

'All Things New' capital campaign enters new phase



Virginia United Methodist

Advocate

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Church & school partnerships

Faith communities lend a hand for children

"We envision faith communities where all God's people are welcomed at table, nurtured and transformed to be Christ to others in the world."

— Virginia Conference Vision Statement

Inside This Issue

FEATURES:

Church and school partnerships help knit our communities together 3
Micah Initiative partners congregations with students in Richmond metro area 4
Volunteer extraordinaire is passionate about his adopted schools 5
Tutoring program in Lynchburg has a new name and purpose 6
'Trinity IN Richmond' provides open door to wider community 7
New faith community in Petersburg District starts with a school 8
Group of churches on Eastern Shore get very involved with local schools 8
Proximity helps Herndon UMC, Herndon High have solid partnership 9
More church/school partnership successes 9
2011 Ministry Grants of Va. 10-13

SECTIONS:

Virginia 14
Upcoming Events 19
Nation & World 20
Letters & Commentary 25
Local Church 26-27
Living the Word 28-29
Clergy & Diaconal 30
Grace Notes 31

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From the Editor's Desk

Programs linking churches, schools get high grades



Neill Caldwell
Editor

Does your church have a partnership with a nearby school? A program like the Micah Initiative in Richmond Public Schools is just one of many such partnerships that are making a difference in children's lives and showing them that people outside their family are interested in their academic and personal progress.

I learned about the Micah Initiative through Trinity UMC members Bob Argabright and Mary Hetzel, who are pictured on the cover this month with some of the children at Oak Grove-Bellemeade Elementary School on the south side of Richmond. I wish everyone could see how these two volunteers were treated by students there. There were few students who did not stop to offer a hug to Mr. Bob and Ms. Mary. I wish we could list all that they do at the school, but it's only a 32-page magazine!

We could have filled many pages with some examples of these programs at local churches within the Virginia Conference. Examples like:

- **Virginia Beach UMC's** "CBC" program – "Care By Community" – has certainly lived up to its name. This church-school partnership with Cooke Elementary School expanded the after-school program for area homeless children, which means more time for tutoring, recreation and hot meals.
- **Greene Memorial UMC** in Roanoke is part of Congregations In Action (CIA), which partners with Highland Park Elementary School and provides school supplies, tutors, mentors, reading buddies and scholarship funds.
- **Thalia UMC** members spend time with students at Malibu Elementary through a "Lunch Buddies" mentoring program.
- **Landstown Elementary School and Courthouse Community UMC's** "Backpack Buddies" program helps provide food to needy students for the weekends. United Methodist Women meet to assemble the food into backpacks, which are distributed to students each Friday.
- **Good Shepherd UMC** of Dale City supports Prince William County middle and elementary schools through tutoring and providing school supplies.
- My own **Brookland UMC** in Richmond partners with Johnson Elementary School. Twice a year we deliver books and supplies to students there.

There are as many different types of these programs as numbers of schools, but a partnership can start small – raising money or collecting school supplies, for example – but will probably grow once started. That's because the needs are great and the rewards are obvious.

If your church is involved in this kind of partnership, thank you for this very Christ-like outreach. If your church is not already doing this kind of ministry, I invite you to prayerfully consider it.

Neill Caldwell

Church and school partnerships help knit our communities together

by Ben Campbell

The children of the inner city are our future. They are the church's future, and the Commonwealth of Virginia's future in far more ways than we realize. If we neglect them, we will eventually destroy ourselves.

The mature relationship between churches and inner-city children through public education is a unique and God-given opportunity for the reknitting of our community and the transformation of our metropolitan city.

Society is in denial. Decades of affluence funded by the selling off of American industry have given the illusion of a society that is growing and building. But underneath, the divisions between rich and poor have increased dramatically, incomes of middle-class people have been stagnant, and benefits have diminished or disappeared. Legal segregation has been ended, but the de facto segregation of the society has in many cases increased, and it now includes segregation by income.

Because of the change in the structure of American industry and employment, a significant amount of unemployment now goes totally unreported. The Virginia Employment Commission, which deals only with the formally, reportable unemployed, does not even maintain an office in the city of Richmond, which has the highest level of unemployment in Central Virginia.

Our communities are disintegrating. The mobility of the society means that almost all of our churches have become non-residential destinations for



As one partnership of the Micah Initiative, youth from Collegiate School (left) are paired with inner-city elementary school students involved in a "Chair Affair" project — painting and refurbishing furniture to be used for the elementary school.

persons scattered throughout a circle with a 10- or 20-mile radius.

The separation of people means a harder time for the poor. It also means that the middle class, who comprise the majority in the membership of our churches, have less direct experience with the poor. When you add racial and jurisdictional barriers to this, you have a toxic mixture which supports increasingly indifferent public policy. For example, the Commonwealth of Virginia in many egregious cases gives less money to the schools of the poor than to the schools of the affluent. Comprehensive citizenship is not taught well in freeway subdivisions, gated communities, and single-race ghettos.

The relationship between churches and elementary schools in the inner city, as we have found through Rich-

mond's Micah Initiative, provides a wonderful opportunity for encounter and service in a protected and respectful environment. Church volunteers are led and directed in an educational setting by experienced adults – teachers, administrators, and support personnel – often of another race and usually church members themselves.

Public education is one of the most evangelical activities in American society. It is founded – as nothing, frequently not even the church, is – on the God-given principle that

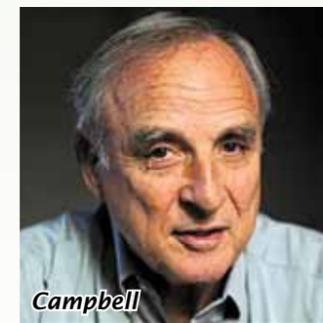
every single child must be included. No other institution in society is based on this principle, and increasingly our public institutions, whether employers, recreation facilities, retail institutions, local governments, or charter schools, try to single out a manageable portion

of society with which they can succeed, pruning off the more difficult margins.

Public education in Virginia has been a mission of persons of faith from the beginning, when Presbyterian minister William H. Ruffner

became the state's first superintendent of public instruction on March 2, 1870. You can see the people of faith in the schools of the inner city. The prayer in the schools is, first of all, the daily

(Continued on pg. 5, Communities)



Campbell

Micah Initiative partners congregations with students in Richmond metro area

The Micah Initiative is a partnership program that connects faith communities with the Richmond Public Elementary Schools for the purpose of enhancing educational opportunities for the students. Volunteers serve as mentors, tutors, classroom assistants and lunch buddies.

It began in 2003, when the Jewish Coalition for Literacy, St. Paul's Episcopal Church and several other faith communities who had developed similar programs came together to encourage other faith communities.

The Micah Initiative is now in its 13th year. Volunteers from 107 faith communities serve in 25 elementary schools. These United Methodist churches are a part of the program: Asbury, Centenary, Central, Ginter Park, Mount Pisgah, Reveille, River Road, Trinity, Walmsley Boulevard, Wesley Memorial and Westover Hills.

Faith partners also include three synagogues, the Islamic Center and the Hindu Temple of Virginia. Richmond Hill community and retreat center provides some financial support.

Clearly the involvement is having a positive impact. Last September, it was announced that 100 percent of Richmond Public Schools were fully accredited based on their Standards of Learning (SOL) scores.

In the Micah Initiative, a congregation establishes a relationship with a public school which needs help and support. The principal of the school and the pastor or other designated leader establish a relationship and a preliminary agreement to explore what they can do together. Members of the faith community, coordinated by a member of that community, begin to volunteer at the school in ways agreed upon by the partners. These will usually involve tutoring or mentoring individual students, and may develop in a number of directions depending on what kind of support is needed and what kind of support is available.

"There is no more important need in our community than the education and nurture of our children," said program co-founder the Rev. Ben Campbell of Richmond Hill retreat center. "The schools in our most distressed neighborhoods lack the resources to do it all by themselves. Our children's need is a call from God to those of us who can answer. And what does the Lord require of us, but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God?"

"It is our faith that makes us passionate to support the education of our community's children," Campbell adds. "Our faith also makes us passionate to respect the proper boundaries between religion and public education. We use our faith to provide the concern, the faithfulness, and the love for children not our own, but not to indoctrinate or proselytize. This has worked well for all of us – the teachers, the volunteers, the administration, and above all, the children, and we believe it has delighted the God whom we serve."

The program sponsors events during the school year, such as a fall celebration in October.

Through the Care & Connect Ministry at Camp Westview on the James in Goochland, 12 children who are making good academic and social progress are receiving camperships. Also the Third Grade Explorers have a monthly program series at Westview which includes Oak Grove, Chimborazo, and four other Rich-

mond city elementary schools.

"In addition to the ministry of All God's Children Camp, we are getting to know children in the city of Richmond and that is a major evangelism effort," said Mary Hetzel, a volunteer from Trinity UMC. "So many of the



Music instructor Teresa Bjornes (right) teaches a group of inner-city children violin lessons as part of the Micah Initiative.

children have little or no religious contacts. I can see it in the children I have worked with from camp."

The Micah Initiative also includes business partnerships, mentoring programs, outdoor experiences for inner-city children and Upwards basketball.

"It's a collaborative effort," says Trinity United Methodist volunteer Bob Argabright.

If you would like to explore establishing a partnership with an elementary school for your faith community, contact Mieko Timmons or Mary Hetzel at (804) 783-7903, ext. 24. The purpose of their work is to support and increase existing partnerships in the city. They can help to arrange a presentation for your congregation, set up a meeting with the school principal, guide you through the early stages of an evolving relationship and put you in touch with other faith communities with helpful experience. □

Volunteer extraordinaire is passionate about his adopted schools

Bob Argabright is in many ways your typical United Methodist volunteer: a success in the corporate world who's now retired, passionate, compassionate, empathetic, eager to help.

In other ways he's atypical. His size, gender and color make him stand out in the inner-city schools where he now spends most of his time.

Argabright, a member at Trinity UMC in Richmond, got involved with the Micah Project (see related story on previous page) several years ago and was connected to the Oak Grove and Bellemeade elementary schools on the south side of downtown Richmond. It's been a match made in heaven, because Argabright is now a huge advocate for those students.

He seems to have dozens of balls in the air: mentoring, outdoor garden proj-

ects, sports, camps, Scouts, 4-H Clubs, special school events, recruiting businesses to help the schools.

Argabright was a "turn-around specialist" for the Chesapeake Corp., and he's applied many of those business skills to the problems of the inner city.

He started by tutoring second-graders. "We saw the depths of need and lack of resources," he remembers. "Most were living in public housing, and 80 percent had no father in the home."

He's also worked hard to open up United Methodist Camp Westview on the James in Goochland to inner-city children, sending hundreds of those kids from 10 different schools to summer camp. "I started with two, Leon



Bob Argabright and one of the many students he has impacted with his dedication as a volunteer with the Micah Initiative.

and Demarco, and they stood out that year because they were the only minority kids out there. Before that, most of the children came from the West End. It wasn't really a 'ministry'; those kids had everything."

Still, there is some hesitation in his voice.

"I feel like I have impacted individual children and families," Argabright said. "But in the seven years I've been doing this, I haven't seen any real change in the community. That's why I've been talking to the mayor, city officials and churches about changing what we're doing, about trying to get some initiatives that would create jobs for people there. We don't want to look back in seven more years and still see no changes. But to turn that battleship around is a difficult thing."

Currently, Argabright is devoting much of his energy to preparing the neighborhood for the new Oak Grove-Bellemeade school that is scheduled to open this fall. "Just because you put up a new building doesn't mean the community is ready," he says.

Argabright is called a cheerleader for the students, urging them to set their sights higher, and for the church-school partnerships.

"This is a billboard from God and if you don't look at it, you're missing an opportunity. If we don't seize these opportunities, well, I don't think God will continue to be as patient as He has been." □

Communities (Continued from pg. 3)

prayer of the consecrated teachers, administrators and support personnel who work with a concentrated group of children in need and in trouble. But God also puts in those children God's own spirit of hope, and that spirit inspires those who work with them to teach, to shape, to heal, and to encourage.

Some church people think that supporting private "church" schools is the Christian mission. There is value there. But far more important to the gospel is the ministry with the adults and children who are engaged in this incredible enterprise based on the premise that every single child is of value, and each has a place in society.

Church work in partnership with public education has another value for church people which cannot be underestimated: the church is the junior partner. When a church or a social service agency runs charitable work, the church or agency is in charge. But when church people serve children, faculty and parents in a public school situation, they are truly in a servant capacity. It is humbling, but it is also strengthening, both to the church people and to the educators. The innate paternalism of much social service work is thus moderated. And the church and the school and the children begin to strengthen a community of learning and hope.

Mentors and tutors and classroom assistants save lives. They love God by loving their neighbor. It is true evangelism – good news – to parent, student, teacher and volunteer church member alike. And the community is knit back together one stitch at a time.

The children of the inner city are our future. They are the church's future and the nation's future in far more ways than we realize. If we neglect them, we will destroy ourselves. □

– The Rev. Ben Campbell is director of Richmond Hill, an ecumenical community and retreat center on Church Hill in Richmond.

Tutoring program in Lynchburg has a new name and purpose

The SOLE (Standard of Learning Excellence) program started four years ago as part of United Methodist Women's Campaign for Children is partnering with the local high school in Lynchburg under a new name, Second Chance.

The program is a continuation of more than 100 years of Methodist Women being organized for advocacy for the rights of children.

Second Chance was developed by teachers and staff at E.C. Glass Senior High School in Lynchburg, replacing summer classes that are no longer funded but are needed to help seniors meet their graduation requirements.

The SOLE program provided tutorial classes preparing students to retake failed Standards of Learning (SOL) tests. Those classes were housed at Court Street UMC and Jackson Street UMC, two historical landmark churches in Lynchburg. The Second Chance program is based at the Park View UMC Community Mission Center. The program will provide academic support in a safe and nurturing environment located a block from the school. The staff for Second Chance are volunteers, certified teachers, retired teachers, retired

professors, local college students majoring in education and local church members with degrees in areas taught.

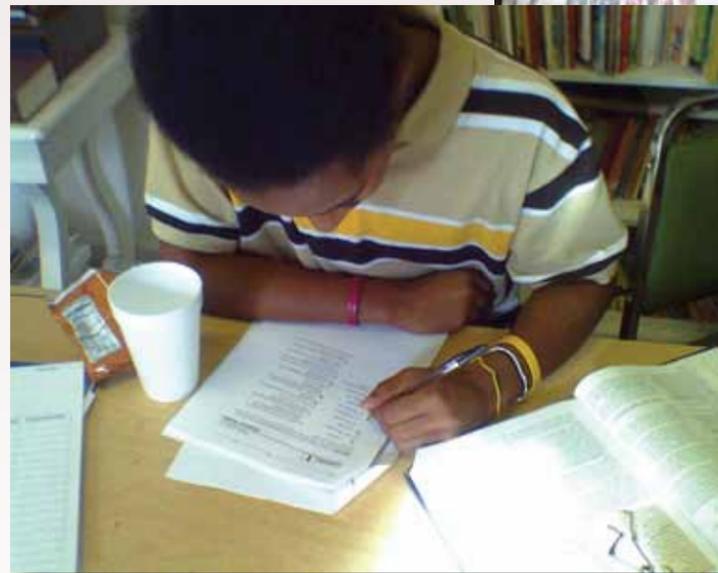
Sanvanna Diaz, a sophomore at E.C. Glass, wrote a thank-you note to the churches participating in Second Chance. "I am deeply touched that the teachers came out of their way to help us get our grades up

on their own time. I was so surprised that they are doing this without getting paid! It really shows us kids that there really are people out there that still care about others, and really genuinely interested in helping people without getting something in return."

She also thanked the program leaders for feeding the students and providing a safe way home. "One day I had no way to get home, both of my teachers and some church members offered me a ride home," she wrote. "I am very grateful for the program and I hope it continues in the years to come because without it I would have lost my cred-



(Above): Second Chance participant Sanvanna Diaz (left) with her biology teacher, Kim Geier. Diaz was deeply touched with the way the churches' volunteers are giving their time to help her and other students, such as the high school senior (left) hard at work with his studies.



its and overall education, possibly ending my chance to achieve a better life and college opportunities."

The program follows the Virginia curriculums approved by the public school system and meets four days a week after school. Through Decem-

ber there were more than 50 students studying biology, algebra, English and world history.

In addition to the churches and the high school, Lynchburg City Schools and Lynchburg Retired Teachers Association are part of the partnership.

Three United Methodist Women (UMW) answered the call to help these students: Kim Geier, president of the Peakland UMC UMW unit, taught biology; Donna Sloman a member of South View UMC, taught English; and Pat Butler, member of the district UMW executive committee, taught world history. □

'Trinity IN Richmond' provides open door to wider community

Trinity *IN* Richmond is a special initiative within Trinity United Methodist Church to help make sure its members are fulfilling the purpose of God's church on earth – to live within God's community and work to bring about God's kingdom making disciples of Jesus Christ.

The ministry's vision statement is: "Using our time, talents, gifts, prayers, service and witness to participate in the work of God's Spirit in the Richmond community."

Currently, Trinity *IN* Richmond is focusing its mission initiatives in the geographic area of south Richmond that surrounds the Oak Grove and Bellemeade elementary schools. Contact there began when Trinity became a part of the Micah Initiative, and that continues, but the church now has "a broader relationship with the school and other partners in the community," said the Rev. Teresa McRoberts.

The program offers a long list of community mission opportunities for members to choose from, including:

- The Micah Initiative partnership program between faith-based communities and Richmond Public Schools. Trinity is one of three churches partnered with Oak Grove/Bellemeade and provides classroom assistants, tutors and

lunch buddies;

- Care & Connect summer camping program with Camp Westview on the James in Goochland;
- Westview Explorers, which brings third-grade students from Oak Grove-Bellemeade and Chimborazo elementary schools to the open spaces of Camp Westview on the James;
- Shalom Farms, a United Methodist Urban Ministries project at Westview, and Shalom Garden, a Girl Scout project at Hillside Court;
- Helping Hands after-school program for fourth- and fifth-graders;
- Back to school and teacher appreciation luncheons;
- Clothing collection from schools in Richmond's West End for distribution on the South Side;
- Prayer partners for all the ministries of the church.

For more information, contact McRoberts at <tmcroberts@trinityumc.net>, or Terri Frazier at <sacredspiral01@gmail.com>. □

(Bottom right collage): Smiles abound for volunteers, students, school principals, Scout leaders and all involved with Trinity UMC's programs working with its local schools and the community. The Micah Initiative (top right and bottom left) is one of Trinity's partnerships.



New faith community in Petersburg District starts with a school

The Stand School, a ministry of The Stand United Methodist Church, opened late in 2010.

“Congratulations to the Rev. Gina Anderson-Cloud, our new church planter, and Pam Sheeder, director of the school, for their tremendous efforts in launching this new ministry,” said Petersburg District Superintendent the Rev. Jack Martin.

The Stand School is a preschool and daycare center located at 4725 Whitehill Blvd. in the Swaders Sports Park campus in Prince George. The facility has been redecorated to make it bright and child-friendly, with brightly painted murals, lots of room to move around, child-size furniture and toys, all working together to create a safe, loving environment for children to interact, learn and grow.

“Gina and Pam have big ideas for The Stand School to grow into a premier Christ-centered child development center, serving both the civilian community and the military families stationed at Fort Lee,” said Martin.

“Our weekly core group is meeting at the school build-



ing on Thursdays at 7 p.m.,” said Anderson-Cloud, “and we are also beginning to launch other small groups to help build the new church and plan for ministry.” The group is holding worship the last Sunday of each month at 9:30 a.m.

The Virginia Conference and the Petersburg District are in partnership for the anticipated launch of a new United Methodist faith community in the Fort Lee area.

“As many are aware, the Virginia Conference is in the midst of a major effort to start new faith communities all across the conference,” added Martin. “We feel blessed to be among the first.”

To learn more, visit the Web site <www.thestandumc.com> or visit The Stand’s page on Facebook, or contact Anderson-Cloud at <pastorgina@thestandumc.com> or (804) 347-9563. □



Children at The Stand School have lots of room to learn and play.

Group of churches on Eastern Shore get very involved with local schools

“FONSY” (Friends of Northampton Schools and Youth) is a group of people who are interested in helping the schools of the Northampton County School System. The group was formed last year in an attempt to help in any way that could benefit students and teachers.

The ball got rolling by the so-called “old ladies” Sunday school class at Franktown UMC. An 81-year-old class member had e-mailed then Gov. Tim Kaine to ask how to help the school system. Kaine suggested getting in the local schools to volunteer.

A fellow class member said, “I thought we were just going to sit around and talk for the next 20 years and she goes and e-mails the governor...”

Volunteers have spon-

sored breakfast groups for discussion, sponsored clubs, tutored students, worked the gate for sporting events, worked on special event days to lead games, made snow cones or popcorn, repaired musical instruments, made flash cards, worked with small groups and prepared snacks for special days. The list is long, but the idea is that participants are able to help the school in any way they need assistance.

Churches that have members volunteering so far include Cape Charles Baptist, St. Charles Catholic, Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal, Franktown UMC, Cheriton UMC and Epworth UMC. Plans are under way to expand network with all the schools this year. □



These women are two of many members of various Eastern Shore churches who listened to former Gov. Tim Kaine’s suggestion to volunteer in the local schools.

Proximity helps Herndon UMC, Herndon High have solid partnership

Being located right across the street from each other has contributed to the comfortable relationship between Herndon United Methodist Church and Herndon High School.

“It is a true partnership,” said Loraine Lappan, chair of the committee of church members, high school staff and students who lead the ministry.

Activities continuing since 2002 have included free tutoring at the church on Wednesday nights, teens and adults collecting books for the high school’s English-as-a-Second-Language department and making the church’s gym and parking lot available for high school extracurricular activities.

Other activities ebb and flow, according to Lappan. Music groups from the school often perform concerts for church functions. Student service groups facilitate church recycling and help with charitable drives. A student leadership team created

valentine craft projects for Sunday school preschoolers.

Church members provide and serve refreshments for quarterly honor roll receptions. On the morning of homecoming, United Methodist Men cook breakfast for the football team. A business teacher invites church volunteers to give mock interviews to her students.

The partnership has won local recognition; neither partner has experienced problems over the separation of church and state. The Herndon church has offered support within Fairfax County’s partnership guidelines through three principals and three pastors.

Members of the church know they are making a difference in young peoples’ lives. □

— Diane Kilmer for Interpreter magazine



St. Stephens UMC member, Jean Taylor, helps a student at a nearby Fairfax elementary school. The church/school partnership is much like Herndon UMC enjoys with its local high school.



More church/school partnership successes:

(Left): Students benefit from the tutoring program provided by volunteers from Ramsey Memorial UMC in Richmond. (Below): It was “wear green day” for children at Hutchison Elementary School last summer during Vacation Bible School sponsored by Floris UMC members.



And that’s not all...

You can see other examples of United Methodist congregations across the conference working with students in their local communities included in the listing of 2011 Ministry Grants of Virginia on the following pages 10-13.



2011 Ministry Grants of Virginia

Program Grants to Local Churches/Faith Groups Reaching Out into Communities

Because the mission of the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, the Virginia Conference has long seen the need to assist churches which are reaching out into their communities. **Special Program Grants** are intended for the start-up of local ministry projects to cover program expenses, and are to be used to help churches and/or ministries to reach out to their communities. **Sustaining Program Grants** are for programs outside of normal conference and local church funding processes and are intended for the sustaining of innovative programs or tangible and caring outreach that is beyond a local church's current financial resources. For more information about a specific project, or how you can assist, contact the appropriate persons below; or call Bev Myers in the conference Director of Connectional Ministries office at 1-800-768-6040 or (804) 521-1100, ext. 134, or e-mail <BevMyers@vaumc.org>.

Special Program Grants

ALEXANDRIA DISTRICT

St. Paul UMC Outreach is a ministry which provides a nutritious weekly meal, fellowship and worship for guests from the community who are in need. The annual Christmas party also offers the opportunity to share Love Bags and a special gift with each guest. Contact: Gail Stzanko, 13981 Van Doren Rd., Manassas, VA 20112; (703/791-4510); <gailmerily@aol.com>.

ASHLAND DISTRICT

Lakeside UMC Neighborhood Outreach is a ministry for neighborhood outreach to a diversified immigrant and low-income community, providing help with not only spiritual needs, but also with other personal and acculturation issues such as Immigration and Naturalization Service concerns, legal and medical assistance, job search assistance, affordable housing and crisis management. Contact: Nancy Robinson, 2333 Hilliard Rd., Richmond, VA 23228; (804/873-1487); <nancyrobin7856@aol.com>.

CHARLOTTESVILLE DISTRICT

Belmont Community Clothes Closet at Hinton Avenue UMC was born from a need which arose when food markets and other retail stores moved out of the area. This ministry hosts a free clothes closet and food pantry for persons and families in need of assistance. Contact: Patricia Carter, 740 Hinton Ave., Charlottesville, VA 22902; (434/409-3615); <pcarter@courts.state.va.us>.

DANVILLE DISTRICT

Design 2 Learn offers free one-on-one and small group tutoring of skill-based instruction (specifically designed for the multi-sensory learning styles of each child) to church and neighborhood youth. Contact: Amy B. Wood, 1064 Franklin Tpk., Danville, VA 24540; (434/836-4545); <amymbrown1977@yahoo.com>.

NORFOLK DISTRICT

Read One, Take One is an outgrowth of Zion-Grace UMC's tutoring program. The Norfolk public schools require 20 minutes of reading each night as part of homework assignments, and this is included at the end

of each tutoring session. When a student finishes a book, he/she gets to take the book home and keep it. This has been a great incentive for students to complete their books, thus improving their reading skills. Contact: Arlene Connelly, 1440 West Little Creek Rd., Norfolk, VA 23505; (757/423-2118); <patteriii@aol.com>.



Don Edwards is a Church and Community Worker serving as director of the Melrose Avenue, Roanoke location for Shalom Zone: Grace Ministries. The name on the sign, "N-Zone" (Neighborhood Zone), was chosen by residents of the community.

Thalia UMC TGIF Breakfast Club offers breakfast items on Monday and Friday mornings to neighborhood teens on their way to the local high school in an effort to make contact and let them know that they are loved by God. Contact: Michelle McKinney, 4321 Virginia Beach Blvd., Virginia Beach, VA 23452; (757/340-5015); <ThaliaUMY@yahoo.com>.

Get Smart at Great Bridge UMC serves high school students with a Tuesday after-school program which provides fun, exercise and mentoring. Dinner is served to the students and their families, and is followed with character-building games and activities. The evening concludes with mentors assisting with schoolwork, while parents may attend informative workshops on health, nutrition and fitness; financial planning; and other topics offered by church members. Contact: Thom Kinsey, 201 Stadium Drive, Chesapeake, VA 23322; (757/482-1049); <gbumcprograms@verizon.net>.

PENINSULA DISTRICT

Bread Plus at St. James UMC strives to alleviate hunger in the predominantly ethnic community by making groceries available, at no cost, to the needy. Contact: Harold Richardson Sr., 105 Water Pointe Lane, Smithfield, VA 23430; (757/357-4066); <harold.richardson@charter.net>.

PORTSMOUTH DISTRICT

Cottage Place UMC Computer Lab will reach out to local schools and community colleges, as well as a senior citizens' center and Social Services clients, to offer the use of computers to conduct research, learn computer skills, prepare for GED testing or reach out to others of different ethnic groups who share similar interests. Contact: Robert Barnes Jr., 1302 Tatenstown Rd., Chesapeake, VA 23325; (757/233-6984, 757/450-3064); <mjbarnes@cox.net>.

Feeding All God's Children at Cottage Place UMC serves free breakfast each Sunday morning to all children and adults in the community who have a need for breakfast and enjoy the benefit of Sunday school. It offers the opportunity for Anglo and African-American members of the community to bond with each other through food, study and worship. Contact: Joyce Barnes, 442 Jamestown Ave., Portsmouth, VA 23704; (757/399-1015); <c.met@att.net>.

RICHMOND DISTRICT

Centenary UMC Walk-in Ministry partners with other downtown Richmond churches to offer a noontime meal to the growing street population. Centenary offers Friday lunch, and now also offers a warm foot soak, massage, pedi-care and clean socks for the tired feet of the poor through its "Bless My Sole Footwashing Ministry," as well as offering Tuesday and Thursday morning sidewalk greeters with coffee and a smile. Contact: Ann Davis, 411 E. Grace St., Richmond, VA 23219; (804/648-8319); <cent.davis@verizon.net>.

Emmaus UMC Ministry for Handicapped and North Korean Refugees provides assistance and encouragement to the handicapped and refugees in the Korean community and their families. Contact: Charlie Kang, 7740 Cherokee Rd., Richmond, VA 23225; (804/335-8392, 804/272-5831); <eumcsh@hotmail.com>.

Food & Clothing Ministry of Belmont UMC, supported by volunteers from the church and the community, embraces the changing neighborhood by offering food and clothing assistance to those in need in the community. Contact: Raymond Perkins (804/447-3380); or contact the church at (804/275-6336) or <belmontumcrichmond@gmail.com>.

Trinity IN Richmond, supported by volunteers from the church and the community, embraces the changing neighborhood by offering food and clothing assistance to those in need in the community. Contact: Teresa McRoberts, 903 Forest Ave., Richmond, VA 23339; (804/282-6506); <tmcroberts@trinityumc.net>.

ROANOKE DISTRICT

Bilingual Preschool Initiative not only provides opportunities for Spanish-speaking children to receive a bilingual preschool experience, it also opens the door

for the next generation of English speakers to live and learn in harmony with their Hispanic brothers and sisters. Contact: Lori Valentine de Segovia, 201 Hagan St., Christiansburg, VA 24073; (540/392-3514); <lsegovia@mail.mcps.org>, <lvalenti@vt.edu>.

Shalom Zone: Grace Ministries is a ministry to the disenfranchised of downtown Roanoke with an emphasis on the recovering community, the immigrant community and marginalized people. It offers help with immigration and Fair Housing law, jail ministries and worship opportunities, and education and nutrition opportunities. Contact: Nancy Dickison, 90 Tinker Mountain Rd., Daleville VA 24083; (540/798-2791); <ndickison@comcast.net>.

West End UMC was a declining inner-city church which has chosen to engage its multicultural community with an urban ministries program, with the goal of once again becoming a community church. This initiative includes the church's youth group, which has greatly increased in size and is ethnically diverse. Contact: David Tanner, 1221 Campbell Ave. SW, Roanoke, VA 24015; (540/344-0206); <dtannerea@aol.com>.

STAUNTON DISTRICT

Greenville UMC offers an after-school program which supplements the one offered by the local elementary school, which has had to reduce the number of days it offers due to budget cuts. The program serves neighborhood students who are struggling with the Standards of Learning tests by offering this free program, which includes free transportation. Contact: Joyce Hinton, 3111 Lee Jackson Highway, Staunton, VA 24401; (540/337-0118); <gumcoffice1@verizon.net>.



(Above, top): Employees of BB&T Bank in Greenville help to restock the Greenville UMC food pantry for the church's "Food on Fridays" outreach program. BB&T employees have donated food for the program for the past two years. (Above): South Covington UMC's Jerry Nicely (at right) assists one of the applicants of the church's "Care Pantry" load his food order into his vehicle.

Greenville United Methodist Women (UMW), through its "Food on Fridays" program, provides food for needy children on weekends and holidays, and connects children and their parents to much needed community resources. Contact: Gloria Deckert, 823 Wagon Shop Rd., Middlebrook, VA 24459; (540/885-9663); <exsoop@gmail.com>.

(Continued on next page)

Care Pantry at South Covington UMC offers food parcels to the needy. Applicants find a caring, joyful Christian atmosphere where a listening ear and prayer support are offered in addition to basic needs being met. Contact: Linda Black, 5015 Castile Rd., Covington, VA 24426; (540/747-5261); <lblack47@aol.com>.

Sustaining Program Grants

ALEXANDRIA DISTRICT

Rising Hope UM Mission Church serves the people of the Route One Corridor. The targeted constituency and membership is particularly marginalized, homeless, low-income, victimized, addiction-ridden population ("the least, the lost, the lonely, and the left-out") and their children, but is not limited to those individuals.



The guiding principles for the vision of Rising Hope are to "love unconditionally, include everyone, and celebrate recovery." Contact: Rev. Keary Kin-cannon, 8220 Russell Rd., Alexandria, VA 22309; (703/360-1976); <kkincannon@risinghopeumc.org>.



(Top): Crossroads UMC Grace Ministries volunteers sort clothes and bags. (Middle): Commercial Drivers License training to become school bus drivers is one of three job training programs offered by Grace Ministries. Another program is (bottom) Personal Care Aide English-as-a-Second-Language training to learn medical vocabulary.

ARLINGTON DISTRICT

Grace Ministries seeks to engage and empower the low-income immigrant community in northern Virginia through the distribution of food, clothing, school supplies and over-the-counter medications; by providing families with emergency funding for utility bills, rent assistance, medical and pharmacy bills; and providing vocational training in high-demand occupations. Contact: Martha Real, 13600 Frying Pan Rd., Herndon, VA 20171; (703/793-0026); <mreal@florissumc.org>.

DANVILLE DISTRICT

Henry Fork Service Center provides academic enrichment, mentoring and Christian education for students in the low-income area of Henry Fork/Doe Run in Rocky Mount. With before-school and after-school programming for K-8 students, it includes nutritional snacks, academic enrichment, Christian education and recreation. Contact: Lisa Nichols, P.O. Box 888, Rocky Mount, VA 24151; (540/483-2819); <henryforkcenter@cs.com>.

EASTERN SHORE DISTRICT

Agape Christian Children's Community Center ministers to the children and community of Horntown through a preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds that is open 11 hours daily, Monday through Friday; after-school program for kindergarten through second grade; and Vacation Bible School during the summer months. Contact: Brenda M. Child, 12021 Robinson Ferry Rd., Broadnax, VA 23920; (434/848-3329); <dougchild@telpage.net>.

HARRISONBURG DISTRICT

Lighthouse Center for Children and Youth provides before- and after-school care and a preschool program for the economically depressed community, including hot meals to subsidize the children's nutritional needs. Contact: Sheila Morris, director, P.O. Box 34, Elkton, VA 22827; (540/298-0304); <Lighthouse4kidzz@aol.com>.

LYNCHBURG DISTRICT

Park View Community Mission seeks to meet the increasing physical and spiritual needs of the homeless and needy of the community with bagged groceries, weekly meals, Bible study and fellowship. This mission is leading to a new multi-cultural faith community, more representative of the current community around the church. Contact: Rev. Phil Showers, 2420 Memorial Ave., Lynchburg, VA 24501; (434/845-8468); <Phil2_13@yahoo.com>.



Park View Community Mission is the primary mission program of the Lynchburg District. In 2010, it distributed more than a half million pounds of food to more than 20,000 people and served more than 15,000 hot meals to the poor and homeless in the community during a Wednesday Night Service and Fellowship Supper (it is not a soup-kitchen!). That's just part of the ministry with the poor as the district creates new places for new people and revitalizes existing congregations. Some days the church looks like a farmer's market when fresh fruits and vegetables are given away.

NORFOLK DISTRICT

Club Sandwich serves children from neighboring low-income, at-risk, transient families. These children receive the love and compassion of Christ through the mentoring, tutoring and caring of the director, church members and volunteers. Contact: Debbie Winn or Joann McClung, 288 East Little Creek Rd., Norfolk, VA 23505; (757/587-2996); <church@norwmumc.org>.

PORTSMOUTH DISTRICT

Wesley Community Service Center provides Christian-based witness through such programs and services as congregational and home-delivered meals; emergency support services; youth development; representative payee and guardianship services for the mentally challenged; individual and family support services, as well as social action/advocacy on behalf of the poor and disadvantaged in the south side of Portsmouth. Contact: John G. Hatcher Jr., P.O. Box 1396, Portsmouth, VA 23705; (757/399-0541); <wesleys@exis.net>.

RICHMOND DISTRICT

Black Methodists for Church Renewal strengthens the ethnic local churches by training its youth in order to realize the inclusivity of the General Church. Contact: Willard H. Douglas, P.O. Box 26941, Richmond, VA 23261; (804/321-4222); <Douglas546@aol.com>.



The annual Harambee Youth Conference is sponsored by the Southeastern Jurisdiction Black Methodists for Church Renewal. Last year, 31 students from the Virginia chapter attended the event which was held at Bennett College, Greensboro, N.C. (Pictured above): Students participated in the march from Bennett College to the downtown F.W. Woolworth Store, commemorating the beginning of the Sit-in Movement some 50 years ago. This movement became the impetus for the civil rights laws outlawing segregation in public accommodations.

Kids' Club of Central UMC provides a safe, fun place for children to learn about Jesus with their friends and neighbors, and serves as a springboard for other outreaches in the neighborhood such as an Easter egg hunt, Super Bowl party, camping opportunities and Vacation Bible School. Families of participating children desire to be a part of what is happening at Central UMC because of the positive experiences their children are having at Kids' Club. Contact: Sandy Harmon, 1211 Porter St., Richmond, VA 23224; (804/232-0334 or 804/288-3063); <sandy@wrightdunn.com>.

Sherbourne Food Pantry provides food and spiritually nurtures needy residents and neighbors in the community where the need for food is very apparent. Contact: Sandy Sahnaw, 2619 Sherbourne Rd., Richmond, VA 23237; (804/559-0705 or 804/921-2187); <sahnnows@comcast.net>.



Sherbourne Food Pantry clients gather at Sherbourne UMC not only for the food they need, but for spiritual guidance provided by the small congregation that is doing big things in the community.

ROANOKE DISTRICT

Hispanos Unidos provides help and guidance for increasing numbers of the Hispanic community in the greater Roanoke and New River valleys in all areas: housing, jobs, immigration issues, assistance in dealing with bureaucracy, teaching basic shopping techniques, etc. Contact: Rev. Dave Rochford, 19 Cedar Ridge Dr., Daleville, VA 24083; (540/992-3030); <pastor@stmarksmethodist.com>.

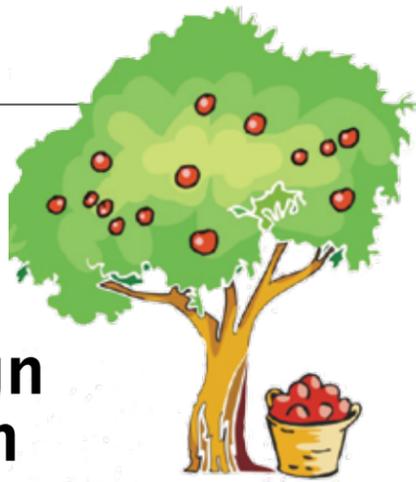
UMC Community Outreach Program of Roanoke provides a safe and nurturing environment for children and families in inner-city Roanoke who are in need of resources not available to them through other channels, exposing them to Christian values and teaching. Tutoring, Christian education, enrichment activities and guidance; as well as a clothes closet, school supplies and evening meals are provided. Contact: Rebecca Parsons, 305 Mountain Ave., SW, Roanoke, VA 24016; (540/324-3103); <beck12_98@yahoo.com>.



(Top right): Youth from the Roanoke inner city learn about painting a deck during a mission trip sponsored by the conference youth office. (Bottom right): First-grader, Garrison, is all smiles after getting his face painted during a harvest party at the Community Outreach Program in Roanoke.



Virginia



'All Things New' capital campaign shifts into new phase this month

The Capital Campaign for "All Things New" will begin this month, with each church in the conference receiving a letter from Bishop Charlene Kammerer and a DVD about new faith communities and the core conference strategy.

"All Things New" was approved by the 2008 Annual Conference as a strategy for starting new faith communities and re-energizing existing congregations. The 2009 Annual Conference approved the capital campaign conducted by James D. Klote & Associates.

The first phase of the campaign was directed toward identified donors and generated approximately \$2.7 million in pledges and gifts.

"Our commitment is to raise \$15 million for 250 new faith communities in the next 30 years, to strengthen existing churches that want to grow and flourish, and to offer a generous missional gift to the Central Conference Pension Fund, for retired pastors in Africa," writes Bishop Kammerer. "Our hope and prayer is that many people and churches will respond generously and joyfully to the purpose of "All Things New" through financial gifts and partnerships with our conference's new faith communities."

In February and March, clergy will learn more about the campaign in district meetings. In May, congregations will receive information on giving opportunities and partnerships with new faith communities. Then, on Pentecost Sunday, June 12, there will be a conference-wide receiving of pledges from congregations and individuals to "All Things New," with a report to come at 2011 Annual Conference.

The primary goal of "All Things New" is to change the culture of the Virginia Conference from focusing on the loss of members to fruitfulness and multiplication, with an emphasis on leadership development for both laity and clergy.

The "invitation to plant" side of the strategy has seen 13 new faith communities started since 2008. A process for equipping new church planters now includes an intentional support network of local, district and conference involvement, a new Church Leadership Institute, intensive training for newly appointed planters, benchmarks of effectiveness, and a Latino Lay Missionary Planting Network designed to help Hispanic/Latino laity discern whether they may be called to be a planter or part of a launch team.

The "invitation to harvest" of "All Things New" has included the very successful 5 Talent Academy, where more than 110 churches are participating in intentional learning and covenantal relationship focusing on worship, ministry with the poor, faith development, stewardship and evangelism. In addition, these churches will engage in discernment about the possibility of beginning or partnering in beginning new faith communities.

In addition, conference boards and agencies have been engaged in a two-year process of restructuring and aligning to the primary goal of changing the culture of the Virginia Conference and the primary emphasis of leadership development. This has resulted in:

- The Board of Discipleship developing a process to provide direct assistance to local congregations in the areas of worship, evangelism, spiritual formation, Christian education, stewardship, age-level ministries and racial/ethnic ministries. Innovative, relevant and transformational opportunities for faith development and discipleship will be provided by leadership and resources in regional areas of the conference, drawing on best practices gathered locally, jurisdictionally, nationally and globally. This process will begin in July.

- The Board of Global Ministries developing a process for recruiting and training Mission Interpreters for local congregations.
- The Board of Higher Education Ministries reviewing campus ministries and developing guidelines for evaluation based on 'All Things New' emphasis on faith communities.
- The Board of Laity restructuring to focus on creating a culture of call by engaging, equipping laity so they might effectively partner with others and their pastors to live out God's call as they lead the church in transforming the world as disciples of Jesus Christ. This will be accomplished through three new leadership teams: Engaging (holistic stewardship), Equipping (leadership excellence), and Empowering (shared ministry).
- The Board of Communications working more closely with other boards and agencies to help provide resources and to more effectively communicate their work to the rest of the conference.
- Approval of Young Adult Leadership Initiative by the 2010 Annual Conference that will facilitate intentional development of young adult clergy and laity. The conference group is also working with The Fund for Theological Education's VocationCARE program, which helps young adults explore a possible call into ministry.
- Discontinuing of two conference boards and one conference council, as well as the merger of two commissions for inclusivity.
- The Board of Ordained Ministry has created "Just in Time" training for pastors of large-membership and mid-size churches, and is planning similar training for small-church leaders – clergy and laity – and for associate pastors. □

Surgery complications force Workman to step down from conference staff

Due to ongoing physical concerns related to her Oct. 18 back surgery, Anna Gail Workman will not be able to continue as director of Congregational Development and Evangelism for the Virginia Conference.

During her eight years of ministry with the Virginia Conference, Workman has served as the primary conference staff leader with new faith communities. This staffing responsibility has included resourcing the Church Development Team during its formation and development of procedures that assist the Cabinet in discerning the location of new faith communities and identification of new faith community planters. She also served as the primary staff person for the 250 Task Force that developed "All Things New," a strategic response to beginning 250 new faith communities and revitalizing existing congregations in the Virginia Conference.

Workman is a diaconal minister with certification in the area of Christian Education. She attended Methodist College in Fayetteville, N.C., and graduated from Elon University in Elon, N.C. Workman served in the North Carolina Conference as a minister of education at Trinity UMC in Durham, Edenton Street UMC in Raleigh and Front Street UMC in Burlington for a total of more than 20 years. In 1999, she was elected as an assistant General Secretary of the General Board of Global Ministries in the area of Evangelization and Church Growth. Three times she was a delegate to General Conference.

She came to the Virginia Conference in November 2002.

"In the years to come, our conference will continue to reap the benefits of Anna's ministry through the formation of new faith communities that will share the good news of Jesus Christ," said the Rev. Marc Brown, director of Connectional Ministries. "I invite

you to join me in expressing gratitude to Anna for her ministry and offering prayers for God's blessings and healing."

Workman's e-mail address is <annaworkman@yahoo.com>. Her mailing address is 2114 US 70, Mebane, NC 27302.

A separate announcement regarding the newly renamed position of director of Congregational Excellence was posted by the Common Table Personnel Committee. Administrative responsibilities for the office of Congregational Excellence will be overseen by the director of Connectional Ministries until the position is filled. □



Workman

Next 5 Talent Academy speaker offers more than 20 years experience in fundraising



Hart

Ted Hart will lead the next session of the 5 Talent Academy, which will meet Feb. 19 at Floris UMC in Herndon.

More than 110 churches in the Virginia Conference are participating in the 5 Talent Academy, which offers practical help for revitalizing existing congregations as part of the "All Things New" conference strategy. The focus for this fourth session is stewardship.

Hart is considered one of the foremost experts in both online and traditional fundraising around the world. He is sought after internationally as an inspirational and practical speaker and consultant on topics related to nonprofit strategy and board/volunteer development both online and offline.

"I attended several classes Hart taught on social networking and fundraising for nonprofits at the United Methodist Association 2009 annual convention," said the Rev. Derek McAleer, vice president for development at the Methodist Children's Home in Macon, Ga. "Ted was outstanding. He knows the field, and explained social networking and Web 2.0 to a whole group of older fundraising professionals who

knew little on the topic, and had not engaged in social networking themselves."

Hart serves as CEO of Hart Philanthropic Services, <www.tedhart.com>, an international consultancy to nonprofits/non-governmental organizations, and People2People Fundraising. He was the founder of the ePhilanthropy Foundation. Hart also has taken a leadership role in helping nonprofits become more green by founding <www.greennonprofits.org>.

Hart is author of six books, including his most recent, *People to People Fundraising: Social Networking and Web 2.0 for Charities*. Other books include *The Nonprofit Guide To Going Green*, *Fundraising on the Internet* and *Nonprofit Internet Management*. He also has served as an adjunct faculty member in the Master of Science in Fundraising Management program at Columbia University in New York.

The session will be offered Saturday, Feb. 19, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Floris UMC is located at 13600 Frying Pan Road, Herndon. You can register on the conference Web site, <www.vaumc.org>, under the "Events" calendar.

For more information, contact Pat Hickman at the conference office, or the Rev. Pete Moon at (804) 739-4535 or <pmoon@woodlakeumc.org>. □

Going, going green: Location at Camp Highroad offers alternative for burials

For 62 years, United Methodist Camp Highroad has provided a place for year-round retreats and camping in Loudoun County. In the summer, Highroad operates a popular summer camp program.

The camp is developing a partnership with EcoEternity, which offers an environmentally friendly alternative to a traditional burial. The northern Virginia Centreville-based company will plant cremated remains in a biodegradable urn, or without any container at all, beside a mature tree to be soaked up by the root system.

The idea is that over time the deceased will become one with their personal trees as the ashes do mix into a tree's soil, much like fertilizer.

Camp Highroad Director Rick Dawson buried his daughter's ashes under a tree at the camp. "We knew she loved the forest. She actually attended Camp Highroad here, so it seemed like this would be a good final resting place for her."

The EcoEternity forest sits apart from the rest of the camp. Name plaques are placed on the back side of the trees to preserve the feel of the forest. Cremated remains are buried in a biodegradable urn in the drip line of a tree. The practice is far more "earth-friendly" than traditional burial, says EcoEternity president Jack Lowe.

"What it takes to make a metal casket is a lot of energy, a lot of materials," said Lowe. "Once you bury that in the ground, you're essentially sterilizing that plot of land." Cost is also a factor. A traditional funeral can run up to \$30,000; you can be cremated and buried at EcoEternity for around \$2,000. "Family trees" with 15 spaces lease for \$4,500.

Naturalist Joshua Johns points out that the land will be protected for at least a century to come. "The real danger for these trees is not that the soil doesn't have enough nutrients in it, but that someone's going to

come and cut them down and build a Wal-Mart. So, you've done something much more beneficial than fertilizing a tree, you have saved a section of forest."

Proceeds from the partnership help keep Highroad open for camping ministries and



(Left): A family buries the cremated remains of a loved one beside a tree which will bear a plaque (above) with the name of the deceased. The remains eventually will "become one" with the tree as the ashes mix into the tree's soil.

events like baptisms and weddings. Pastors are available to do internments at the camp.

EcoEternity offers four different green burial sites in the United States, and three of those are located on United Methodist campsites.

Lowe said that the concept appeals to many people who want to be more ecologically sensitive.

"I was surprised to learn how many people have the ashes of a close relative on a mantle at their home," Lowe said. "They have just not found a meaningful place to inter those ashes."

Implementing a natural burial place seemed more than natural to Dawson when he first learned about the idea. "Highroad's vision is a place where people can come to experience God's love in His creation. We are also God's creation, and it seems appropriate that when our earthly bodies have served their purpose that the ashes be returned to the natural environment."



"The tree, as it continues to grow, stands as a living memorial to the people, but also to God's creation," added Dawson.

Mark Harris, author of *Grave Matters: A Journey Through the Modern Funeral Industry to a Natural Way of Burial*, calculated that a 10-acre cemetery contains enough coffin wood to build more than 40 houses. That same cemetery holds about 900 tons of coffin steel, 20,000 tons of vault concrete, and countless gallons of weed killer and pesticide to keep cemetery lawns green. Plus there's enough formaldehyde, a toxic embalming fluid, to fill a small swimming pool.

If you are interested in seeing the EcoEternity Forest at Camp Highroad, check in at the camp office and someone will show you the area.

For more information on the company, visit <www.ecoeternity.com>. For more information on Camp Highroad, visit <www.camphighroad.org>. □

Randolph-Macon College to name new dorm for retired United Methodist elder, Ira Andrews

Randolph-Macon College (R-MC) recently broke ground on a new freshmen residence hall to be named to honor retired Dean of Students and Professor Emeritus the Rev. Ira L. Andrews III, a United Methodist elder. The new facility will border a newly renovated football stadium on Henry Street across from Freshmen Village.

The Ira L. Andrews Freshmen Residence Hall was made possible with a lead gift from Frank "Pepper" Laughon Jr. and his wife, Stuart. The 100-bed, suite-style facility will include a 1,500-square-foot common room for academic and student organization use; study areas; social areas; a gaming/TV room; a laundry facility; a staff apartment; and a community porch.

The dorm, which is expected to be completed by August, also will include some environmental features as R-MC continues to find ways of reducing its carbon footprint. Geo-thermal wells will temper collected groundwater for the heating and ventilating system, and the hall will also feature a system to collect and recycle rainwater for toilets and irrigation.

"This is an exciting time of growth for Randolph-Macon College," said President Robert Lindgren. "Applications have soared over the past three years and we anticipate an even greater interest in our liberal arts program. It is important for us to meet that demand."

Andrews' experience at R-MC spans more than 50 years. As a student, he was inducted into the prestigious Phi Beta Kappa National Honor Society and was a member of Clericus, a pre-ministerial program, and the Glee Club. After graduating, Andrews earned a Master of Divinity degree from Emory University, where he was elected to Omicron Delta Kappa. He returned to R-MC as a professor of religious studies and was later appointed to serve as dean of students. He worked admirably through historic milestones such as the college's change from an all-male

campus to a coeducational one, and served under five presidents.

Andrews' life and contributions to the college were also celebrated during commencement weekend 2010, when he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree.

The Ira L. Andrews Residence Hall is the first living space to be built on campus since 1994. A new R-MC Master Plan was approved in 2009 by the board of trustees. The college completed the relocation of Smith Street,

which is now a block north of its previous location, last year. The relocation will allow for the expansion of athletic amenities to include de-coupling the football and baseball fields. The football field will be moved to a north-south configuration.

R-MC will break ground on an addition to the McGraw-Page Library in the spring. The addition will include a 24-hour study area, restrooms and wireless Internet. □

— Pam Cox, R-MC Communications

February is Heart Havens' month

Residents at Heart Havens' home in Stuarts Draft enjoy Wii game system

The New Year started off with a bang at Heart Havens' Bonnie Home.

Already on a path to fitness thanks to the donation of a treadmill by the parents of Jean, a resident, the residents at the home in Stuarts Draft are getting active in creative ways.

Members at Calvary UMC donated a Wii game system, among other household items and Christmas gifts, to the home, a fun way to keep moving. The Rev. B. Failes, his wife, Jan, and the congregation at Calvary provide special care for the individuals in the Staunton District home.

"Calvary has a great relationship with the folks at Bonnie Home," said Failes. "They worship with us, come to Sunday school, and we participate with them in many activities at Bonnie Home and at church. We have several members who are adults with intellectual disabilities. These are great folks and we are in ministry with them."

The staff at Bonnie Home wants to facilitate community involvement on Friday or Saturday evenings, with movie nights at the theatre and other social activities.

All the individuals there participate in the Special Olympics.

"We are going to have an operating program here at Bonnie that addresses a person holistically. Mind, body and soul," said Stosh Kalinsky, frontline supervisor at the facility.

The home itself is going through some upgrades. Funds were donated to restore flooring in a bedroom, and staff repainted and remodeled the office in December. The goal is to remodel the entire house, which was an existing home purchased by Heart Havens around 2000.

"We seek to educate the community and public that this is a home where real people live, work, hope, dream and achieve. There are lots of houses in the neighborhood, but this is a home," said Kalinsky.

Heart Havens has 12 group homes for adults with intellectual disabilities located throughout the Virginia Conference. Direct support staff in each home begin the new year by continuing to seek new ways to empower individuals and engage them in their community.

For more information on how you can support Heart Havens, visit <www.hearthavens.org>. □

Virginia's first camp for children with hearing disabilities is set

Camp Loud and Clear is a summer camp for children who are deaf/hard of hearing that will be held for the first time July 15-17, at Holliday Lake in Appomattox County. Currently there is no camp in Virginia that is specifically designed to meet the needs of children who are deaf and hard of hearing regardless of their degree of hearing loss or their chosen communication mode.

Camp Loud and Clear will change that. All the counselors at the camp will have experience working with children with hearing loss. There will be nationally certified interpreters present for the children who are deaf. The Virginia Department of Deaf and Hard of Hearing is providing specialized equipment necessary for this camp. It is important to establish such a camp as socializing is exceedingly difficult for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing and often results in isolation. The hope is that by establishing Camp Loud and Clear and by facilitating the interactions between these children, not only will they develop friendships, but also their social and coping skills will be strengthened.

Camp Loud and Clear is being supported by the Virginia Conference's Common Table and Commission on Disabilities, as well as Longwood University and the Holliday Lake 4-H Educational Center.

For more information about volunteering, camper applications, or ways to assist with Camp Loud and Clear, contact Jennifer Kingsley at <jkkingsley@hotmail.com> or (434) 391-3679 or Dr. Lissa Power-deFur at <powerdefurea@longwood.edu> or (434) 395-2972. □



"I love you" in sign language.

Applications being accepted for Rickard Scholarships

Applications are being accepted for scholarships from the Harry C. and Reba C. Rickard Scholarship Endowment Fund at the Virginia United Methodist Foundation. Candidates may be graduating high school seniors or current college or current seminary students between the ages of 17-30 who are preparing for full-time church-related vocations.

Ten scholarships were awarded in 2010 to seminary students and college students. The endowment fund was established in 2007 through a bequest in the estate of Mrs. Reba C. Rickard of Strasburg, the widow of a former military chaplain and clergy member of the Virginia Conference, the Rev. Harry C. Rickard.

Applications must be received by April 1 and are available on the Web at <www.vaumcfoundation.org>, or by calling (804) 521-1122 or toll-free 1-800-768-6040, ext. 122, or by e-mailing <Foundation@vaumc.org>.

The Virginia United Methodist Foundation administers nearly \$7 million in permanent endowment funds from which income is used for scholarships and loans or to benefit various United Methodist local churches, agencies, institutions or other programs.

There are opportunities for individuals to establish endowed scholarship funds through local churches or through the Foundation. Often these honor or memorialize a loved one. Persons or local churches interested in this may contact the Foundation at (804) 521-1120 or 1-800-768-6040, ext. 120, or <JimBergdoll@vaumc.org>. □

Grand Camp

Designed especially for grandparents and their school-aged grandchildren
Epworth By The Sea ~ St. Simons Island, GA
June 24-27, 2011

- *Explore Neptune Park on the ocean's shore (fish, swim, miniature golf or watch the ships go by)
- *Take a guided beach walk
- *Visit Fort Frederica and play colonial games
- *Tour the Maritime Center and St. Simons Island Lighthouse
- *Talent Show
- *Enjoy a dolphin cruise
- *Have a picnic lunch by the ocean

"COME CREATE MEMORIES"
**Spend time making memories in special activities with your "GRANDS"*

For more information, visit our website at www.epworthbythesea.org or call 912-638-8688.

Upcoming Events - for all ages!

FEBRUARY

'Celebrate Your Marriage' Retreat, Feb. 11-13, Blessings Lodge, Overlook Retreat and Camp Ministries in Keezletown. Join with other married couples to enrich your relationship in the context of Christian faith and action. Grow in your love and commitment to God and one another. Trained leaders will guide you through a series of exercises, activities and worship experiences. For more information, call the camp office at (540) 2MY-CAMP, or send an e-mail to <campoverlook@gmail.com>. Cost is \$265/couple.

Investment Seminar, Feb. 12, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Virginia United Methodist Conference Center, Glen Allen. This seminar is sponsored by the Virginia United Methodist Credit Union (VUMCU). Want to be a better steward of your investments? Learn about the basics of investing ranging from types of investments to personal risk tolerance. Sue Lewis, a VUMCU board member and retired financial advisor, will be the speaker. During her 25 years as a financial advisor, she worked for UBS, PaineWebber and A.G. Edwards. There is no cost to attend, but space is limited and registration is required. E-mail Janie Hightower at: <jhightower@vumcu.org> to reserve your seat.

5 Talent Academy, Feb. 19, 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Floris UMC, 13600 Frying Pan Road, Herndon. Ted Hart, CEO of Hart Philanthropic Services and author of several books including *People to People Fundraising: Social Networking and Web 2.0 for Charities*, will be featured speaker at the 5 Talent Academy teaching event on Stewardship. Attendees are encouraged to read this book before the academy event. It may be ordered through Amazon.com. **Cost is \$20 if you register by Jan. 31, \$25 after Jan. 31.** Register online at <www.vaumc.org> and click on "Events," then the date.

Lay Servants Academy, Feb. 25-27, Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center, Blackstone. All laity are invited to the first Lay Servants Academy and the 33rd annual Lay Speakers Training. You do not need to be on track to become a Local Lay Speaker or Certified Lay Speaker to attend, although these programs are developed to challenge the Lay Speaker to become skilled to the level of certification and offer continuing training for re-certification. Every chairperson, committee member, teacher or congregational leader is encouraged to take the introductory course and overview of United Methodism. **Registration deadline is Feb. 11.** To download a brochure and registration form, visit <www.vaumc.org> and click on "Events," then the date.

MARCH

Middle School Confirmation Retreat: 'Following Jesus,' March 25-27, Camp Westview on the James, Goochland. Students will have the opportunity to see how Jesus lived his life and his effect upon people. Youth will consider the experiences of their own lives in light of Jesus' example and will be challenged to commit to Christ and Christ's way. Students will be led by former and current Westview staff and have interaction with leaders from their home churches. Justin Hicks, youth minister at River Road UMC, will be keynote speaker, and Steve Kropp will lead the group in energetic worship experiences. **Register by Feb. 15 for the early-bird rate of \$85/person or by March 12 for \$92/person.** Online registration and a full brochure are available on the Web at <www.westviewonthejames.org> or register via paper using the registration attached to the brochure. Group registration is also available using the "Group Registration Form" found on the Web site in the News and Events section.

APRIL

Confirmation Camp, April 15-16, Blessings Lodge, Overlook Retreat and Camp Ministries in Keezletown. Gather with youth from other United Methodist churches to discover what it means to "Claim the Name" *Christian* and bring an interactive and connectional element to the content already being shared with the confirmands in your church. Six sections (4-8, 12) of the "Claim the Name" curriculum will be shared through a variety of experiences and from special guests. Cost is \$46 per youth or adult (one or more adult with each group). Discounts apply for early registration. For more information, call 540-2MY-CAMP, or send an e-mail to <campoverlook@gmail.com>.

MAY

Middle School Confirmation Retreat: 'The Walk,' May 13-15, Camp Westview on the James, Goochland. Youth will encounter the commandments and the example of Jesus, recognize the need for trust and for action in response to Christ's call, and strengthen their relationships with Jesus. They will be challenged to discover new ways to walk the talk. Confirmands will be led by Westview staff in cooperation with youth pastors, Sunday school teachers, and Christian educators. Justin Hicks, youth minister at River Road UMC, will be keynote speaker, and Steve Kropp will lead the group in energetic worship experiences. **Register by Feb. 15 for the early-bird rate of \$85/person or by April 21 for \$92/person.** Online registration and a full brochure are available on the Web at <www.westviewonthejames.org> or register via paper using the registration attached to the brochure. Group registration is also available using the "Group Registration Form" found on the Web site in the News and Events section.

Nation & World

Haiti earthquake, one year later

Tons of rubble show there is still work to be done

To mark the one-year anniversary of the massive earthquake in Haiti, which occurred Jan. 12, 2010, The United Methodist Church is reminding people that much work remains to be done in Haiti and there are ways they can help.

An advertising campaign in January included television commercials on CNN and Fox News Channel, online advertising, text messaging and outdoor billboards in selected cities. The ads invited viewers to go to <www.RethinkChurch.org> to find out how to get involved.

In Atlanta, San Antonio, Kansas City [Mo.], and Charlotte, 10' x 10' x 10' clear containers were filled with an estimated five tons of rubble to illustrate the magnitude of the destruction. The earthquake in Haiti left behind 25 million cubic yards of rubble, only about 5 percent of which has been removed. The amount of rubble in one container represents only 0.00015 percent of what is still in Haiti.

The United Methodist Church has a long history of providing aid in Haiti, dating back to 1817. Over the past two centuries, United Methodists have worked to establish schools, churches, clinics and other programs.

Relief and recovery work began immediately following the deadly quake. In the past year, United Methodists have contributed more than \$43 million for earthquake relief in Haiti.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) addressed immediate needs for food, shelter, education, medical care, clean water and cholera education and prevention, and embarked upon a five-year earthquake relief and recovery program.

From April to October 2010, more than 80 United Methodist Volunteers-In-Mission teams traveled to Haiti and nearly 180 are scheduled to go this year. United Methodist churches all over the United States have reached out to



(Above): A woman amidst rubble from a preschool building in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, that was destroyed by last year's earthquake. (Left): Dr. Brian Good of Salt Lake City, Utah, examines Medina Alexis at Grace Children's Hospital in Port-au-Prince. Holding Medina is her mother, Ketly Alexis. (UMNS photos by Mike DuBose)

Haiti in various ways, from assembling health kits to holding fundraisers to building mobile medical clinics.

UMCOR has prepared a set of resources to help congregations mark the first anniversary of relief and recovery work in Haiti. Church bulletin inserts, a poster, and a worship slide are available for download. A timeline also provides a chronology of the denomination's relief and recovery efforts. UMCOR's *Haiti Digest* provides a monthly recap of recovery efforts by the agency and its partners in Haiti and the United States. Subscribe to the digest or look for it each month at <www.umcor.org>.

To learn more about rebuilding efforts in Haiti and how to get involved, visit <www.RethinkChurch.org>. You may also make a donation of \$10 by texting "HOPE" to 27722. □

— Diane Degnan,
United Methodist Communications

United Methodist's faith helped uncover a golden voice, great story

By now, millions of Americans have heard from 53-year-old Ted Williams. He's "the homeless man with the golden voice," an Ohio panhandler whose stunning vocal skills were recorded for an impromptu video that's netted at least 4 million views on YouTube.

But what about the Good Samaritan with the video camera?

What made him stop for Williams on a dreary, overcast day when scores of people ignored the African-American homeless man during the peak of the Christmas season?

It turns out that Doral Chenoweth III, the man who filmed Williams, has a story of his own.

Five weeks ago, Chenoweth, 47, was driving to Lowe's with his wife, Robin, when he spotted a thin man with wild, unruly hair at an intersection. The man held a cardboard sign that read, "I have a God-given gift of voice..."

Chenoweth stopped and talked briefly with Williams, but he couldn't stay. He returned, however, a week later.

"Hey, I'm going to make you work for your dollar," Chenoweth said as he rolled down his window and took out his flip camera. "Let me hear you say something."

What comes out of Williams' mouth is startling. It's a rich, baritone that doesn't match his craggy exterior at all. His enunciation is crisp, his tone smooth as suede.

Williams isn't holding that cardboard sign anymore.

After Chenoweth posted the video, it went viral. Williams did interviews on national TV and radio. He's received several job offers, including one that comes with a home. A reunion with his 92-year-old mother was also arranged.

Chenoweth is paid to notice people. He's a multimedia producer for *The Columbus Dispatch* newspaper in Ohio. He said he stopped because he thought Williams might make a good video.

Still, he wasn't so sure after the filming. He said he sat on the video for five weeks until he finally decided to use it

because it was a slow news week. Then he watched the video take off.

"I never anticipated this," he said. "A week ago, he was living in a tent behind a station in the middle of December, and now he's being flown to New York and his video is everywhere."

But the reason Chenoweth stopped goes deeper than his job. It's "standard operating procedure" for him, he said, to stop and talk to people who are homeless, whether he's carrying a camera or not.

"It's part of my faith," he said after some prodding about his motivations. "You may not be able to help someone with money, but you can at least say hello, how you doing, and look at them."

About 14 years ago, Chenoweth said he was assigned to photograph a homeless ministry at New Life United Methodist Church in downtown Columbus. He was so impressed by the ability of the 50-member congregation to help the homeless that he and his wife joined.

The church's pastor said that Chenoweth routinely invites people who are homeless to the church for meals and medical attention. He's also photographed people on the street and displayed their photographs to emphasize their humanity, said the Rev. Jennifer Kimball Casto, New Life UMC's pastor.

When asked if she was surprised by Chenoweth's action, Casto said: "Absolutely not. Doral has a special heart for people who are homeless and in need."

Chenoweth's concern for people goes beyond Columbus, and even the United States. His wife said they are regular Habitat for Humanity volunteers. They've also taken seven trips to Africa with their two children, Cassie, 12, and Kurtis, 10, to serve impoverished com-



Ex-radio disc jockey Ted Williams holds his sign that reads "I have a God-given gift of voice..." The homeless man got Doral Chenoweth's attention and now Williams' golden voice is being heard all over the world.



Chenoweth

munities. Chenoweth has documented many of the trips on his Web site.

"He's taken me all over the world," Robin Chenoweth said. "He's a fabulous husband. It's the best decision of my life to be with him."

Chenoweth sounds thrilled to see where the newfound fame will take Williams. He had a reunion with Williams after their video went viral. A local

radio station interviewed Williams, and Chenoweth was there for the interview.

"We had a big hug and shook hands," Chenoweth said. "He almost cried when he saw me."

Chenoweth was watching a local radio station interview Williams when he saw something that touched him.

"He still has my business card," Chenoweth said. "He's been carrying it the whole five weeks since I gave it to him. He was carrying it right in his fingertips."

Chenoweth didn't see Williams as "visual white noise" to tune out, the Rev. Tom Long at the Candler School of Theology said. "He sees possibilities others don't see and acts on them and, wow, here we go."

Long said there's more to the story than the importance of treating people in need with compassion because miracles may happen. "His (Chenoweth) experiences expose what is already true about people, that even a homeless person who doesn't have a golden throat is nonetheless a child of God."

Casto, Chenoweth's pastor at New Life, said Chenoweth taught another lesson ith his encounter with a panhandler.

"We are all broken in some way, but we are also gifted in some way," she said. "Mr. Williams is a perfect example of that." □

— John Blake, CNN

United Methodists pray for peace in Côte d'Ivoire

Amid post-election violence, The United Methodist Church of Côte d'Ivoire is calling for prayer and trying to reinforce its ministries to the people.

The outcome of the West African nation's Nov. 28 presidential election is in dispute, leading to renewed tension in a country that has been trying to regain stability following a civil war earlier in this decade. Both the current president, Laurent Gbagbo, and his opponent, Alassane Ouattara, are claiming victory.

United Methodist leaders are urging peace and calm, and the unrest has driven many people to turn to the church.

The situation has been different in the government-controlled southern part of Côte d'Ivoire compared to the rebel strongholds in the north. A member of Angré United Methodist Church in the eastern section of Abidjan, in the south, noticed that Sunday attendance actually increased from an average of 800 to 1,500 people after the election.

"Many of the newcomers lived in the vicinity and they don't want to travel long distances to attend their ordinary service," he said. "In addition, many people felt the need to come and pray, particularly in situations like these."

About 600 kilometers north, in rebel-held Ferkessedougou, the average church service attendance decreased drastically for two Sundays, according to a source. The reason: many civil servants returned to their hometowns to vote and could not leave because of the unrest and lack of public transportation.

Methodist schools were closed in December because parents were afraid to send their children to school in the uncertain political situation. Paul Ohanson, general manager of the Methodist schools, reported that the winter break would be reduced to make up time lost and students would not be penalized.

"Our students should not suffer from this situation," he said. "We need to make any possible sacrifice to stick to our value of academic excellence."

Dabou Methodist Hospital, about 59 kilometers west of Abidjan, treated some of those injured in clashes over

the weekend of Dec. 4-5, following the announcement of the results of the second round of presidential elections. Six people were reported killed and several others wounded by bullets and machetes.

"We treated 23 injured people and hosted two deaths at our morgue," confirmed Alfred Degny, the hospital's director. "Since the hospital does not have an emergency service, we had to over-exploit the capabilities of the operating room where we treated all the major cases besides our traditional patients."

The United Methodist Church of Côte d'Ivoire is continuing to pray for a peaceful resolution of the situation

throughout the country. The church has an estimated 700,000 members and serves a wider community of about 1 million in Côte d'Ivoire.

Speaking to the press after a meeting of religious leaders for peace and reconciliation, United Methodist Bishop Benjamin Boni recognized that the "greatest battles are won on knees," referring to the need for Christians to kneel on the ground and ask God to help.

"We don't have any human enemies. Our enemies are Satan and the demons," Boni said. "We must, therefore, reach out to each other in our neighborhoods and show them love and peace." □

— Isaac Broune, a United Methodist communicator in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

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Change the World's first-year success leads to 2011 event in May

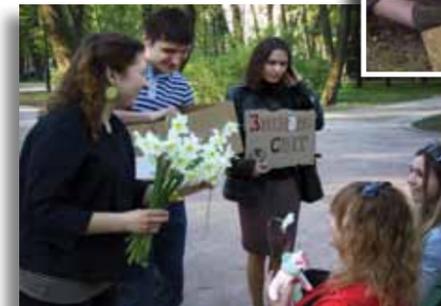
More than 100,000 people from some 1,000 churches united with a common purpose over a 48-hour period: to make a world of difference in ways both large and small. United Methodists from 13 countries and every state in the United States energetically worked to build community locally and fight malaria globally during Change the World weekend last April.

Congregations at local churches rolled up their sleeves and took to the streets to feed the hungry, aid the homeless, visit the lonely, and more. From stocking food pantries and cleaning school grounds to washing cars and renovating homes, people of faith reached out to a world outside the four walls of their own churches. They did it with work crews, talent shows, candlelight vigils, picnics,

sleep-outs, food drives, etc.

This year's event will be held May 14-15.

The Change the World event was created as part of the Rethink Church campaign by United Methodist Communications in partnership with the



(Above): Members of Bartlesville First UMC in Oklahoma held a community garden work day during Change the World event in 2010. (Left): Members of L'viv UMC in Ukraine "Change the World" by passing out flowers and toys on the streets.

United Methodist Publishing House and Imagine No Malaria. The concept for Change the World originated with the Rev. Mike Slaughter, lead pastor at Ginghamburg Church in Tipp City, Ohio, and author of *Change the World: Recovering the Message and Mission of Jesus*.

"What we have discovered through our radically missional focus on changing the world is that people truly want to be part of something bigger than themselves ... they just need to be asked," said Karen Smith, director of communications and global initiatives for Ginghamburg Church.

"You throw out the challenge. Give them the opportunity. And they're going to go for it," she said. "And they find out in the process that their own lives are just as much or more transformed than those they are serving."

The 150-member congregation at Faith United Parish in Fitchburg, Mass., is one of the many congregations that took up the challenge. During Change the World, they worked with the local state college to paint and fix up an aging middle school in their community. The transformation included refurbishing an inoperable historic theater in the school that is once again being used

for student productions.

"For us, Change the World was significant because we partnered with others in the community and were able to do far more together than we would have been able to do on our own," said the Rev. Justin Hildebrandt.

To aid churches in planning and promoting Change the World events, United Methodist Communications produced international resources in 10 languages, sermon starters in five languages, and advertisements in three languages. E-mail blasts spread the word. Facebook posts told the stories. Tweets kept the ball rolling. Local news headlines heralded hometown events. And a Google Earth map regularly lit up with the location of churches, districts and conferences as they signed on to commit to making the world a better place.

"The Change the World campaign has been a wonderfully amazing meeting point for vision and ministry," said Neil Alexander, president of the United Methodist Publishing House. "It links God's abundant love and hunger for justice with our calling to live simply so others may simply live." □

— Diane Degnan, United Methodist Communications

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Lake Junaluska names new executive director

Dr. John "Jack" L. Ewing Jr. is the executive director of Lake Junaluska Assembly, Inc., the conference and retreat center located in the mountains of western North Carolina. Ewing began his new duties on Jan. 1, replacing the Rev. Jimmy L. Carr, who retired after a decade of leadership at the assembly center.

Ewing was formerly executive director of the Foundation for Evangelism, also based at Lake Junaluska.

"I am excited about the opportunity to build on the good work of those that have gone before me. Lake Junaluska is a special place, and together we will make it an even more special place for many more people," said Ewing.

Ewing comes from a family of United Methodist pastors. His father, maternal grandfather, father-in-law, grandfather-in-law, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, daughter and son-in-law were or are United Methodist pastors. He has degrees from Asbury College, the University of Kentucky and the University of Minnesota. Ewing has served on the faculty of South Dakota State University.

He also served as president of two United Methodist institutions of higher education: Dakota Wesleyan University and Mount Union College.

More information about Lake Junaluska is available at <www.lakejunaluska.com>. □

New executive director Jack Ewing, in front of the assembly center's scenic lake.



Young pastor's message: consume less so the world has more

When she was a teenager, Anne Williamson remembers wearing a T-shirt with a picture of a rhinoceros on the front. It was her way of making a statement, "This is an endangered species."

"I intentionally wore it as a way of saying, 'this is important to me,'" said the now 29-year-old. "I was proud I was wearing something that conveyed a passion of mine — a respect for animals."

Nowadays, Williamson is no less passionate about the earth and all its inhabitants. In fact, some would say that she's a role model for green living. Whether she's "repurposing" old cereal box liners into doggie waste bags, devising ways to eliminate junk mail, equipping her household light sockets with energy saving CFL bulbs, or keeping close watch on her carefully controlled electric thermostat, Williamson practices what she preaches about consuming less so the rest of the world will have more.

"This is something I've always felt deeply about," she said. "My most profound moments with God have always been in nature ... it's been the way I've always connected with God. I started to feel like we were slowly killing off that connection by the way we are living and consuming."

"This wonderful home — Earth — that God has given us is a real gift and it feels so sad to me that we are destroying it for creatures, and for humans, too. And when I started thinking about the way I was living, I realized it wasn't sustainable and it grieved me. I knew I had to change."

As the years passed and her faith grew, Williamson began to question

more and more about what it means to be a Christian and care for the environment.

"I've always felt a need to align my faith with how I live," she said. "What does it mean to be a Christian and think about the environment? To think about ways I am consuming? To think about what it means to be a good steward of the earth? What does it mean to be a creature among creatures?"

Williamson is Pastor of Discipleship at a radical new Chicago church called Urban Village Church. (Urban Village Church was started by two United Methodist pastors in the summer of 2009.) When it comes to caring for



Anne Williamson tries to live out her message of green living in many ways, including driving a car that consumes less gas.

the environment, she says the staff and congregation are "still figuring it out," but are working hard to be ecologically conscious from pulpit preaching to everyday practices.

"I think the whole issue with the environment

has given us an opportunity to grow closer to God and to each other," she said. "It forces us to recognize we share one planet. We are one people, and not just people, but one Creation."

"We have all this stuff surrounding us. We're worried about our stuff. We're cocooned by our stuff. We work really hard so we can get more stuff. But, if we could let the accumulation of stuff go, we could jump off the hamster wheel and begin to live life in fuller ways. Ways that remind us, remind me, how connected and intertwined we all really are. How much we need each other — and not just our family and friends — but even the stranger we've never met. I believe that's the way God designed our world to be." □

To the Editor



Letters & Commentary

Christianity and gun control

In the wake of the horrific massacre in Arizona on Jan. 8, there are calls to renew restrictions, some of which lapsed when Congress permitted the federal assault weapons ban to expire in 2004, on certain types of weaponry, particularly the high-capacity magazine used by the Arizona shooter.

Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY), whose husband was murdered in a 1993 rampage on the Long Island Railroad, plans to introduce such a measure in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) of The United Methodist Church has released a statement suggesting support for such a ban: "The gunman used a weapon bought legally, but if the ban on assault weapons that unfortunately lapsed in 2004 had remained in place, then the 30-round clip he used would have been illegal. Yes, the gunman still could have inflicted a tremendous amount of harm, but it would have been dramatically reduced."

In a 2008 resolution to General Conference, the GBCS stated, "No appeals to individual autonomy are sufficient to justify our church's ignorance of this threat."

This is in stark contrast to Christian Second Amendment absolutists, who not only believe that the Constitution guarantees an individual right to carry a gun, but that God does, too.

Last summer, Herb Titus, a lawyer for the Gun Owners of America, whose executive director, Larry Pratt, says he is a "biblical Christian," told me that the Second Amendment isn't just about "firepower," but "you have to see it in its spiritual and providential perspective."

For that story I wrote last summer, just after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that state and local law cannot infringe on the right to bear arms, Titus cited the "totalitarian threat" posed by President Obama. People need to be armed, he said, "because ultimately it may come to the point where it's a life and death situation."

Titus, who filed an *amicus* brief on behalf of the Gun Owners of America, an organization which claims 300,000 members, told me that "the ultimate authority is God." "[I]f you have a people that has basically been disarmed by the civil government," he added, "then there really isn't any effectual means available to the people to restore law and liberty and that's really the purpose of the right to keep and bear arms — is to defend yourself against a tyrant."

Gun Owners of America contends that no regulation of gun ownership is constitutional, assault weapons bans included. Something to watch if McCarthy's bill is introduced will be how legislators react to any organized religious support of the ban, and what kind of religious language and imagery Gun Owners of America-supported members of Congress use in opposition. □

— Sarah Posner, associate editor of Religion Dispatches, and author of God's Profits: Faith, Fraud, and the Republican Crusade for Values Voters

Maintaining tradition versus attempting to be 'cool' examined

The January edition of the *Advocate* provided a most interesting juxtaposition of articles on the rub between maintaining a traditional, biblical faith system while attempting to be "cool" to the masses.

On one hand, Brett McCracken's article, "The perils of 'Wannabe Cool' Christianity," [pg. 30] talks mainly about obsessive efforts to stay current such as pastors wearing skinny jeans, quoting Lady Gaga and using sex-themed shock tactics to lure people back into church. Just several pages earlier, however, are two articles about the growing efforts to welcome previously defined deviances into the sanctuary. One article gives a forum to one of the very few transgender pastors in the UMC [pg. 24]. The other discusses the struggle of conscience by bishops who wish to promote same-sex unions [pg. 25]. The position of Foundry UMC in the District of Columbia was cited as an example of a congregation wanting to perform same-gender marriages consistent with new Washington, D.C., laws.

In many ways these two articles prove Brett McCracken's point that attempting to maintain "Wannabe Cool" Christianity cannot be sustainable. Such issues as sexual identity are the current fad, but one that may just as quickly fade away. At one time smoking was wildly popular and never criticized in our pulpits. Today, United Methodist Church conferences are passing resolutions attacking smoking while hinting at efforts to legalize drug use. Global warming was once the craze, while today that fad has been replaced with climate change.

These many issues are in reality political in nature and have no place in our theology. Our bishops and pastors should concentrate on preaching the word of God and making disciples of Jesus Christ. Naturally when they stray from this mission and try instead to be "cool Christians," they will sometime find that being one with God may make them less than popular.

Being one with God does not mean following every passing fad and supporting every protest. As the 27-year-old McCracken wrote, "If we are interested in Christianity ... it is not because it's easy or trendy or popular. It's because Jesus himself is appealing, and what he says rings true. It's because the world we inhabit is utterly phony, ephemeral, narcissistic, image-obsessed and sex-drenched — and we want an alternative."

This is a message that needs to be heard by every bishop and every pastor. □

— Kevin Sabo, Worship Chair, Annandale UMC



Local Church



Central UMC, Richmond District, now has more than 30 youths each week participating in its youth ministry. These are not children of the members of the church, but young people from the neighborhood. The church is working hard to be relevant within the neighborhood through block parties to meet people and social programs to help people. They even put in a dog park so that folks without yards have a safe place to exercise their pets. Pastor Tom Sweat and church members also drive a bus to help folks get to and from ministry activities.



In December, **Central UMC**, Hampton, entered its first float entry for the Hampton Holly Days Parade. A team of church members worked throughout November and the first part of December to build and assemble the float, which was titled, *From the Stars to the Seas, Jesus is Lord*. Central Hampton's float won first place in the non-commercial float division.

As a joint charge conference project during 2010, **Jackson Street, Fairview and Court Street United Methodist churches** in the Lynchburg District prepared approximately 30 bag lunches and provided beverages once a month for the Narcotics Anonymous group that met at Jackson Street's Williams Center.



On Thanksgiving, before sitting down to dinner with their own families, members of **Court Street UMC**, Lynchburg District, delivered cooked turkeys with all the trimmings and bags of non-perishable food to 10 needy families in the vicinity of the historic downtown church. Two of the church's youths are pictured bagging food items for the families. The church also presented each family with a Bible.



United Methodist Women (UMW) of **Andrew Chapel UMC** in Montross each year sponsors a class at Cople Elementary School. Once a month volunteers go to a first grade class and listen to the students read one-on-one, a joy for the children and the UMW members alike. At the December visit, members presented each student in the class with a stocking cap knitted by the Busy Bees of Andrew Chapel. Pictured: the children wearing their new hats, UMW members Vinny Parry, Peggy Jones, Bettie Lou McGinness, Evalyn Sanford and teacher, Mrs. Feamster.

Fredericksburg UMC recently installed a new Cross & Flame United Methodist logo on the exterior of its new building (pictured here, at night). The church Building Committee began acquiring and selling property back in 2000 for the construction of a columbarium, church park and most importantly, a multi-purpose addition. While the church has been using its new structures for more than a year, it was not until the week of Thanksgiving that the new Cross & Flame arrived from Orlando, where it was designed and fabricated.



Fairlington UMC, Alexandria District, moved toward an "alternative Christmas" by encouraging several different ways to recognize loved ones



with "gifts that keep on giving." For the Sundays leading up to Christmas Day, a Christmas market was held in the Fellowship Hall, with gifts from Ten Thousand Villages made available for purchase. Ten Thousand Villages sells wares made in developing countries and pays the craftspersons/artisans a fair price for their goods. Others in the congregation purchased Society of St. Andrew Christmas cards, each of which guaranteed 600 pounds of produce given in the card recipient's name. The crowning achievement of the congregation had to be the pledging of more than \$17,000 to Heifer Project International. That amount will purchase more than three arks of livestock to be given to families in developing countries. Pictured is a representation of the livestock given. Each of the individual animals was colored by a child in Fairlington's Sunday school classes.

TRIBUTES

MARGARET ANN BURTON

Margaret Ann Burton, beloved lifetime member of Wesleyan United Methodist Church, Alexandria District, passed away Sept. 25, 2010, after a long illness. She had served in many capacities, including delegate to Virginia Annual Conference, lay leader, United Methodist Women president and Sunday school teacher. She never knew a stranger and was known for her welcoming smile.

She is survived by her husband, Wilber W. Burton; sister, Dorothy Lee Jeffries; four children; seven grandchildren; and a great-grandchild.

TRIBUTES are published on a space-available basis. Rates are 60 cents per word. The maximum acceptable length is 200 words; thus the maximum charge is \$120. Longer tributes will be returned for editing by the persons submitting them. **THERE IS A MINIMUM CHARGE OF \$60.**

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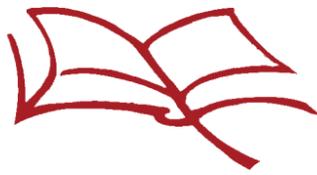
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Living the Word



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Christian White has been an ordained deacon in the Virginia Conference since 2009. He attained his Master of Divinity degree with a concentration in Education from Duke Divinity School in 1998. His specialized ministry is urban education where he has served as both a teacher and an administrator in parochial and charter schools in Washington, D.C. His secondary appointment is Fairlington United Methodist Church, where he occasionally assists with worship. He resides in Alexandria with his wife, Kasey, and two daughters, Taryn and Sadie.

February 6, 2011

Who are you?
Mark 8:27-9:1

On the way to Children's Choir one night, my 6-year-old daughter asked, "Why is Jesus important?" I paused for a moment.

I have always loved the way that children know how to get right to the point.

In an odd reversal of the teacher-student protocol of Jesus' time, Jesus asks the question to his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" The disciples answered as expected: John the Baptist, they say. Elijah, some say. Others say, a prophet. Mark then writes this: "He asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are the Messiah.'" (Mark 8:29, NRSV).

Identity in God's narrative matters. As we live our story in the Kingdom of God, our identity as characters in that story makes a difference as to how the plot unfolds. And, we all have both a public and a personal identity, as Jesus wisely shows. As for me, I am a son, a brother, a husband, a father, an uncle, a nephew, a deacon, a neighbor, a teacher, a friend.

But then there is the real me. How would my innermost circle describe me? I am hopeful they would say, loving, compassionate, humorous, and other good things!

When I first answered my daughter's question, "Why is Jesus important?" I explained that Jesus was important because he was the Son of God. I narrated the identity of Jesus as a healer, a preacher, a leader. I told her that Jesus died for our sins, so that we could live in God's House forever.

But as the question lingered with me over the days, I realized the real

question she was asking was, "How do I live my life in a way that shows Jesus is important to me?" Obviously, Peter got it right: Jesus is the Messiah! But do I live as a follower of that Messiah? Do I live in such a way that I show how Jesus is important?

This is the question that unsettled me. And, it is why Jesus rebuked his followers not to share his Messianic identity. Living the narrative of Jesus the Messiah takes a life of joy and sorrow. It is hard work. But, it is our calling as the people of God.

Ask around – who do people say that you are? Make them, through your life, say: that person is a Christian! Look at what they do! □

February 13, 2011

Skiing in the Alps
Mark 9:2-13

A few years ago, my wife had a business trip to Switzerland and asked if I wanted to come along. She wanted to go to Interlaken, a popular ski area in the Swiss Alps so that she could ski on some REAL mountains. I thought about it for a minute and said, "Sure. But do they have 'bunny slopes' in the Alps?"

"Of course, they have 'bunny slopes' in the Alps," she confidently replied to me.

I know what you are thinking. Yes, I was naïve. Of course, there are NO "bunny slopes" in the Alps.

I went anyway – sat on the train that went straight up the side of the mountain. We got off at the top, looked around (what a sight!), and adjusted our gear. My wife took off skiing. I yelled to them, "Where are the 'bunny slopes'?" My wife yelled back, "Just follow us!" And so that is what I did.

For the next six hours, I fell down the side of the Alps. It was long and ugly.

That was my mountaintop experience. It was the glory of the Alps. It was the painful falling down off the mountain. But you know what? I was transformed into a really good skier!

Jesus transfigures on his mountaintop experience. God speaks, "This is my beloved, my Son; Listen to Him!" (Mark 9:7, NRSV). Jesus is in all of his glory!

James, John and Peter witness the Transfiguration. They stumble through the event. Confused, amazed, confounded, awed. They hear God's voice! They don't know what to do. Again, they are confronted with Jesus' identity; an identity that upsets their relationship with him. Their world is turned upside down. Their lives are shaken up. They come off the mountain changed. Different. With a powerful understanding of who the Messiah really is.

Let this Transfiguration upset your world too. Come to it with all of your senses – see the bleached white coat, feel the presence of Elijah and Moses, hear the voice of God, touch the Holy ground – taste the goodness of the Lord! Let the mountaintop experience fill your Spirit, and when you get to the valley and live in God's Kingdom, live like it matters. Live knowing that Christ the Messiah has come for you and all of us, and serve the other with all of the vigor and life that this good news brings. □

February 20, 2011

Our potential
Mark 10:35-45

Here, in Mark, we find James and John pulling Jesus aside and asking for reservations at the best table in the Kingdom – one at his right hand and the other at his left hand. Jesus does not rebuke them but teaches them (and the other disciples who get upset with James and John).

When I read this, I immediately get on my high horse when it comes

to James and John. Look at them, I think. How dare they ask Jesus if they can sit with him at his throne! Who are they to ask such a privilege?

Many of us, if we had been with Jesus, would have been jockeying for the good seats too. We all want the best seat in the house. We all want to be sitting next to the host.

But, again, Jesus does not rebuke them, he teaches them. He says, "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Mark 10:38, NRSV).

Jesus replies to their request gently and lovingly, like the great teacher and leader that he is. Why does Jesus take this approach? It is because of what he sees in them. When James and John ask the question, Jesus does not look at them and see what they are not, he sees what they could be; he sees their great faith and desire to follow him to the end; he sees their longing for something more; he sees their *potential*.

This is part of what servant leadership is. Seeing what could be in the other and offering to them what *you* have so they might become greater. Offering your gifts to God together so that our lived faith is more rich and full and beautiful.

This is how we live like Jesus matters, through the lenses of potential and faith; through the eyes of what the others are, not what they are not. It is then that we are able to live to our own potential – the potential that God has given us (which is often far greater than the belief that we have in ourselves!). Let us live with imaginative faith, so that we can lead as servants bringing light and hope and faith to the world. □

February 27, 2011

Your first sentence
Mark 13:14-27

This past Christmas, I wrote a letter to my father. It was part of a family tradition developed in recent years in our effort to enrich our family's celebration of Christ's birth.

As I began writing, there were lots of things I wanted to say, but I did not know how to start the letter. I often have this problem. How do I begin? I am this way especially since I have been spoiled and delighted with the way that John Irving opened his critically acclaimed novel *A Prayer for Owen Meany*. It has been argued as one of the greatest opening sentences in all of 20th-century American literature:

"I am doomed to remember a boy with a wrecked voice – not because of his voice, or because he was the smallest person I ever knew, or even because he was the instrument of my mother's death, but because he is the reason that I believe in God; I am a Christian because of Owen Meany."

In a special edition copy of *A Prayer for Owen Meany* that was published 13 years after the original, Irving writes of this first sentence, and his methodology for writing first sentences generally. He comments that he never writes the first sentence of a novel until he knows exactly what happens at the end of the novel. And that, actually, he most often writes the last sentence of the novel first. It's an interesting approach if we think about our life as narrative.

However, in a deeper consideration of the first sentence of *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, and more important here in this reflection, is what Irving says about this particular sentence:

"What makes the first sentence of *A Prayer for Owen Meany* such a good one is that the whole of the novel is contained in it."

Mark's "Little Apocalypse" contains Jesus' reflections about end times. He leaves the disciples, and us, with more questions than answers. When and what will it be like are the most frequent questions. But Jesus tells his disciples not to worry. He tells them all of that will not matter. Stay calm. Continue to do what I have called you to do.

We know the ending already. Jesus tells us what is coming. We know of the apocalypse. What Jesus is telling us is to *write our own first sentence*. What will your first sentence say? □



Clergy & Diaconal

Deaths

Fran Blankenbaker, widow of the Rev. Wilmer A. Blankenbaker, died Dec. 23, 2010.

Eva Priddy Robertson, widow of the Rev. James L. Robertson, died Jan. 3, 2011.

Mary White "Georgie" Cash, widow of the Rev. Van E. Cash, died Jan. 12, 2011.

Robert J. Robertson Jr., father of the Rev. Rob Robertson III, died Dec. 22, 2010. Rob is pastor of Charity UMC in Virginia Beach.

Wallace B. Robinson, father of the Rev. Burton Robinson, died Jan. 4, 2011. Burton is pastor of Old Bridge UMC in the Alexandria District.

Shirley Houff, mother of the Rev. Michael Houff, died Jan. 4, 2011. Michael is superintendent of the Staunton District.

Deloris Dunavant, mother of Janene Pennel and mother-in-law of Bishop Joe E. Pennel Jr., died Jan. 9, 2011. Bishop Pennel was episcopal leader of the Virginia Conference from 1996 until his retirement in 2004. The Pennels reside in Franklin, Tenn.

Agathe von Trapp, aunt of the Rev. Elizabeth "Tizzy" von Trapp Walker, died Dec. 28, 2010. Tizzy is pastor of the Richmond Charge (Calvary, Hopewell and Oakland UMCs) in the Rappahannock District.

Wanda "Sam" Perkinson, administrative secretary for the Petersburg District, died Jan. 10, 2011.

Births

The Rev. Ashley Abarca-Mitchell and David Abarca announce the birth of their first child, **Megan Christine Abarca-Mitchell**, born Dec. 23, 2010. Ashley is associate pastor at First UMC, Charlottesville.

Gianna Theresa Smith was born Jan. 5, 2011. Gianna is the daughter of Danielle and the Rev. Matthew G. Smith. Gianna is sister to 5-year-old brother, Nicholas. Matthew is pastor of St. Thomas UMC, Haymarket – a satellite congregation of Manassas St. Thomas UMC in the Alexandria District.

Eliot Thomas Robinson was born to Christopher and Katie Robinson Jan. 14, 2011. Eliot is the first grandchild of the Rev. Burton Robinson and his wife, Carole. Burton is pastor of Old Bridge UMC, Woodbridge, Alexandria District.

Honors

The **Rev. Ray Buchanan**, Stop Hunger Now's co-founder and president, was named 2010 Tar Heel of the Year by *The News & Observer* (Raleigh, N.C.). He was selected for this honor in recognition of his "success as a nonprofit entrepreneur whose work has saved thousands of lives and improved tens of thousands more," according to the article.

An ordained United Methodist minister from the Virginia Conference, Buchanan is fueled by the vision of a world without hunger and has dedicated himself to helping those in the greatest need. After an 18-year career as the founder and co-director of the Society of St. Andrew, a Virginia-based domestic food relief organization, he co-founded Stop Hunger Now in 1998 as an entrepreneurial model for providing rapid, cost-effective responses to international crisis situations. Buchanan writes about his life's work on *The Face of Hunger*, the official blog of Stop Hunger Now.

"I am truly honored to have received this award," said Buchanan. "It is a reflection of the compassion and commitment of Stop Hunger Now volunteers, donors and staff here in North Carolina



Buchanan

and around the United States toward the goal of ending hunger in our lifetime. I thank them and share this honor with them. I'm looking forward to continuing to work with our supporters and partners to create a world without hunger."

Buchanan received numerous awards in recognition of his humanitarian efforts, including the University of North Carolina at Wilmington Alumnus of the Year award, the Caring Institute National Caring award, the National Association of Christians and Jews Humanitarian award, the Maxwell House "Real American Hero" award, the North Carolina International Human Rights award, and the International Affairs Council's Citizen of the World award.

The Tar Heel of the Year is selected by the newspaper's editors to recognize the leadership and service of individual North Carolinians.

At the Annual Educators' Banquet last fall, which is sponsored by The Resource Center located in Richmond, the **Rev. Judy FaGalde Bennett** was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award for the leadership she continues to give the center as its executive director. Bennett is a retired elder in the Virginia Conference. Ordained in the New York Conference, she had nearly 20 years of experience as pastor in and around New York City. Bennett is adjunct faculty in Christian Education at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University in Richmond.

The Resource Center provides Christian resources to United Methodist churches across the Virginia Conference, along with other churches in the metro Richmond area. For more information, visit the Web at <www.resourcingchurches.com>.



Bennett

Bishops' Beloved Community Statement



Charlene Payne Kammerer
Bishop of the Virginia Conference

Grace and peace in the name of Jesus Christ! The bishops of The United Methodist Church feel compelled to renew our commitment to work to become the beloved community of Christ. We, as a Council, desire to deal with the crucial and critical issues of racism and the sacredness of every human being. Therefore, as the spiritual and administrative leaders of the church, we issue an urgent call to the whole people of God, lay and clergy: to speak the truth in love in public and private discourse, to act with compassion, and to work for peace and justice in the world.

In order to transform the world, in faithfulness to Christ's command, we must model respect and kindness and extinguish the fires of animosity. And thus, we call on all churches to engage in genuinely honest dialogue and respectful conversation, such that others who observe the action in our lives might declare, "See how they love each other!"

As people of faith, we are charged to build the beloved community because Christ has broken down the dividing walls and ended the hostilities between us. Yet, we continue to build walls in the church and in the world which separate us and cause our hearts to grieve.

On the continent of Africa and in many parts of Asia, including the Middle East, the Philippines and India, the historical and contemporary impact of colonialism, racism, tribalism, hostility and religious persecution continue to affect human relationships.

The challenge in the Philippines is to break down the barriers between mainline society and tribal peoples. Meeting this challenge will accord equal rights such as land possession and free education for all.

By nature, colonialism in Africa thrives on hostile, violent and demeaning human relationships. Racism and tribalism cut deep wounds, not only in one's flesh, but also on the soul and the spirit. These gaping wounds leave permanent scars.

In Europe, racism is a growing issue, with political parties openly working against minority, ethnic and religious communities. Prejudice is overtly articulated in the media, in politics and even in churches.

Throughout the United States, there has been a rapid escalation of violence related to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religious preference. This escalation includes personal attacks, bullying and vicious and criminal acts of violence to the mind, body and spirit of persons. These actions diminish life for the victims and their families, as well as for the perpetrators and the whole community. They are the ultimate insidious and irreverent attacks on the sacredness of God-given life.

Across the world, terrorism – as demonstrated by wanton acts of violence against innocent persons – leaves a trail of loss of life, limb, home and community. Discriminatory treatment is widely practiced against immigrants and refugees everywhere around the world. All of this creates a universal atmosphere of suspicion, mistrust and fear. Often this is the result of religious persecution of various faith communities, including Christians, which threatens the capacity or hope for reconciliation and peace. The church is called to decisively and directly counter these acts and engender and empower a "perfect love that casts out all fear." (1 John 4:18, NRSV) Through intentional action we *can* "overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:21, NRSV)

It is incumbent upon the bearers of this vision of a beloved community to do whatever we can today to hasten the day of a just world with peace. This is our hope, our prayer and our commitment.

Charlene Kammerer

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Advertising/Tributes

Tributes are published for a fee on a space-available basis. Rates for advertising and Tributes are available upon request.

Local Church News

Items should be typed (preferably sent via e-mail) or printed legibly, no more than 100 words, and of conference-wide interest. Complete names of individuals, churches, and districts should be included. Because of space limitations, the *Local Church* section prohibits news items related to church members' birthdays (of less than 100 years), wedding anniversaries, receptions for moving and/or retiring pastors, photos of traditional Christmas trees or Easter trees/crosses, and any item over two months old (please no more than one item per issue). Color photos 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.

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