



February 2018

Advocate

**“Life
of the
party”**

Celebrating
Heart Havens
month



Connecting with the

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

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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 prohib-
its news items related to church members'
birthdays (of less than 100 years), wedding
anniversaries, receptions for moving and/or
retiring pastors, photos of traditional Chris-
mon trees or Easter trees/crosses, and any
item over two months old. Color photos
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PILLOW TALK

**Madeline Pillow**
Editor

Christmas 2017 has passed and our minds are likely to be on New Year's resolutions and diets as I write this editorial.

It was our pleasure in the Advocate office to have Heart Havens as this month's feature. In order to prepare, I, along with our videographer Nick Ruxton, visited two homes in Richmond—the Mary Beth Graff and Garber Morris houses—to meet with residents. I also talked with Sarah Wilkinson, communications and volunteer manager for Heart Havens, for the feature article.

I hope you'll read the article to learn what is in Heart Havens' future and simply to learn about the organization if you have never heard of its important ministry.

In my interview, Sarah talked about the residents' hopes for the new year which we could all add to our 2018 resolutions as well.

Sarah shared about Heart Havens' person-centered model that focuses on an ability rather than disability. Often those without disabilities think of those with disabilities only in one way. But if that is not true for persons without disabilities, why should it be true for those with disabilities?

In 2018, residents of Heart Havens have their own dreams and hopes for the new year; for example, Barry wants to learn to play golf.

As Sarah said in our interview, these dreams of the residents are just as worthy of further exploration and worthy of support as anyone else's dreams.

The world in 2018 can use as much of that mindset as we can put forth. In your corner of the world, are you valuing people and their worth no matter their backgrounds, disabilities or political affiliations?

After all, God finds worth in each of us. Are we finding that worth in others? It's my hope in this new year that we don't put issues before people. It's my hope that we remember to find our own worth in meaningful things like in people, charity and love. 🍷

**Luke, a resident at
Heart Havens, enjoys
going to the State Fair.***Madeline C. Pillow***Worthy
of...**

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Cover: Lyvette is a resident of a Heart Havens home.

Above: Jasmine, another Heart Haven resident, celebrates her birthday. Photos courtesy of Sarah Wilkinson.



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COMMENTARY

How can we be a miracle?

By Eric Vaudt

When writing this article, Advent was just around the corner, and I was preparing a sermon series from Mike Slaughter's book *Christmas Is Not Your Birthday*. The first chapter in the book is titled "Expect a Miracle," and he talks about how we can be a miracle for others throughout the seasons of Advent and Christmas.

So, how can we be a miracle for our brothers and sisters who live in a Heart Havens house?

I never had a direct connection to Heart Havens, but when I was beginning my ministry on the Elizabeth River District I served as chaplain of the district United Methodist Men (UMM) which had always been involved with Heart Havens. I've since had the joy of introducing two churches to Heart Havens. Neither had heard of this important ministry. The response? They could not wait to get involved with Heart Havens, from organizing a supply drive to doing hands-on work. Those who work in these areas receive joy from giving of their time to be a miracle for our brothers



The Rev. Eric Vaudt is pastor of Fox Hill Central UMC, York River District.

and sisters with intellectual disabilities.

When we work for the glory of God, we receive blessings and joy and, when it comes to Heart Havens, the staff and residents also receive blessings and joy. We don't have to be able to replace a deck or a door to be involved. We might not be the best painter or landscaper or have any skill that might contribute to the upkeep of a Heart Havens home, but one thing we all have is the love of God poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). When we share that love, we become a miracle worker.

Why get involved with Heart Havens? The better question is why not? We, as Christians, are encouraged to share the love of Jesus with others and that includes our brothers and sisters living in a Heart Havens home.

However, giving in love means sacrifice — giving something else up to be involved in something that **can** make a difference. Isn't that what Jesus did for us? When it comes to Heart Havens just giving some of our time can make a world of difference and then, because we feel joy through that sacrificial act of love, we will be spurred on to other acts of love. We not only bring joy and happiness into other lives, but we glorify our living and loving Lord as well.

Get involved! Go visit a home and spend time with our friends (but call ahead first!) Organize supply drives, have a meal with them or simply make a financial donation. These are just a few ways the church, YOU, can be involved and instead of expecting a miracle, we just might be a miracle for someone else and we might also be blessed! Being involved with Heart Havens is a win-win scenario. You can either take my word for it or just go and do it. You won't regret it! 

— The Rev. Eric Vaudt is pastor of Fox Hill Central UMC, York River District.



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



EVENTS

FEBRUARY

UMVIM Team Leader training Feb. 3, Crums UMC, Berryville

Team Leader Training is required for first time United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (VIM) team leaders, but all interested persons are welcome to attend whether leading a team or not. This training will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Crums UMC in Berryville, Va.

The Virginia Conference offers sessions in different parts of the state. Invite your friends! There must be eight participants to offer this training. There is a no registration fee, though you are encouraged to make an offering to the host church to cover the cost of lunch. Doors open 30 minutes prior to training. Continuing Education Units (0.5 units) will be provided for those needing CEU certification. Pre-registration is required. Register by sending an email to Cindy Ingroff in the conference office (CindyIngroff@vaumc.org) with the following information: name, email address, phone number, church, district, dietary restrictions and if you are pursuing the training for CEU units. Registration deadline is noon on the Monday before the training event. For more information, contact Forrest White at VirginiaUMVIM@gmail.com.

UMVIM Team Leader training Feb. 10, Burke UMC, Burke

Team Leader Training is required for first time United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (VIM) team leaders, but all interested persons are welcome to attend whether leading a team or not. This training will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Burke UMC in Burke, Va.

The Virginia Conference offers sessions in different parts of the state. Invite your friends! There must be eight participants to offer this training. There is a no registration fee, though you are encouraged to make an offering to the host church to cover the cost of lunch. Doors open 30 minutes prior to training. Continuing Education Units (0.5 units) will be provided for those needing CEU certification. Pre-registration is required. Register by sending an email to Cindy Ingroff in the conference office (CindyIngroff@vaumc.org) with the following information: name, email address, phone number, church, district, dietary restrictions and if you are pursuing the training for CEU units. Registration deadline is noon on the Monday before the training event. For more information, contact Forrest White at VirginiaUMVIM@gmail.com.

MARCH

Lay Servant Academy Mar. 2-4, 4H Center, Wirtz

Lay Servant Academy is about equipping laity (those who are not clergy) to carry out the discipleship-making mission of the church.

Courses are open to anyone and each course is designed to help those serving the local church learn more about leadership, personal faith development and of The United Methodist Church. The courses are also designed to support those seeking to become Certified Lay Servants and Certified Lay Speakers. Visit www.vaumc.org/2018LSA to get detailed information and registration. For more information, contact Beth Christian at bethchristian@vaumc.org or 804-347-5999. 📞

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

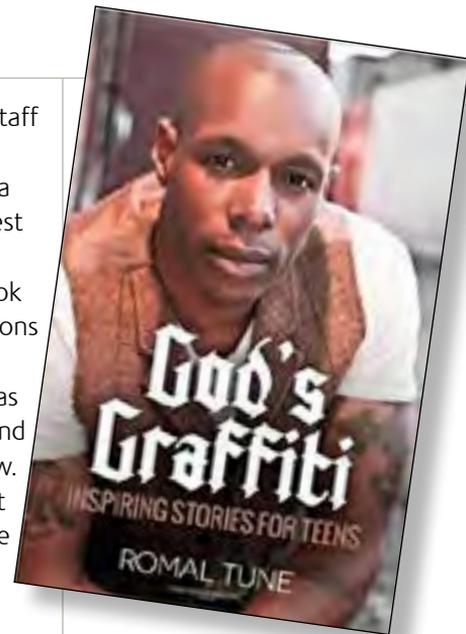
SNIPPETS



Additional news associate joins conference Communications office

The conference Communications office welcomed Forrest White as a part-time news associate on December 4. White is a well-known and well-respected individual in the conference from his work as United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) coordinator to his role as Long-term Recovery Manager for the February 2016 tornado recovery. Conference Director of Communications Madeline Pillow said she is excited about

White's addition to the staff as well as the increased capacity to cover Virginia Conference news. "Forrest has a strong background in journalism, and we look forward to his contributions to the news coverage in the *Advocate* magazine as well as on our website and social media," said Pillow. You can find White's first article for the conference on pg. 12.



Conference Convocation on Race and Reconciliation scheduled for April 14

Bishop Sharma Lewis' Convocation on Race and Reconciliation is

scheduled for April 14, at Annandale United Methodist Church. The keynote speaker for the event is Romal Tune, a full-time speaker and author. Tune cultivates purpose and passion that equips people to heal the wounds of their past, bravely offering his own journey as a case study of raw transparency and refreshing honesty. He guides audiences through the process of identifying and embracing their unique destinies. Committed to living the six-word sentence that defines his life, "he helps hurting people find healing."

The convocation will offer opportunities for participants to explore further the calling as disciples to life-long learning regarding social and cultural issues such as racial division, justice and Christ's call to reconciliation and peace.



Calling21 internship applications due Feb. 1

The Calling21 internship program is a summer experience for college students who are discerning God's call on their life. Each intern will receive a broad exposure to church life and leadership with their host church which may be located in a small town, a suburb or a city environment anywhere in the Virginia Conference. The process of the internship allows interns to ask questions and learn about various aspects of ministries, both clergy and lay. The internship dates are from June 3 to Aug. 7.

Go to www.vaumc.org/calling21 to learn more about the internship or if your church is interested in hosting an intern. For additional questions: Contact the Rev. Allie Rosner Bass, chair of the Calling 21 team, at allierosnerbass@vaumc.org or the Rev. Lindsey M. Baynham, associate director for the Center for Clergy Excellence, at lindseybaynham@vaumc.org or 804-521-1160.



Lake Junaluska addresses racist behaviors

Lake Junaluska's Board of Trustees released a letter in October 2017 addressing racist behaviors of the organization in the past. The trustees shared, "Lake Junaluska has not shown love or even acceptance of some of God's children during some of its 104-year history. In particular, people of color, specifically African Americans, were not loved or even welcomed during a significant part of our history. As we reflect on this history, it is clear that Lake Junaluska not only allowed

individuals in the majority culture to participate in racist behaviors but the organization itself created and maintained restrictions, written and unwritten, that were racist. As leaders of Lake Junaluska Assembly, Inc. in 2017, we acknowledge this failure to do as we have been called by God to do; to love ALL of God's children. For this we repent."

The trustees also share in the statement actions steps that they commit to "implement actions to eliminate" any forms of racism. Read more of the statement on the conference website at www.vaumc.org under "Conference News."

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Christ UMC holds event for veterans

By Madeline Pillow

Christ UMC in Fairfax Station held a “Listen 2 Veterans” event on Nov. 9, 2017, as a way for people, whether associated with the military or not, to learn more about the needs of veterans returning from war.

The Rev. John Speight, pastor of Christ Church, said events like “Listen 2 Veterans” provide a learning opportunity for their pastors, staff, Stephen Ministers and laity seeking to support veterans.

“Many wonderful men and women who have served in our nation’s military come home from combat situations emo-

tionally wounded,” Speight said. “Events such as ‘Listen 2 Veterans’ offer to our congregation and our surrounding community opportunities to learn how we can be in ministry to those who are struggling with emotional pain.”

The church places a high importance on the well-being of veterans through their military ministry as it serves an area with a large military population. Its congregants are largely active or retired military.

Bill Shugarts heads up the church’s military ministry which began in 2008. The church is also the lead church of the Northern Virginia Military Ministry Outreach (NVAMMO), a coalition of churches.

Shugarts said the church has excellent relationships with Fort Belvoir’s

care systems and did what he called “innocent things” to form those relationships, from decorating at Walter Reed during Christmas-time back in 2009-2011 to inviting the Fort Belvoir personnel to join them for Wednesday night dinners.

“Christ Church is blessed by its location to this military regional complex,” Shugarts said. “The beauty of a church is you’ve got lay leaders and systems in these churches like Stephen Ministers who can help.”

“Listen 2 Veterans” event

The church was asked by the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Clinic of Fort Belvoir to hold a listening session for those with traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress

Photos courtesy of Bill Shugarts.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Bill Shugarts heads up the military ministry at Christ UMC in Fairfax Station.

disorder. It took a couple years to for the ministry to organize the event.

“The military’s viewpoint is that listening helps in addition to the other care processes that they use. Listening is part of it too,” Shugarts said. “Anybody can do these listening sessions, and churches are set up to do it better than anybody.”

Shugarts also cites the H.E.R.O.E.S. Care program* as another avenue alongside Stephen Ministers which is open to churches.

The event featured Dr. Paula J. Caplan who has completed over a decade of work with military persons and veterans transitioning back into society. She is the author of *When Johnny and Jane Come Marching Home: How All of Us Can Help Veterans*.

Through her work, Caplan has developed proven listening methods to help combat veterans from all wars.

“Dr. Caplan’s research shows that when a veteran returns from a combat situation and struggles emotionally with the events of war, they are far too often immediately labeled with PTSD and prescribed psychotic drugs to dull the pain and their memories. Little opportunity is given to veterans to talk through and process their feelings,” said Speight.

“She’s of the main proponent that not every veteran walking around is a mental health issue,” Shugarts said.

Shugarts said Caplan believes in the power of support groups for veterans, with individuals who actually listen to the veterans rather than try to talk over or downplay their experience. There are support groups in the military, but the downside of those can be the stigma attached to them, Shugarts said.

The event began with the video “Is Anybody Listening” followed by a Q&A portion with Caplan. It was open to the public and attended by community and church members, as well as veterans.

Christ Church’s Military Ministry

Moving forward, the military ministry at Christ Church will work with Stephen Ministers to advertise that they have persons trained to listen to veterans.

“It’s about the effective power of listening to a veteran,” Shugarts said.

“Many people believe that nothing of value happens unless they attempt to ‘fix’ those struggling with PTSD, and that is not true,” Speight said. “Listening to, praying with and allowing our veterans to talk is the beginning of healing.”

Shugarts mentioned that veterans often become more talkative about their war experiences as they grow older.

“To a veteran, no matter the circumstances, the dangers were extreme. Regardless of what they did, the stories are there, and the reality is that Veterans Day and Memorial Day are two times that you talk about this. You induce that and you encourage those conversations, and that’s what we do as a military ministry,” Shugarts said. 🇺🇸

*H.E.R.O.E.S Care stands for Homefront Enabling Relationships, Opportunities and Empowerment through Support.

– Madeline Pillow is the editor of the Advocate.

Dr. Paula J. Caplan, author and researcher, works with veterans transitioning from the military back into being civilians.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Two churches gather together for unity, racial reconciliation service

By Madeline Pillow

Woods UMC and Shiloh Baptist Church in South Chesterfield partnered to hold a joint worship service on Nov. 26, 2017, with the theme of “Unity of Christ the King.” The service focused on race in contemporary society.

The Rev. Andrew Ware, pastor at Woods UMC, said that both he and the Rev. Marcus Leggett, Shiloh Baptist’s pastor, started

planning the event about a month after the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville.

They said they believed bringing together their congregations of different racial backgrounds would start a dialogue of racial reconciliation. Woods UMC is predominately a Caucasian congregation and Shiloh Baptist is predominately African-American.

In planning the worship service, Ware said both pastors wanted the theme to be centered on unity. He reflected on Bishop Lewis’ statement following the August events in Charlottesville.

“In her statement, she talked about one of the best ways to move toward racial reconciliation is not necessarily the rallies or the protests but even just gathering together and educating one another,” said Ware. “We thought Christ the King Sunday, Nov. 26, gave us a good opportunity to talk about Christ’s role in the Kingdom of God and how Christ calls us to present ourselves and ‘behave’ in the kingdom of God toward our Christian brothers and sisters.”

The planning included blending the two churches’ order of worship and music. At the service, members of both churches acted in roles of ushers and greeters as well as readers.

Ware said holding this

kind of service felt necessary following the events in Charlottesville.

“It just really broke my heart to see that level of hatred and evil in the world,” Ware said. “I wanted to tell myself that it’s not present in my community, but I knew that if I was being honest, I couldn’t. As we try to grasp what it means to move beyond racism in this country, one of the first things we can do is show each other we’re not bad people and we have respect for each other and to preach the message that Christ calls us to unity.”

“Racism is not the only problem in the world, but it’s one we can work on.”

Moving forward, Ware said he sees work continuing between his church and Shiloh Baptist, perhaps not simply on Sunday morning. The churches have discussed starting a Bible study together in addition to having the Rev. Leggett preach at Woods UMC.

For the church universal, Ware said he sees this work as connected to the UMC’s baptismal vows.

“I think about our baptismal vows and how we’re



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

called to work against the evil and injustice in this world,” Ware said. “That was the whole thing going through my mind as Charlottesville was happening. In a post-Charlottesville world, as we begin to think about what’s important for us, it shows us that racism is not the only problem in the world, but it’s one we can work on.”

Ware said that this work of a post-Charlottesville involves invitation.

“How will we move past it? We invite all of the voices to the table, we allow them to be present in all of it,” Ware said. 🍷

– Madeline Pillow is the editor of the Advocate.



Left: The Rev. Andrew Ware and The Rev. Marcus Leggett.

Below: The unity service focused on racial reconciliation at Shiloh Baptist Church in Chesterfield.

Photos courtesy of Andrew Ware.



EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY



Starting the 2018 Bible Reading Challenge

By Forrest White

In my childhood days, I was a “what if ...” thinker, so I worried about all kinds of things that seem silly now. I remember looking to the night sky and thinking “What if Martians invade?” Of course, some thoughts weren’t so silly. I am an only child. “What if something happens to my parents?” That was a frightening thought. One day,

wearied perhaps by my worries, my dad made a simple statement, one that helped me as a child and still helps me as an adult. “An idle mind,” he said, “is the devil’s workshop.”

As adults, our minds also may be preoccupied with idol thoughts when we chase what society deems important or with worries of the world where news, often bad, reaches us in moments via social media and notifications on our smart phones.

How can we make a lasting change?

We can heed the urgent advice of the Apostle Paul, who wrote to the church in

Rome: “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:2)

In one of his many fine books, Rabbi Harold Kushner writes: “I recently ran across a story about a Native American tribal leader describing his own inner struggles. He said, ‘There are two dogs inside of me. One dog is mean and evil. The other dog is good. The mean dog fights the good dog all the time.’ Someone asked him which



EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY

dog usually wins, and after a moment's reflection, he answered, 'The one I feed the most.'"

There is no better way to feed the good dog inside us or to reprogram our minds than through a daily Scripture reading plan like Bishop Sharma Lewis' 2018 Bible Challenge.

Here are some ways to make daily reading a habit:

- 1) Pick a time and do your best to stick to it daily. Make the time non-negotiable.
- 2) Pick a place that's comfortable and quiet for reading and reflection.
- 3) Undergird this journey with prayer. "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people." Ephesians 6:18
- 4) Ask someone to be your accountability partner. Don't simply ask one another if you've done the reading. Make sure to ask questions like, "How did God speak to you through today's Scripture?" or "What word or phrase stood out to you today?"
- 5) Be persistent. Some books of the Bible are more easily navigated than others, but remember ... "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 16-17
- 6) Try hard not to skip a day. But, if that happens, don't beat yourself up over it and, whatever you do, don't give up! Fortunately for us, life and Bible reading challenges aren't like a spelling bee – one

mistake and you're out.

- 7) Embrace technology. There are some terrific apps for your smart phone. They are easy to navigate and offer multiple translations and even commentaries.
- 8) If you prefer to read from a print version of the Bible, begin with a new one. We mark Bibles because they speak to us at that moment in time. Allow God's living word to speak to you anew in this season of your life.
- 9) Listen up! Consider an audio Bible to supplement your reading.
- 10) Enjoy the journey! Don't look at it as something you have to do, but embrace it as something you want to do. 🐶

– Forrest White is a news associate with the conference Communications office.

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Living and thriving



Danny enjoying games at the Apple Blossom Festival.
All photos in the feature courtesy of Sarah Wilkinson.

at Heart Havens



Hearth Havens was founded from a question. A woman went to her pastor. She had a disabled son and had been caring for him at home. She knew the time was coming when she couldn't do it anymore. At the time, the options available from the state and private operations were not satisfactory, and no one could blame her. Her question to her pastor was, "Where will my son live when I am gone?"

This is how the group homes known to us today as Heart Havens (HH) began. Now there are seven HH homes around Virginia, and the future of the organization is focused on providing individualized support.

"Home is your church, the park you like to go to, it's Starbucks on Saturday morning, it's your book club, your bowling league, all the myriad things that make our lives full. It is true for the folks Heart Havens supports too," said Sarah Wilkinson, communications and volunteer manager. "This is a way to make sure we're empowering people to thrive. In many ways, that means choice."

Learn more about Heart Havens in the feature to follow.



A community to live in: Heart Havens

By Madeline Pillow

Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Luke 14:12-14

Chris and Charles enjoying the flowers on a sunny day.





The Heart Havens organization considers care for people of utmost importance according to Sarah Wilkinson, communications and volunteer manager.

“The community we’re called to live in goes a lot further than just the church walls,” Wilkinson said. “When we make sure people have the choices in where they live and choices in the support they need, our communities are a lot more livable for everybody.”

Since opening their first home in 1999, Heart Havens has changed greatly in its mission to empower adults with developmental disabilities and allow them to live and thrive in their local communities. But through everything they do, Medicaid remains a necessity for the costs of support and care. Presently, Wilkinson said, anything and everything to do with Medicaid could change quickly depending upon governmental changes.

Join in advocacy with Heart Havens

Currently the Medicaid waiver affects 11,000 people who could live with Heart Havens but are currently in limbo, said Wilkinson. She urges advocacy, especially from the church, in the areas of allocation of waiver slots and implementation of changes to ensure that families are being respected and heard at the federal level. Medicaid covers the cost of direct support professionals for Heart Havens, as well as reimbursements for the care they provide at a set rate.

“It’s calculated at \$10.50 an hour,” Wilkinson said. “That is the hourly rate Medicaid assumes we’re paying the staff we have. Now, \$10.50 an hour is not a whole lot of money. If you’re someone who has been with your employer for any length of time you probably don’t want to be making the same amount as when you started.”

Heart Havens caretakers are asked to fill a number of roles in their job that include personal chef, friend, driver, nutritionist, medical tech and social activity planner.

“We ask so much, and we can pay so little,” Wilkinson said. “There’s a very high turnover in this field. That’s going to be true no matter who the provider is. Folks who might work in our homes can go work in assisted living facilities and make more money. This makes it even more important for us that we can offer bonuses and little raises here and there to make sure we’re remaining competitive in a very competitive market.”

When Heart Havens can maintain consistent staffing through competitive pay, residents receive better support.

Medicaid also doesn’t pay for the maintenance of any

of the group homes. In 2016, a new roof had to be put on two of the homes. In addition, the homes go through household appliances faster than an average family. Medicaid also doesn’t pay for any of the activities for the residents to be integrated into their local communities.

Simply put the organization depends on donations to cover the unfunded gaps. Contrary to a widely-held belief in the conference, Heart Havens does not receive money through apportionments.

“We are definitely second-mile giving,” Wilkinson said. “Medicaid is like a piece of Swiss cheese. We have to cover those holes. Churches are crucial for the support we receive.”



Chris is Heart Havens’ resident Disney expert. His favorite event each year is “Disney on Ice.” He also loves to dance.

February is Heart Havens month

The theme for Heart Havens Month 2018 is “Life of the Party,” based on Luke 14:12-14. Additional Scriptures this year are Galatians 3:26-29 and Isaiah 58:6-12.

“When you include Heart Havens, when you include people of all abilities, when you celebrate and embrace who they are, you’re going to be blessed right now and you’re going to find they’re often the life of the party,” said Wilkinson.

Resources for Heart Havens month can be accessed at www.hearthavens.org.



(Continued from previous page.)

Heart Havens' future

"The Commonwealth wants to see people in as independent a situation as they can handle. For a lot of people, that's going to look like apartments," Wilkinson said.

There is some uncertainty about what that could look like for people currently receiving services.

"We think there's probably going to be a place for group homes with all the changes coming, but that role is going to be quite a bit smaller than it has been up until now," said Wilkinson.

"Heart Havens is now actively working to modify their license to begin to offer in-home services. Maybe they're living with a family member and we would come in and provide services they need so mom and dad or siblings are not doing that. It's not a 24-hour-a-day thing. If you have someone living with you who has a disability, you're doing some caretaking.

"It's not just caretaking. It's skill development. Eventual-



Jean likes to crochet and play music. Every Sunday she plays piano to open her Sunday school class at Calvary UMC, Stuarts Draft.



Phillip loves puzzles and plays T-ball in the Special Olympics.

Phillip

ly, people become more independent through our services, learning to do some of these things. It's support so people can be integrated in their community and develop some of their own interests away from their family. We all have that – even if we live in a family, there are things we like to go do by ourselves."

With an in-home license, Heart Havens would be able to expand whom they can serve and they would also be able to serve children as young as 8. Currently, the organization is only licensed for people 18 and older.

It is a long process to get this license, but an exciting one, Wilkinson said. This kind of license can lead to serving people in supported apartments.

More individualized care meets people where they are and with what they need, Wilkinson said.

As for Heart Havens' future, Wilkinson said she is excited to see people more integrated in the community.

"Ultimately everything comes back to wanting people to be more a part of their communities – not just living in a house they never leave and not living in a situation where the only other people they see are folks with disabilities," Wilkinson said. "When you ask someone to name their friends, there shouldn't only be people with disabilities on the list. You want people to have the breadth of the human experience, the depth of the human experience."

She also shared that welcoming someone with a disability into the life of the church is no different than welcoming someone without a disability.

This requires listening to the voices not currently at the table. Wilkinson used ideas about worship as an example. "If they're not open to all, if they're not welcoming, if they're not finding their place, then we aren't doing it right."

"Things happen in time. When people are embraced and welcomed, good things happen," said Wilkinson.



Being person-centered

“We look at the whole person. We look at a person’s ability rather than their disability,” said Wilkinson. “A person with a disability is still a person with all kinds of hopes, dreams and interests. No two of us are alike; therefore, no two persons with a disability are alike.”

Heart Havens strives to embrace people for who they are and to celebrate their gifts and talents.

“There’s no limit to what our folks can do,” Wilkinson said. “Sometimes they’re going to do some things with some modifications, and that’s okay. It’s about finding the way for people to do the things they want to do in a manner in which they’re going to be the most successful.”

A question that is asked of the residents at the end of each year is, “What would you like to try next year?”

For example, Barry wants to learn to golf in 2018.

How you can help

Heart Havens has seven group homes around the state,

with new programs piloted in Richmond. If you’re in a district with a house or anywhere near one of the houses, give Heart Havens a call. The organization would love to welcome you to a house and even more to arrange for their residents to visit your church for worship or events such as picnics, dinners, and concerts.

You can also invite a speaker from Heart Havens to your church to share more about the residents and the organization.

Volunteers are also welcomed in the homes for work days and maintenance. Youth groups can also get involved through pizza parties or paint nights.

“We are called to recognize people as our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are called to embrace people for who they are, to celebrate the gifts and talents they share,” Wilkinson said. “Think outside the box. Look around. Who have we not included? Who isn’t here that should be?”

To learn more about Heart Havens or to make a donation visit www.hearthavens.org.

– Madeline Pillow is the editor of the Advocate.

Life of the Party

Everyone has a place at God’s party, and God rejoices when people of all abilities are included in our churches and communities. Heart Havens empowers adults with a developmental disability to be the life of the party in communities across Virginia.

February is Heart Havens Month.

Will you join the party with Heart Havens?



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Devoted supporter shares deep appreciation for Heart Havens

By Forrest White

It's difficult to imagine finding someone with a deeper appreciation for Heart Havens than Steve Cunningham, who has been a devoted supporter of the Winchester home since long before it was even built.

As president of the Winchester District United Methodist Men (UMM), Cunningham helped lead the way with fundraising. Those efforts began in earnest in 1996. The home on Saratoga Drive opened in October 2002. The mortgage was paid off by the District UMM in January 2003.

The UMM and other supporters provided the house. The residents made it a home.

"Family," Cunningham said, when asked what comes to mind first when he thinks of Heart Havens. "Heart Havens becomes a second family to the residents and their families. They provide love and support just as if each resident was family."

He, too, has experienced the caring nature of the residents.

"I took my young son once to one of the fundraising events for the home," Cunningham said. "Now, every time I see Danny Smith he asks me, 'How is Zach doing?' Never fails. He always asks."

Now a member at Burnt Factory UMC, Cunningham has remained connected to the Heart Havens home by making sure the church provides direct support through monthly lawn maintenance and minor home repairs. (The Winchester District is a leading financial contributor to Heart Havens, Inc., as well.)

In addition, he encourages churches around the district not only to provide support to the home and its residents by visiting even if it's "just to say hello," but also to include them in the life of the local church.

While the residents often attend Kernstown UMC for worship because of its close proximity, they welcome the opportunity to participate in the life of other area churches.

"The Heart Havens residents just want to be treated as we often treat each other," Cunningham said. "Involve them in your church functions. They love to be a part of their



community and their community needs to be a part of their lives."

And when you make Heart Havens a part of your life – as a church congregation or as individuals – you'll become a part of the family.

Cared for and loved.

"Once after mowing the yard, I came into the home to visit and Charles was the only resident at home," Cunningham said. "Charles is nonverbal. During our visit Charles led me to the refrigerator. I got him a glass of water and he drank it."

"The next week when I mowed the yard and came in for a visit, Charles did the exact same thing. I got him his water and he looked at me. He was leading me to get a drink of water since I was hot and sweaty. He had a smile on his face as we shared a drink of cold water together."

Now, more than 20 years removed from the fundraising efforts to make Heart Havens Winchester a reality, Cunningham has a simple, yet profound way of describing it.

"Heart Havens is a ministry of love," he said. "Love provided to the residents and to those involved. I never leave the home without feeling God's blessings upon me from the love that I feel from each of them." 

– Forrest White is a news associate with the Virginia Conference Communications office.



"I am going to see Granny more and lose weight and be healthy."
-Rose



"I am looking forward to playing Special Olympics Basketball and going on more trips to the beach."
-Elizabeth



Share your goals for 2018!



"I want to go on a picnic with the butterflies in the garden. I want to walk on the beach and see the dolphins."
-Lisa



"I want to learn to play real golf on a golf course."
-Barry



LIVING THE WORD



The Rev. Shaun Smith is chair of the Commission on Disabilities, James River District Construction Consultant and Dendron Ministry Coordinator.

February 4

Exodus 16 – 18

Grumble, grumble, grumble

As pastors and leaders in our churches, we all too often hear the grumbling of our people and take it personally. Are they grumbling against us or against God? The big picture of what God is doing, has done and will do is apparent to many of us—however, the day-to-day walk of life doesn't always keep the understanding of God's greatness in the forefront of our thoughts.

I have a good friend who, from my viewpoint, sees God in everything all day long. At my best, I'm the same way, and some might even say the same thing about me that I do about her. However, I am not always "at my best."

Moses, called by God to lead God's people out of Egypt, did as he was instructed. The people were under oppressive rule, forced to do more with less and lived in horrific conditions as slaves. Having once been a favored people in this foreign country, they longed for a better life, and God, through Moses, made it available to them.

The Israelites had fled their captors. They had seen God's miracle of the parting the Red Sea and their tormentor's destruction at God's hand. Yet when the promised land wasn't across the next hill and the going got tough, they grumbled, even suggesting they would have been better off staying in Egypt. Moses was quick to point out that, when the people grumbled, they were not complaining to him or to Aaron, but to God.

God, ever loving, ever forgiving, heard their cries and provided for their needs, first with meat and bread, then with water. When Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, heard all God had done for them, he declared "...the Lord is greater than all other gods..." and "brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God." (Exodus 18:11-12) The big picture of what God had done was a powerful story when heard by an outsider.

I am "at my best" when I am in prayer daily and practicing the spiritual disciplines an hour or more each day. I am "at my best" when my prayer life includes not only asking God to be with, help and heal others, but also when I am

thankful for all God has done for me and those for whom I pray. I am "at my best" when I spend time at the end of my day to reflect upon my waking hours, see where I have sinned, repent and seek forgiveness. This leads to a better night's sleep, helps me to grumble less, helps me to hear others grumbling with a kinder heart and, most importantly, helps me see God at work in more things, more places and more people.

February 11

Exodus 36-38

God loves a cheerful giver

This Scripture tells of the building of the tabernacle and its furnishings. Early on in these chapters (Exodus 36:6-7), Moses tells the people to stop bringing materials as they had all that was necessary to build the tabernacle. In chapter 35 we learned that not everyone was required to give an offering, only those with a generous and willing heart (Exodus 35:5).

Prior to being called as a pastor I was a home improvements contractor and often wondered what I would do, as a pastor, with all the knowledge I had stored up during those 20 years of working on and building homes. Little did I know the plans God had for me! Almost two years exactly from the date I became the pastor of a three-point charge, I was called to disaster recovery ministry by the conference in response to the tornadoes that hit Virginia in February 2016. Having the knowledge of construction—not to mention the experience of leading short-term mission teams and numerous community service projects with people of all ages—I certainly had the skill set!

A good friend and mentor told me that my time as a pastor would make me look at the work differently than I had in the past. He told me I would not look at the work as a task to be accomplished, but as a ministry to be fulfilled—he was spot on!

During my time with the disaster recovery ministry, I was blessed to work with hundreds of people of various skill levels who came to serve God with all they had to give, regardless of their abilities. One Saturday a scheduled group



of about 10 people dwindled to two guys who knew little about construction. Having driven an hour to meet the “team,” I was initially disappointed, especially when I found out their skill level. Exhausted from an already long week of work, I was frustrated with the situation. But God gave me that little nudge that we are all familiar with, and fortunately I listened. We didn’t accomplish as much as I had hoped that day, but two men of God left knowing that, through serving this particular homeowner, they had served God. They also learned some home improvement skills they will be able to use the rest of their lives and pass on to their children and grandchildren. For me, I was fulfilling the ministry to which I had been called.

Tyndall’s Life Application Study Bible, New Living Translation, says this of Exodus 35:5-21, “God did not require these special offerings but he appealed to people with generous hearts. Only those who were willing to give were invited to participate. God loves people who give cheerfully.” (2 Corinthians 9:7) Our giving should be from love and generosity, not from a guilty conscience. Review what God has done for you. Has he blessed you with enough to meet your daily needs? Thank him, and then cheerfully give so others’ needs can be met. Learn the joy of giving wholeheartedly to God.”

Exodus 36:1 says, “So Bezalel, Oholiab and **every** skilled person to whom the Lord has given skill and ability to know how to carry out all the work of constructing...” (New International Version). God has blessed each of us with gifts and talents and wants us to use them to glorify His kingdom. when called—it is the least we can do!

February 18

Leviticus 16-18

A moral compass

In these Scriptures God gives clear instructions—on how Aaron is to enter the tabernacle and carry out the priestly duties (Leviticus 16) following the death of his sons Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10); why the Hebrews are not to consume blood (Leviticus 17); and unlawful sexual relations (Leviticus 18). God knew the Israelites had poor role models in the Egyptians, and they would be influenced by their predecessors in the land of Canaan. We all know, of course, they eventually had to learn the hard way through exile when famine and loss of wars was not enough to get their attention. Their moral compass was way off true north.

My dad asked me in frustration more times than I can remember “Why do you have to learn everything the hard way?!?!” My standard response was, “I don’t know.” It was a truthful answer. I really did not know. Like a loving parent, God did not want his chosen people to learn the hard way. God wanted them to know His way from the start. God wanted their moral compass pointed toward Him, and the rewards promised to Abraham would be given to them.

I grew up in a dysfunctional family with a history of alcohol addiction. It led to my becoming an alcoholic and spending the first 20 years of my adult life drinking. Sober now for more than 24 years, with a firm foundation in Christ, I can honestly reflect upon my life journey. Needless to say, my moral compass was WAY off as well. Getting sober led me to understand the need for a moral compass—still anywhere between west and east was close enough to north for me—it was an

improvement on heading south which I’d been doing most of my life.

As I grew in sobriety through the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) I learned to have a personal relationship with God. I turned my will and life over to Him and ridded myself of the pain of the past. My moral compass began to point more north, but I still had a long way to go.

It was several years before I truly accepted Jesus as my savior. I began to study the Bible and learn what it really meant to be a Christian. It is often said in AA meetings, “AA is a simple program for complicated people.” As a child in the church, being good all the time and trying to live a Christian life seemed too hard. No matter how hard I tried I always seemed to fall short. Being a Christian as an adult was seemingly too hard as well until I realized it is all about love.

In giving the guidance found in Leviticus 16-18 God is showing His love to His people. My favorite Scripture for a long time was Romans 13:8-10. In verse 10 Paul says, “Love does no wrong to anyone. That’s why it fully satisfies all of God’s requirements. It is the only law you need.” (TLB). If we do everything from a point of love we “fully satisfy all of God’s requirements.”

While the Romans verses remain some of my favorite Scriptures, I try keep things more simple today—love God (Matthew 22:37), love your neighbor (Matthew 22:39), and don’t judge (Matthew 7:1). This keeps my moral compass pointed toward God, the one true north.

(Con’t. on pg. 27: “LIVING WORD.”)

The Living Word devotions will coincide with the 2018 Bible Reading Challenge from Bishop Lewis. Find the February schedule on pg. 27. Find all 2018 readings at www.vaumc.org.

CLERGY & DIACONAL



DEATHS



The Rev. Lewis C. Armentrout Jr., 92, of Timberville, died Jan. 16, 2017, at Sentara RMH Medical Center in Harrisonburg. Armentrout began his ministerial service in the Virginia Conference in 1962 at Massanutten. He went on to serve in Clover Hill and West Brunswick. He retired in 1989. More recently he served the Fairview Church of the Brethren near Endless Caverns.

He is survived by his wife Helen and two daughters, Glenda Rader and Susan Miller. Four grandchildren and four great-grandchildren also survive. He was preceded in death by his son, William C. Armentrout.

Anita Moore Billingsley, 92, died Dec. 17, 2017, in Harrisonburg, Va. Billingsley was predeceased in 2014 by her husband of more than 65 years, Thaine. She put her family and her faith first. Anita was dedicated to The United Methodist Church, from her local congregation in Monterey, Va., to national boards, and the General Conference of the denomination. She served two terms as a member of the national United Methodist Board of Pensions, and she was active locally and regionally in the United Methodist Women. She also was lay leader for the Staunton District.

Born in Miami Beach, Fla., the only child of Clara Clark and Gordon

Moore, Anita spent most of her childhood in Georgia. She earned her bachelor's degree from Baker University in Kansas. After college, Anita worked as a teacher at a school sponsored by the Methodist Church in a small Kentucky community. She and her husband moved to Highland County, Va., in 1954. There, they raised their family and participated in many county activities until moving 15 years ago to Sunnyside Retirement Community in Harrisonburg. Among her passions were genealogy and nature. Billingsley had an affinity for wildflowers and birds, along with a tenacity for chasing away squirrels, cats and overly aggressive birds. She often took nature hikes. A birdfeeder was a constant in her yard. Survivors include three sons: Gary of Harrisonburg, Rob (Anna) and Kirk (Kim) of Monterey; and two daughters, Mary Anita Billingsley and Sarah Lyn Torres (Nola). In addition, she has six granddaughters, Carol, Leslie, Hayley, and Julia Billingsley, and Priscilla and Rosemarie Torres; and three great grandchildren.

Pam Rowley, sister-in-law to **the Rev. Glenn Rowley**, died in Dec. 2017. Glenn, who is the conference director for the Center for Justice and Missionary Excellence, presided at her funeral in Oklahoma Dec. 9, at First United Methodist Church, Mannford.

Jeffrey B. "Jeff" Bookwalter, 51, died Dec. 4. He is the son of **the Rev. Carol Bookwalter**, retired elder serving Bethlehem UMC, York River District. Bookwalter was a 1984 graduate of Poquoson High School and 1989 graduate of Virginia Tech. He worked for and was a proud member of the architecture firm PMA of Newport News and was a member of American

Institute of Architects.

Bookwalter is survived by his mother; brothers, Scott (Cheryl) Bookwalter and BJ Bookwalter; sisters, Valerie Bookwalter and Evonne (Mike) Dickey; a niece; several nephews; and many extended family members.

Catherine Gibbs Hicks died Dec. 3, 2017, following a brief illness.

A native of Culpeper, Va., she met her husband, **the Rev. Harold L. Hicks**, while in high school. Together, they served United Methodist churches in Culpeper, Lynchburg, Poquoson, Richmond and Fairfax, before retiring in Manassas. Hicks deeply loved people from all walks of life and her role as a preacher's wife allowed her to fully utilize her talents, sowing seeds of grace, hope and love into the lives of others.

She was most passionate about her strong faith and relished her roles as a wife, mother and grandmother. Providing a home, meals, comfort, and fun to her family was her greatest joy. A lifelong prayer warrior, she rose early each morning to pray for each family member individually. She enjoyed working with people and excelled as a medical receptionist for a large family practice.

In retirement, Hicks was a member of Grace UMC, where she served as a Sunday morning greeter for the 8:30 service. Until this year, she rarely missed a Sunday. She is survived by Harold, her husband of nearly 60 years, daughter Scarlett (David) Barbee and son Lee. Known as "Gigi" to her grandchildren (Raleigh, Matthew and Madison), she was actively involved in their lives and activities. She was a faithful friend and her memory will be cherished by several close girlfriends who were like sisters to her.

The Advocate strives to compile and share obituaries in this section through ClergyNet and LaityNet and as the office receives them. To make sure our staff publishes an obituary, please email to MadelinePillow@vaumc.org or mail to c/o Communications Office, P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058-5606.

Myra Lou (Creswell) Nine, 80, of Fountain City (Knoxville, Tenn.), died Sept. 27, 2017, due to complications from surgery. She was a member of Fountain City United Methodist Church and the Christian Homebuilders Sunday School Class. Nine retired after 18 years as administrative assistant and office manager of the Arlington District office of The United Methodist Church in Northern Virginia, but her main focus and interest was always her home and family. She was the special prayer warrior for her family.

Nine was preceded in death by the love of her life and husband of 52 years, Robert Nine; parents, Harold and Helen Creswell; and loving sisters, Betty Benson and Cherrie Turner. She is survived by her daughters, Lexi Gaber (David) and Marci Villanueva; son, Rob Nine (Donna); grandchildren, J.D. Gaber, Kelsey Katchmark (Stephen), Alex Villanueva, Jason Scott (Kerri) and Jaime Gray (Brian); great-grandchildren, Landon Gray and Peyton Katchmark; brother, Dick Creswell (Pat); special nieces and nephews and other extended family; and many special friends including Barbara Rogers, Dixie Bopp and Roz Irwin.

BIRTHS

Congratulations to **the Rev. Sean and Robin Gundry** on the birth of their son, **Jordan Lee Gundry**. He was born Dec. 3, 2017. Sean is the associate pastor at Gainesville UMC, Alexandria District. ☞

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FROM THE BISHOP



Chat and Chew 2.0

Dear Virginia Annual Conference,

By the end of January, I will have completed two sessions of the Bishop's Chat and Chew 2.0 hosted by the districts of Danville, Farmville, Lynchburg, Roanoke, Charlottesville, Harrisonburg, Staunton and Winchester. I want to thank Bethlehem United Methodist Church, Moneta, Va., and Verona United Methodist Church, Verona, Va., for hosting this event. I would also like to express my appreciation for all of the host churches that will provide excellent meals and hospitality during my visits this year.

The remaining Chat and Chews 2.0 are listed below:

February 17 – Eastern districts at Ebenezer United Methodist Church (Suffolk, Va.)

February 24 – Northern districts at Ebenezer United Methodist Church (Stafford, Va.)

I would like to thank Mr. Warren (Virginia Conference lay leader) and Sandy Harper for accompanying me during the Chat and Chew sessions.

This year, the purpose of the Chat and Chews is to provide lay and clergy an opportunity to engage directly in conversation on the work of The Commission on the Way Forward regarding unity and human sexuality.

This past November, The Commission on the Way Forward presented The Council of Bishops three models/sketches of the work done thus far.

These models/sketches are not in any order of priority; for further explanations, please review The Commission on a Way Forward website (umc.org/wayforward).



- ❖ **Model/Sketch 1 – affirms the current *Book of Discipline* language and places a high value on accountability.**
- ❖ **Model/Sketch 2 – is grounded in a unified core that includes shared doctrine and services and one Council of Bishops, while also creating different branches that have clearly defined values such as accountability, contextualization and justice.**

- ❖ **Model/Sketch 3 – removes restrictive language and places high value on contextualization. This model/sketch also specifically protects the rights of those whose conscience will not allow them to perform same gender weddings or ordain LGBTQ persons.**

After the models/sketches were presented to The Council of Bishops, the bishops recommended that The Commission do further study and work on all three models.

I would like to commend The Commission on a Way Forward for all of the prayer, study and work they have done for the past year. I would like to strongly encourage the Virginia Annual Conference to continue to pray for The United Methodist Church, The Council of Bishops and The Commission on a Way Forward. 🍀

Peace and Blessings.

Bishop Sharma D. Lewis

Bishop's Bible Challenge readings for February

February 1	Exodus 7-9
February 2	Exodus 10-12
February 3	Exodus 13-15
February 4	Exodus 16-18
February 5	Exodus 19-21
February 6	Exodus 22-24
February 7	Exodus 25-27
February 8	Exodus 28-29
February 9	Exodus 30-32
February 10	Exodus 33-35
February 11	Exodus 36-38
February 12	Exodus 39-40
February 13	Leviticus 1-4
February 14	Leviticus 5-7
February 15	Leviticus 8-10
February 16	Leviticus 11-13
February 17	Leviticus 14-15
February 18	Leviticus 16-18
February 19	Leviticus 19-21
February 20	Leviticus 22-23
February 21	Leviticus 24-25
February 22	Leviticus 26-27
February 23	Numbers 1-2
February 24	Numbers 3-4
February 25	Numbers 5-6
February 26	Numbers 7
February 27	Numbers 8-10
February 28	Numbers 11-13

(“LIVING WORD,” cont. from page 23.)

February 25

Numbers 5-6

Doubly blessed

Once again God shows His love for His people by giving them rules for right living. As a child in church, as a member of a youth group and as an adult returning to church, I had this thought, “How can anybody possibly follow all these rules?!” I did not see the Scriptures as God’s love, but rather as a bunch of rules I had to follow. God loved me through my alcoholism, and Jesus had called me to Him in a powerful way—I had to do my best to live the way God wanted me to live.

I returned to regular church attendance, got involved with the men’s group, went to Sunday school, and had a wonderful Christian wife. I began again reading the Bible and learned what Jesus was saying and putting this guidance to work in my life. Still, I could only see a bunch of rules to follow, and I was not doing a good job keeping them. I felt guilty. Repentance and forgiveness were things I did not fully grasp until

I attended an Emmaus walk. There, the depth of unconditional love really sank in, and the Scriptures started to take root in me.

Romans 13:8-10 (referenced previously) has been especially important in my growth. Paul, a very devout Jew and fully aware of the laws and the ways taught by God, sums up how to follow them—Love! Verse 10 concludes with “...love is the fulfillment of the law.” (NIV)

“Could it be that simple?” I thought; the Bible says so. It must be true. If we simply love, we’ll never break any of God’s laws. However, I am not Jesus and, while moving toward spiritual perfection, I will sin. The realization that this is not a curse but a blessing gave me peace. God’s grace is abundant, Jesus’ forgiveness limitless. I repent daily and ask for forgiveness—Jesus offered us this in Matthew 6 when teaching us to pray.

I do not have to worry about “all these rules.” I simply need to focus on loving God and my neighbors. Many people have prayed for me to be blessed (Numbers 6:24) and I have been. Through those blessings I have been blessed to pray that others may be blessed—I am doubly blessed. 🍀



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