc.org or (540) 932-1055. (Will also be offered April 5 at Farmville UMC, Sept. 20 at Greenville UMC and Nov. 8 at Grace UMC, Manassas.)

Lay Servant Academy Feb. 21-23, Blackstone Conference and Retreat Center

The Virginia Conference Lay Servant Academy will help laity as they encourage, equip and support others for deeper commitment to Christ and to faithful discipleship. For more information about the Academy or Lay Speaking/Servant Ministries, contact your district director of Lay Servant Ministries, or e-mail Johnnie Draughon, conference director of Lay Speaking Ministries, at johnnie.draughon@cox.net or David Bailey, Lay Servant Academy director, at dw.bailey@comcast.net.

Clergy Spouses' Retreat Feb. 27-March 1, Blackstone Conference Center

The theme of this year's retreat is "Faith, Family and Forgiveness," focusing on the correlation between loving one's neighbor as oneself and forgiving one's debts as one is forgiven. Dr. Carol Fletcher will be the retreat leader. Contact Bill Moore for details at (540) 364-0027 or wjmoorewj@gmail.com.

MARCH

5 Talent Academy March 8, Floris UMC and eight live-stream sites

The 5 Talent Academy and the Virginia United Methodist Foundation are teaming up to offer stewardship expert Clif Christopher as the speaker of this teaching session. Ideal for clergy looking to reinvigorate their stewardship campaigns and lay persons eager to cultivate ways to help increase church giving in a meaningful way, this event is not one to miss. In addition to the live speaker at Floris in Herndon, the broadcast will be available at these locations: Eastern Shore: Franktown UMC; Lynchburg: Timberlake UMC; Martinsville: First UMC; Northern Virginia: Floris UMC; Richmond: Woodlake UMC; Shenandoah Valley: Bridgewater UMC; Tidewater: Francis Asbury UMC and Winchester: Front Royal UMC. Cost is \$25. For more information visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org under "Events" and the date.

Bishop's Convocation on Prayer March 29, Trinity UMC, Richmond

The second annual event for Bishop Young Jin Cho to highlight the importance of prayer in all things. Guest speaker will be the Rev. Tom Albin, dean of Upper Room Ministries.

EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY



Web design trends for 2014

By Gavin Richardson

Are you designing a new website for your church? Does your outdated website need a new look? Consider these web-design trends for 2014:

Mobile responsive

An extension of design trends from 2012 and 2013 is to build your websites to be mobile responsive. From 25 to 35 percent of many websites' total traffic will come through mobile devices. The number of mobile device users is growing. Having a website designed to adapt to each device is critical.

Before this trend began to emerge, you had to build a second website for mobile devices, which created extra work to maintain a second site. Most likely, you just let your site be as it is on a mobile

device, which does not provide an optimal user experience.

Going responsive will allow your users to experience the colors and design of your site, crafted for their viewing device of choice. Gone are the needs to zoom in, crop a screen or just leave because the visual look is too much for the eye.

Minimalism

Perhaps the biggest change for many church websites is a move toward minimalism. The past practice has been to put as much information as possible in front of your site visitors. This makes for a busy, cluttered and often confusing front-page. Because of the growing use of mobiles for viewing webpages and emerging app culture, this show-everything trend is passé.

With a minimalist design, you remove content and decide what content is most important for users

to focus on. The focus might be to share who you are as a congregation or an important event of the church. Possibly, the focus could be to have people follow a call-to-action and sign up for an email list.

Flat design

Trends change frequently. Once, the trend was to have a website with many graphics that had many textures and gradients. The aim was to give depth to the site. The new web design trend is more minimalist in order to be less distracting and drive focus on the content aim of your website.

Flat design can be elegant and aesthetically pleasing when done well. Even with a flat design, your graphic design can give depth to important page elements or calls to action. The level of depth and manipulation of graphics will be significantly less than in the past.

Large, high-resolution photos

We are an image-driven culture. We love large, eye-popping images within a website, whether they come as a large background image or some high-resolution images that capture the user's eye when he or she calls up your website. Apple has employed this technique for a few years, showing vivid pictures of Apple products. Many sites used a full-screen background to focus the feel of their

message and create clear instruction to their website.

Infinite scrolling

Not long ago, it was the norm to design so that the end user of a website never had to scroll. The result was that a user had to click from page to page. Though this concept is still popular and a valid design technique, if your goal is to get a number of page views, it is not a "must have" design. One new design trend, with the assistance of micro-blogging sites (Tumblr, Pinterest), is to implement an "infinite-scrolling" technique. People are becoming more comfortable scrolling. They scan and find interesting content without complaint.

Mashable, a popular tech news site, has implemented the infinite scroll technique (just start scrolling to the bottom to see it in action). If you have a current Wordpress-built website (and theme), you can test your site's infinite scrolling capabilities by turning on that function within the Jetpack plugin.

Infinite scrolling works well for blogs, but it may not be best for every page. However, it could be attractive to visitors to see landing pages that simulate your church's "infinite" involvement in the community or with the youth group. Often, people search for youth activities and community involvement before visiting a church, so infinite scrolling could

really help. Include pictures, progress and positive quotes from those affected by your church's love.

If you include infinite scrolling, be sure to place contact info prominently so people need not endlessly scroll to find you. That gets annoying quickly.

Typography

In years past, web designs used web-safe fonts, fonts that end users most likely had on their computers. If you designed a website with a font you liked, the site might not have worked on other computers because that font needed to be part of their font library. By designing with Google Fonts, you can expand the use of typography and your website to be unique and convey your message for a pleasing user experience.

What is the big deal about typography? Taking time to watch "Helvetica," a documentary by Gary Hustwit (at www.helvetica.com) is a good place to start your exploration into the importance of typography. Creative use of fonts and avoiding overused fonts (Comic Sans and Papyrus, for example) will give your website a new feel and convey a new message.

Not only is your font choice a design trend, but sizing and spacing your fonts correctly is an emerging trend. Larger font sizes and more white space provide great readability. Does your website have small,

crammed print? Users may not read pages that have small, compressed fonts because copy is difficult to read and the value of the content might not be worth the effort.

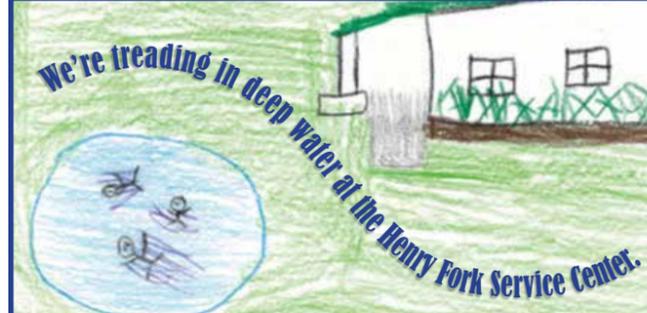
Circles

Formerly, to make circles and curves happen on a webpage, you had to use a graphics program and then insert the circles and curves into a website. This served the needed purpose, but it was also time-consuming, as you had to go outside the website to change that element. More graphics make for slower load times.

CSS coding has developed curves within

a site, making it more feasible to create new shapes in a site. With the CSS radius function, you can change the boxy world of the web to give a fresh, less edgy, more appealing look. This might be the faddish design trend of the bunch, so decide if it fits within your design aesthetic before implementing. 

-Gavin Richardson is a co-founder of Circuit Rider Media.



Your \$100 could be a lifeline.

Henry Fork Service Center is initiating a "Pay Off the Mortgage in 2014" Campaign. If every United Methodist Church in the Virginia Conference gives \$100, we'll pay off the mortgage on the new buildings in 2014.

Please send your contribution to:
P.O. Box 888
Rocky Mount, VA 24151
with "Pay off the Mortgage" on the memo line.

Thank you for getting us out of financially deep waters.

Artwork by Edgar Pichardo, a 4th grader at the HFSC Afterschool program

LOCAL CHURCH NEWS



▲ The Sunday before Christmas, **Good Shepherd UMC** in Dale City (Woodbridge), Alexandria District, took the Christmas message to the community by holding "A Night in Bethlehem" in the local park. Invitations were hand delivered to around 200 homes. Volunteers of all ages filled roles of shop keepers, artisans, bakers, beggars and the Holy Family. This outreach project is one of four annual events that Good Shepherd intends to begin holding in the community instead of at the church.



▲ Pastor Myrtle Francis Hatcher and family offered the congregation of **Main St. UMC-Suffolk** a "Cookie Factory" during the Advent season, where 2000 cookies had been baked. After worship, each person took a box and selected cookies of their choice. Pictured: Lily Pierce is shown selecting her favorite cookies.

In snowy Blue Grass, Va., 18,583 meals were packaged for Stop Hunger Now. "The people were on a roll and didn't want to quit," said Pastor

Andre Crummett. **Blue Grass UMC, Staunton District**, sponsored the event and the community joined in the mission activity at the Ruritan building. ▼



▲ For the past five years **Mount Olive UMC, in Toms Brook**, has been sending cards, food and personal items to troops serving in the Middle East. This year 2,873 cards were



signed and delivered to the South Washington County Military Support Group by Kermit and Frances Orndorff.

▼ **Crenshaw UMC in Blackstone** has coordinated a mission project that has benefited several parties involved. Music Director Judy Amos pondered in 2012 how to beautify the sanctuary during Christmas while getting the congregation involved. She talked with the local garden shop (Clay's Garden Center) and worked out a cost with the owner. Members of the congregation were asked to donate the cost agreed upon for the poinsettias in honor/memory of loved ones. Amos was pleasantly surprised at the response. The sanctuary has been adorned the past two years with 40 poinsettias paid for by the congregation. Ten dollars of the cost of each plant is being donated to UMCOR. This project is a benefit to several: the sanctuary is adorned each year with poinsettias, loved ones are remembered in a special way, UMCOR gets a donation to help with disaster relief, and the garden center benefits financially, too. Church pastor the Rev. Dr. Stan Thompson said he has been joyfully amazed at the response from the congregation.



▲ Over Christmas, **Farmville UMC** provided a meal and supplies for an entire low-income apartment complex. The church received a grant from Wal-Mart for local hunger relief. That money, plus donations from other area churches, helped provide all 80 units with food, cleaning supplies and children's winter accessories.

Winchester church reaches out to church on eastern side of Commonwealth



The people of **Bethlehem UMC** are excited – their vision is one of hope aware that God is not finished with them yet!

With a church needing to be "spruced up" and finances to do it but not able bodies to work, an able-bodied work team with hearts for mission provided the needed manpower to jump start the work.

A five-member team, three men and two teens, arrived at Bethlehem and saw a job needing to be done – lots of painting to be done. They went to work on a very hot day.



▲ In December, United Methodist Women of **Mount Tabor UMC, West Buckingham Charge, Farmville District**, met to complete the one session "Mary's Advent" Bible study, which includes instructions to make birthing kits for UMCOR. The study was well received, and the women enjoyed putting the kits together. Pictured, from left, Doris Davis, Sue Bryant, Lucile Moniuszko, Faye Taylor, Judy Carroll, Winnie Amos and Phyllis Carroll.

The team brought many of their personal tools, and the church provided additional rollers and brushes and lots and lots of paint. By four o'clock in the afternoon one whole addition to the church was done – clean and bright and inviting. It is amazing to see God as work through hearts and hands committed to God's service.

Special thanks are owed to the Rev. Mike Mayton, pastor of **Wesley UMC in Winchester**, who happened to have a conversation with me about our need, and Jimmy Robertson, the mission team leader who made it all happen. Additional team members included Maurice Appl, Braden Robertson and Meleah Mayton.

It was truly a work of God and exciting to behold. What an example of Christian love and caring – churches helping churches! It looks very much like the church in the Book of Acts where Christians helped other churches in need. ☺

-The Rev. Carol Bookwater is Bethlehem's pastor.

Your house...



Celebrating 80 years of service

...can become a very special home for retired United Methodist pastors and their spouses in the years to come.

The **Retired Clergy Housing Corporation of the Virginia Conference** maintains a program to provide retirement homes for eligible United Methodist pastors who need them.

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

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

c/o Thomas L. Coffman, President
4837 Village Lake Dr.,
Richmond, VA 23234
Retired Clergy Housing Corp.

Phone: (804) 271-7219; Fax: (804) 271-4558
E-mail: nlctlc@comcast.net

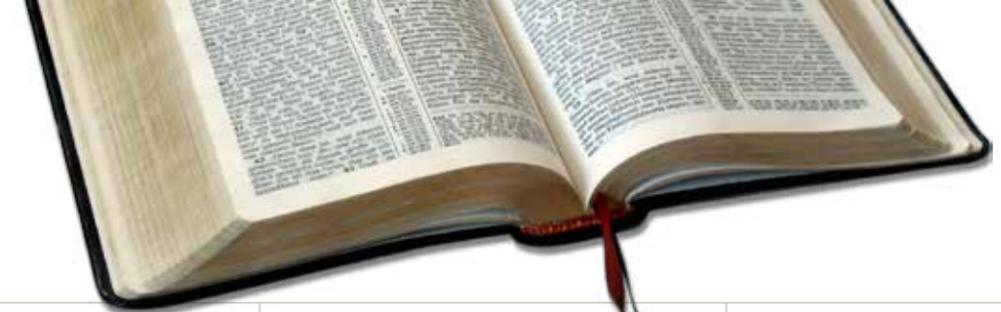
Please send me information on:

- The Covenant of Gratitude.
- Including the Retired Clergy Housing Corporation in my will.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____

Devotions from International Lesson Series

LIVING THE WORD



The Rev. Robert D. Lewis is pastor of Hinton Avenue UMC in Charlottesville, serving on-loan from the Methodist Church of Great Britain. He was ordained there in 2005 and served as Superintendent of the Ecclesall Circuit in Sheffield, England. Robert has a BS in Physics and Religious Studies from Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, and earned his M.Div. and Th.M. from Duke Divinity School in Durham, N.C. He served two appointments in Virginia beginning in 1998, then transferred to the British Methodist Church with his wife, Rev. Rachel Downs-Lewis, in 2004. Robert is an avid photographer and moviegoer and plays guitar and djembe.

Feb. 2, 2014
Doers of What?
James 1:19-27

Several years ago, I completed a course for spiritual growth in which we were assigned, over a period of months, to spend time in groups of three just listening to one another. The rule was simple: the first person to speak was able to say whatever was on her or his heart or mind, for as long as needed, with no interruptions. When that person finished, the other two partners were not to share similar experiences, or words of understanding, or good advice. We were simply to say “thank you” to one another, and keep a time of silence. Then it was the next person’s turn to speak their heart. Can you imagine how difficult it was for a bunch of clergy and other caring church folk to listen to others pour out their hearts and not comment, critique or command? We all had to learn enormous restraint.

At our heart’s core, we are all “doers.” We like to fix things, people, situations. Nowhere is this more obvious than in churches. In my experience of congregations – large and small, urban and rural, here and abroad – the desire to be busy, useful, doing something holds inordinate sway. We feel the need to do without always first listening for the need, the challenge or the invitation from God.

James advises similar restraint when he commends us to be “quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger.” How often have I witnessed Christian sisters and brothers interrupt, shoot down, hijack or otherwise resist one another’s earnest attempts to describe what God has placed on their hearts! How often I have seen hackles raise, indignation erupt, and negativity flare when, as Christ’s church, we’ve tried to discern where and how God calls us to be engaged with the poor and needy of our world. We react – sometimes virulently – to what “they” are asking of us, or the ways “they” have received what we have offered. We undercut the impulse of “the perfect law, the law of liberty” by insisting that this or that course of action is unsustainable, unappreciated or undeserved.

Being “doers of the Word” means testing our busyness against our calling: “to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.” Is what we are

doing in service of our need to be of service, or of God’s perfect law of love?

Feb. 9, 2014
A Different Law
James 2:1-13

It’s one of those apocryphal old chestnuts that preachers love to trot out: the “religious worthy” who dresses in dirty and tattered clothes and comes into church to see how the congregation responds. Of course we root for the one bold enough to say, “Come sit with me!” and despise the hypocrites who dismiss the poor and downtrodden.

Only this time, it was a story reported by the Associated Press. Just before Thanksgiving, Mormon Bishop David Musselman enlisted the help of a professional make-up artist to disguise himself as a homeless man and test the hospitality of the Salt Lake City congregation at which he’d been invited to preach. The media loved reporting this story, especially how the children wanted to help him, but at least five adults asked this sheep in wolf’s clothing to leave.

James understands this dynamic, and he counsels us as well as those “brothers and sisters” of old to whom he wrote. “Do you, with your acts of favoritism, really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?”

Or course, in my congregation, we proudly point to our soup kitchen that serves warm and hearty fare each Sunday. Even if those folks seldom come to our worship services, we take comfort in giving a genuine welcome when they do. But what of the other distinctions that dwell within our hearts? Some of us still struggle to embrace people of another race. Others insist sexual orientation matters. Even if our hearts are open, many of our buildings do not welcome people with physical disabilities. In other cases, our ways of worshiping say “Have a seat here, please” to some while barking at others – particularly children or those with developmental disabilities – “Stand there! Sit at my feet!”

The tendency to make distinctions is a very natural part of who we are as human beings. It’s part of the survival instinct that the “law of the jungle” wrote into our DNA. But thanks be to God that there is a different law written on our hearts. This law insists we are not responsible for our own survival; indeed, we are completely

incapable of sustaining or preserving ourselves. Instead, we look to God’s boundless love especially as it was revealed in our glorious Lord Jesus, who taught us “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Mercy triumphs over judgment whenever distinctions are erased.

Feb. 16, 2014
Working Faith
James 2:14-26

The staff at my local Wendy’s knows me by sight. They often see me come in for a quick lunch with my wife. Sometimes, I’m on my own, looking for a quiet corner with wi-fi to churn through e-mail. One recent winter day, I was on my way back to the front for a refill when a bundled-up man asked me, “Could you get me a cup of chili?”

I was taken aback. There are many homeless in Charlottesville, and we help through our local church and partnerships across the city. It’s not that often that I’m approached away from church. This was one of those days I was “incognito” in sneakers, jeans and a fleece.

I knew I had a dollar’s change in my pocket, and I was headed for the counter anyway. I didn’t feel I could say “no.” So I smiled politely, said “Sure, I’ll be right back,” and went to place the order. The cashier looked a bit puzzled when I ordered more food. I was worried the manager might have standing orders to run such folks off.

When I took the man his chili (and extra crackers), I stopped to chat. He clasped my hands in his – they were very cold – and thanked me profusely. He said something about not being able to get warm. I asked if he would like a cup of coffee also. “Oh, yes sir!”

Once he had the coffee, we talked a bit more. I asked if he had a place to stay that night, and made sure he knew about our ecumenical shel-

ter program. I told him that if he was hungry, he could always come to our church on Sundays for a warm and filling lunch. He blessed me as I shook his hand to go.

As I left him, I was grateful that God had put in my path such a tangible reminder of who and how I am called to be. But I also wondered, “Where am I not doing this?” James reminds us how crucial it is that our faith be put into practice. Without works of mercy and compassion, our most profound theologies and cherished beliefs are like a body without a soul. Can we stay attuned to the opportunities around us, and to all the challenges that beset us, as we join hearts and hands in a vital, working faith?

Feb. 23, 2014
Only to Bless
James 3:1-12

Not many of us should write devotions for the *Advocate*, sisters and brothers... What if Bishop Cho is reading this, right now? He will, of course, know all of us make many mistakes. But what should I say?

Not all of us consider that our words are as of great an import as our actions. We were taught as children to say “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Yet this is just not true. I still remember being called “fatty” and “dork,” and it still stings. I have seen and heard others called words that start with “n” and “q” and “f” and “b” – and even those letters in that context bring hurtful thoughts and images to our minds. Indeed, the tongue is like a tiny spark that sets an entire forest ablaze.

For all our best intentions, we cannot tame the tongue. I remember other words, words I am sure were not meant to hurt, but they hurt nonetheless. “I don’t have time for

you right now.” “You don’t deserve that.” “I’m going to have to let you go.” “There isn’t a place for you here.” “It’s not going to work out.”

Since James tells us that our faith is dead without its works, we might assume that things we simply say don’t matter. But it just isn’t so. Our speech also displays our faith, and as a very small rudder steers a very large ship, what passes between our lips may steer hearts and minds to places we never dreamed we’d make them go.

What hope have we, then? How do we cope with this world of iniquity lodged squarely in each of our mouths? James’ good news for us is that while our daily habits and practices may inadvertently reveal our innermost character and commitments, so may they shape one another, and vice versa. We attain spiritual maturity by acting and speaking with charity and mercy. And as we grow more spiritually mature, our words and actions become more healing and compassionate. Can a fig tree yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No, of course not! Neither can one who is growing into the image of Christ long use their lips to curse – only to bless. ☞

CLERGY & DIACONAL



Deaths



The Rev. Rogers Staton Laudermilk, 76, of Stephens City, a native of Covington, died Dec. 24, 2013, in Front Royal. Survivors include his wife

of 55 years, Katherine B. Laudermilk; a son, John Wesley Laudermilk and his family. Laudermilk worked at General Electric in Waynesboro for a number of years, then worked in automobile sales and real estate prior to being called to the ministry. As an ordained elder, he served charges in several districts of the Virginia Conference. He was also on the Camp Overlook Board for a number of years. Laudermilk graduated from Longwood College in Farmville and Duke Divinity School in Durham, N.C. He was involved in emergency services starting in Waynesboro in the 1960s. He served with the Buckingham Volunteer Rescue Squad and finally as a member and chaplain with Stephens City Volunteer Fire and Rescue.



The Rev. Howard Cabell Smith, 87, of Broadway, died Oct. 28, 2013. He was a native of Martinsville and the son of Methodist minister, the Rev. Ernest

C. Smith. A World War II veteran, Smith became a Methodist pastor and served the Page Charge, Mount Solon, Stanley, Broadway, New Hope, Bassett Memorial and Basic UMCs.

The Rev. Charles W. Cannon, 94, Retired elder of the New Jersey Conference, died Dec. 25, 2013. Rev. Cannon lived in Horntown and attended Deas Chapel UMC, Eastern Shore District, for many years. His internment was there, led by the Rev. Gary Miller.

Robert "Bob" Owen Crabbs, 90, died Dec. 29, 2013, in Loughman, Fla. He was the father-in-law of the Rev. Linda Crabbs, who serves Forrest Grove UMC, Richmond District.

Dasie Pearl Garner, mother of the Rev. Steve Garner, who serves Mount Bethel UMC, Danville District, died Jan. 9, 2014.

Eunice Kate Robertson Gill, mother of Brenda Harris, died Oct. 22, 2013. Brenda is the spouse of the Rev. Ralph Harris, who serves West End UMC, Roanoke District. Gill was a member of Halesford UMC in Moneta.

The Rev. Oden Haynes of Tampa, Fla., died Jan. 7, 2014. He was the father of Carol Haynes Marvel and father-in-law of the Rev. Fred G. Marvel, Fredericksburg District.

Bonita Leavitt died Jan. 3, 2014. She was the wife of the Rev. Charles Leavitt, recently retired chaplain at Bon Secours HealthCare Systems, Elizabeth River District.

Mary Eva Lee died Jan. 10, 2014. She was the mother of the Rev. Cindy Lee, a deacon serving as Minister of Discipleship at Shady Grove UMC, Mechanicsville.

Florence McCullough, 99, of Glen Allen, died Dec. 7, 2013. She was the oldest member at Laurel Park UMC.

Michel Meeuwissen died Dec. 21, 2013. He was the father of Alexandria District Lay Leader John Meeuwissen and the father-in-law of the Rev. Pam Meeuwissen, a local pastor in the Alexandria District appointed as Chaplain/Spiritual Counselor at Mary Washington Hospice in Fredericksburg.

Carol Sue Oguich, 70, of Midlothian, died Jan. 12, 2014. She was the mother-in-law of the Rev. Judy Oguich, a deacon serving Trinity UMC as Minister of Discipleship.

Betty Wineman Pearson, 91, of Lynchburg, died Jan. 7, 2014. She was mother of Janie Dowdy, mother-in-law of the Rev. Roger Dowdy, and grandmother of Kristen Dowdy Hart.

Robert C. Ripley Sr., 89, died Dec. 19, 2013. He was the father of the Rev. R. Carl Ripley Jr., pastor of Community UMC in Arlington.

The Rev. Kelly J. Wilson Jr., father of the Rev. Jim Wilson, pastor at Ridge-way UMC, Danville District, died Dec. 18, 2013, in Rocky Mount.

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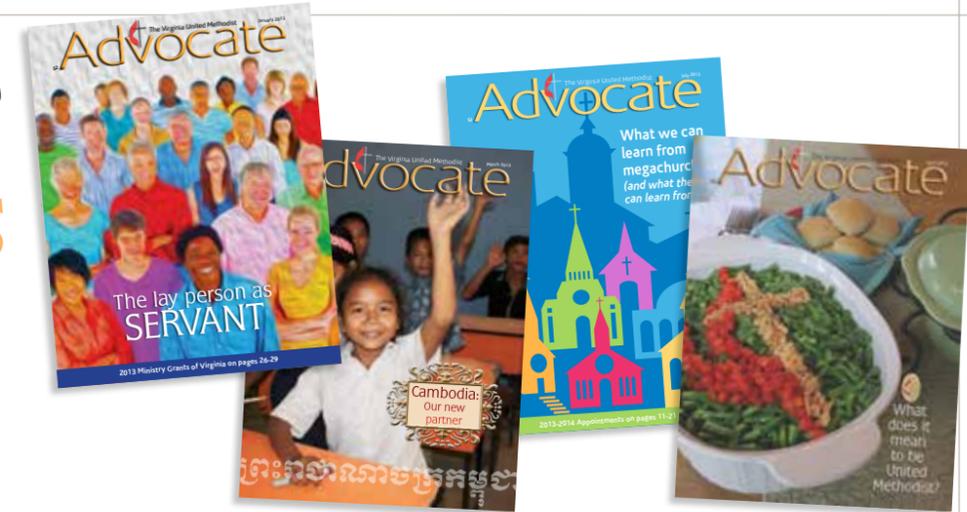


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FROM THE BISHOP



Continuing opportunities for Prayer

May the peace and blessings of our Lord be with you. I pray this new year will be a real blessing to you, your family and your church. As I said last month, I am very excited about the new possibilities that we will experience this year. May our Lord continue to lead the Virginia Conference.

Many of you may have heard the news that my administrative assistant, Estelle Pruden, will retire as of March 1 this year. She has served this office for 31 years, and I am the fifth bishop she has worked with. I cannot thank her enough for her faithful and effective ministry for many years, and all the clergy and laity in the Virginia Conference will join me in expressing our deep appreciation for her dedication to Christ's ministry. I pray the Lord will bless this new chapter of her

life and her family. We will miss her.

As the Scripture says, there is a time to end and a time to start. The ad-hoc search committee and I discerned that Terri Biggins, administrative assistant to the director of Justice and Missional Excellence in our conference center building, would be the person to succeed Estelle in this ministry. She agreed to serve, and I am relieved by her commitment. I invite you to support and pray for my new administrative assistant.

Last year it was a great joy to have the first Bishop's Convocation on Prayer with Dr. Dwight Judy. This year we will have the second convocation on March 29 at Trinity UMC in Richmond. I am very excited to have Dr. Tom Albin as our keynote speaker. Dr. Albin is currently serving as dean of Upper Room Ministry and is well known in the area of spiritual formation. The theme for this convocation will be spiritual disciplines.

Since we invited the churches to sign the Covenant for Spiritual Disciplines last fall, the question that came into my mind has been what will be next. Many people responded to this invitation. Now, our new task is how to help and nurture these faithful responders to grow in Christ. How can we guide them to experience the joy and meaningfulness of spiritual disciplines? How can we help them to live in the presence of God? So, the conference is planning to provide a brief guide and resources for this purpose.

The Convocation on Prayer will also be an opportunity to learn more about spiritual disciplines. Besides the presentation of Dr. Albin, we will offer workshops on various kinds of spiritual disciplines. This will be a great opportunity to learn more about spiritual disciplines and share our experiences with one another. I invite all congregations to attend this convocation, especially those churches that responded to become prayer

covenant congregations.

Thinking of the situation of our beloved United Methodist Church, I believe that it is truly the time to pray. Today we are facing many challenges, and it is becoming more and more difficult to maintain the unity of our church. These signs awaken us to the fact that it is the time to pray. Without prayer, without the help and guidance from the Lord, we cannot handle today's situation. In such a time as this, if we do not pray, we do not do our best. This is truly the time to get together and pray for guidance from our Lord. This is the time for us to pray for a renewal and revival of our churches.

In the Bible, when the Israelites faced a crisis, they got together and prayed to the Lord. They repented and renewed their covenant with God. In prayer they overcame many challenges and crises.

This is not just an old story. We need to learn lessons from the people of Israel. The God who helped the Israelites in their crisis is our God also. Our Lord is the same yesterday, today and forever.

In our gathering we will open ourselves to God and humbly seek the wisdom, guidance and strength which come from the Lord. We will share and encourage one another to grow in the Spirit. We will spread the culture of prayer to the churches. I want you to remember Saturday, March 29, and to attend this convocation. But first of all, please pray for our convocation. Without prayer, we cannot carry out our mission. Prayer should always go first. I am excited about this convocation and am looking forward to seeing you on March 29. ☺

With many thanks,

ONE LAST WORD



Tweets heard 'round the conference

Martha Stokes @MarthaEStokes

Traveling west and experiencing a heat wave. 18 when I left Glen Allen; now 24 in Danville. #polarvortex

Hannah Lambert @hannahbanana004

Got my space heater on and I can't see my breath in the living room anymore

Bert Cloud @bertcloud

I just discovered the Interrobang! What else have I been missing? Will use this all week. Wingdings2 in MSWord

Farmville - UMC @FarmvilleUMC

We hit 500 'likes,' yay! Now the next challenge...Let's get all 500 of you in worship this Sunday!!

Floris UMC @FlorisUMC

Roads too slick on Sunday? Missed the sermon? Whatever the reason, it's ok. We got it on demand.

Rev. Sarah Wastella @SarahWastella

Even on the coldest of days, we can find our heart strangely warmed. #MercurialMethodism

Jason Micheli @JasonMicheli

Like the GPS in my car, the star only gets the magi 'near' their destination.

Jason C. Stanley @jasoncstanley

One of the best parts of vacation is going to church with my wife.

Small Church Pastor @SmallishChurch

If Downton Abbey was more like Duck Dynasty, I would watch. ☺



Deck extension is Eagle Scout project

By Kiki Nusbaumer

Sean Thompson, 14, has already made a big impact on many people in many ways.

It isn't just that he's polite and smart. It isn't even just his leadership ability or self-confidence.

The guy can build stuff.

At the Winchester Heart Havens' home there was recently a small ceremony to dedicate the newly extended deck in memory of Colleen Rathel and Murray Smith. Colleen, the late wife of Fred Rathel, has been family to Heart Havens since day one. She and Fred were fixtures at the home, and she supported his service and dedication to the organization, which continues to this day.

Murray Smith, husband of Mary Lynn Smith and the father of one of the men who live at the Winchester home, attended all the Winchester events along with his wife. They volunteered their time and maintained a constant cheerfulness matched only by their son and his two brothers, who continue the legacy of volunteerism

by working at events.

For his Eagle project, Thompson extended the deck with support from his fellow Scouts, family and mentor. The structure more than doubled the original size of the deck. He created benches that fold away to save space when needed. It is a thing of beauty and the perfect gift to the men of Winchester home. Their lifestyle is warm and social, and time spent that evening on the new deck was no different. Surrounded by supporters, friends and family, the structure was officially dedicated to the memory of the two individuals so intricately woven into the fabric of the home.

With speeches, food and fellowship, the crowd remembered Colleen and Murray. All were brought together by Sean Thompson's hard work.

Thompson received his rank of Eagle Scout on Dec. 17. ☺

-Kiki Nusbaumer is Heart Havens' coordinator for Marketing and Volunteers

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