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Virginia Advocate

The official magazine of
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Local Church News

Items should be typed (preferably sent via e-mail) or printed legibly, no more than 100 words, and of conference-wide interest. Complete names of individuals, churches and districts should be included. Because of space limitations, the Local Church section prohibits news items related to church members' birthdays (of less than 100 years), wedding anniversaries, receptions for moving and/or retiring pastors, photos of traditional Christmas trees or Easter trees/crosses, and any item over two months old. Color photos are encouraged. Photos returned *only* if submitted with a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Photos included on a space available basis. The editor reserves the right to edit all copy or refuse publication.

Letters

Letters to the Editor are printed on a space-available basis. Letters should be limited to 150 words for space reasons. The Advocate will not print letters addressing a topic beyond two months of the publication of that issue. The Advocate editor reserves the right to edit all letters.

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PILLOW TALK



Madeline Pillow
Editor

Humans, curious as we are, enjoy categorizing information in order to learn more and to make connections between the things we learn. These categories and labels are ones that we know by heart and use on doctor's forms.

And to a certain extent these categories make sense (at least until we get our hands on them and use the information for completely different reasons).

Imagine one of those rides at a carnival and the sign at the front of the line stating how tall you must be in order to ride. Now if I can't go on the ride for not meeting this requirement, should others in line make judgments based on my economic status, family life or educational status? No. But this is what we as a society do every day whether or not we realize it.

The risk we run with categorization in our society is letting categories become barriers. When they become barriers, we start to rely on them as infallible in order to judge other people, creating things like racism and prejudice. These categories divide us into marital status, race, age groups, educational status, country, states and cities; all of these for ultimately good reasons. They can help define regions so state and federal governments know what areas might need more assistance. They show peoples' patterns and preferences, so needed commodities are available.

All of this information can benefit society. It can help us right wrongs and understand why things are happening. But it can also be a danger. When we rely solely on this information to tell us something about a person or a particular group of people, we run the risk of creating inherent judgments based on these facts.

Think about it. You have an opinion of people who are from New York versus Texas. If you're a sports fan, you may have predisposed thoughts about another team's fans. If someone is from a lower economic bracket than yourself, you have internal thoughts that may cross your mind. These are natural reactions, but it's what you do next with that information that matters.

If someone is single, the danger we run is thinking that this is a problem. Single people aren't problems that we need to wrangle down to the ground with an engagement ring. Meet those persons where they are and don't define them by this fact.

If someone dropped out of high school, the danger we run is equating this to lack of intelligence or drive. There could be family reasons that made this happen or it could be that this person realized his interests were leading him on a different path or timeline.

We make a mistake when we question the person rather than our assumptions that rise to the surface of our minds from these categories. Though we may all be grouped somehow, these groups are probably not the way we would define ourselves.

Remember that there are real, breathing people hidden under all these shells of information. And people are more important than what's on the surface.

And if that's not enough, we can remember Paul's rebuke to the Galatians: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28)

And that's one label that can define us.

Until our next issue,

Madeline

Labels



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Above: Snorkeling as a spiritual experience (see page 21.) Photo courtesy of Don Hawks.



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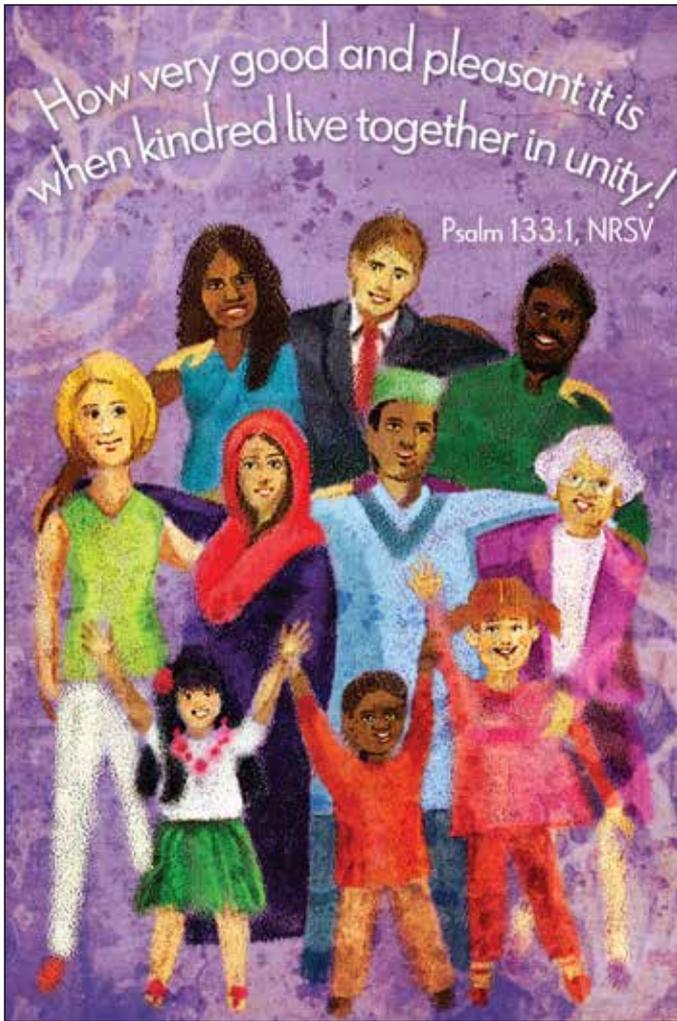
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COMMENTARY



Discipleship Circle impacted by issue of racism

By Barbara Cousar

The Eastern Shore Discipleship Circle for the Northern Accomack area was partly formed in response to a spirit-led “Call to Action” to be true disciples of Christ in the vitality of our churches. Originally beginning with just six clergy, we explored how to be instrumental in this call and where we would start.

We agreed that once we had firm commitments and direction we would invite one laity representative and, if desired, an alternative, which we did.

Our discussions began with sharing fruitful areas to renew our congregations’ accountability as disciples of Christ, as well as how and where we as leaders could be effective in having our churches grow to be Christ-like in love, unity and service. The impact of The United Methodist Council of Bishops’ pastoral letter on racism May 7, 2015, in Berlin, Germany, and the preceding letter that week calling for prayer and healing by the President of the Council of Bishops, Warner H. Brown Jr., led us to engage discussions openly and seriously through individual and collective fervent prayer as a group, trust, Lectio Divina devotion and with safe house boundaries on this topic in order to be proactive where discord could occur dealing with racism.

We narrowed our focus to within our church walls and outside “putting our faith into action.” As grace would have it, due to the constant reoccurring actions of social injustice, specifically racial profiling and excessive unwarranted abuse and misplaced loyalty in these situations, our circle began open conversation regarding our personal feelings about the situations and what we felt attributed to the circumstances that would cause

such actions, such as lack of economical resources in impoverished areas, education, low self-esteem, abandonment, envy, loss of hope, the feeling of being forsaken by persons in power to make a difference, lack of respect and no longer seeing church as a place to turn to.

We began to realize that our diverse group (composed of African Americans, Euro Americans and Koreans; different age groups and genders) was hungry to share their doubts and fears and to learn more of the reality of white privilege in the midst of a hurting black society. A society that feels rioting, marching and picketing is a means to be heard, seen and to be taken seriously as a way to combat an inequality in receiving necessary resources, information, better living conditions, funding projects, educations, jobs and wages. More frankly, to be treated as free human beings that matter.

The circle’s holy conversations touched home in such a way that we all related to some type of direct or indirect means of exclusion because of race or uncomfortable being in the company of another race. Realizing race relations needed to be our priority, the first step was to start a self-examination.

We no longer can look the other way, stay silent and not take a stand because it is happening in the other areas, somehow

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

COMMENTARY

exempting us from responsibility and accountability. In order for us who are leaders and shepherds to have dialogue with our congregations on race relations, we knew we needed to work through our issues, doubts and fears by seeing how we can help to be proactive to a solution or to having a common consistent ground of social harmony in case these happens in our area.

Having established a covenant, we have also outlined ways to help accomplish these tasks including:

Inviting persons in the community and close surrounding areas that have been involved with racial profiling and discrimination situations and cases.

Contacting local officials and members of the police department in order to establish working relationships and openly share personal experiences.

I feel very privileged to be a part of this circle to help to make a difference in an ever growing world where it seems sometimes that we are going backwards instead of forward. Being an African American clergy and a member of this circle awards me an opportunity to address the needs and hurt of the community and its lack of necessary resources without coming across as a radical trying to promote a race crusade for the need for more race awareness and to have action taken.

I am comfortable being

that voice for all people and in sharing experiences and giving comments on matters presented in our discussions. Having been a member of other race awareness groups in other areas, I have been aided in my ability to communicate on such a touchy topic, one that sorely needs to be addressed. I see others listen and how they are genuinely sincere in the need to want to break the barrier as they share their stories.

Wouldn't it be awesome if the world would totally trust the words of Mark 10 (that what we lose in the name of Jesus Christ, we gain back hundred fold) and step out in faith to make this the kingdom on earth as God created us to be?

My role as clergy and concerned person is to continue with the Discipleship Circle in hopes that my tactful and honest openness in sharing and receiving will help others to continue to open up. It is my hope that our desire to be effective in approaching race relations as an extension to Christ's ministry will manifest itself to show Christ in us as leaders and shepherds.

Blame is not the game for we all must take responsibility for our actions, but we must first have an equal playing field with no hidden agendas. This begins with keeping our focus on God as the head, staying centered on God and having the mindset of Jesus

Christ. You are no better than me, and I am no better than you. Love God, love thy neighbor and know that thy neighbor does not have to look, speak or dress like us.

Respect for person and or life does matter whether it's yours or mine. 

– The Rev. Barbara Cousar is a pastor of the Horntown Charge in the Eastern Shore District.



Advocate

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EQUIPS
CONNECTS
INFORMS

COMMENTARY

February is Heart Havens month

By Sarah Wilkinson

As a life-long United Methodist, I've known plenty of people for whom music was a delight. But for my friend Ronnie, music is a special joy. Whether he's singing with his choir at Laurel Hill UMC in Varina or playing his keyboard or tambourine at home, the happiness that radiates from his face when he's making music is magnificent. Even during services, Ronnie likes to leaf through the hymnal to see the notes printed on the page. One of my favorite memories from this Christmas was at our Richmond Heart Havens Christmas party. As we were cleaning up, Ronnie and I started spontaneously singing "Silent Night" together. That was a beautiful moment of shared Christmas spirit, and Ronnie's face was so lit up and happy that you could

Ronnie, Sarah and Chris at Boulevard UMC, Richmond District. Photo courtesy of Sarah Wilkinson.



almost see sunbeams coming from his smile.

Ronnie lives at a Heart Havens home in Richmond. There, he is empowered to pursue his love of music while receiving the support he needs to live as independently as possible. He participates in community events such as volunteer opportunities, plays and festivals, and he makes friends. When he gets home in the evenings, he relaxes however he wants, whether that's with his music or by turning on "The Three Stooges" (his favorite thing to watch). His life is his own, and by living in a Heart Havens home, he's empowered to live life to the fullest in the way he wants. Heart Havens supports him as he finds his place at the table.

February is Heart Havens Month, and this year we're celebrating the fact that everyone has a place at God's Communion table, including Ronnie and all Heart Havens residents. After all, "we are one body in this one Lord!" People with intellectual disabilities bring many different talents and gifts to God's kingdom, and God values each and every one.

I invite you to take February to learn more about Heart Havens and the wonderful people we support. This year, we have some wonderful new worship resources to aid you as you plan your Heart Havens Month observance, including new prayers, a call to worship and a special

Communion liturgy. We also have some updated communication resources available, including some prewritten social media posts. All of these resources, as well as mission ideas and bulletin inserts, can be downloaded at <http://heart-havens.org/article/heart-havens-month-2016>.

I or another Heart Havens representative would also love to come visit your congregation, United Methodist Men, United Methodist Women or other small group. We can provide a program of almost any length that will help you learn more about our mission and the wonderful men and women we support. We're happy to provide a speaker for your programs year-round, not just in February (though February is an extra-special time to host us). If you'd like to schedule a speaker, please call me at **(877) 442-8368**.

Ronnie loves living at his Heart Havens home, because it's truly his home. It's a home where he can be himself. It's a home with Christ at the center. Ronnie and his other Heart Havens friends have a place at God's table. Does he have a place at yours? 

– Sarah Wilkinson is the Communications and Volunteer Manager at Heart Havens, Inc.

COMMENTARY

What's the deal with Valentine's Day?

Not much, to tell the truth. It's another example of what happens when Christian faith intersects with pagan custom: a tradition whose origins remain unclear.

Valentine's Day is the feast day of St. Valentine. It is not certain who this saint was. There are at least two individuals named Valentine (Latin form is Valentinus) who might be at the heart, no pun intended, of the tradition. One Valentine was a Roman priest who died in AD 269 under Emperor

Claudius II Gothicus. He was executed for helping Christian martyrs. He refused to renounce his faith and became a martyr himself, being beaten to death and beheaded. According to tradition, this happened on Feb. 14. A second candidate is a bishop from central Italy who was executed in Rome. Other traditions hold that both men also performed marriages that were considered illegal because they occurred during a time of war.

In AD 469, Pope Gelasius set Feb. 14 as the feast day to honor this Christian martyr and saint. St. Valentine was said to have suffered from epilepsy and so became the patron saint of

those who suffer epilepsy.

Where did all the romance stuff come from, you ask? That's where the syncretism comes in.

The 15th of February was also the Roman "Feast of Purification" known as the Lupercalia or Februarca. Associated with the coming of spring, it was a celebration intended to ensure the fertility of flocks, fields and people.

Probably as a result of the conflating of a holiday about fertility and a feast day to commemorate a saint who had been persecuted for performing marriages, the Feast of St. Valentine became a holiday associated with romance, and it was



not long before St. Valentine would be identified as the patron saint of lovers.

Now, about the chocolates, the roses and the cards? You might have to look to Fanny Farmer, FTD and Hallmark for the answers to that one. 

—Article from the American University United Methodist Community.

A Place at the Table



Everyone has a place at the Table. Across the Conference, adults with intellectual disabilities want to find their places at tables both at church and in the community. Heart Havens empowers them to do just that by providing a safe and nurturing environment where people with intellectual disabilities are empowered to live life to the fullest with as much independence as possible.

February is Heart Havens Month.
Is there a place for Heart Havens at your table?

"Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him..."



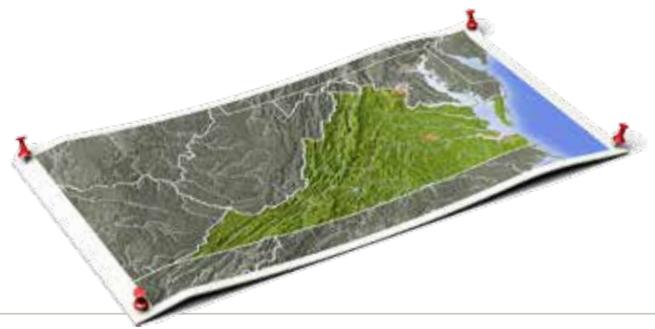
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The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



A look into the crowd of youths at the high school retreat in November 2015.



Youth retreats: Q&A with Paulo Lopes

Paulo Lopes is the Virginia Conference director of Ministries with Young People. In November and December 2015, he was speaker for the middle school and high school retreats with a combined total of almost 1,000 students.

In this Q&A, he reflects on the retreats and what is up next for Ministries with Young People.

Why is it important for youths to attend retreats?

Paulo Lopes: I think it is important for youths to attend, particularly, confer-

ence retreats and events because our connection is like a family. We don't always treat it like a family, but we should.

When you're trying to do something new, when you're trying to innovate, when you're struggling in ministry or when you are having success in ministry, you want to share all of that in the family. I'm going to Brazil for Christmas, and I am looking forward to Christmas with 60 family [members]. Some of them I know very little. Some of them live lives that are extremely different from mine, but they are family and I want to hang out

with them, meet with them and learn with them. And maybe find some things in common that I wouldn't find otherwise.

What was important for you to focus on with these two retreats?

Lopes: I wanted to focus on the fundamentals. Too much of what we do in church, particularly in youth ministry, focuses on the ins and outs of living our lives: how to have better relationships, how to feel better about myself, how to understand that God loves me, etc. We ask

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

QUIZ

all these things, but we forget to tend to the basics. Who is God? Who are we because of God? What kind of people are we called to be because of this new identity?

I've noticed in the past few years that there is a lot of hunger and thirst for basic Christianity, the basics of what does it mean to follow Jesus. And we don't explore that nearly enough. My goal in the context of Called [the retreats focused on the students' call to ministry] was what in the most basic form, what does it mean to be Called?

I believe we are called to be rooted in God, I believe we are called to be centered in Jesus from everything we do, to the way we think, our attitudes and our love. I believe we can't do any of that without being empowered by the Holy Spirit. And, at the end of it all, there is an invitation to be called to God's mission in the world, and part of our mission is to make disciples.

What should retreats do for the students who attend? What do you hope they get out of it?

Lopes: Retreats on their own are pretty worthless. But in the context of good youth ministries, they can be fantastic because they affirm what is happening, and they encourage what's to come. If all I do all year long is wait for a retreat, I'm going to have a moun-

taintop experience and that withers; nothing happens with that.

But if I have a caring church that is investing in me as a young person and that is trying to teach me truths and trying to raise me as a disciple and then I have this experience, this experience affirms within the context of a bunch of people the same things that that one leader, that I sometimes don't care about, has been trying to teach me for years. It affirms what my church is doing and how it is supporting me and how they are growing me in faith, and it helps leaders when kids come back to give them something to work with next. It both affirms what happens and encourages what's possible for the future.

Favorite moments from each retreat?

Lopes: The favorite moment with middle school and high school has to be Saturday night for different reasons. We spoke about the Holy Spirit. We hardly ever invest time in talking about the Holy Spirit, but this time around with the kids, it was all about the Holy Spirit and the kids could receive the Holy Spirit and be filled with it.

With the middle schoolers, I asked if they would like to receive and it was the image of kids rushing to the front and extending their arms as if to say they want to receive that was so powerful. We finished praying and singing the song and it was now time for Communion. But the

(Continued on pg. 13: "YOUTH RETREATS.")



Paulo Lopes speaks to the youths gathered at the high school retreat.

1. Paulo signed his name at the retreat using what shortened form?

- A. Paul-LO
- B. P-LO
- C. P. Lopes
- D. Popes

2. What popular TV show inspired a remix of the popular Rock, Paper, Scissors game?

- A. Game of Thrones
- B. The Voice
- C. The Walking Dead
- D. The Big Bang Theory

3. What "necessary" run did Paulo, conference videographer Nick Ruxton and Advocate editor Madeline Pillow make before break-out sessions on Saturday afternoon?

- A. Starbucks coffee run
- B. Gummie Bear run
- C. One-mile run to take off the delicious retreat food
- D. A run to create the perfect Instagram post

Find the Answers on pg. 31.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



VUMAC hosts first B3 Commuter Day

By Debbie Baugham

Building Blackstone Better.

November 21 began as a sunny but chilly day. I was so excited at anticipation of the very first B3 Commuter Day. B3 stands for "Building Blackstone Better." B3 teams are made up of mission-minded people who want to make a difference, one day at a time.

Recently founded, through B3 we would like to improve and promote the Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center (VUMAC) building in Blackstone. This building is currently used by many groups and events annually and now will also be used to host mission teams. The ultimate goal is that the teams would also move out to the rest of the community to assist where needed.

The beauty of the Commuter Day concept is that so many people want to be involved in missions,

but they cannot for an array of reasons. One common reason seems to be time. B3 is not a long commitment, but it allows the participant to make an impact in a short amount of time. And while the team member gets to participate and be a mission team member for a day, VUMAC benefits from the work being done to the facility.

VUMAC is a special place. It's a place where God brings together those who may not meet in other ways and provides a haven for growth, community and reflection.

On this first B3 Commuter Day, we arrived at Blackstone a bit early to find that it was almost nine degrees cooler there than where I reside in Petersburg. But the sun was shining bright and warm, so I remained hopeful for a quick warm-up. Once in I was greeted by Bessie, a long-time member of our staff, working hard and welcoming us with a smile and words of encouragement for our day. Before I knew it the other 14 people arrived. We had team members from their pre-teens to their eighties. We had one person

from New Jersey and some that represented United Methodist Women from a rural church about 75 miles away. It was a great mix of God's people: men, women, youths and adults. We needed to move onward to Plan B, a plan I had in mind in case of rain.

Moving inside the gymnasium, we began sweeping, dusting and freeing a little bird friend who must have found his way indoors during one of the weekly exercise classes. The group was excited about assisting our friend with its freedom. We moved from this area into the ping-pong room, the supply room and then onward to the second floor dormitory. It was amazing how fast the day was going by.

Several members of the team found their way to the outdoor areas where there was raking, pulling weeds, trimming bushes and tree work to be done.

God bless Charleyne, part of our staff, who provided us with a huge bowl of fresh fruit for a delicious snack because we were working up a hunger. While we were outside, several people told us how good our hard work was looking as others came for preparations of the Southside Area Community Theatre production that evening.

For lunch, we enjoyed some delicious homemade soup and sandwiches. Sam McCracken provided us a brief history of VUMAC

(Continued on page 28, "VUMAC")



Virginia United Methodist Credit Union wins community involvement award

By Madeline Pillow

The Virginia United Methodist Credit Union (VUMCU) recently received the 2014 Dora Maxwell Social Responsibility/Community Involvement Award for its Jubilee Assistance Fund (JAF) program which is an alternative to predatory lending. This award is given by the Credit Union National Association (CUNA) to recognize a credit union for its social responsibility work that is supportive of its community. VUMCU received first place at both the state and national level in its asset category.

JAF is a collaborative loan program in which a conference church establishes an account with VUMCU to provide small, short-term loans with low interest rates to church members who would not qualify for loans otherwise. To qualify for JAF, borrowers covenant with their church and agree to receive financial counseling, loan monitoring and payroll deduction.

In 2008, the Rev. Rodney Hunter, pastor of Wesley Memorial UMC, Richmond District, first had the idea for JAF and worked with the Rev. Charles Swadley, retired pastor who was then serving at Lakeside UMC in Richmond, and VUMCU to develop the program.

Hunter believed the church could teach people to live life in abundance and fullness while addressing the rising problem of debt in today's society that leads at-risk families to predatory lenders.

Hunter sees the program as a unique collaboration as it combines the banking institution and the heart of the Church.

"Most banking institutions are conservative about risk, where the church must be faithful risk takers and believe in the impossible," Hunter said.

The program has also allowed these two institutions that are member-focused to work even more closely with their members.

"JAF has given people hope and trust in The United Methodist Church and the credit union. Both institutions have been seen by some as uncaring and insensitive to the needs of the poor. Our Jubilee Assistance Fund is just the beginning of what institutions can do to alleviate poverty and hopelessness," said Hunter.

Janie Hightower, marketing manager for VUMCU, said the institution was honored to receive the Dora Maxwell Award. "We exist solely to serve the Virginia United Methodist community (churches and organizations, church members and clergy), so

working with our conference churches so they can, in turn, help their church members is what we are all about," she said.

So far the program has loaned more than \$33,000, and 25 percent of the loans have already been repaid in full by the borrowers. In addition to the Dora Maxwell Award, Congresswoman Maxine Waters (D-CA) has used the Jubilee Assistance Fund as a model of what churches and credit unions can do to drive predatory lenders out of business.

Churches interested in this loan should contact the Virginia United Methodist Credit Union loan department at (804) 672-0200.

— Madeline Pillow is editor of the Virginia Advocate.

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Snapshot of the JAF Program

- ❖ Established in 2008
- ❖ 16 church members loaned approximately \$37,000 through the JAF program from 2007 to 2015. Four churches have established JAF programs.
- ❖ Interest rate around 6% APR (compared to car title loans that can be as high as 264% APR).
- ❖ 25 percent of the loans have already been repaid in full by the borrowers.
- ❖ One of the JAF borrowers, after paying off a JAF loan, strengthened his financial situation and was able to obtain a mortgage and became a homeowner.
- ❖ Another JAF borrower has improved his credit score and recently was able to qualify for a loan on his own.

EVENTS



February

United Methodist Day at the General Assembly

Feb. 4, Bon Air UMC and Capitol Square, Richmond

This annual event, sponsored by the conference Board of Church and Society and Virginia Conference United Methodist Women, is an opportunity to help faith communities become empowered to serve as missionaries of justice as well as the more traditional missionaries of mercy. Participants will gather Thursday, Feb. 4, at 7 a.m. at Bon Air UMC, 1645 Buford Rd., Richmond, for registration and breakfast and then travel together on buses to the General Assembly and Capitol Square where they will attend committee hearings and meet with legislators in order to advocate for social justice. At 12:30 p.m. participants will return to Bon Air UMC for lunch followed by speakers and discussion. Registration is \$35. Final registration deadline is Jan. 29. Space is limited to 300 persons. For more information or to register, visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org under "Events" and the date. Registration questions may be directed to Monica Sprague at (757) 766-9418 or monicaleighsprague@gmail.com. General questions may be directed to Pat Shipley at (804) 353-1387 or plsrevdoc@aol.com.

Clergy Ethics II Training

Feb. 18, Dayton UMC, Harrisonburg District

All clergy and certified church professionals are required to attend an Ethics II training during this quadrennium (2012-2016). The next training will be 9:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 18, at Dayton UMC, 215 Ashby St., Dayton, Harrisonburg District. Registration fee of \$12 includes lunch and training materials and is payable

by credit card. For more information or to register, visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org under "Events" and the date. Or contact the Center for Clergy Excellence at (804) 521-1126 or 1-800-768-6040, ext. 126. Registration is required 48 hours prior to the event in order to ensure sufficient materials are available for all participants.

Lay Servant Academy

Feb. 26-28, Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center, Blackstone

The Virginia Conference Lay Servant Academy will be held at the Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center (VUMAC) in Blackstone Feb. 26-28. The academy is designed to equip laity to carry out the mission of the church. All of the courses offered are open to anyone who would like to take one. Each course is designed to help those serving the local church learn more about leadership, personal faith development and The United Methodist Church. Many of the courses offered this year will support those who are seeking to become Certified Lay Servants and Lay Speakers. For more information or to register, visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org under "Events" and the date.

March

Clergy Spouse Retreat

March 3-5, Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center, Blackstone

Clergy spouses from around the Virginia Conference will retreat with keynote speaker Lee Anne Orndorff, wife of the Rev. Randy Orndorff, March 3-5 at the Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center (VUMAC) in Blackstone. On Aug. 29, 2008, the Orndorffs' daughter, Kelsey, was killed in a car accident while heading to a Chris Sligh Christian concert. Subsequently, Lee Anne suffered overwhelming grief

that led her to the depths of despair but, with God's help, she began to make a turnaround. Out of her experience with a parent's worst nightmare, she began speaking at engagements at churches and other groups encouraging others battling despair and grief. For more information or to register, visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org under "Events" and the date.

Bishop's Convocation on Prayer

March 5, Trinity UMC, Richmond

The Bishop's Convocation on Prayer will be held Saturday, March 5, at Trinity UMC, 903 Forest Ave., Richmond. Theme is *Deepening Discipleship: Piety and Mercy through Prayer*. Plenary speaker will be Dr. Frederick Schmidt, Reuben P. Job Associate Professor of Spiritual Formation at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Ill.

5 Talent Academy

March 8, Floris UMC, Herndon

Join the 5 Talent Academy on Tuesday, March 8, for "POWRful Worship: Transforming Worship Planning and Leadership." The event will begin with worship, and then the Rev. Barbara Day Miller, associate dean for Worship and Music at Candler School of Theology, will lead a reflection on worship using the POWR model, a conversational model of worship planning and leadership. Miller will be speaking live from Floris UMC in Herndon. The event will also be live streamed to nine satellite locations throughout the conference in order to bring this event close to your church home. For more information or to register, go to www.vaumc.org/5TalentAcademy.

April

Ethics 102: Clergy Reporting of Child Abuse & Neglect Training

April 18, Virginia Crossings Wyndham Hotel & Conference Center, Glen Allen

For newly appointed clergy and interested church professionals, this event meets the commitment to require mandatory sexual ethics training for the Virginia Conference. Registration for this event is required 48 hours prior to the event to ensure sufficient materials are available for all participants. For more information, contact the Center for Clergy Excellence at **(804) 521-1126** or **1-800-768-6040, ext. 126**; e-mail ClergyExcellence@vaumc.org.

Ministers' Convocation

April 18-20, Virginia Crossings Wyndham Hotel & Conference Center, Glen Allen

2016 Ministers' Convocation, "Come to the Table: Bringing Food and Faith Together," will be held April 18-20 at Virginia Crossings Wyndham Hotel & Conference Center, 1000 Virginia Center Parkway, Glen Allen. This will be a time of Sabbath retreat, fellowship of ministry leaders, engagement in theological and academic conversation and a time to be re-inspired for ministry. All clergy, diaconal ministers and professional/paraprofessional certified ministers in the Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church are invited. For more information or to register, visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org under "Events" and the date.

Clergy Ethics II Training – Roanoke District

April 21, Thrasher Memorial UMC, Vinton

All clergy and church professionals are required to attend an Ethics II Train-

ing event in the current quadrennium (2012-2016). Registration is required 48 hours prior to the event in order to ensure sufficient materials are available for all participants. Refunds will not be processed once registration closes 48 hours prior to the event. For more information or to register, visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org.

("YOUTH RETREATS," Continued from pg. 9.)

kids were surrounding the table and there was no way to serve. So we had to carry the table up to the stage to be able to serve Communion, and that was just fantastic.

The high school retreat was the same thing but because we couldn't get to the table the first time, this time before we even asked kids if they wanted to receive the Holy Spirit, we put it in the context of Pentecost. This was when the Holy Spirit came, they were together in the Upper Room and they were probably worshipping, probably praying together and probably sharing food together, and so, we thought, why not have Communion before we ask for the Holy Spirit?

It was really cool to see all of the youths and adults receiving Communion and going back and then we had this moment where we prayed together to receive the Holy Spirit just as in Pentecost.

How important is it to have young leaders in the Church?

Lopes: Young leaders are a product of discipleship. Or in our case, as United Methodists many times, the lack thereof. So when we complain about young people or young leaders, we are really complaining about ourselves. Because who was it that raised those leaders? You can choose to engage and be active in the formation of young leaders, or you can choose to see what kind of leaders show up.

When you wait for young leaders to show up, you get what you get. But

vaumc.org under "Events" and the date. If you do not have a credit card to register online, e-mail Kristen Seibert in the Center for Clergy Excellence at kristenseibert@vaumc.org. For more information, contact the Center for Clergy Excellence at **(804) 521-1126** or **1-800-768-6040, ext. 126**.

when you engage, you get mature, Christian, yet young, leaders who love Jesus, love the Church and have a sense of purpose in the greater church. And that's what we hope to do with young leaders, not only in retreats, but as a whole in our ministries in which we are involved.

What opportunities are there for interested youths to get more involved with the conference?

Lopes: First and foremost, be involved in ministry in the local church. The best youth leaders that get involved in conference-wide ministries are youth leaders that are really involved in their own church.

We have district youth councils and our conference youth council, and we are always looking for youth to fill those spots and help organize what we do throughout the year, especially staff these events when we have them.

What events are up next for your office?

Lopes: One thing that should come up in the next year is a cohort opportunity for leaders of ministry with young people: children, young adult, campus ministries. This is a small group of people who would meet monthly and do spiritual formation. They would learn together and learn how to build teams in their context, and that's something we are going to do soon.

Also, at least one leadership development event for young people. 🍷

TECHNOLOGY TIPS



Nine mistakes to avoid in church website design

By Clay Morgan

Building a website may seem like a daunting task, like when we had to put together our first meaningful resumé. Fear not. While most of us lack the expert coding skills needed to build a website from scratch, web tools continue to improve by leaps and bounds. Knowledgeable friends and affordable pros can help. Drawing on all of these, you can build a website that reflects the personality of your church and serves church seekers as well as congregants.

Before we cover the

missteps, let's discuss the foundation. Good church websites must help us connect with visitors. Make sure you know the key sections to put on your church website. For example, your church's physical address, service times and contact information must be zero clicks away, clearly visible on the homepage and probably in the footer of every other page. At the same time, there are some things you don't want to clutter your site.

Here are nine mistakes to avoid when creating and refining your church's site. It is best to steer clear of all of these design transgressions.

1. Designing your site for regular attendees only

You already have time and space to communicate

with regular attendees: your Sunday morning gathering. Your site is one of your primary outreach tools. Include an obvious place on the site for new people. Consider a tab called "I'm new." Regular attendees may be heavy users of certain sections of the website, like the calendar or blog, but the website does not exist only for them. Let church seekers know you're thinking about them.

2. Creating a site that lacks good images

Professionalism is part of being excellent. Church sites should clearly state your purpose as well as brand your church. Choose visual elements that give a sharp, contemporary and consistent look.

The site should reflect the style of your church as much as possible. One quick way to accomplish that is by placing photos of your worship service on the site. Show your members doing things in the community. Avoid plastering the faces of the pastor or other leaders on every page. Pictures can also answer one of the biggest questions church visitors often ask: "What should I wear?"

3. Neglecting site maintenance

It's surprising how many churches ignore site maintenance and leave outdated content sitting around for months or years. Review every page often. Check for typos. Make certain all the links work.



4. Forgetting about mobile users

Nearly two-thirds of people in the United States now own a smartphone, and the numbers keep climbing. Many people access the Internet only through phones and tablets. If your site doesn't work on those devices, many users will never see what you have to offer. Google's algorithm also gives better rankings to sites that are mobile friendly, increasing your church's visibility online.

5. Overlooking children's ministry info

Many people start looking for a church home once they start a family. One of the first Google searches parents do when they move to a new community is "kids' or children's activities." Many searchers and web visitors don't know what churches do with kids. Your site should clearly explain where children of all ages are invited to hang out. Answer these questions: Is it safe? Who watches these little ones? Where are mom and dad supposed to go when they arrive? Consider a tab called "Parents" to make the experience as stress-free as possible.

6. Excluding video of your services

Many churches post every week's sermon on their website. Those videos show visitors — many of whom will attend your service online before they come in person — what to expect

on Sunday morning. Show them with video. Interested browsers can quickly learn what kind of music you play, what the style of worship is and how a sermon might sound.

Many churches live stream their worship gatherings on the web. Consider using the MyUMClive streaming service, which offers discounted pricing to United Methodist churches.

Remember, if you use copyrighted material of any kind in your service, you need to make sure you have licenses to use it in a broadcast situation. Check out Discipleship Ministries' resources for Christian copyright solutions.

7. Leaving out a way to contact regular attendees

You have posted the phone number for the church office on your site, but what if a prospective visitor wants to speak with someone who isn't on staff? Consider designating a few people in the pews each week who would be great initial contacts for someone who wants to know what they can expect if they show up and attempt to get involved. Consider these ideas:

Create a community skills database where people can match their needs with the skills of other people who could help them. Place a link to this in the "visitors" section and on your homepage.

Think strategically about other ways churches can

connect people with people online and everywhere.

8. Omitting information about special events and calls to action

Most visitors are looking for the same information. Include the times and details of special seasonal and holiday outreach events on your homepage. Make it easy to click spaces with clear directions like Who We Are, Get Involved, Give Online, Get In Touch, etc.

9. Not optimizing web pages for search engines

Someone searching Google with the generic term "United Methodist Church" may not find your church if you haven't implemented any search engine optimization (SEO). Google is smart enough to show local results for generic terms like this, however you have to do a little homework first. Review this SEO guide for churches to further improve your website's placement in search results and specifically target certain groups like parents or newcomers to your area at <http://www.umcom.org/learn/improve-your-church-websites-search-results-seo-guide>.

If you already have a fabulous site, congratulations! If you don't, avoid these mistakes and you will soon have an attractive, clear and engaging web presence. 📌

—Clay Morgan,
United Methodist Communications

"Technology Tips" is a new section of the Virginia Advocate. Here you can learn more about how to use technology to convey God's message on every level of the Church.

Care of self needed for

Do you not know
that your bodies
are temples of
the Holy Spirit,
who is in you,
whom you have
received from
God?

1 Corinthians 6:19

or effective leadership



For whatever reason, it's hard for people to focus on self. If you are an elder or deacon, a local pastor, a lay leader or a congregant, it doesn't matter. Taking time for self can be a practice that is hard for many people to keep.

One reason that self-care is low on the personal list may be that people see it as selfish. But in roles of leadership, it is necessary to keep the balance between family, friends, work and self.

In the Virginia Conference, self-care might be difficult for those of the cloth who feel that it is hard to shut down from responsibilities. According to United Methodist Communications, nearly 50 percent of United Methodist clergy in a survey conducted by the United Methodist Board of Pension and Health Benefits said that their jobs stressed them out. With 5 percent suffering from depression, 26 percent report at least some functional difficulty from depressive symptoms, and 47 percent experienced hostility in their congregations.

In an article in the *Huffington Post*, the Center for Disease Prevention and Control reported that stressful work environments contribute to increased absences, tardiness and overall negative employee attitudes. To counter this, it is recommended that you establish a self-care routine, creating healthy boundaries and balance in your life.

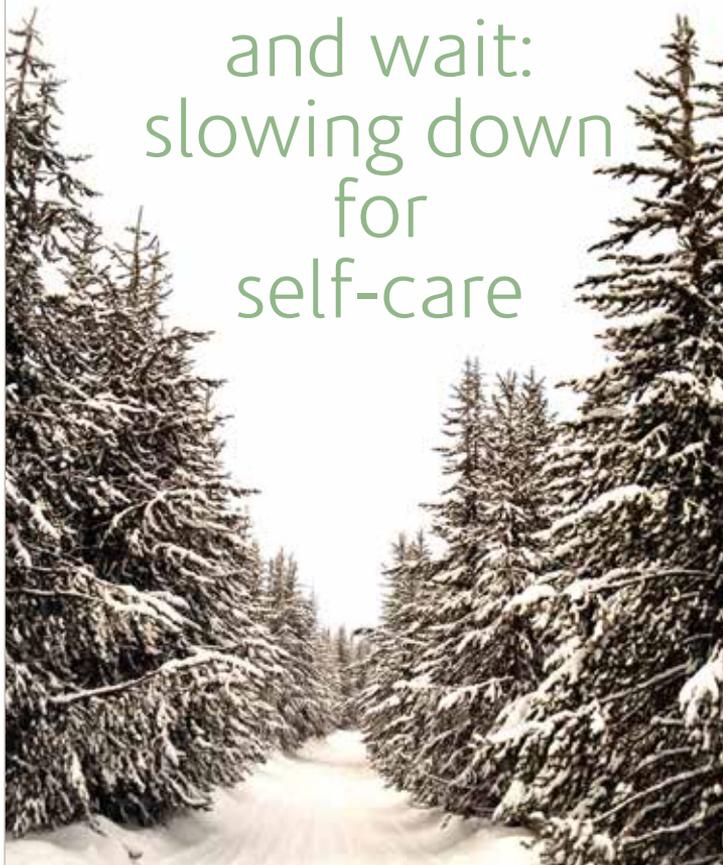
Self-care can take many forms. Some options work better for some than for others. For some it may be ensuring enough sleep or exercise or making time for family and friends to feel happy and fulfilled at work and in life.

For those in leadership, self-care means, whatever your definition, being honest with yourself and others. In the *Huffington Post* article, Kristin Neff, Ph.D. and associate professor at the University of Texas in Austin, identified that part of self-care involves accepting each and every part of who we are spurring each individual to be authentic leaders, engaged partners and productive members of any team.

Read the rest of this feature to explore the ways clergy, laity and churches within the Virginia Conference manage their health and self-care.



Breathe and wait: slowing down for self-care



By Cindy Butler

I love the sound of snow falling. There's a heavy stillness in the air, and if you concentrate it seems like you can hear the flakes coming down.

The first time I noticed it I was at a retreat in Kentucky. I wasn't there for a spa day. In fact, it was just the opposite. My accommodations consisted of a 10 x 20 cabin with attached porch that held the wood for my source of heat that weekend in January. There was also a cooktop and small fridge or my weekend would've included a fast.

My lodgings reflected my reason for going. I needed to get back to the basics and clear everything out of my head so I could hear from God. I had been working at a God-appointed job for five months and hating every minute of it. I cried often, rarely slept well and could barely contain my disappointment with what I knew God had asked me to do.

Why not just quit? It had been confirmed by many God-fearing people and in my own journey that this was what God needed me to be doing. It just felt so uncomfortable, and it burdened my heart that I was a failure at some-

thing that God had chosen for me. I'm also pretty stubborn; I'm not going to give up on something that I feel God has led me to do. So, I continued to hound the idea that something that I was doing was wrong. Those five difficult months were spent doing what I thought I needed to do to hear from God – praying and reading God's word, fasting and speaking with friends. Yet no matter what I did, I came up empty and feeling even further from the answers I sought. Did Joseph feel this way in prison?

I got to the cabin that Friday night with my Bible, journal, pencils and cans of soup. And I did everything I could to avoid getting started. I had been trying so hard for so long, that I was almost afraid to begin. I started a fire, made some tea, found a book in the cabin that I flipped through. Then I noticed the snow falling. I laced up my boots and took a walk through the woods. I breathed in the cool crispness, and it was then that I noticed how cozy the air felt. It was like I was getting a big hug. I stood there quietly and I noticed how my breathing had relaxed and a peace was settling in my soul. God hadn't been elusive all those past months. God was waiting for me to slow down and calm down. I needed to wait and listen.

Back in the cabin I went to work on journaling and praying. God did release me from the job. God only needed me there for a while until the right person came along. I got the answers I needed and was able to move on in another direction in my life.

I still remember that weekend whenever the snow falls and I'm outside. I remember how God was there even when I was running away. I also remember how peaceful and calm I was when all I did was breathe and wait. 🍀

– Cindy Butler is a Spanish teacher at Amelia Academy and attends New Life UMC, Midlothian.

Clergy Health Facts

United Methodist clergy have a higher percentage of physical conditions – including obesity, high cholesterol, borderline high blood pressure, asthma and pre-diabetes – than the U.S. adult population as a whole.

Stressors that can affect their jobs include maintaining a healthy work/life balance, frequent appointment changes and relocations and existential burdens of ministry – feeling obligated to carry the weight of others' emotional and spiritual burdens or overwhelming needs.



Reflections on pastoral self-care

By Jim Thomas

For most of my adult life I have suffered from depression and anxiety. For many years, I kept this as a secret, afraid of what my friends and colleagues would think of me if they knew I suffered from mental illness. I have managed the disease with a rather strict schedule and work ethic that has enabled me to carry on ministry even while I did not feel like doing so. I have also learned the importance of taking a day off each week to go fishing just to help give my soul a little balance and my spirit a little time off from the church.

Of course, ministry happens, and there have been times when that day off was not guarded as closely as it should have been. Such was the case shortly after I was appointed to Trinity UMC in Poquoson, a 1,400 member congregation with no associate pastor. While I was still new and getting my feet on the ground, our community was devastated by the floods of Hurricane Isabelle.

Overnight, hundreds of church families were thrown out of their homes. My own home was flooded, and our family was forced to live in the upstairs portions of the parsonage. We lost a car and thousands of dollars of belongings which were not covered by renters insurance. But our loss was minor compared to what many of our families were suffering.

Immediately I began work in the community. We cleaned the flood waters from our church. Portable show-

ers were set up in our parking lot. A clothing distribution center was established in our multi-purpose room. Telephone banks were later added as were fax machine capabilities for the community which needed contact with insurance carriers as well as FEMA. I began working 70-80 hours per week, neglecting time off or time to care for my own family. This pace went on for months with little or no attention to self-care.

As things began to slow down, my depression was compounded by a tremendous case of PTSD. Some days the pressure and anxiety were almost unbearable. Many times I thought about checking myself into the hospital, but I could not see how things would be done without me, especially considering the needs in the community I had been sent to serve. I just kept going, and the depression kept getting worse. To add to this, physically my body was failing. The weight I had carried for decades was putting a tremendous strain on my back. I was in constant pain and painkillers were having little effect. I kept spiraling down both physically and mentally.

While I have had some brief periods where I have felt better, I have continued to battle the depression and anxiety without any real relief since that natural disaster. Medications help but only take the edge off of an ongoing feeling of malaise. I cannot help but think that if I had taken better care of myself then and worked reasonable hours through the disaster, then I would be a better pastor now. Before that event, the depression was controlled by medication. However, at the time I felt as if I was doing the best and most important work that I had done in ministry. I did not realize that I may have been trading that effort for my future. I guess I have learned the hard way about the importance of Sabbath and self-care. 🍷

— The Rev. Jim Thomas is senior pastor at Sydenstricker UMC, Alexandria District.

There are also vocational differences between full-time and part-time local pastors, according to the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits in a Clergy Health Survey from June 2015.

Part-time local pastors report the lowest levels of stress and hostility in their ministry and occupational settings, but they are more likely to be overweight and suffer from diabetes and hypertension.

Clergy at smaller churches have higher physical health risks; those at larger churches have higher spiritual health and occupational stress risks.

Clergy who change appointments more frequently show higher levels of risk across several physical,

emotional, spiritual and stress dimensions.

Those in cross-racial or cross-cultural appointments report higher spiritual vitality and well-being, and more positive ministry settings.

Clergy couples experience more stress (including occupational and financial) and lower spiritual well-being than couples where a spouse is non-clergy.

Improving and sustaining clergy health requires the education and engagement of leaders at both the denominational and local church levels to promote healthful practices across multiple dimensions of health.



Virginia Conference wellness programs encourage clergy self-care

By John Fuller

Challenges associated with the concept of work-life balance are a fixture of modern society. Many struggle to find the appropriate balance between the demands of work and personal needs, including the need to maintain good physical, emotional and spiritual health. Most of those for whom this concept resonates may envision a demanding boss, an overflowing inbox or an over-booked schedule. Clergy, however, are likely to encounter the work-life balance with a somewhat different perspective. Having been called by God to serve the church, many clergy see their responsibilities as sacred, perhaps even to the point of giving so much of themselves to their work that they give insufficient attention to their own needs. But, as is the case with all callings and vocations, one can only be optimally effective when one is well.

Recognizing the importance of self-care and wellness, the Virginia Conference sponsors several health insurance plans for the benefit of our conference's full-time clergy.

Having been called by God to serve the church, many clergy see their responsibilities as sacred, perhaps even to the point of giving so much of themselves to their work that they give insufficient attention to their own needs.

Those health plans, which are primarily funded through conference apportionments, help enrolled clergy identify and resolve adverse health issues. The plans are also designed to encourage appropriate self-care, with a focus

on the maintenance of wellness and the prevention of health problems. Features such as no-cost wellness visits encourage those who are enrolled in the plan to establish a relationship with a primary care physician.

As the administrator of the conference-sponsored health plans, Virginia United Methodist Pensions, Inc. (VUMPI) administers a wellness incentive program for active clergy enrolled in the plans. Requiring only the completion of a health risk assessment and a routine visit with a primary care physician, the incentive offers the opportunity to qualify for a \$15 per month discount on the clergy person's health plan contributions. The discount can be as much as \$30 per month if the clergy person's spouse is enrolled in the conference-sponsored plan and also completes the two elements of the incentive program. In order to augment the wellness incentive program, VUMPI has contracted with Health Advocate, a health care advocacy and engagement company. Health Advocate provides additional wellness-focused support to the clergy enrolled in conference-sponsored health plans, including wellness coaching and customized individual wellness plans.

Wellness-focused financial incentive programs can be particularly effective for self-insured health benefit plans like those sponsored by the Virginia Conference. Improvements in the health of those who are enrolled in the conference-sponsored plans are expected to result in reductions in the plans' aggregate medical costs. Offering a modest financial incentive for those enrolled in the plans to embrace a greater focus on self-care and wellness can translate into significant future health cost savings.

Another element of VUMPI's efforts to promote clergy wellness includes the Clergy Health Institute, a year-long program kicked off by a 10-day retreat at Lake Junaluska. The Clergy Health Institute was designed to be an opportunity for spiritual enrichment, wellness training and renewal. Topics including nutrition, stress management, emotional wellness and physical fitness are addressed, with the expectation that participants will enjoy improved health, an increase in energy and will be better able to continue serving and making a positive impact on their communities. This year, VUMPI is sponsoring five Virginia Conference clergy who are participating in the program. The feedback has been very positive, and VUMPI hopes to keep the Clergy Health Institute as a key component of the conference's clergy wellness efforts.

Ultimately, VUMPI's hope is that the Virginia Conference's health and wellness-related programs help our clergy to continue responding to God's call with a sense of physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. 

— John Fuller is executive director of the Virginia United Methodist Pensions office.



Snorkeling is a spiritual experience

By Don Hawks



“When I think of the first glimpse of Heaven, I think of the first time I went snorkeling,” writes Randy Alcorn in his online blog (<http://www.epm.org/blog/2011/Mar/25/gods-creation-under-sea>). How I resonate with his words. I discovered snorkeling for the first time about four years ago, along with my wife, along the Kailua-Kona Coast off the Big Island of Hawaii. Ever since then I have been hooked.

For me, snorkeling is one of the highest spiritual experiences. The beauty and the peacefulness of the underwater world has become one of my primary “means of grace” (to use Wesley’s term). Quoting Alcorn again: “It’s exhilarating, even worshipful, to be immersed in a God-made world normally beyond our reach.”

Dick Cavett was once quoted as describing it this way: “Snorkeling is a rebirth. You just hang there in liquid space like an irresponsible fetus. For me it combines the best features of sport, sleep and religion” (as cited in *Running & Being: The Total Experience* by George Sheehan). Since discovering snorkeling as a spiritual experience I more fully understand these sacred words: “I assure you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, it’s not possible to enter God’s kingdom” (John 3:5 CEB) Surrounded by the sea and all the creatures therein, along with fellow snorkelers, yet I still feel solitude and oneness with the divine.

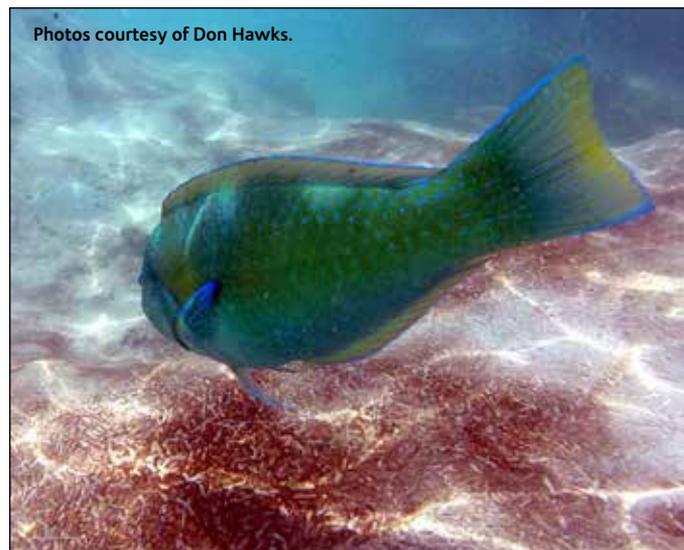
In a vocation that is at times overly demanding and

stressful, and as one who typically experiences a depressive mindset in times of high stress, snorkeling at least three times a year is now a significant component of the still waters that restore my soul. I have developed the sacred rhythm of snorkeling in early fall, post-Christmas and late winter. After having traveled to Bermuda late this past summer, I think I need to add an additional pilgrimage to my spiritual discipline to complete the four seasons. I find new energy and focus which sustains me for several weeks as I return to the work of ministry.

For some people, a pilgrimage to the Holy Land is a life goal. My life goal is to make a pilgrimage to every possible snorkeling spot in the Caribbean during my time that remains upon this earth. My wife and I have traveled in the past three years to the Grand Cayman (two times and my favorite thus far in this new spiritual journey), Key Largo, Key West twice including one trip to the Dry Tortugas National Park for both superb underwater and above ground scenery, Aruba and Culebra (Puerto Rico). I sense the spirit blowing me toward the Dominican Republic next year, after another post-Christmas trip to Key Largo with family this time.

“For most of my life I had seldom thought about that other world under the water. But I fell in love with that other world, and often find myself thinking about it even now,” Alcorn concludes about his snorkeling experience. That too is my experience. Snorkeling is now essential to my emotional and spiritual self-care. Surely still, clear, azure waters, thousands of colorful tropical fish and fragile life-sustaining coral reefs shall follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the underwater world of the Lord forever. 🐠

– The Rev. Don Hawks is pastor of Sunset Drive United Methodist Church, Harrisonburg District. You can find his travel blog at <http://donhawks.com>.





Churches help with self-care



Fitness classes at church

Farmville UMC, Farmville, offers two small-group fitness programs. Both classes are onsite and are free to participants. The first class is called the “Methodizers.” A class for senior adult women, they meet from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. These ladies from around the community have met for over 10 years and alternate group leaders from within the group.

The church’s second group is “Cross Training.” Meeting every Thursday, the co-ed class is free to all participants and offers onsite child care. The certified instructor teaches Turbo Fire, Pivo and Cize. The classes alternate throughout the month.

Last year, the church’s council created a health ministry budget to meet the needs of whole person care.

The church now offers things such as blood pressure checks one Sunday a month with their Parish Nurse Chair and a Compassionate Support group for parents of deceased children. Stephen Ministers lead this support group. 📖

– Jennifer Kinne, Farmville United Methodist Church



Self-care crucial for selflessness

Self-care is crucial if we want to be a loving presence for others. Our good intentions turn to feelings of martyrdom or of being a victim if we try to care for others without first having cared for ourselves. Healthful eating, exercise, stress relief and relaxation are the ground work for good self-care. But how do we motivate ourselves to do these things that we know we should be doing?

Cave Spring UMC in Roanoke has offered yoga classes for the community for the past seven years. Participants report increased self-awareness along with feelings of peace and contentment. The yoga class includes programs on nutrition, a spring detox and words of wisdom from religious leaders around the world.

Increased self-awareness encourages us to adopt healthier lifestyles because we notice what increases comfort and feelings of self-worth and what makes us uncomfortable. We begin to eat more mindfully and more healthfully because it feels right and good, not because someone else tells us it is the right thing to do. We learn to respond more from the heart rather than react from the head.

Dedicated yoga practice leads one naturally into silence and meditation/centering prayer. Once the body is able to relax and be comfortable, we can rest and release many of the thoughts that keep us locked in our minds. We are able to sense the Holy Spirit within and without. We feel connected to each other and to the world. This outpouring of love leads one naturally into service for others. Self-care leads us to selflessness. 📖

– Sue Parks, yoga instructor, Cave Spring UMC, Roanoke



Igniting change for a healthier church

Main Street UMC, Suffolk, partners with Eastern Virginia Medical School and the Obici Healthcare Foundation for the “Igniting Change for a Healthier Church” campaign. This model helps and encourages members to be more aware of how eating healthful foods and being physically active can affect chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, stroke and obesity.

Grant monies provided through this program were used to purchase kitchen equipment for the church kitchen used by Main Street Day Care & Preschool that will assist in preparing healthful meals for the children of the day care and the church members.

New signage for the stairwells encourages people to take the stairs, and posters in different areas of the church provide information on healthful ways to eat and exercise options to burn calories. In addition, the church has received a blood pressure monitor and glucose monitor that can be used by members and also by those people in the community who attend the Friday night community suppers held at the church.

In a plan of action adopted in April 2015, the church agreed to establish Holistic Health Guidelines for food, beverage and physical activity. Some of those guidelines are as follows:

- ❖ Designate a walking path and/or safe area to walk near the church
- ❖ Provide ongoing activities to encourage physical activity among church members
- ❖ Promote stairwell use
- ❖ Integrate activity breaks for meetings lasting more than an hour
- ❖ Promote the use of healthful food for events
- ❖ Provide portion control education and guidelines to kitchen staff and members
- ❖ Establish a Health and Wellness coordinator 🏃

– Barbara N. McPahil, Congregational Care coordinator, Main Street UMC, Suffolk

Clergy and laity work out

Working out is a great way to look after your health and your self-care. Find out how and why clergy and laity are working out around the Virginia Conference.



Since early 2015, I have taken up running on a consistent basis, three times a week. I also completed my first 5k and 10k, and am looking forward to a half marathon in spring 2016 and the Marine Corp Marathon in the fall.

In many ways, running has become my Sabbath time. Even though I’m working my body, it’s refreshing to my spirit and I’ve had a good deal of prayer time while getting in miles. It has also been greatly

beneficial in managing my Type 1 diabetes.

Running has led to greater effectiveness in ministry by being a stress reliever, but also by increasing mental acuity. Since I’ve been temporarily sidelined by a foot injury (unrelated to running), I’ve been much more sluggish, felt more in a fog, and my wife would probably say irritable too. Overall, through the years I’ve definitely noticed when I’m not taking care of myself physically, I’m usually not taking care of myself spiritually as well, and vice-versa. 🏃

– The Rev. Dan Elmore, associate pastor at Pender UMC, Arlington District

As the days get noticeably shorter, I find it more and more challenging to be healthy and care for myself. I make a point to exercise, whether it’s mall walking and people watching or doing a six-minute exercise video from YouTube.



I also mix up my exercise routines a lot by trying different classes and changing my running loops. I make sure to keep fresh fruit and veggies on hand for quick and easy snacks so I don’t succumb to junk food that actually depletes your energy and

(Continued on pg. 29: "WORK OUT.")



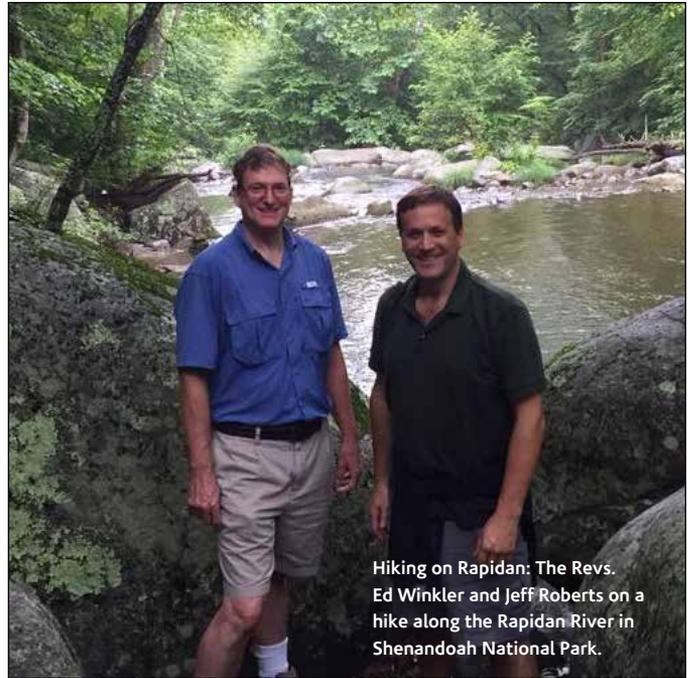
Walking in the woods

By Jeff Roberts

I was astonished when I realized that, after five years serving as a pastor, I was 30 pounds heavier than I had been in seminary. I was being well-fed at church dinners and receptions, and my only form of regular exercise was golf, which mostly just exercised my impatience and short temper. It did, however, also provide the benefit of regular time with my friend and colleague, the Rev. Ed Winkler. So one day, when both of us had tired of putting golf balls into deep woods, shallow water and almost everywhere except the hole, Ed and I decided to give up the links in favor of a more healthy, vigorous and agreeable activity. We began hiking on mountain trails.

Since then we have walked the entirety of the Appalachian Trail that is within Shenandoah National Park (and also as far north as Harpers Ferry) and on a countless number of other trails on mountains slopes and battle-field plains. It has been a regular regimen for us for many years, hindered only by rain, snow or ice, for we've learned that mountain trails are manageable even in cold, winter weather, so long as they are dry. The trails are easily accessible from most parts of our conference, and we have hiked mountain trails through appointments in Arlington, Shenandoah County, Loudoun County, Charlottesville and Fairfax County.

In addition to the obvious physical fitness benefits, hiking has also provided mental and spiritual benefit in the form of camaraderie: talking and listening, sharing burdens and unloading frustrations, reflecting on our ministries and on our favorite sports teams and movies. From time to



Hiking on Rapidan: The Revs. Ed Winkler and Jeff Roberts on a hike along the Rapidan River in Shenandoah National Park.

time, other clergy friends have joined us, enhancing the fellowship and sharing the healthy regimen.

Yes, the 30 pounds I found early in my ministry are long gone, and the practice of regular hiking has provided an effective way to keep it off. I recommend taking a regular walk in the woods as a way to get in shape and stay in shape. It is good for the body. I also recommend doing it with a friend (or two or three). It is good for the mind and spirit.

Of course, the grandeur of mountains and the beauty of valleys also adds a healthy dose of the glory of God, and that ain't bad either! 🍷

– The Rev. Jeff Roberts is senior pastor of Springfield UMC, Alexandria District.



DISCIPLES HELPING TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD

Kits for UMCOR to be collected at 2016 Annual Conference

Various types of Relief Supply Kits will be collected at the 2016 Virginia Annual Conference session. Kit collection is being conducted to replenish the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) supply.

Local churches are encouraged to collect items for any of the most requested UMCOR kits – Bedding, Birthing, Cleaning, Health, Layette, School and Sewing Kits – and bring them to Annual Conference. (Please bring the kits in boxes [not bags], labeled and with a count of the items.)

For kit instructions, go to <http://www.umcor.org/UMCOR/Relief-Supplies>

Kits should be taken to the two tractor-trailers at the far end of the Roanoke Civic Center Parking lot A, near the intersection of Williamson Road and Orange Ave. (across from the Sheetz Gas Station). Kits will be received 12-5 p.m. Thursday, June 18; 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Friday, June 19; and 8 a.m.-12 p.m. Saturday, June 20.

Send cash for kits directly to conference treasurer

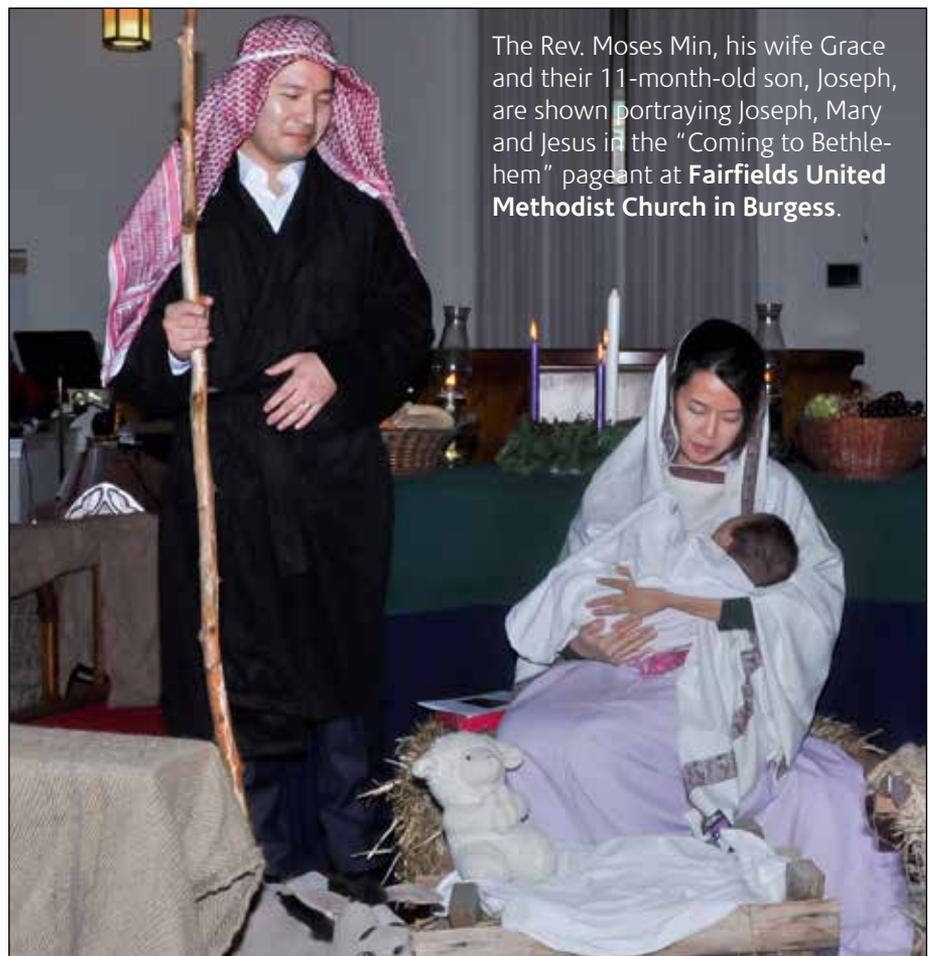
If you prefer to contribute cash to enable United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) to purchase relief kits, you can contribute \$50 for each bedding kit; \$8 for each birthing kit; \$55 for each cleaning kit; \$12 for each health kit; \$35 for each layette kit; \$11 for each school kit; and \$18 for each sewing kit. In addition, UMCOR asks for \$1 per kit (\$1.50 for cleaning buckets) to cover processing and shipping and \$1 for toothpaste for each health kit. Please do NOT bring checks to Annual Conference. ALL

checks (for processing and shipping, for toothpaste and in lieu of providing kits) should be made payable to “Virginia Conference UMC,” earmarked for “kits” and mailed to Treasurer, Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 5605, Glen Allen, VA 23058 any time prior to Annual Conference, and no later than Aug. 31.

Volunteers needed to collect kits at Annual Conference

More volunteers are needed for this

year’s “Kits for Conference” collection at Annual Conference. You can help (1) write information on a clipboard; (2) sort kits; (3) seal boxes; or (4) load boxes onto the tractor-trailers. Kit collection will take place Thursday, June 18 from 12-5 p.m.; Friday, June 19, from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. and Saturday, June 20, 8 a.m.-12 p.m. If you can volunteer to help, e-mail Virgil Decker at vdecker@cox.net or contact Jeff Wilson at Huntington Court UMC, (540) 366-3465, to indicate what time you would be available. Also, you may register online at <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0848abaf2ca0fc1-annual>.



The Rev. Moses Min, his wife Grace and their 11-month-old son, Joseph, are shown portraying Joseph, Mary and Jesus in the “Coming to Bethlehem” pageant at **Fairfields United Methodist Church in Burgess.**

To have your church or church organization featured in the “Disciples helping to transform the world” section, e-mail your story and photos to MadelinePillow@vaumc.org by the first of the month. Stories should be approximately 100 words, and photos should be 300 dpi jpgs.

LIVING THE WORD



The Rev. Michael Andrew Dettmer is a provisional elder at Mt Jackson Charge - Mt Jackson UMC & Quicksburg UMC in Harrisonburg District. In 2003, he earned his Bachelor of Arts in Religion from William & Mary. In 2007, he received his M. Div. from Eastern Mennonite Seminary with a concentration in Pastoral Counseling. The same year he entered the Virginia Conference as a clergy member. Dettmer is married to Gabriella, and they have two children: Hannah, 4, and Noah, 2. He is also a member of the Virginia Conference Board of Communications.

February 7

Exodus 12:1-14

Feelin' It

Many times as a pastor I'm asked why worship has so much order to it. This question often comes with a statement about how spontaneous prayers and actions feel more authentic and meaningful than some of the "cookie cutter" aspects of worship that are the same each time. And yet, there are many examples of ritual actions in our everyday lives that most people are fine with. People just know that they're supposed to stand for the national anthem, raise their hand to ask a question or sing "Happy Birthday" at a kid's birthday party.

In fact, if someone doesn't participate in rituals like these, they can seem disrespectful of what's going on around them.

Wherever they're used, an important part of the power of rituals is in how they help us regulate our relationships for the benefit of everyone. While a stop sign has no physical ability to stop a car, we often respect that the command it gives is helpful for us and those around us (whether or not a police car is nearby).

A problem for our ritual practice may not be that we don't "feel it" enough, but actually that we concentrate on our own feelings to the exclusion of God and others. For example, Paul accuses the Corinthian church of poorly practicing the sacrament of Holy Communion when he says, "Each of you goes ahead and eats a private meal. One person goes hungry while another is drunk." (1 Corinthians 11:21 CEB).

The ritual of Passover found in Exodus 12 reinforces healthy relationships by reminding the Israelites of who they are and who God is. "This day will be a day of remembering for you. You will observe it as a festival to the Lord. You will observe it in every generation as a regulation for all time." (Exodus 12:14 CEB). By participating in the ritual meal, the Israelites remember that they were not always free. The actions connect the current practitioners with those who have shared the Passover before and after the current moment. Each one recognizes that they have been set free by God regardless of how long ago the first Passover was.

When we're truly able to open our hearts to loving others and remember how much God loves us, we can then discover how the rituals of

worship connect us in loving relationship to God and each other.

February 14

Leviticus 23:5-22

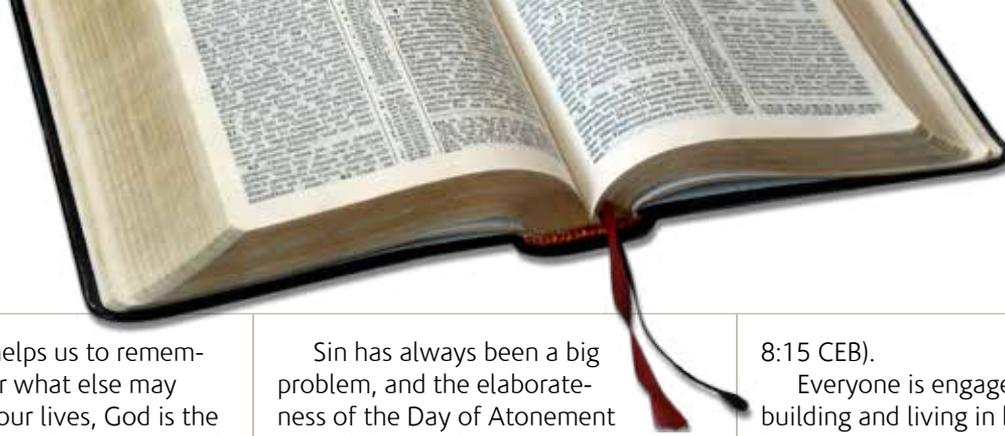
Hurry Up and Rest!

Efficiency seems to be a big buzzword among writers of leadership texts these days. How can you get the most out of your team for less time and money? There are many different software startups and gadget companies that are ready to sell you solutions for everything from organizing projects to keeping everyone connected through communication. And this push doesn't only apply to the workplace. Just ask any parent if they want to know how to juggle their multiple responsibilities more efficiently — if you can catch them between school pickups, soccer practice and band recitals!

A prominent side effect of this concern to get things done is that many people today feel distracted by the same technology that was supposed to "solve" the problem. While smartphones do indeed increase communication, they also can create an assumption that we're always available to communicate. I've struggled at times with whether I should take a call during dinner or even when I'm with another church member.

But this push to get more done isn't new. The commands in Leviticus for offerings during the Feast of Weeks called them to stop and reorder their lives. This included a command to rest. "On that very same day you must make a proclamation; it will be a holy occasion for you. You must not do any job-related work. This is a permanent rule wherever you live throughout your future generations." (Leviticus 23:21 CEB). This can seem like a waste of time, especially after all of the offering preparations in the preceding verses. After doing all of these special errands, we're just supposed to stop working?

But God has already done work, and that's the focus of the whole endeavor. Notifications on our screens or memos from our bosses are a way of reorienting our attention. "Whatever you're doing right now, don't forget this!" Often they add work to our already full plate. The command to stop work and offer to God is more grace-filled than this. God asks us to stop work and remember the work that God did for us! We give an offering to God from what God first blessed



us with. This call helps us to remember that, no matter what else may seem to be ruling our lives, God is the one who has done the best work. And that is a truth we can rest in!

February 21

Leviticus 16:11-19

Safe Spaces

I love the language of our current service of Word and Table in the *United Methodist Hymnal*. I think it gives a beautiful and powerful summation of God's work to bring us into loving relationship with God and each other. But I also have an appreciation for the Communion liturgy from the previous hymnal. The old "King James" language lends a gravity to everything that's said. One phrase from the confession portion has always stuck with me: "manifold sins and wickedness." That always made sin feel so big to me as a child.

Sure, a small lie was one thing, but if we need help with "manifold sins and wickedness," we need something powerful! The Day of Atonement reminded the Israelites that sin was a real problem. While offerings could be made for atonement throughout the year, the problem of sin was still there. Every year, the Israelites had to confront the rituals of the Day of Atonement and recognize that sin wasn't a problem that they could deal with perfectly. In fact, there was no distinction between "small" sins and "big" ones — sin was sin.

As Christians, we don't utilize the system of blood sacrifices. "[Jesus] doesn't need to offer sacrifices every day like the other high priests, first for their own sins and then for the sins of the people. He did this once for all when he offered himself." (Hebrews 7:27 CEB). But when we're confronted with the cross and the empty tomb every Lent and Easter, we remember that our sin is a problem that we can't deal with perfectly by ourselves.

Sin has always been a big problem, and the elaborateness of the Day of Atonement helped the Israelites to remember just how deep the problem of sin went. Multiple animals were sacrificed so that multiple sacred areas could be purified. Similarly, we utilize many different rituals to illustrate the immensity of what Jesus' death and resurrection means: ashes, life-size crosses, Holy Week services, sunrise Easter services and so on. All of these rituals confront sin as a life-and-death issue.

I've become thankful for how rituals connect us to thoughts and feelings we might otherwise avoid. As a child, I wouldn't approach my "manifold sins and wickedness" on my own. But in sharing the table with God and the church at Holy Communion, I was able to give thanks that God was strong enough to free us from sin.

February 28

Leviticus 23:33-43

Ritual Dancing

We can often be very limited in our physical expressions of our faith. Most United Methodist churches invite congregants to sit and stand at certain times, but that seems to be the extent of bodily movement in worship (unless you count all of the hugging that can go on in some churches during the Passing of the Peace of Christ). Having a liturgical dance team share their gifts would be very new for some churches.

Contrast this with the physicality involved with the Feast of Booths. The book of Nehemiah gives this explanation concerning the booths: "They also found that they should make the following proclamation and announce it throughout their towns and in Jerusalem: 'Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written.'" (Nehemiah

8:15 CEB).

Everyone is engaged in the act of building and living in huts made of branches. There's a physical relocation involved for every Israelite. That's quite a work project — like an ad-hoc Colonial Williamsburg where Israelites lived like their ancestors for a week out of the year!

Many churches I've been a part of have had an implicit bias toward the more mental aspects of discipleship with an emphasis on Bible study, Sunday school and listening to preaching or choir music. Physical activities were utilized, but not often and not in a systematic way. I think this wasn't because physical activity was looked down on, but because it was so unfamiliar. One year for Easter sunrise service, I decided to challenge my congregation and myself in a different way. I invited the congregation to stomp and clap to the rhythm of the hymn "Christ Has Risen" (#2115 in *The Faith We Sing*). The faces of the congregation began looking nervous, which soon turned to joy as we failed and succeeded in keeping the rhythm together. We all felt engaged with worship in a different way, with our very bodies participating in praise.

Rituals can help us to engage in actions that may seem foolish but actually lead us to a greater realization of scriptural truth and holy love. It's one thing for an Israelite to mentally know that their ancestors lived in booths and another to experience life in a booth. Through physical engagement, we not only accept the truth we're told, we experience it ourselves. 🍷

CLERGY & DIACONAL



DEATHS



The Rev. Roy Hedrick, 98, of Singers Glen, died Nov. 29, 2015. Roy served 44 months in the United States Army during World War II in

Company A of 93rd Signal Battalion of the Third American Army in the European Theater and was awarded the Bronze Star for activity in Luxembourg during the Bulge Attack. After the war, he served seven pastorates beginning in the Evangelical United Brethren Church, which merged with the Methodist Church in 1968 to form The United Methodist Church. Two of his pastorates were served after his retirement. He attended Mt. Clinton UMC, Harrisonburg District.

Young people were always dear to him, and he served them in many ways, including being active in the Mt. Clinton Elementary School PTA and serving on the board of Weekday Religious Education. He was instrumental in the establishment of Camp Overlook and served as its director for the first seven years. Roy was active in the West Rockingham Ruritans during his time in pastorates in the Harrisonburg area and after his retirement. He was also a member of the Carl D. Lee VFW Post. He is survived by his wife, Dovie; children, Nancy Harper (Harvey) of Seneca Rocks, W.Va., Wilma White (Fred) of Harrisonburg, Wanda Miller of Mt. Clinton and Paul Hedrick (Ruby) of Harrisonburg; sister, Ella Griffith of North Carolina; brothers, Hugh Hedrick of Ohio and Joe Hedrick of Seneca Rocks; 11 grandchildren; and 15 great-grandchildren.

A funeral service was held on Dec. 3 at Mt. Clinton UMC. Burial with Military Rites was held at Blake Hedrick Cemetery near Seneca Rocks, W.Va.

Betty Purcell Roberts, mother of **the Rev. Jeffrey J. Roberts**, Springfield UMC, Alexandria District, died Dec. 5, 2015. Her husband, the late Rev. William T. Roberts, was a United Methodist pastor and member of the Northern Illinois Conference for more than 40 years. A Service of Death and Resurrection was held for Betty at Glenview UMC in Glenview, Ill., on Jan. 2, 2016.

Mrs. Ruth N. Basom, Lewisburg, Pa., died Nov. 30, 2015. She was the widow of **the Rev. William E. Basom**.

Mrs. Melvena Drinkard Wright, 97, of Irvington, died Dec. 8, 2015. She is survived by her daughters, Sheryl Stinchcum (Doug) and Linda Kettelhut (Rick); five grandchildren, Elisa Staton, Amanda Howard, Terry Johnston, Shawn Johnston and J. S. Johnston; 12 great-grandchildren and 3 great-great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her husband, **the Rev. Dr. Eugene Braxton Wright**, and her grandson, Dustin Johnston.

Mrs. Beatrice Miller died Dec. 13, 2015. She was a long-time member of St. John's UMC, Atlantic, where her son, **the Rev. Gary Miller**, is pastor. Beatrice was pre-deceased by her husband, **the Rev. John Miller**.

Helen Shomo Forcke, 86, of Richmond, died Dec. 9, 2015. She was the mother-in-law of **the Rev. Bob Jennings**, Corinth UMC, Goochland. She is survived by her five children, five grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Births

Camaini [Kah-may-ni] Irene Lee, was born Dec. 12, 2015, to **Asa and the Rev. Chenda Innis Lee**. Chenda is pastor of Calloway UMC, Arlington.

("VUMAC," continued from pg. 10.)

since some were there for their very first time ever. I was able to talk to the team about B3 and how they were making a once dream now come to fruition. We fellowshiped a few more minutes, and then it was back to work – we had rosebush gardens to clear! Chris from VUMAC's maintenance even drove in from Crewe to provide us some additional tools and thank everyone for their hard work and dedication.

For some, we gathered that sunny chilly morning as strangers, but we left feeling that we would see each other again. VUMAC is a special place. It's a place where God brings together those who may not meet in other ways and provides a haven for growth, community and reflection.

Many events occur within those walls; the possibilities are only limited by your imaginations. Again, we want to thank each of you for your hard work, dedication and eagerness to want to come back soon.

At VUMAC as well as Blackstone, there is a community and a family that resides here. We invite you to come out and meet them. We are already forming our next B3 Commuter Day for March and/or April. If you and/or your group want to be a part of this transformational event, contact us at (434) 292-5308.

The work is planned by the staff here at VUMAC ahead of time. If you have a particular project in mind for your visit, please mention it so we can plan accordingly.

The mission of B3 is to lead in the restoration of the greater Blackstone community. 

– *Debbie Baugham is director of Development at Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center (VUMAC).*

("WORK OUT," continued from pg. 23.)

can cause depression symptoms and guilt. I don't beat myself for eating something bad or if I miss a workout. I accept it as balance and acknowledge it as a treat and get back on track right after, not later or give up. It happens.

Using social media to connect with others for support, motivation, to eat right and take care of myself is also a great tool. I make a point to pamper myself weekly if not daily, either with an extra-long shower, a hot cup of herbal tea before bed or thinking of reasons to be thankful. ♡

—Katey McCarney is Marketing and Communications manager for the Virginia United Methodist Foundation.

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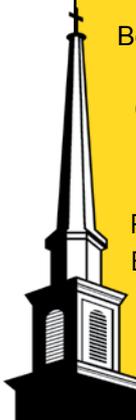
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FROM THE BISHOP



Another Stewardship: Self-care

Dear Friends,

May the grace and peace of our risen Christ be with you. It is already February! I hope our New Year resolutions are still working in our lives.

The season of Lent will begin on Feb. 10, Ash Wednesday. This is the season to remember our Lord's suffering and death and to reflect upon ourselves before the Lord. I hope and pray that during this Lenten season our prayer life will go deeper and our hearts will be warmed by God's amazing grace and love.

I think it is appropriate to think about self-care this month. Our lives are a precious gift from God. We are called to take care of ourselves, wisely following the will of God. A couple of times in my life, I was not a wise steward of myself. In my late teen years my family struggled with poverty and hunger. In an attempt to overcome

these challenges, I studied very hard to pursue my dream without paying attention to my health. Later I became infected by tuberculosis (TB) and struggled with TB for about five years. It was during this difficult time that I learned the importance of good health. Because I was young at the time, I took health for granted. I was not a good steward of my health. As a result of a couple of major lung surgeries, I finally regained my health. I also learned an important lesson: Although I may have a great vision, I cannot move forward if I do not have my health. This was an important lesson in self-care.

A second challenge came to me while serving the Korean Church of Greater Washington. Another health issue arose in my life, and I struggled with it for some years. The church graciously granted me six months of Sabbath time to rest and recharge. During this time I had the opportunity to take part in a wellness program. It was called NEW START. Each letter in the name carried meaning for a healthy life: "N" meant nutrition; "E" meant exercise; "W" meant water; "S" meant sunshine; "T" meant temperance; "A" meant (fresh) air; "R" meant rest; and "T" meant trusting in God.

I attended a NEW START retreat where it was emphasized that our body, mind and spirit are in unity and closely related to each other. To be a faithful steward of our life and health, the program said, we need to move beyond just addressing any particular health issue; our whole lifestyle should be changed. I learned this important lesson in that retreat. So, since that time I have been trying to focus upon changing my lifestyle, including food, exercise, drink, rest, etc. Although I continue to have many challenges and weaknesses, by the grace of God and the lessons I have learned in my life journey, I am continuing to live and do Christ's ministry up to this present moment.

I think we need to work, not only

for physical health, but also for emotional, relational and spiritual health. As disciples of Jesus Christ, our spiritual health is a critical foundation for our holistic health. Our spiritual health will have a great impact upon our physical, emotional and relational health. Here we find the importance of prayer again. Prayer is the key for our spiritual health; and prayer will have an impact upon the other areas of our health. So, prayer should go first, and our prayer life should be strong in order for us to have an overall healthy life.

If we are truly faithful in our prayer life, we will also learn the importance of setting the right priorities in our lives. It is very important to set the right priorities in our lives, especially in managing our time. Life is God's gift of time. How we effectively use our time is critically important for our self-care. The more we know and love Jesus, the more clearly and wisely we will discern the right priorities in our lives and seek them. What Jesus said about what should be our highest priority is still true: Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then everything will be added unto you.

We only have one life to live, and once time has passed it will not come back to us again. During this given time, God wants us to live in health. Wise and faithful self-care is not an option. This is a "must" as disciples of Jesus Christ. Let us continue to grow in caring for ourselves and in using our time wisely and faithfully, following the will of God.

Lastly, it is in February that the Cabinet begins making appointments. This is one of the most important tasks given to the Cabinet and to me. Your prayers for the district superintendents and for me will be deeply appreciated. 🇺🇸

In our Lord,

Young Jin Cho

ONE LAST WORD

How to: Mandalas

By Madeline Pillow

Creating and coloring mandalas are spiritual in nature and can be used as a spiritual meditation in your self-care and closeness with God.

What is a mandala?

These designs are circular in nature, and the viewer's eye is focused on the center. The word mandala translates as "disk" or "circle" in Sanskrit. These designs are intricate with symmetrical imagery.

Used in the Christian tradition, they have also been used in other religious traditions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. Hildegard of Bingen, a twelfth-century Benedictine nun, used mandalas to express her visions and beliefs. These creations also have formed patterns in the stained glass windows of churches like the Rose Window in the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris and the "Bishop's Eye" rose window in England's Lincoln Cathedral. As well they can be found in the Celtic cross, halo and rosary.

Coloring and creating mandalas

The act of creating and coloring a mandala allows for focus on a solitary task and relaxation. Some people use the act of creating and coloring mandalas as a way to pray while the hands are active and busy.

You can also use this time to do a devotional. Begin by reading a Bible passage, then begin to color. By focusing on the Scripture while coloring, you can consider your connection with it and what God may be telling you.

To add this to your spiritual discipline, there are mandala coloring

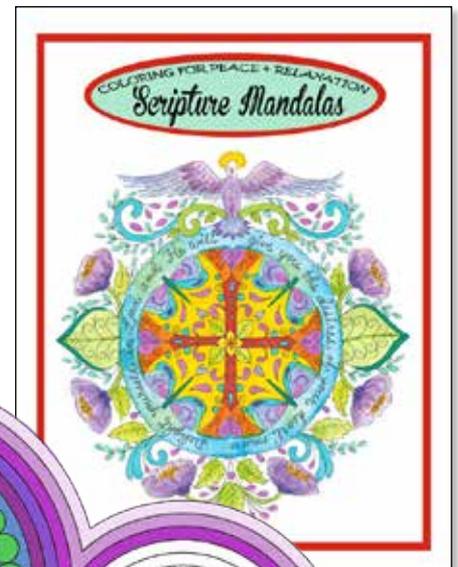
books for purchase as well as free downloads online. Or you can create your own.

Creating your own mandala can be a very personal experience by finding shapes and patterns to express your own quiet time. The process of creating your own pattern is unique to you. You can do it free-hand or with the use of a ruler or compass. When coloring your mandala, it can be with watercolors, colored pencils, markers or pastels.

Repetition is the key to a mandala. Whatever you do on one side of the circle needs to be repeated on the other side. This is completed by taking it slowly. Draw one shape at a time. By building upon each shape you create, you will in turn complicate and make your mandala more and more complex. 🍷

— Madeline Pillow is editor of the Advocate.

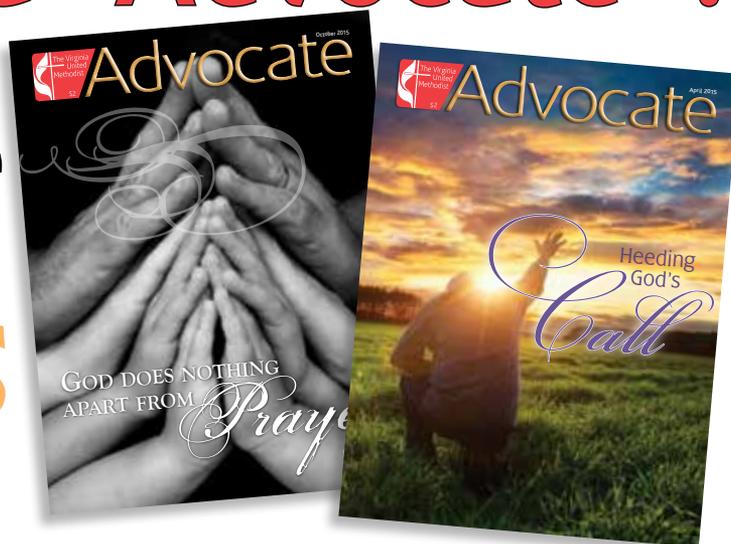
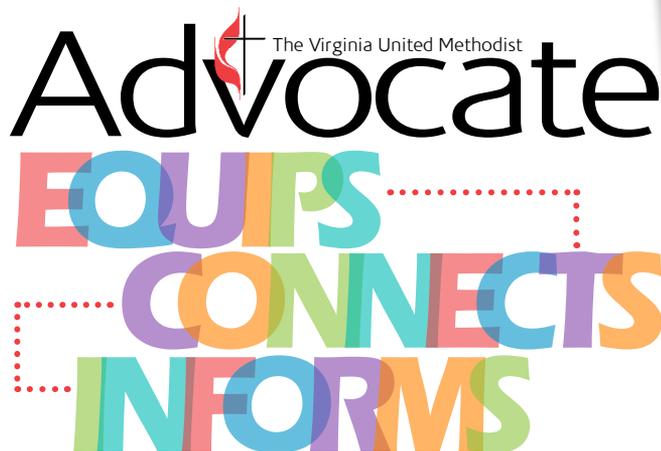
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Sunday Advocate

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