



The Virginia United Methodist

January 2013

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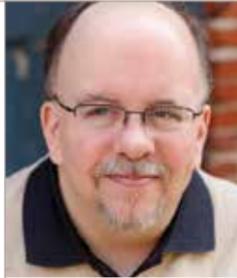
Advocate



The lay person as
SERVANT

2013 Ministry Grants of Virginia on pages 26-29

FROM THE EDITOR



Neill Caldwell
Editor

Willing
to be a
servant



It was just a few months ago that I watched in awe as Bishop Young Jin Cho knelt and washed the feet of a young girl as part of the celebration for the bishop's start of his term as our episcopal leader.

The foot-washing ceremony is not very common in church, because while it echoes what Christ did for his disciples on the last night of his life, it's not very comfortable for us. To have our feet washed by someone, especially someone we don't know well, takes us way out of our comfort zone. And to see someone we hold in a position of high esteem bend to wash our feet, is also not something we witness easily.

The prophet Isaiah foretold a "suffering servant," but that's not the kind of Messiah that the Jews in Jesus' time were looking for. The idea that the Messiah would stoop to wash another person's feet was unthinkable. Their Messiah would be an all-powerful king and military commander. That's why most rejected Jesus, a man who was comfortable on his knees washing the feet of his friends.

This month we feature servant leadership, in particular on the part of the laity of our church. It's said that 20 percent of a church's membership does at least 80 percent of the work. That statistic is probably true at the district and conference levels, too. We rely on a solid core of people to do the work of the church, those who are willing to say "yes" to serving on a committee, or co-chairing a specific initiative, or helping with an event.

But what of those members sitting on the sidelines, content to be in worship once a week, drop their offering envelopes into the plate and go home happily fed by the experience?

One of the things that happens when a local church sees its membership shrink is that the people remaining have to take on more jobs so that the work still gets done (which leads to "church leader burnout," which needs to be a topic for a future month). It creates a need for those who, perhaps, have been hesitant to say "yes" to step up and take on a job that, perhaps, someone else has been handling. It creates opportunities for us to come out of our comfort zones and become servant leaders.

Thankfully, there are lots of opportunities for learning those roles. There are district training days held annually, plus many conference-sponsored events and other special trainings. I was blessed to be a class leader at the Lay Servant Academy at Blackstone last year. This year's event will be held Feb. 22-24, and will be a great opportunity to learn about being a servant of others.

So you there! Yes, you in the checkered shirt! Get off your seat and help us out! We need you! 🍷

Neill Caldwell

Connecting with the



Virginia Advocate

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Local Church News

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

Letters

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

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The wrong side of history?

By KIRBY GRIFFIS

Homosexuality is a major issue these days in national politics and in the politics of our church. At the General Conference of The United Methodist Church this past May, there was a proposal made to change the *Book of Discipline* to say that homosexuals are “people of sacred worth” and that church members disagree about “whether homosexual practices [are] contrary to the will of God.” That was defeated by a vote of 54-46 percent.

The language in the *Discipline* on the subject thus remains unchanged, and will remain unchanged until at least 2016, the next meeting of the General Conference: “The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.”

This debate at General Conference occurred in the middle of a national debate over the issue, with laws and resolutions in multiple states in favor of and against gay marriage and with politicians and others taking public stands.

It is quite possible for a Christian to be opposed to various rights for homosexuals, and quite possible for a Christian to be in favor of those same rights: that is obvious from the fact that there are many Christians

on both sides of the debate. My main concern about the debate is that it seems to me that there are many who have taken a biblical position against rights for homosexuals without doing the hard soul-searching necessary before one imposes political restrictions on other people. (I focus only on one side, because I think that Christians who favor rights for homosexuals are a lot more aware of the possible contradiction in their views, and thus more likely have thought carefully about it.)

What counts as “a biblical position” is one of the tricky parts of this debate. Many seem to believe that it is self-evident that the Bible condemns homosexuality. In fact, there is quite a lot of debate about that, and particularly about whether the New Testament – as opposed to Mosaic purity law – condemns homosexuality. I won’t try to repeat any of that debate here. You can look it up, and should, if you are going to vote on the issue anywhere. As always, be especially careful to study the views that disagree with you. This is very important because having a Bible verse or two in your pocket should be very little comfort when dealing with civil rights. The Bible was quoted extensively in support of slavery and against miscegenation, for example. Paul – the only New Testament source on homosexuality – also repeatedly exhorts slaves to obey their

masters, and in Philemon returns a runaway slave to his master. These verses, and others, were cited from pulpits as evidence that slavery was ordained by God.

I think that there is no doubt that those who today oppose civil rights for homosexuals will soon find themselves on the wrong side of history. By that I mean that they will be judged by the children of today in the same way that we judge those who stood against the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s: as ignorant, prejudiced and hateful. That judgment will not be fair or nuanced, and will lump everyone together, whether they acted in good faith and from love or in fear and disgust.

Of course there is nothing wrong in itself in being on the wrong side of history. The wrong side of history may, nevertheless, be the right side of a moral issue, and anyone who is part of a Church that stands in opposition to the world will often oppose this or that aspect of popular culture. But your views on issues must be able to sit comfortably in your heart, not in the comfortable climate of today, but in the scathing judgment of tomorrow. And if your views do not stand on a far more enduring foundation than the current majority view in your community, tomorrow’s judgment will be harsh indeed. ♡

—Kirby Griffis is Lay Leader at Cameron UMC in Alexandria



Firewalled into ineffectiveness

I’ve gotten several e-mails regarding more work by the church’s Judicial Council. First, the ruling that the General Conference’s work regarding the reforming of the guaranteed pastoral appointment is now null and void; and more recently, the involuntary resignation of Bishop Earl Bledsoe, decided upon by members of the South Central Jurisdiction based on their evaluation of his ineffectiveness, is also now “null and void.” Both are citing church law and a lack of proper due process.



Commentary by
SKY
McCRACKEN

I am not enough of a jurist to say one thing or another about church law, and I am sure that the Judicial Council is acting within its purview and the letter of the law in its rulings. So blaming the Judicial Council for our woes is probably misplaced. However, its role in these recent events is making one thing abundantly clear: as a denomination, we have firewalled ourselves into impotency regarding transformation. It will be hard to live out our United Methodist mission of “making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” when we cannot even transform ourselves. In short: we have painted ourselves into an ecclesial organizational corner!

Reinhold Niebuhr made the following observation about organizations: after a period of time, people become less passionate about their original mission and become more self-serving and self-protective. Self-preservation then kicks in and replaces the original purpose and mission.

Sound familiar? Methodism – a reform movement – needs to be reformed. We’re right back where Wesley started. Father John wanted to do a 180, but instead we have completed a 360. We have worked so hard to guarantee the protection of a free pulpit in United Methodism that we have made it virtually impossible to exit a pastor or a bishop. While there may have been good reasons in the past to have enacted this, can we defend it now, in light of diminishing resources and evaluative tools? It seems clear – and now with legal precedent – that once elders are ordained and received into full connection, they are virtually “firewalled” and untouchable, regardless of their effectiveness.

While I don’t know (or need to know) the specific reasons why Bishop Bledsoe was found ineffective, I seriously doubt it was a decision arrived at lightly and without cause. If a jurisdictional episcopacy committee cannot exit an ineffective bishop, I doubt that any other body will be able to exit a pastor. We have firewalled the system so it cannot be changed, and furthermore now have established legal

precedent for such in the eyes of our Judicial Council.

I fear this hastens certain disaster for The United Methodist Church unless change comes quickly. Continuing to have a Judicial Council rule against needed (and agreed upon) changes in structure will only frustrate everyone and waste precious time and resources that are now at a premium. Why is it so hard to admit that what we have is not working nor is adaptable for use in the 21st century? Are we so willing to preserve what we have at the cost of becoming a dead, lifeless sect?

Before anyone says, “This is the way we’ve always done it,” think again – a Judicial Council is a rather new innovation to Methodism, created by the Methodist Episcopal South in 1934, because we wanted to be less “episcopal” and more “democratic” and remove questions of legality from our bishops. If Father John Wesley or Bishop Asbury wanted to make a change, they just made it. We Americans aren’t very good at absolute authority, but we presently have the opposite of it in the UMC – we have an episcopacy shackled to lead, but convenient to blame. It’s a great system to play armchair quarterback in, but it doesn’t make disciples. We’re the Pharisees all over again – law is taking the place of faith.

There are some very hard decisions coming for the people called United Methodists, and they involve more than just pensions, health plans and guaranteed appointments. Are clergy willing to sacrifice knowing that promises formerly made by some in the Church (many who are now dead) may not be able to be kept? Is the gospel worth that? Are laity willing to step up and become partners in disciple-making, not employing their preacher to do it for them but, rather, being empowered by their baptism and faith? Will clergy and laity partner together to do ministry as a whole, rather than be at variance with each other in role and deed? Will we be able to come together as a denomination, dissolve the present unworkable structure and adopt a new wineskin for a new wine? Or will we go the way of the Lutherans and Presbyterians and split into smaller factions? Will such smaller factions be able to sustain themselves? What would that mean for our brothers and sisters across the world (we are not just an American church)? I am certainly not trying to limit these questions to either/or – the problem is much more multi-faceted than that. But of this I am quite sure: the system will not self-correct!

A few years ago Lyle Schaller noted that we may need to do a denominational restart: dissolve the Constitution, the present *Book of Discipline*, and start from scratch. I think he’s right. It will be painful. It will involve compromise and faithfulness. It will only be done in an atmosphere of prayer and trust. But I fear the alternative is to be a loose association of churches where only the strong in numbers and

(Continued on page 32: “Firewalled”)

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Q&A with John Fuller, new executive director of Virginia United Methodist Pensions



John W. Fuller was hired as executive director of Virginia United Methodist Pensions, Inc. (VUMPI), effective Nov. 12.

What attracted you to this position?

For someone with my background, this position truly is the opportunity of a lifetime. For the majority of my working career, I have been involved in insurance, benefits or finance in one way or another, so I believe that my employment experience has given me the technical aptitude needed for this role. A much more

significant consideration, however, is the impact that my faith has on my excitement about this position. As a lifelong Methodist, I can say without hesitation that United Methodist pastors have had an immeasurable impact on my life and my faith. To the extent that I can use my work experience in a way that helps pastors do what God has called them to do, then I feel like I'm fulfilling the role that God envisions for me.

We can see how the rising cost of health care is having a major impact on our conference budget and apportionments. With that in mind, what are the major challenges ahead for Pensions and Health Benefits?

Unquestionably, the most significant challenge facing health benefits is the rapidly-rising cost of health care. Over the past couple of decades, increases in health care costs have outpaced overall inflation, and health care is consuming an increasing share of our economy. It likely won't be long before health care represents 20 percent of our nation's Gross Domestic Product, meaning that 20 cents of every dollar spent in the U.S. will go toward health care. There is a serious need for innovative approaches in both the delivery and financing of

health care, and that is a key challenge and opportunity for people involved in the design and administration of health plans.

On the pension side, there are similar challenges associated with factors like economic weakness and poor market returns, as well as the need to maintain programs that are sustainable for many, many years. Occasionally, these challenges could require adjustments in the programs in order to enhance their long-term viability. Our hope and expectation is that we can continue to maintain pension and health care programs that are both sufficient and sustainable, while maintaining a thoughtful awareness of the impact that these programs have on the conference's budget and the resulting apportionments.

Will 'Obamacare' affect us? (Other annual conferences seem to be using it to save money... Is that an option?)

The Health Reform law (often referred to as ACA, PPACA or "Obamacare") creates challenges and opportunities for all health coverage programs like ours. The law includes new requirements for both employers and individuals, and will drive many changes throughout the health care coverage marketplace. To a large extent, the law's

greatest impact will be on the availability of health care coverage, and many people will gain access to coverage that they don't have today. While greater availability of coverage is certainly a favorable outcome, the rate of growth in health care costs is unlikely to be impacted in a similarly favorable way. As a result, the challenge of controlling health cost growth will remain firmly intact.

One of the opportunities created by the law involves the potential to shift health care coverage from one sector of the market to another. For example, employers with workers who become newly eligible for Medicaid (due to the law's expansion of Medicaid eligibility thresholds) could encourage employees to enroll in Medicaid, generating savings for the employer. Other employers may consider directing employees to state or federal health care exchanges, rather than sponsoring health benefits programs for those employees. Changes like these must be based on a detailed analysis of many factors, including health care costs, government subsidies and penalties. While short-term strategies could result in short-term savings, I anticipate that the health reform law is just the latest chapter in a story that will play out over many years, and any cost savings strategy should be viewed in the context of its potential

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impact over the long term, rather than just the near-term savings.

How do you feel about the conference's effort to improve clergy health? How will that effort affect our costs?

Programs designed to improve the health of their participants, of which our conference's Wellness Ministries is an example, have emerged as a very important strategy in overall health benefits programs. Looking back a few decades, the idea of "managed care" gained acceptance as a way to discourage excessive use of health care services, and to help reduce overall costs. To some extent, ideas like these are effective, but we also recognize that generally discouraging care is not an intelligent long-term strategy. Wellness programs encourage a level of care utilization that makes more sense.

One of the truly great things about wellness programs is that they can go way beyond the relationship between a doctor and her patient. Wellness programs can create incentives for things like daily exercise, paying attention to food consumption, even time spent in prayer. When someone is properly encouraged to do things that will result in better health and well being, the result can certainly include favorable financial outcomes, but it can also lead to increased produc-

tivity and better quality of life. So, yes, I think that our conference's Wellness Ministries will, very likely, have a beneficial overall impact on costs, but I anticipate that the most important benefits of the programs will be non-financial.

How do you see your office's relationship with the Annual Conference? With the General Board? How will we respond to the General Board's increased charges?

I'm still pretty new here, so it's difficult for me to describe anything more specific than a general intent to work collaboratively with both the Virginia Conference and the General Board. One of the things that I think of every day is that every single one of us is ultimately driven by the same goal, and God is at the very center of that goal. While we may have different ideas for the best way to reach that goal, the assurance that we are all pushing in the same direction encourages me to strive to work in a spirit of trust and cooperation every day. I am extremely fortunate to work with an incredible group of people in the VUMPI office, and together we are firmly committed to making VUMPI the best partner we can be for both the Virginia Conference and the General Board. ☺

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The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Quick and not-so-dirty Sandy response makes a real difference

By Bert Cloud

It was late in the day, near the close of business, when I pulled into the large warehouse filled with mission donations for several regional ministries. There was not a Cleaning Bucket (formerly called flood bucket) in sight. Thousands had been taken to New Jersey that morning, along with bottled water, health kits and other supplies. For a moment at least, the buckets in the back of my rental truck was the only supply.

The immediate aftermath of a disaster is often a place of confusion, trauma and shock. It is messy, frequently dangerous and a place in desperate need of hopefulness and the

tangible presence of Christ. This is the time that God's people are in the business of being the answer to prayers. There are helpful ways to do this, but other responses can make a bad situation worse.

When Sandy was developing, many folks in Virginia prepared for the worst, only to be relieved and thankful for its relatively mild passing. Following that, it became clear that the damage was much worse in the Northeast, and many had wondered how we could be "blessed to be a blessing." What could we do from our abundance to help those who were suffering so much?

Fighting the impulse to hop into the car and

go north, which is a poor plan for several reasons, the advice from the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) to first send money and needed materials seemed like a best first step. Many of us began the relatively easy process of collecting financial donations and sharing the text donation numbers in our communities. This was the easy part. But relief supply collection and distribution is always another story.

A quick Internet search is all that was needed to get in touch with an UMCOR Depot, Mission Central (missioncentral.org) not far from Northern Virginia in Mechanicsburg, Pa. This ministry, which is quite impressive, is able to deliver needed supplies through an already established network in New Jersey and New York. It was almost like finding an "easy button" for the effective supply distribution, and we were thankful.

A quick turnaround seemed important, so we began soliciting supply donation on the Thursday following the storm with a collection scheduled for Election Day. Remembering that the well-meaning but unusable donations that sometimes flood in after a disaster are sometimes called the second disaster, we stuck with the supplies that were requested by UMCOR and Mission Central. Because we were scrambling, donation partnerships were formed with only a few, neighboring

United Methodist churches: Newville, The Stand, Salem, Sycamore and Trinity.

On election night, previously scheduled Communion services at The Stand and Sycamore also became drop-off points for supplies that we loaded on a rental truck. The following afternoon, three full pallets of supplies, including the now scarce Cleaning Buckets, were moved into that warehouse ready for the next step.

This collection was a small, quick offering to the glory of God, and there is no doubt these gifts have been quickly absorbed into the massive need. Yet, I cannot help but think how individual lives – people created in the image of God – are being directly impacted by the generosity of strangers who love Christ. Surely we will have plenty of opportunities to do the same.

I invite you to pray with me as we discern our next steps to support those devastated by Sandy, responding as Christ's presence in all that we do as United Methodist followers of Christ. United Methodist Volunteers In Mission teams, Emergency Response Teams, UMCOR and other expressions of love will be part of this, but there may even be other ways to help. Invite Christ to show you the way to serve and trust him with the details. I promise, this will make a difference. ☞

-The Rev. Bert Cloud is pastor at Sycamore UMC



Cleaning Buckets have been collected at several sites around the conference in the weeks following Hurricane Sandy.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

Emergency response training of college students believed to be a first

By Nicholas Ruxton

In November, the department of Spiritual Life at Shenandoah University hosted a United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) Early Response Team (ERT) Training. Thirty-seven people, ranging from students, staff, faculty and community members, attended and were trained by Forrest White, director of Serve Ministries from Trinity UMC in Henrico.

According to UMCOR, this is the first time that a university has ever hosted an ERT training for their students and employees.

ERTs play a vital role in assisting areas devastated by disasters. These teams go in to areas of devastation after Emergency teams and before the general public can enter. An ERT's main purposes include establishing a caring Christian presence, stabilizing homes, managing donations, assessing the needs of the community, and being listeners to the survivors. ERTs are only allowed into a devastated zone for a maximum of three days due to the physical and emotional toll.

Additionally, ERTs do not just rush into devastated sites. Instead, the teams must be invited to come. They also have to be self-sustaining, so they do not cause more burdens on the area.

Shenandoah University is very involved with different types of missions, including trips in 2012 to Alabama, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Brazil. In the summer, the Dean of Spiritual Life, the Rev. Dr. Justin Allen, decided it would be beneficial for students at Shenandoah to be trained as members of an ERT. Students from the JustFaith Christian Leadership Program and some students from the

have never been on a mission trip or seen a devastated area. This training strengthened the team to understand what to do in different situations.

The training lasted nearly a whole day. However, this did not stop the Shenandoah University group from having worship in the middle of the day. "University Chapel@Noon" on the day of the training became a giant feast. Students, staff and faculty from the university, plus members of the Winchester community, who were not involved in the training, cooked and served those who were being trained.

Less than two weeks after Hurricane Sandy, Shenandoah University was able to educate and inspire students, staff, faculty and community members to think of the greater good of loving God and loving neighbor. The people who are now officially trained members of an ERT are eager to go out and assist anywhere they are needed. We hope we never have to use this training, but if needed we are ready to go as we love God and love our neighbor. ☞

-Nicholas Ruxton is a student at Shenandoah University from Trinity UMC in Chesterfield



Shenandoah students recently completed Emergency Response Team training.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Member of St. Matthias United Methodist Church hasn't missed Sunday school for 59 years



By Cathy Dyson

Mary Lou Pitzer hasn't missed a day of Sunday school for 59 years. She was named the international poster girl for Sunday school attendance in 2005 by the United Methodist News Service, when she had only 52 years under her belt. A video about her called her the "Sunday school superstar." But it seems that Pitzer brings that kind of energy to everything she does.

"She's like a turbo rocket," Sheri Pierce, a Stafford High School teacher, said about Pitzer, who taught for 42 years and supposedly retired six years ago. Yet, Pitzer still tutors math students in her home and teaches English to middle-school students twice a week.

At Stafford High, she continues to help with the end-of-year awards programs. She washes and irons table skirts, orders awards and flowers and types names on certificates. "There are little jobs that she's just always done, and she enjoys doing, and I enjoy her doing it," said Pierce, the senior class sponsor. "I find her very valuable."

Pitzer shows the same dedication to St. Matthias United Methodist Church off Deacon Road in Stafford. She's Sunday school superintendent, treasurer and the incoming mission chairperson. She sings in the choir, helps lead the children's group of singers and is the Vacation Bible School cook. Pitzer also organizes the annual event to get bicycles,

Mary Lou Pitzer helps teach the children's choir at St. Matthias United Methodist Church in Stafford County. Pitzer, 70, is also a Sunday school teacher. She's been at church every Sunday for 59 years, without fail.

helmets and coats for needy children. "She never stops," said Chris Embrey, the administrative assistant at church. "She really has a heart for what she does, and she really enjoys helping children." Fellow church member Margaret Ann Holt suggested a story about Pitzer because it would be "a great encouragement to others in what just one person can accomplish."

Pitzer, who smiles easily and often, says she's blessed in more ways than she can name. When she visits friends in nursing homes – and she's made a lot of trips lately – she's grateful that she's active and healthy. She's 70 and doesn't take medicine of any kind except vitamins. She said that not missing a day of Sunday school in almost six decades – unless the weather was so bad, the service was canceled – is the least she can do. "God's blessed my life, and I can certainly give back an hour of my time to God," she

Pitzer walks Ian Thompson and her granddaughter, Maya Wick, to choir practice. If Pitzer happens to be out of town, she finds a church to attend wherever she is. Photos by Peter Cihelka/Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star



said.

Pitzer was 11 when she joined Morgan's Chapel United Methodist Church in New River, Va. It was the Sunday before Labor Day, 1953. She was given a class of toddlers, which fueled her determination to be there when the doors opened. "When you're teaching children, you don't want to miss," she said. Then, she just made up her mind to be in class every Sunday morning at 10 a.m.

She and her husband, Gene, who have been married for 46 years, had their wedding ceremony on a Sunday. It was at 4 p.m. in the afternoon so she could go to church in the morning. "Everybody thinks that's funny," she said.

As the years went by, her husband, two children and five grandchildren supported her. Whenever she was on vacation or visiting a relative, she looked for a church to visit. While on vacation in Hawaii one Christmas, she attended a unity service for all denominations. She went to a Mormon church while she was on a Navajo Indian reservation. And

while taking the grandchildren to Disney World, she found a church meeting in an Orlando hotel.

"Christians are all the same, no matter where you go," Pitzer said. "What I enjoy the most about Sunday school is everybody's friendly. You sit around, have coffee, and I just find it so exciting to talk to and to meet new people."

"God's blessed my life, and I can certainly give back an hour of my time to God."

Pitzer wears pink running shoes when she's out and about doing church tasks or visiting friends. Her husband, Gene, walks about six miles a day and she joins him for an evening walk. She also takes exercise classes at St. Matthias UMC, where she lifts weights and walks. She does water aerobics twice a week.

One day this summer, she and her aerobics class went to the Massad YMCA Water Park while the pool they usually use was being cleaned. Some in the group looked at the water slides and said, "Look, we're 70, we can't do that." Not Pitzer.

"Our grandchildren said we were acting like teenagers."

-Cathy Dyson for the Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star

Army vet turned student athlete inspires Virginia Wesleyan crowd

By Leona Baker

I feel like I was molded and prepared to be a soldier before I even set foot on the battlefield," Virginia Wesleyan College (VWC) senior and Army veteran Milton Clemmons told the crowd gathered outside Hofheimer Library for the College's Veterans Day Ceremony on November 12. Clemmons was emotional as he thanked his mother, Bernette Long, and a family friend and fellow veteran, Theodore Hall, who helped shape him in spite of challenging times as he was growing up.

At 27, Clemmons' journey to a college degree and a spot on the Marlins men's basketball team is one as inspiring as it is unconventional. Raised by a single mother alongside four siblings, Clemmons bounced around to four different high schools before graduating from Norview High in Norfolk in 2003. He took a year off before enlisting in the Army and went on to serve just over five years, including two tours in Iraq, 15 months of which were in Baghdad. He left the Army as an E-5 Sergeant.

"The military definitely helped me to be able to adapt to any situation," Clemmons explained, "and to communicate with all types of people, different ethnicities, different social groups."

With help from the G.I. Bill, Clemmons came to Virginia Wesleyan to pursue a degree in criminal justice. He hopes to continue on to law school after he graduates in May. But a degree and a career weren't his only ambitions when he arrived at VWC. He wanted to play college basketball. So he approached Head Coach Dave Macedo and asked if he could try out.

"I thought it would be a good goal to at least see if I could walk on," he said. "Coach didn't know anything about me, but I did let him know I had just gotten out of the military and that was something I could tell he took a liking to."

He joined the team his sophomore year and has since become something of a father figure to his teammates as well as part of a winning athletic program that brought the Marlins to the Sweet 16 in 2011 and

the Elite 8 in 2012. He is also a real-life father to 5-year-old Styles, who has become an unofficial Marlins mascot, cheering his dad and the team on at games and practices.

"I think Coach Macedo has looked to me for a lot more leadership than he would from the younger guys," said Clemmons. "He expects that, and I try to give him 100 percent of that and be a vocal leader."

Macedo introduced Clemmons during Veterans Day Ceremony, at which Clemmons served as the featured speaker.

"Milton is very dear to VWC, very dear to our program and very dear to our community," Macedo said. "We're very proud to work with him and proud to have him as a Marlin. We are looking forward to his senior year and looking forward to him walking across that stage on graduation day."

For his part, Clemmons was happy to defer the spotlight to his fellow veterans and all those currently serving their country in the military.

"This is not about me," he said, "I actually want to thank the veterans. I want to

(Continued on page 32: "Army Vet")



Senior criminal justice major and Army veteran Milton Clemmons was the featured speaker at VWC's 2012 Veterans Day Ceremony. (Photo by Sequoia Mulgrave)

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Haitian student assisted by United Methodist church in Danville

By Jonathan Parker

Lude Labieville's nightmares are real.

A native of Haiti, Labieville was in a Port-au-Prince apartment when a 7.0-magnitude earthquake rumbled through the tiny country, toppling cement buildings and leaving hundreds trapped in the rubble in 2010.

"That was the worst experience of my life," Labieville said, wiping tears from her eyes. "They didn't have anywhere to go. Some of them still live in tents."

The quake destroyed the university where Labieville was studying dentistry, claiming the lives of professors and students.

"Everything was flat," she said.

Labieville's family helped her cope with the horrific images.



Lude Labieville (right) poses with Beth Bauman from Mount Vernon UMC in Danville.

"It was a nightmare," Labieville said. "Each time, I closed my eyes, I saw bodies. It was chaotic."

Labieville believed the earthquake also snatched away her dream of becoming a dentist, but nearly three years later, the Haitian student is continuing her studies in the quiet comfort of Averett University in Danville.

"That's still my goal," Labieville said, sitting on a sofa in the university's student center. "If I can't be a dentist, I can still work in the medical field. My country will need workers."

Labieville covers a bright yellow Averett t-shirt with a heavy jacket and carries a backpack filled with notebooks across her shoulder.

The cheerful 27-year-old smiles and laughs about overcoming language barriers to understand quiz questions.

"I don't have words to thank them," she said of students and professors. "They help me even though they don't know me. They help me a lot with my education."

In 2011, Labieville was one of four Haitian students selected by the "I Have a Dream" Foundation to take classes in Richmond. She spent a year taking intensive English and academic courses to prepare her for a four-year university.

Ken Hanshaw, who runs the foundation, contacted

Averett administrators, who quickly offered Labieville a 50-percent scholarship.

Mount Vernon United Methodist Church members chipped in to fund Labieville's tuition for the first semester.

Beth Bauman, who chairs the church's Haitian Student Fund, said the church is seeking community support to keep Labieville in college.

"She is very courageous," Bauman said, hugging Labieville.

Gary and Lin Benefield, who live within walking distance of Averett, welcomed Labieville into their home at no charge.

"After the earthquake, people's hearts were broken for Haiti and people wanted to make a difference in some way," Bauman said. "We have the opportunity in our church and community to make a significant contribution to the rebuilding of Haiti."

Bauman said by assisting Labieville – a biomedical science student – the community will provide continual aid to the impoverished country.

Labieville will return to Haiti and help rebuild the country.

"We consider it a great privilege and blessing to have her in our lives," Bauman said. "It's so clear to see God was working in that. God brought us Lude."

Labieville has immersed herself into her studies and church activities. She

recently joined Mount Vernon UMC and sings in the youth choir.

Labieville is juggling 13 credit hours, including history, biology, English, French and freshman seminar.

Labieville, who speaks Haitian Creole, French, English and Spanish, wants to help Haiti and return to her family, which includes nine siblings.

"I want to go back and make a difference and teach them what I have learned," she said. "We can be motivated to work hard and try to make the country look different so we won't always be dependent on others."

Labieville rides a bike or walks to classes at Averett, finding solace and comfort in the quiet city. "It's familiar to my hometown and people are friendly," she said.

Far from the destruction, Labieville keeps her beloved Haiti on her mind. Danville offers a cozy change of scenery and the opportunity to keep pushing forward.

"The way people treat me, it makes me feel like I'm home," she said. "I feel like I belong here."

Donations can be sent to Haitian Student Fund, 107 West Main Street, Danville Va. 24541. For more information, call Mount Vernon UMC at (434) 793-6824.

— Jonathan Parker for the Star-Tribune in Chatham.



Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD

Gil Hanke helps restart Hope of Hearing program in Haiti

By Rich Peck

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti— A three-member team led by Virginia native Gil Hanke, top staff executive of the Commission on United Methodist Men, conducted hearing tests on 415 children in three schools in this island nation.

During the trip, the team members fit 30 children with hearing aids, and they made ear mold impressions for 55 children, who will receive hearing aids and batteries when a second team comes to Haiti in January.

Hanke has made 25 mission trips to Haiti, some of them with construction teams.

"My first trip was in 1988," Hanke said. "I was invited to participate on a medical and construction team, but I thought I would be useless because I could not speak Creole. As it turned out, I was able to use my training as a speech pathologist to work with deaf children in St. Vincent School in Port-au-Prince. Since I knew sign language I found that I could be helpful to the only children who could understand me."

The following four years, Hanke served on several other mission trips to Haiti where he spent most of his time on construction crews. But he also found time to work with children

at the St. Vincent School.

In 1992, he led a team of audiologists to test the hearing of Haitian children and supply them with hearing aids. In every year since, the speech pathologist has led a "Hope of Hearing" team to Haiti.

"We missed a couple of years because of political unrest in Haiti, and the project was put on hold after the January 2010 earthquake," Hanke said.

He had also participated in 2010 and 2011 construction teams to repair damaged buildings, but this is the first time the Hope of Hearing team has returned since the earthquake.

Hope of Hearing works through the Texas Annual Conference and Partners in Mission. It is supported by the National Association of Conference Presidents of United Methodist Men, Rotary Clubs, churches and individuals. In-country housing and transportation was arranged by the Methodist Guest House in Haiti.

Restarting the project required the coordinated efforts of the Methodist Church of Haiti, the United Methodist Committee on Relief, Volunteers in Mission, the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries and Haitian schools.

"Our primary focus was to return to the schools where we had worked in the past," Hanke said. "We also wanted to help



Hanke and one of the 415 Haitian children tested for hearing loss and suitability for hearing aids. (Photo by Dr. Ricardo Gautier)

schools that were not getting any assistance from other sources."

Hanke told of a particularly difficult experience with one school.

"A U.S. hearing aid company came to their school after the quake with a pop star, took lots of pictures, and did not test a child or fit a single hearing aid," Hanke said.

"In previous trips, this same company had provided hearing aids to the team in return for the thousand or more hearing aids they had collected.

But just weeks before this trip, they declined to make a donation. In fact they wanted us to blow off the plans we had made, and test at another site, so they could come in later with another celebrity and fit those children for another photo op," Hanke said.

"Dr. Ricardo Gautier, a team audiologist fluent in Haitian Creole, called the school and assured them that this was not another photo op, and that the team was not representing

(Continued on pg. 24: "Hearing")



Dr. Sally Muhlbach and Dr. Ricardo Gautier test the hearing of Haitian school children. (Photo by Gil Hanke)

Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD



Chuck Knows Church helps those unfamiliar with worship

“Chuck Knows Church” is a new weekly internet video series which helps interpret the objects, symbols and terminology used in church. The series featuring Chuck – a witty fount of knowledge about all things church – is being produced by the General Board of Discipleship (GBOD) office of communications and worship resource team,

in collaboration with the United Methodist Publishing House and United Methodist Communications. “Chuck Knows Church” was developed to invite church and nominally church people to understand the ‘stuff’ we see and do in church,” said Karen Greenwaldt, GBOD General Secretary. “It’s meant for a broad audience – youth and older. Each episode is

presented in a simple, brief and fun way. “Many church members can benefit from a short and informal description of the things they find in church,” Greenwaldt said. “We found through research that even long-time members knew very little about some foundational symbols and terms used in their church – such as what’s a paschal candle, why is there both a pulpit and a lectern and what really is the purpose of a narthex,” said Steve Horswill-Johnston, Executive Director of Communications and Brand Strategy at GBOD.

A new episode of “Chuck Knows Church” is available each week on the “Chuck Knows Church” YouTube channel and also posted to Facebook and the website, ChuckKnowsChurch.com.

“Fun, quirky and solidly informative, ‘Chuck Knows Church’ was designed for anyone who has ever wondered about the meaning of the symbols, rituals and practices of Christian worship generally, and United Methodist worship in particular,” said Taylor Burton-Edwards, Director of Worship Resources at GBOD.

“Chuck Knows Church” is meant to augment the local church’s education of its members in a social networking environment. It’s not meant to be a full and complete explanation of each week’s subject. At the end of each episode Chuck

invites viewers to learn more by asking their pastor. “Today nearly all of us mediate our world through screens. ‘Chuck Knows Church’ has been produced with this understanding. It’s an attempt to present vital information, yet in an informal social media type of approach,” Horswill-Johnston said.

Church leaders are invited to post the video each week to their local church or annual conference websites. In addition, the series is perfect for confirmation classes, new member classes, youth groups and worship teams.

Each new YouTube video link will be on the “Chuck Knows Church” YouTube channel. Church leaders can sign up on the “Chuck Knows Church” website for a simple weekly notice announcing when the latest episode is available.

If a church or annual conference commits to posting the series to their websites, they will be listed with a link on the “Chuck Knows Church” site.

Anyone can watch or download the episodes in the video series at www.ChuckKnowsChurch.com.

In addition, the series will be available on YouTube at: www.YouTube.com/ChuckKnowsChurch and on Facebook at: www.Facebook.com/ChuckKnowsChurch. Chuck Knows Church tweets at @ChurchKnows.

Tennessee faith groups help fight childhood obesity

By Emily Snell

United Methodist leaders in Tennessee and across the nation are standing together to fight against a growing health issue among children. Obesity, now diagnosed in 17 percent of children and adolescents, is an increasing problem, and faith leaders are saying it’s time to do something about it.

Vincent DeMarco, the national coordinator of Faith United to End Childhood Obesity, is working with leaders of the General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Men and others to fight against this crisis.

“Childhood obesity is a growing threat to our children’s health,” DeMarco said, noting that obesity contributes to diabetes and other health problems. “We need to deal with the problem, and it’s a problem that can be dealt with. There are things we can do to make something happen, and the faith community is in one of the best positions of anybody to make something happen.”

DeMarco has helped coordinate efforts in Wisconsin, Ohio, Colorado and, now, Tennessee.

“What faith leaders have shown in the areas where we’ve had these events is that they’re motivated, and they want to work on it,” he said.

The Tennessee Conference is encouraging churches and preschools to commit to the cause by signing a “covenant for a healthy faith community” which indicates their agreement to implement programs and policies that will create a healthier start for children.

Gil Hanke, top staff executive of United Methodist Men, said his agency “has a long history of advocacy in health issues, starting with tobacco and now with obesity.”

The *Let’s Move Faith and Communities* toolkit is full of resources and guidance on how faith-based and neighborhood organizations can initiate, expand and coordinate activities that make their communities places of wellness for kids and families. Download the toolkit at www.letsmove.gov/faith-communities-toolkit.

Gayle Callis, president of the United Methodist Association of Preschools, said the partnership was created to address lifestyle trends leading to the “ridiculously alarming” statistics about childhood obesity.

“It’s a commitment to making people more aware of the causes of childhood obesity and what we can do as a faith-based community to help change those causes,” Callis explained. “We’re focusing this particu-



Jada Oldham (left) and Fair Wellons enjoy a healthy lunch at West End UMC preschool in Nashville, Tenn. (UMNS photos by Mike DuBose.)

lar initiative on early childhood and the things we can do to help prevent childhood obesity in that age group.”

Callis said the partnership will begin in weekday childhood ministry programs to educate caretakers and parents and then will extend “into the congregations, the Sunday school classrooms, the whole faith community.”

According to DeMarco, the partnership with The United Methodist Church began in May when about 20 national faith leaders, including Jim Winkler and Cynthia Abrams of the Board of Church and Society, “met with top leaders in the first lady’s Let’s Move team ... to talk about how faith leaders can help move this issue.”

DeMarco said the response from groups in Tennessee was “overwhelming.” “There is a lot of interest in this, and we think the Tennessee event is going to be one of the best events

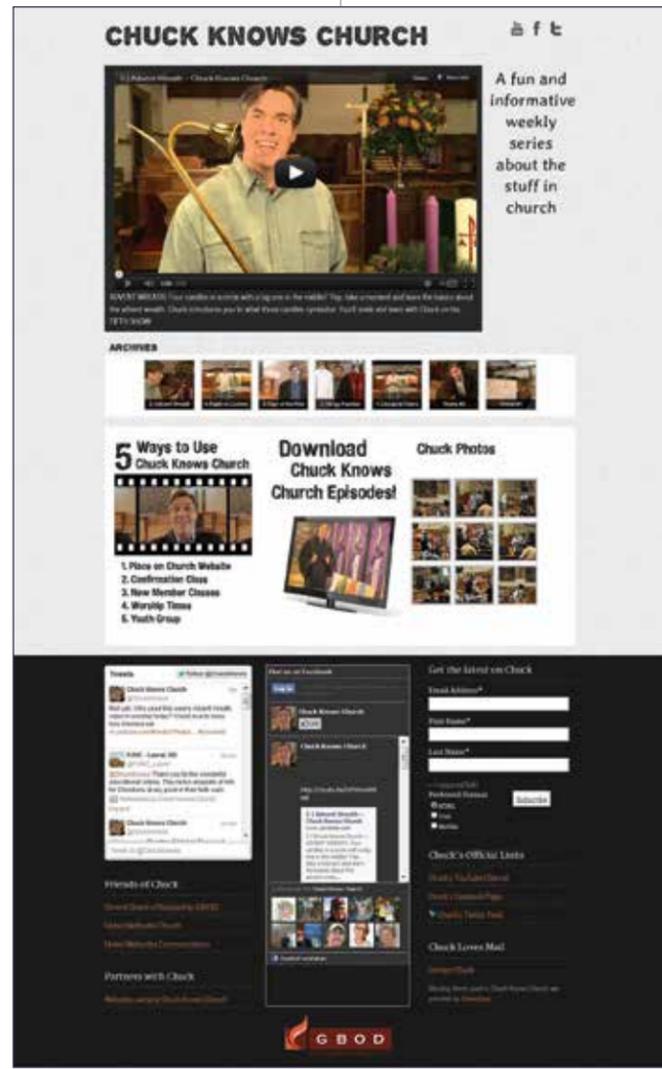
because of The United Methodist Church taking such a leading role in it,” he said, “and really talking about specific things that are going to be done in the child-care area in helping children reduce obesity.”

DeMarco and Callis said the United Methodist Association of Preschools plans to do training and research to equip people who work with children to understand causes of childhood obesity and how to change the growing trend toward overweight children.

DeMarco suggested that churchgoers who want to get involved can start by registering their organization with *Let’s Move*. He then suggested that they join the fight to end obesity by generating support within their congregations.

“It’s a serious problem, and the faith community can do a lot,” he said.

—Emily Snell is a freelance writer in Nashville.





▲ Fourteen servants from **St. Mathias UMC** recently spent a week in Pamlico County, N.C., rebuilding lives and homes from damage caused by Hurricane Irene, which hit in 2011. Ironically, the team headed out the same time Hurricane Sandy was threatening the Mid-Atlantic coast. This was the sixth mission for members of the church, who have made annual trips since 2006 to Mississippi to help rebuild from Hurricane Katrina. In addition to rebuilding, they also provided prepared meals to several families in the county and gave leftover food to Fishes and Loaves, the local food pantry operated out of St. Paul Catholic Parish. Pictured: (from left): Mike Trant, Barry Jones, Betsy Giannuzzi, Bob Dixon, Dick Moore, Jim Davis, Brenda Trant, Pat Tony, Roger Keene, Peg Jones, Kathy Smith, Dianne Moore, Junior Posey and Rich Kaufmann.



▲ Fourteen youths successfully completed their age-level "God and Country" program at **First UMC Fox Hill** in Hampton. These youths com-

mitted to attending sessions where they learned about God and their faith. Pictured: Front row (from left): Brandon Tanner, Ashlin Schultz, Corbin Struhs, Maddison Steele, Madison Ward, Trent Richmond and Steven Ward; back row: Steven Tanner, Mallory Covalt, Conniya Gardner, Allison Stacy, Hannah Steele, Brandi Chandler and Astanzi Struhs.



▲ On the first weekend in December, Culpeper UMC confirmed and received into membership 38 youths. Culpeper has put together a 14-week program that includes a multicultural worship experience, a Teens Opposing Poverty mission trip and a retreat weekend. Participants wrap up the confirmation experience with a banquet and service on Saturday evening where each youth is confirmed, and then the confirmands help lead all three services on Sunday morning.

▶ Children of **Mount Cana UMC** and their families and friends hosted a "Happy Birthday Jesus" party as a way to usher in the Advent season. Realizing that they were celebrating Jesus' birthday, the children partnered with Santa Claus in order to spread the spirit of the season. Attendees brought new unwrapped gifts for children in need. Pictured at right: On the unseasonably warm Sunday afternoon, Santa arrived in his horse-drawn wagon, as there was no snow for a sleigh. The children visited with Santa and then filled the wagon with about 100 gifts. After Santa departed, the children discussed other ways they could keep the season of Advent as they perform acts of kindness as additional gifts to Jesus for his birthday, followed by dinner and cake.



▶ On Oct. 28, Ted West, a long-time member of **Fairlington UMC**, Alexandria District, was recognized as a Fellow of the Society of John Wesley. This award was given by The United Methodist Men's Foundation for West's many years of dedicated service to his church family through his involvement with UMMen. He helped start the annual chicken barbecue and the Christmas tree sale, two key fundraisers for Fairlington's United Methodist Men, and continues to be the "head tree man." Pictured at right: West (left) receives the plaque from current United Methodist Men's president Rolf Blank.



JANUARY

Meeting Your Vital Congregations Goals

Jan. 5: Faith Development, Zion UMC, Troy

Feb. 2: Small Groups, Zion UMC, Troy

March 2: Leadership Development, Zion UMC, Troy

Vital Congregations training events continue in the Charlottesville District at Zion UMC, 1674 Zion Road, Troy, from 8:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Virginia Conference Cabinet and Connectional Ministries staff are coordinating these Vital Congregations events focused upon churches averaging up to 150 in weekly worship attendance. Workshop topics will be directly tied to the key areas for goal-planning in the Vital Congregations Ministry Plan and report www.umvitalcongregations.org.

Ministers' Convocation

Jan. 15-17: Blackstone Conference Center

The theme for 2013 Ministers' Convocation is "Finding Hope... Bearing Hope." The keynote speaker will be author Phyllis Tickle. The preacher for convocation will be the Rev. Carl Arrington. Bishop Young Jin Cho will preach at the opening service of Communion. Workshops will include "Pastoral Care in Changing Times" by the Rev. Judy Hall and "Bringing Hope in the Midst of Crisis" by the Rev. David Canada. Continuing education units will be offered.

UMVIM Team Leader Training

Jan. 26: Shady Grove UMC, Glen Allen

Jan. 26: Aldersgate UMC, Charlottesville

Each training session will be from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. with registration beginning at 8:45 a.m. Team Leader Training is required for all first-time team leaders, but all interested persons are welcome to attend whether leading a team or not. All participants must pre-register by noon on the Monday before the training event.

FEBRUARY

United Methodist Day at the General Assembly

Feb. 7: Bon Air UMC, State Capitol

The annual opportunity for United Methodist laity and clergy to meet with their senators and delegates in the legislature will happen on Feb. 7. Participants will gather at Bon Air UMC. The \$25 early bird registration fee is available until Jan. 20. Registration increases to \$35 on Jan. 21. Registration includes information packet, breakfast, lunch, parking, transportation to the State Capitol grounds and afternoon speakers.

School for Children's Ministry

Feb. 9 at Springfield UMC

March 9 at Baylake UMC, Virginia Beach

April 13 at Bonsack UMC, Roanoke

Training offered from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. for all involved in ministry with children. Seven different workshops will be offered: "Children & the Worship Experience," "Communication through Technology," "Family Ministry," "Involve Them!," "Think Fast!," "Volunteers and Kids in Mission."

(Continued on page 32: "Events")

9126. The Ministry of the Laity



The ministry of the laity flows from a commitment to Christ's outreaching love. Lay members of The United Methodist Church are, by history and calling, active advocates of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Every layperson is called to carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20); every layperson is called to be missional. The witness of the laity, their Christ-like examples of everyday living as well as the sharing of their own faith experiences of the Gospel, is the primary evangelistic ministry through which all people will come to know Christ and The United Methodist Church will fulfill its mission.

The 2008 Book of Discipline



What's in a name?

Lay service forms the foundation of our church

By Johnnie Draughon

In April, the General Conference of The United Methodist Church voted to change the name of "Lay Speaking Ministries" to "Lay Servant Ministries." This change goes into effect, by direction from *The Book of Discipline 2012*, on Jan. 1.

So, what's in a name anyway? It was nearly 15 years ago when the Rev. Marc Brown, then pastor at Thalia UMC in Virginia Beach, suggested that I might enjoy taking the Basic Lay Speaking course. My wife and I signed up and had a great time taking the course together. I still have a number of friends from that class, including our instructor, Charles Higgins.

At the time I had no idea of the spiritual journey God was calling me to through Lay Speaking Ministries. I will also never forget my first invitation to "speak" during a worship service.

Brown called me one night to talk about several items of church business and then asked me if I would deliver the message on an upcoming Sunday. I told him I would be delighted to... "What message?" He responded that he would be out of town and wanted me to preach. My heart stopped. My pastor wanted me to stand in the pulpit and deliver a sermon to my church family at Thalia.

The night before the sermon my wife asked me how I was feeling, and I replied, "I am really surprised at how calm I am." After thinking it through, I laughed and said, "Well, my sermon is on the coming of the Great Comforter, Holy Spirit."

Since that sermon, I have spoken in a number of churches. I even had the opportunity to publicly thank the school teacher in the mountains of North Carolina who was responsible for gently encouraging me to sing with her church choir. I have a sermon titled "The Power of an Invitation" based on her gentle leading. I've served, and continue to serve, the United Methodist Men in the Virginia Conference and have spoken at hundreds of breakfasts, dinners and conferences, had the privilege of teaching the Basic Lay Speaking course in my district and at Blackstone for a number



of years, as well as several advance lay speaking courses.

What does all of this have to do with a name change? About three General Conferences ago, the idea of changing the name of Lay Speaking Ministries was introduced. I was against it. We are Lay Speakers, that's what we do, and that's what we should be about. After all, look at all the opportunities I've had to "speak."

In 2001 I was invited to serve the Norfolk District as the director of Lay Speaking Ministries. I was honored to serve in that capacity for three district superintendents over seven years. God opened my eyes to the many facets of ministry as Lay Speakers. I began to see Lay Speakers serving in their churches, ministering in nursing homes and retirement centers. They were teaching, leading Bible studies and small groups, serving as Steven Ministers and teaming in the Emmaus community, telling stories, acting, leading in worship and Vacation Bible school. They were leaders in their United Methodist Men and United Methodist Women fellowships and serving on every committee in the church. I began to understand that this ministry was about so much more than "speaking." Our Lay Speakers truly were engaged in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Lay speakers make up the foundation of virtually every facet of lay ministry within the United Methodist church.

Something else I learned was that a large number of servants in our churches would not pursue certification as a Lay Speaker. They would not avail themselves of the wonderful training opportunities available to them within our conference because they believed they would have to "preach" if they received their certification. My heart began to change with regard to the name Lay Speaking Ministries.

Three years ago, my brother in Christ, David Bailey, and I entered into a partnership in the Virginia Conference. I was asked to serve as the director of Lay Speaking Ministries, and David agreed to serve as director of our Lay Servant Academy. The more we work and pray together, the more

we realize we are of one heart with regard to this ministry. Lay Speaking Ministries is much broader than just speaking.

With the blessing of the Board of Laity, we began to refer to the ministry within the Virginia Conference as Lay Servant Ministries. We changed the name of our academy to reflect this change in perspective. We felt that God was leading us to engage the laity of the Virginia Conference, to equip and empower them to serve Jesus Christ in whatever aspect of ministry they felt called. We opened our courses to anyone desiring to know more about a particular avenue of service. The official advance lay speaking courses provide a wonderful overview of more than 20 different ministries. We also offer training in other areas of ministry as requested by the laity to meet their needs. Of course our desire is that once someone takes a course, sees the quality of instruction available and enjoys the fellowship and networking opportunities provided through our training, they will desire to take the Basic Course and start the process to certification – but that is not the goal. The goal is to equip every member of The United Methodist Church to serve Jesus Christ.

For those who desire to preach, there will be an opportunity to pursue certification as a Lay Speaker. Their primary ministry will be to provide pulpit supply when needed or called upon. The conference Board of Directors of Lay Servant Ministries is working with the Board of Laity and the General Board of Discipleship to refine that process and make the specific training opportunities available over the next few months. These Lay Speakers will be called to preach, but as Lay Servants we are all called to be in service to Jesus Christ. ☞

By any name, lay ministry is all about getting involved

By Glenn Barbour

In the case of "Lay Speaking Ministries" or "Lay Servant Ministries," the middle word is not crucial. We should concentrate on the first and last words, because all Christians should be lay ministers.

The Apostle Paul talks about the giving of our talents in Ephesians 4. Being a lay minister does not require that you be gifted with a public speaking genius or sing like an angel, or quote the scripture chapter and verse. No. Being a lay minister means living a Christian life so that everyone around you knows you are gifted simply by your actions and your faith.

At the time I became involved in Lay Speaking Ministry, it had nothing to do with speaking. It had to do with my call from God to get involved. I had been estranged from the church for more than 20 years.

Sitting at my desk on a Sunday morning about five years ago, I began thinking about a poem I had heard in church when I was a teenager. The poem was titled "Barnyard Duck" and was written by an unknown writer. It's the story of a duck living a life of laziness in a barnyard when one day he notices other wild ducks flying overhead. He flaps his wings to see if he can join them but to no avail as he is too fat. He accepts his fate and continues eating. "He is not the duck he might have been" is how the poem ends.

All of a sudden I realized God had spoken to me. Not in some booming voice from heaven, but through a poem I heard 50 years ago. I was not who God wanted me to be.

From that day forward, I have never looked back as to my dedication to my church, my attempts to live the best Christian life possible, and to be a lay minister to everyone in my life. I am so blessed to be part of the lay minister program. I am so grateful that God called me to get involved. This program is also blessed to have dedicated Christians such as Norma Townsley, Johnnie Draughon and David Bailey, who undoubtedly have been called by God.

I would also encourage everyone to get involved with Lay Ministry. Get out of that "barnyard," spread your wings and fly! ☞

– Glenn Barbour is a Certified Lay Speaker at South Hill UMC.

"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

EPHESIANS 4:11-13 (NIV)



My journey to the Lay Servant Academy

By David Bailey

My first experience with Methodism was in a downtown church in North Carolina that was very rich in tradition, including an active youth program. In high school, I was drawn to the church for probably the worst reasons. It was five miles from home, and that's as far as my parents would let me take the family car. Plus, I passed a popular hamburger stand to get there. It was different than the parochial school that I attended. And the biggest reason I went there was because of a girl there who I was friendly with ... and she was friendly back.

After high school, I continued to go, and I assumed the role of youth advisor. There were two adults and me. In my first year as an advisor, the youth were asked to lead an upcoming service. While we wrote and practiced the service for weeks, it became clear to me that we would not fill the hour with the skits, readings, testimonials and songs. Someone would have to deliver a message. I was 18 and in my sophomore year at the local community college, so I fit in as a youth. The youth recognized me for my knowledge of the ways of the world, as I didn't have a curfew. That qualified me to deliver the message.

Because the service was based in music, it was easy to see how Psalm 100 tied in: "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!"

And that was the start of my journey. For some reason, I enjoyed standing up before people and talking. But circumstances never came up again for me to deliver a message.

Twenty-two years, several churches, a marriage and a move for a job 300 miles from my hometown later, I became a part of a small church in the Courthouse area of Chesterfield. My love for youth programs continued, as I was trained as a teacher and now had the responsibility of guiding my own three kids in their spiritual journey. After the first visit by the pastor, Carl Costlett, my wife and I were hooked. The Sunday school class became our family. The kids fit right in to the Children's Fellowship and later

on into the Youth Fellowship.

One of the church members, Linda Goodman, was a professional storyteller, and she offered to teach the youth. A small band of 10 storytellers, including my three, had the best time each week hearing great stories. They quickly learned to tell stories, and with each week, I could see their joy and skill improve.

It was convenient for me to sit in the back of the room where they met. Several parents did. But the art and beauty of a well-told story touched me, too. I asked Linda if I could try telling a story one day. That same feeling from my first experience in the pulpit came rushing back.

Linda guided and coached me in the art of storytelling. She also told me about her role as a church lay speaker. I found out more, and the pastor, the Rev. Cynthia Corley, encouraged me to go to training at Blackstone.

That first weekend in February, 2003 was one of the most spirit-filled moments of my life. Three hundred people singing, praying, learning and enjoying the fellowship was almost beyond belief. That year, the Rev. Larry Jent was the featured speaker. His deep faith, love of stories and a very engaging entertaining style solidified that Lay Speaking Ministries was for me. My basic class was led by Bill Walker. I have since publicly praised him for setting the foundation and teachings of The United Methodist Church firmly in my view.

Every year since then I have been back to Blackstone. After the basic class came the "History of The United Methodist Church" with Hal Costley. While history had never been my favorite subject, the interaction with others that found the backbone of our religion in its history was compelling. Then I was fortunate to take the storytelling class offered by Goodman. She and Denise Bennett, another world-class storyteller, asked me to help with the class the following year. With more than 30 students, we needed to break the class into smaller groups. I led one of the groups that included Shirley Cauffman, at the time the conference Lay Leader. The following year, I taught the basic storytelling class, while Linda was

teaching an advanced course. That continued for two years, and I thought that I had found my niche.

My district director of Lay Speaking, Dave Talley, became the conference director, and I was asked to take the role of the Petersburg District director. For two years, teaching storytelling and administratively handling the district was my role, and I cherished it. Fortunately, Johnnie Draughon and Bill Walker, the neighboring district directors, guided me. Since that first experience in 2003, I have gone on to teach or speak in 41 churches and was always uplifted by the experience.

In 2010, Cauffman called me about a change in leadership in the Lay Speaking Ministries. She had asked Johnnie to lead the conference Lay Speaking Ministry. He said that he would only do it if I would share the duties. To Shirley that sounded like a great plan. She left it up to us to work out the details. Johnnie and I talked for two hours the next evening. We batted several different scenarios around until finally I said, "You obviously know more about the organization of the Lay Speaking Ministries, and I would like to run the academy." Through several meetings and phone calls, we hammered out the particulars for the division of responsibilities.

This will be the 35th year that the training has been held at Blackstone. We have had our share of changes. We have morphed into the role as directed by the Board of Laity to expand our educational opportunities beyond the certification of those called Lay Servants. All of our classes are offered to anyone interested in serving in the church in any capacity. In my 10 years we have had the Academy grow from 15 classes to 30 different topics. I cannot imagine a better place for me in my faith journey. 

— David Bailey is a member at Trinity UMC in Chesterfield and director of the 2013 Lay Servants Academy.

Training gets lay people into leadership

By Marta Alrich

“Whom shall I send and who shall go for us?” That haunting question from Isaiah 6 echoes in churches everywhere as pastors and staff longingly prod, plead and wait for lay leadership to emerge.

Unfortunately, Isaiah's answer of "Here I am; send me!" is heard all too infrequently, often sending a struggling minority of overworked leaders spiraling toward disillusionment and burnout, sometimes leading them even to abandon the church.

Inability to replenish the lay leadership is easily one of the top reasons churches wither and die, as well as "the major thing that burns out church shepherds," says Dr. Bob Whitesel, a lecturer, author and consultant on church growth and evangelism. "The church is like a large ship," he says, "and this is the fracture below the surface that is draining the energy out of its people."

In his book *Growth by Accident, Death by Planning: How NOT to Kill a Growing Congregation* (Abingdon Press, 2004), Whitesel identifies leadership training and prayer as the most common practices that lead to church growth. "One thing leadership training does is acquaint people with what's required for a task," he says. "Once they understand what's involved, they will usually say, 'That's not so hard. I can do that.'"

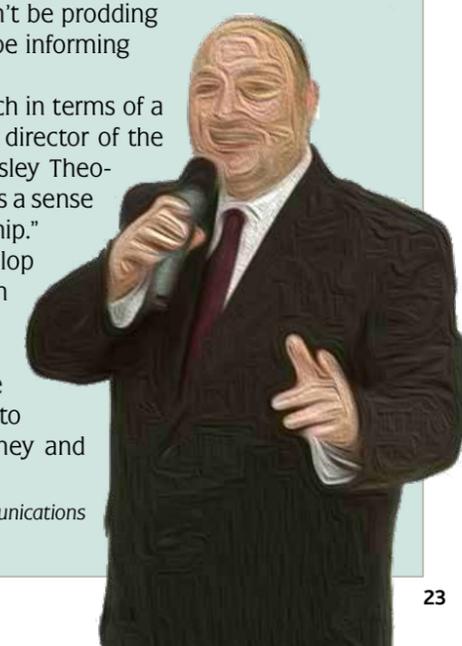
He urges an ongoing leadership training program and suggests starting with an "Introduction to Leadership" course one evening a week over 10 weeks to let people explore their gifts and learn about church needs. Large churches can develop their own courses using leaders from local organizations, businesses and other vibrant churches. Smaller churches can ban together from within their district or judicatory for such programs.

But it's best, says Whitesel, for the pastor not to lead such workshops. "If the church has more than 100 members, it's probably beyond the pastor's skill, and many lay people will view the pastor as having an agenda," he says. Holding such workshops at the church – not at a retreat center or elsewhere – usually increases attendance. And always promote it as a "no strings attached" opportunity. "We shouldn't be prodding and pleading," says Whitesel. "We should be informing and training."

"I like to think of leadership in the church in terms of a calling," says the Rev. Lovett H. Weems Jr., director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington D.C. "There's a sense that all Christians have a calling to leadership."

Weems suggests several ways to develop lay leaders. Programs of spiritual growth encourage personal reflection and nudge Christians toward service. "When people listen to their heart and where they believe God is leading them, it's logical for them to take the next step on their spiritual journey and become more involved," he says. 

—Marta Aldrich for United Methodist Communications



Lay Servant Academy
Feb. 22-24
Blackstone Conference Center

As lay servants care, lead and communicate, they encourage, equip and support others for deeper commitment to Christ and to faithful discipleship. To register, visit www.vaumc.org under "Events" and the date. For more information, e-mail Johnnie Draughon, conference director of Lay Speaking Ministries, at johnnie.draughon@cox.net or David Bailey, Lay Servant Academy director, at dwb.bailey@comcast.net.

Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD



("Hearing", continued from page 13)

the same hearing aid company."

Despite the pre-trip obstacles, the trip ran perfectly. Testing was completed on 415 children in four days, at schools in Croix des Bouquets, St. Marc and Jacmel. And the team made a return visit to St. Vincent School. The team did not conduct hearing tests at that Port-au-Prince school since it was receiving help from a team out of Canada.

St. Vincent officials helped Hanke contact that Canadian team, and Hope of Hearing hopes to work in partnership with that group in the future.

The schools at Croix des Bouquets, Jacmel and Port-au-Prince were destroyed by the earthquake and are in the process of rebuilding. "The testing we did in Jacmel was under a mango tree, the coolest place we could find," Hanke said.

"Then unexpectedly, they hear a tone. They look at us at first bewildered, unsure of this new sensation, their eyes widen, and a smile lights up the area; they are transformed."

"Almost all these children have had a significant loss of hearing since birth," Hanke said. "They have been tested before in a variety of ways and even if some minimal residual hearing was detected, there was little available to help them. So for some, as soon as they sit down, they raise their

hands repeatedly, even before any tone is introduced hoping to get help. Others sit with a frown expecting nothing, resigned that this is a waste of time. Then unexpectedly, they hear a tone. They look at us at first bewildered, unsure of this new sensation, their eyes widen, and a smile lights up the area; they are transformed."

One young boy entered the testing area, very shy, unsure of these strangers at his school. Hanke examined his ears, Gautier did the testing, and Dr. Sally Muhlbach fit him with a hearing aid.

"He began to hear the noise of his classmates and a plane landing at the nearby airport," recalled Hanke. "He smiled broadly, stood up straight and literally strutted back to the other students. He entered meek but left a young man with a new value of himself, assured that his horizon was forever changed."

The team met with the chairman of the Methodist Church of Haiti (similar to a bishop in The United Methodist Church). He asked them if they could provide hearing tests and intervention for children in schools run by the Haitian church.

"This restart of the Hope of Hearing did more than provide testing and hearing aids," said Hanke. "The teachers and administrators of the schools saw the team as tangible evidence that they had not been forgotten. Many go on mission trips and promise to return; this trip and this team illustrated to these special places that even an earthquake and church red tape cannot stop them from fulfilling their promise to return."

Donated hearing aids of any kind and any condition or financial donations can be made to: The Hope of Hearing, 3644 Burwick Place, Antioch, TN 37013. ☞

-The Rev. Rich Peck is a retired clergy member of New York Conference and Communications coordinator for the Commission on United Methodist Men.

Malaria-fighting partnership is all about the nets

Bishop Scott Jones will attempt 1,000 free throws on Feb. 23 for "Shoot for No Malaria," a fundraising venture for the Great Plains Episcopal Area, which encompasses the Kansas East and West and Nebraska conferences.

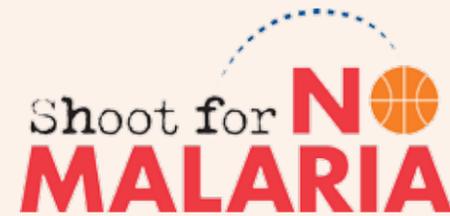
The endeavor was sparked by the partnership between the U.S. conferences and the Zimbabwe East Conference.

A December ceremony in the Biriiri rural area east of Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, celebrated the launch of Phase 2 of the United Methodist Church's Imagine No Malaria campaign.

Jones told the group he will attempt to shoot 1,000 free throws for "Shoot For No Malaria." As part of a month-long effort in the Great Plains Conference, Jones will attempt the 1,000 free throws on Feb. 23. There is an open invitation to anyone to guess how many he will make by clicking a "Bishop's Free-Throw Challenge" tab on the Shoot For No Malaria website and placing the guess for a \$10 donation to Imagine No Malaria.

"God works His will through people like you and me, and when we work together we make God happy," Jones told some 300 gathered at Biriiri District Hospital. The health center is the main treatment facility in the area where Imagine No Malaria will distribute 22,000 nets next month.

The Rev. Gary Henderson, executive director for Global Health Initiatives for United Methodist Communications, said the church is committed to the preservation of life and had involved its 12 million members in fighting malaria.



"We believe malaria has to be eradicated. We are here to celebrate the work done and take home with us more motivation to raise more resources," Henderson said.

Malaria is a major public health problem. Fifty percent of the people in Zimbabwe are at risk of developing malaria, Dr. Moleen Matimbira of The United Methodist Church's Mutambara Mission told the gathering.

"Over 14,600 cases are diagnosed and treated annually in Chimanimani District, with children under 5 years, the chronically ill, pregnant women and the elderly being the most vulnerable to the disease," she said.

Malaria transmission starts in November, reaches its peak in February and ends in May. Dr Matimbira said the good news is that malaria is preventable and treatable.

The government annually managed to spray 10 administrative wards out of the 23 in Chimanimani District with an insecticide that kills mosquitoes for up to six months. Matimbira said, ideally, 15 of the wards most prone to malaria have to be sprayed to fight the disease.

The head of traditional leaders in Biriiri, Chief Muusha, said he believed it was possible to win the fight against malaria.

"We believe we will conquer malaria; each person must police the use of the mosquito nets and not leave the responsibility to the chief alone," he said. He urged the community to use the nets properly and for their intended purpose. ☞

-Eveline Chikwanah is a communicator in the Zimbabwe East Conference.

Sex, the Bible and the Church
Proclaiming Sexual Wholeness – Ministering To Sexual Brokenness
(Sponsored by the Evangelical Fellowship of Virginia)

Saturday, March 9, 2013

9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Discovery United Methodist Church
13000 Gayton Road, Richmond, Va. 23233



Featured Speaker:

Rev. Karen Booth

Director, Transforming Congregations
Author, "Forgetting How To Blush"

Cost: \$35.00, includes box lunch.
.5 CEU available

For more information, visit our web page: www.efumcva.org and print out the registration form under "Events and Links" or call: President - Rev. H. O. ("Tom") Thomas (434-525-0048) or Event Coordinator - Rev. Keith Boyette (540-972-8808)

Onsite registration at 9:00 a.m.

Worship begins at 9:30 a.m.



Project Loans For Churches

Unsecured

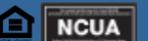
Rates as low as 4.75% APR* for up to 60 months

Up to \$50,000



Fund roof repairs, kitchen upgrades, parking lot improvements, heating/ac systems, painting or parsonage repairs.

*Credit restrictions apply & rates are subject to change.



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 that are reaching out into their communities. The Common Table, Committee on Ethnic Minority Concerns and Advocacy and United Methodist Women have combined their resources, including a designated portion of the Church Extension Apportionment, to assist in this work. A total of \$160,100 will be distributed to the mission projects listed on these pages. For more information about a specific project, or how you can assist, contact the appropriate persons listed below; or call Bev Myers in the conference Office of Connectional Ministries at 1-800-768-6040 or (804) 521-1100, ext. 134, or e-mail BevMyers@vaumc.org.

Special Program Grants

ALEXANDRIA DISTRICT

Rising Hope Noonday Meals Program supplements its other ministries by providing a nourishing meal to those who come to Rising Hope for the Noonday Worship Service seeking spiritual nourishment. The meal is served Tuesday through Friday and on Sunday. Contact: Rev. Keary Kincannon, 8220 Russell Rd., Alexandria, VA 220390; (703) 360-1976; PastorKeary@risinghopeumc.org.

ARLINGTON DISTRICT

Bruen Chapel UMC ESL Program offers three 6-7 week sessions of English as a Second Language classes to the community. Contact: Ruth Burgess, 3035 Cedar Lane, Fairfax, VA 22031; (703) 560-1665; pastorbruenchapel@gmail.com.

CHARLOTTESVILLE DISTRICT

Aldersgate UMC Twinkling Stars is a program for low-income preschoolers which prepares them for entry into school. Activities encourage language development, cooperative play and cooperative working of parent and child. Contact: Ann Galione, 2609 Northfield Rd., Charlottesville VA 22901; (434) 973-2860; anngalione@gmail.com.

Cub Care Packages (Nelson UMC) partners with a coalition of churches and non-profits in its community to provide backpacks of food for hungry children on weekends, holidays and summer vacation when free or reduced-cost lunches are not available. Contact: Lori Saunders, 5239 Thomas Nelson Hwy., Arrington, VA 22922; (434) 263-5652; nelsonumc@gmail.com.

Tuesday's Table (Stanardsville UMC) seeks to provide meals to the hungry in the Stanardsville community by serving meals in participating churches or offering a meal for pick-up or delivery. Contact: Doris Swenson, Stanardsville UMC, P.O. Box 740, Stanardsville, VA 22973; (434) 985-9620; sprngchckn44@embarqmail.com.

DANVILLE DISTRICT

Family Worship Night (Rocky Mount UMC) will include a meal, bilingual praise and worship service and a time for small group interaction after the service. It is provided for members of the community surrounding Henry Fork Service Center, intending to give these families an opportunity to come together and worship with their children in a familiar place. Contact: Rev. Bruce Tuttle, 35 N. Main St., Rocky Mount, VA 24151; (540) 483-5338; pastor@rm-umc.org.

ELIZABETH RIVER DISTRICT

Get Smart (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: Wendy Scott, 201 Stadium Dr., Chesapeake, VA 23322; (757) 482-1049; wsaag01@aol.com.

Oak Grove Community Dinner is a weekly dinner available to individuals and families in the Hampton Roads community, which offers food and fellowship. Contact: Kathy Hodges, 472 N. Battlefield Blvd., Chesapeake, VA 23320 (757) 547-2319; kathy@oakgroveumc.org.

FARMLAND DISTRICT

Jane Jones Food Pantry (Main Street UMC) is a monthly food distribution program which serves the South Boston/Halifax county community, providing fresh and non-perishable foods to all who have need. Contact: Rev. Edward Rigg, P.O. Box 119 South Boston, VA 24592; (434) 572-3290; mainstreetumc@embarqmail.com.

HARRISONBURG DISTRICT

Shiloh UMC Enrich Program serves at-risk children by providing a half-day summer enrichment program which includes two meals and a snack daily. Contact: Lucinda Erbach, 392 Thompson St., Strasburg, VA 22657; (540) 465-3382; luellie392@hotmail.com.

LYNCHBURG DISTRICT

Amherst Cares (Emmanuel UMC) provides food for middle school children who have little or no food on the weekends. Teachers have recognized improvements in academic performance, behavior and attendance since the implementation of this program. Contact: Beth Gamble, 297 Ridge Dr., Amherst, VA 24521; (434) 946-7657; bethgamble3@comcast.net.

Weekend Meals (Anderson Memorial UMC) is a week-end meal program that provides food for the families of hungry children, along with notes of encouragement and tips for providing nutritious meals. The program also invites parents of the children to participate in activities such as low-cost menu planning, reading labels, grocery comparison shopping, etc. Contact: Joan Yeatts, P.O. Box 773, Gretna, VA 24557; (434) 565-2604; joanyeatts@comcast.net.

Community Revitalization by Youth (Jackson Street UMC). This program partners with community groups, local government agencies and business, to provide opportunities for non-violent youth offenders to do community service by tending the lawns of the sick and elderly in the community while being mentored by members of the church. Contact: Dr. Alexander Duncan Jr., 901 Jackson St., Lynchburg, VA 24504; (434) 846-5810, 757/232-7135; aduncan81@me.com.

RICHMOND DISTRICT

Belmont UMC Youth Outreach Program reaches into the nearby Broad Rock community to mentor youth, providing leadership training, social skills, Christian character education, life skills, academic assistance and opportunity for community service projects, college tours and other relevant experiences. Contact: Larry Cochran, Barbara McDougald or Marie Coone; (804) 275-6336; belmontumcrichmond@gmail.com.

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, pedicure 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.

Dignity Food Service (Discovery UMC) provides ongoing food support for families in need, offering fresh produce, frozen foods, canned and boxed groceries. Contact: H.B. Caples, 3418 Ridgemere Dr., Richmond, VA 23233; (804) 360-3412 or (804) 201-7945; patandbobmallory@gmail.com.

Food and 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: Larry Cochran (804) 275-6336; belmontumcrichmond@gmail.com or lcochran6@verizon.net.

ROANOKE DISTRICT

Greene Memorial UMC Summer Lunch will serve children in the northwest area of Roanoke City, providing a weekly meal on Saturdays during the summer. Contact: Debbie Brown, 402 Second St., Roanoke, VA 24011; (540) 344-6225 or (540) 314-6263; DebbieB@gmumc.org.

Church members work in the "Dignity Food Service" pantry at Discovery UMC in Richmond.



Newport Cares Backpack Ministry provides weekend meals for Eastern Elementary and Middle School students who are identified by the school. Contact: Morris Fleischer, P.O. Box 133, Newport, VA 24128; (540) 544-7183; nmoumc@pemt.net.

The Well at Huntington Court is a ministry which seeks to involve un-churched young adults in the surrounding community through worship, fellowship and missions. Contact: Rev. Jeff Wilson, 3333 Williamson Rd., Roanoke, VA 24012; (540) 366-3465; hcumc1@gmail.com.

STAUNTON DISTRICT

Basic UMC Feeding Program is an ecumenical feeding ministry which provides Saturday morning breakfast and Wednesday evening meals to the hungry in the Waynesboro community. Contact: Sharon Smith, P.O. Box 2447, Waynesboro, VA 22980; (540) 949-8947; jenns456@comcast.net.

Casa de Amistad Computer Access Program provides access to computers to community members to conduct job searches, seek affordable housing and reconnect with estranged family members. Contact: Jennifer Strother, PO Box 2447, Waynesboro, VA 22908; (540) 946-7958; cdajenn@comcast.net.

Greenville UMC offers an after-school program with transportation which supplements the one offered by the local elementary school. The program serves neighborhood students who are struggling with the Standards of Learning tests. Contact: Rev. Kevin Haynes, 66 Almo Chapel Rd., Greenville, VA 24440; (540) 337-6220; gumcoffice1@verizon.net.

Helping Hands Food Pantry (Mint Springs UMC) offers food-insecure families access to a pantry which allows them to make choices which fit their needs, with bilingual assistance as needed. Contact: Anne Perdue, P.O. Box 34, Mint Spring, VA 24463; (540) 33-4855; adperdue1@gmail.com.

South Covington Care Pantry is a food pantry which serves the hungry of the Covington City and Allegheny County area. Contact: Linda Black, 5015 Castile Rd., Covington, VA 24426; (540) 747-5261; llblack47@aol.com.

YORK RIVER DISTRICT

Bread Plus (St. James UMC) is a food pantry which makes groceries (both perishable and non-perishable) available at no cost. Contact: Harold Richardson, 105 Water Pointe Lane, Smithfield, VA 23430; (757) 357-4066; harold.richardson@charter.net.

Chestnut Memorial Food Pantry, in partnership with another nearby church and a local business, serves families in need of food assistance in Newport News and Hampton. Contact: Dana Dahl, 1024 Harpersville Rd., Newport News, VA 23601; (757) 595-6531; fpantry@chestnut.hrcoxmail.com.

Sustaining Program Grants

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: Rev. Martha Real, 13600 Frying Pan Rd., Herndon, VA 20171; (703) 793-0026; mreal@florismc.org.

DANVILLE DISTRICT

Henry Fork "Plan Here, Go Far" seeks to reconnect with teens that have "graduated" from the center, seeking to be a positive influence on their lives, providing meaningful learning experiences and positive role models. Contact: Elizabeth Nichols, P.O. Box 888, Rocky Mount, VA 24151; (540) 483-2819; henryforkcenter@cs.com.

EASTERN SHORE DISTRICT

Agape Christian Children's Community Center provides a healthy nurturing environment for the at-risk children of the small rural ethnic minority 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. Contact: Brenda M. Child, 12021 Robinson Ferry Rd., Broadnax, VA 23920; (434) 848-3329; dougchild@telpage.net.

ELIZABETH RIVER 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; joannmclung@cox.net.



Shalom Zone's 'Bridges Out of Poverty' graduation in June, 2012

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.

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) 298-5309; Lighthouse4kidzz@aol.com.

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 Douglas, P.O. Box 26941, Richmond, VA 23261; (804) 321-4222; Douglas546@aol.com.

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) 288-3063; sandy@wrightdunn.com.

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., Rich-

mond, VA 23228; (804) 873-1487; nancyrobin7856@aol.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; sahnaws@comcast.net.

ROANOKE DISTRICT

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: Don Edwards, esq., 4819 Golfview Dr., Roanoke, VA 24019; (540) 266-7262; donedwards.esq@gmail.com.

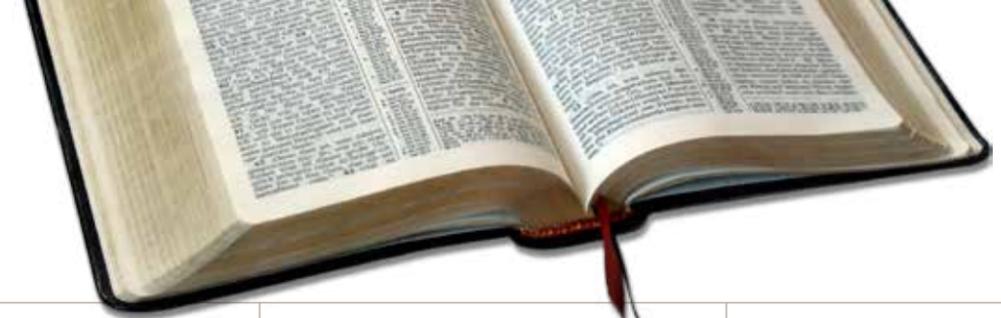
STAUNTON DISTRICT

Casa de Amistad is the outreach ministry of Basic UMC, serving the primarily Hispanic population in the community through programs of educational and material assistance. Contact: Jennifer Strother, P.O. Box 2447, Waynesboro, VA 22980; (540) 946-7958; cdajenn@comcast.net.

Greenville United Methodist Women (UMW), through its "Food on Fridays" program, provides food for children on weekends and holidays, and connects children and their parents to much-needed community resources. Contact: Beth Haynes, 823 Wagon Shop Rd., Middlebrook, VA 24459; (540) 377-6220; gumcoffice1@verizon.net.

Devotions from International Lesson Series

LIVING THE WORD



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: *The Rev. Dorothee Tripodi is serving in extension ministry as associate director of Supervised Ministry and Vocational Planning at Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond and serves as an affiliate pastor at Westover Hills UMC. She is a provisional elder in her second year and holds an M.Div. and Th.M. from Union Presbyterian Seminary. Dorothee is originally from Frankfurt, Germany.*

Jan. 6 "The right thing to do" Philippians 1: 15-26

The picture of Officer Larry DePrimo, New York City Police, helping a homeless man on a bitterly cold night instantly became an Internet sensation in December. DePrimo, having noticed the man's bare and blistered feet, used his own money to purchase socks and boots. Unknown to DePrimo, a tourist captured the moment of his giving and the man's joy on camera. The picture was posted on the NYPD's Facebook page! The story took off – and so did a lively discussion concerning his actions. Some praised DePrimo as a hero, one of the best who serve and protect. Others questioned his motives, suspecting a publicity stunt. A few expressed concern that somehow the homeless man would take advantage and use the gift for personal gain. DePrimo, when asked about his motive, simply expressed his conviction that it was the right thing to do.

Paul provides us with his own "it is the right thing to do" statement when he comments on the actions of those who clearly preach with questionable motives or use Paul's imprisonment for self-promotion. Paul encourages the Philippians to be of one mind and to focus on what truly matters: "That in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached." Because when Christ is preached and God's reconciling love and forgiveness is offered, by God's grace, lives are changed. Paul has learned that circumstances may impact but not define his ministry. He sees his circumstances, such as his imprisonment, not "simply (as) the result of his proclamation of the gospel but (as) a means of proclaiming it." Motives, such as "envy, rivalry, selfish ambition," or even "lack of sincerity" in the end cannot limit the transforming power of God's love nor hinder God's purposes. Even though Paul's future is uncertain, he remains focused on living "worthy of the gospel."

As we begin a new year, we are called to preach Christ in every way. Not everyone may agree, and it is not always easy to be of one mind. But we can find comfort in the hope that no matter how complex or uncertain our circum-

stances, God is with us, and God's love is able to transform. What we are to do is to discern how to live worthy of the gospel and how to serve – because it is the right thing to do.

Jan. 13 "To know God's will" Philippians 2: 5-11

I asked two of my friends to give me their first response to the phrase, "to have the mind of Christ." (2:5 NRSV) Granted, one is a Ph.D. student and seminarian, the other an experienced ordained minister and Christian educator, so I knew I would get interesting answers. Both are experienced in ministry, yet their lives and backgrounds are very different – though there are some commonalities. Neither is United Methodist, and they are not from the same denomination. So you can imagine my surprise when they both gave not only the same answer, but answered with tremendous certainty!

"To have the mind of Christ is to know the will of God."

Not humility, not obedience, not willingness to suffer for God's purposes or give up your purposes – though those may be part of it – but to know the will of God.

Paul would probably agree. Paul instructs the Philippians to be united in Christ and to be of one mind. He encourages them to put the needs of others above their own, and to literally "think this among you which also (is) in Christ." Christ not only knew but did the will of God. Christ humbled himself, renounced his status, became as insignificant as a slave (3:7 NRSV) humiliated and misjudged, and in the end, died a traitor's death (3:8 NRSV). But out of the impossibility and complexity of these circumstances, counter-intuitive to all we know to be true, healthy and successful, comes the good news: that all can be reconciled to God and be transformed and in the end that which is impossible serves to the glory of God. (3:10-11 NRSV)

And that is where having the mind of Christ comes in. As my friend reminded me, to do the will of God means to share God's love with all, to grow in becoming like Christ and to build up the people of God. To do so requires discernment to explore what it means to share and embody

God's love and have your heart broken by what breaks God's heart. As Paul states, we are to think that which is in Christ and know and do the will of God. Because to have Christ's mind, to know God's will is not just an attitude or an understanding: it is a call to action. As Christ gave himself for us, we are to give to others – all to the glory of God.

Jan. 20 "Returning Home" Philippians 3:1-11

In his books *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming*, Henri Nouwen once again describes aspects of his journey of coming to know his human identity in relationship to God. Nouwen's own journey leads him to realize "we are not what we have, we are not what we do. We are not what others think of us, coming home is claiming the truth I am the beloved child of a loving creator."

He puts aside a successful ministry as an accomplished theologian and missionary and accepts a call to Daybreak, a L'Arche community for disabled persons. He concludes "his home is in Christ and he is called to be 'the father' to those seeking relief from their burdens."

Paul's description of considering his gains as loss so he can know Christ Jesus as his Lord, (3:7 NRSV) evokes echoes of Nouwen's journey. Paul could have found his identity in his accomplishments: a rabbi, an interpreter of the law, (3:9 NRSV) and a leader among the apostles. But Paul comes to realize what matters most is knowing God and living a life in obedience to God's will.

And while, for both, accomplishments or "gains" were means of God's love and grace, they became neither

final purpose nor basis of their identities. They could even be counted as loss. (3:7) Because in the end, what matters is "being in Christ." (3:9 NRSV). But before such a life is possible, both must acknowledge Christ as Lord (3:8).

So we find Paul being stopped on the road to Damascus, and Nouwen on an on-going journey of spiritual discovery. Paul comes to understand Christ in multi-cultural, multi-religious settings. Nouwen finds Christ's presence in the importance of waiting and through the ministry of Adam, a severely disabled person. Both learn to live with uncertainty and to minister with and be ministered to in unexpected ways restored in Christ.

What is true for Paul and for Nouwen is true for us. Having been restored to God, we are one in Christ, called to see our gains as means to ministry, perhaps even loss, but not as basis of our identity. Because according to Paul, and as discovered by Nouwen, our identity rests in God who welcomes us home and calls us to know and proclaim Christ as Lord.

Jan. 27 "Core values" Philippians 3: 12-16

In *Copycat Kids: Teach Kids to Imitate Your Good Qualities*, Dr. Paul Cohen comments on how children learn life skills by imitation.

"The usual sequence is that a child observes something that she sees another person do, imitates it exactly, then transforms it in some way and makes it his/her own," he writes.

Children's imitation goes far beyond brushing hair, tying shoe laces and feeding the dog. On the contrary, as many parents can attest to, children learn also by imitating their parents, friends and teachers.

Perhaps that is why so many psychologists recommend you intentionally include your children in your activities and monitor what they are learning. As a matter of fact, being proactive, preparing children for learning from others and learning from watching television or the use of technology in an age-appropriate manner is highly recommended. In the end, the imitation of skills and actions result in the formation of core values which dictate how we understand ourselves, our relationships with one another, our community and God.

Discipleship is characterized by imitation as well. We learn from each other, and others learn from us. Perhaps that is why Paul encourages the Philippians to be of one mind, to be mature in Christ and hold on to that which will be eternal and to become "imitators" of Christ, (3:17 NRSV).

Paul is deeply aware maturing in Christ not only consists of learning from others, but also of being made Christ's own (3:12 NRSV) and living for that which has eternal value. By leaving behind the past and striving to embody the love of Christ God in unity, Paul focuses on "holding fast to what we have attained." (3:16 NRSV).

Through prayer, study of Scripture, worship and service we continue to grow in maturity. Just like children become adults, we are to become mature in Christ. That maturity is lived out in loving God and reaching out to our neighbors. And we do so fully aware of what it means to be human together before God.

Like children and parents, we grow by making mistakes, by being recipients of God's forgiveness and acceptance. By developing core values, we not only demonstrate skills and deeds but also model a way of loving God and each other no matter what – and that value passed on will last into eternity. 



CLERGY & DIACONAL

("Firewalled", Continued from page 5)

resources will survive. While that seems to be the antithesis of Methodism's method, it is a reality: at present, the UMC needs our larger churches and conferences more than they need the UMC. Unless we find a better way to govern ourselves, we will continue to get what the system is designed to produce – and

it's not disciples.

I am convinced until we are brought face to face with the realities of our denomination, we can't lead with any sense of authority or urgency – and these are urgent times. We have to change, and change often means loss of power, loss of security and loss of identity. However, those are all things

that at our baptisms we said we would be willing to give up for the sake of Jesus Christ.

I don't know any greater joy than to be faithful to our Lord. I pray we can be less faithful to a failed system and more faithful to our Lord. ☞

-The Rev. Sky McCracken serves as superintendent in the Paducah District of the Memphis Conference.

("Army Vet", continued from page 11)

thank them for being who they are. Not only do they help protect us while we're here but even when they come back they are helping instill those values in others."

Timothy O'Rourke, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Kenneth R. Perry, Dean of the College, echoed the sentiment in opening remarks at the ceremony.

"Our veterans have shown us the way," O'Rourke said. "Today we honor our veterans for their service, above and beyond the call, and we recommit ourselves to the republic for which they have stood and continue to stand so nobly." ☞

-Leona Baker is director of communications for Virginia Wesleyan College in Norfolk, a United Methodist-affiliated school.



("Events", continued from page 17)

FEBRUARY

Vital Congregations: What Would Asbury Say?

Feb. 25: Virginia United Methodist Center, Glen Allen
The Society for Wesleyan Studies will host Dr. John Wiggen, for a day-long event at the conference office. Wiggen will help us consider lessons from the vitality of early American Methodism under Asbury's leadership, and how we might apply them today. Cost is \$45. For more information, e-mail questions to myron@setapart.org or rbrucejohnson2010@gmail.com.

Clergy Spouses' Retreat

Feb. 28-March 2: Blackstone Conference Center

The theme will be on spiritual development, "Finding Your Hidden Treasure." Leaders will include David Canada, author of the book Spiritual Leadership in the Small Membership Church, and his wife, Judy. To register, go to www.vaumc.org/events. For details, contact Bill Moore at (540) 364-0027 or wjmoorewj@gmail.com.

Deaths



The Rev. Albert Clayton "Al" Lynch, 65, of Richmond, died Dec. 8, 2012. Lynch was the pastor of St. Andrew's UMC, Richmond District, and a chaplain for the Henrico County Sheriff's Department. He was a graduate of Campbell College, Union Theological Seminary and the University of Richmond School of Law. He is survived by his wife, the Rev. Susan Lynch, and two daughters. Lynch began his ministerial career in 1970 serving Bishop Memorial, then served Prospect, Bethel (Oilville), South Brunswick and Woods. A memorial service was held at St. Andrew's UMC, with interment at Rock UMC in Lawrenceville.



The Rev. O. Murry Unruh, of Lynchburg, died Nov. 27, 2012. Unruh began his ministerial career in 1952 at Mecklenburg and went on to serve as the

director of the Wesley Foundation at the University of North Carolina, then as pastor of Centenary in Jarratt, Harmony in Hamilton, Kilmarnock, Grace-Calvary, Parksley, Chestnut Hill, Deep Creek and Miles Memorial. He retired in 1991, then served Forest Road in the Lynchburg District for three years during retirement. A memorial service was held at Chestnut Hill UMC in Lynchburg.

Marina Cortese de Bosis of Rome, Italy, died Nov. 10, 2012. She was the mother of Alessandra, the Charlottesville District Treasurer, and mother-in-law of the Rev. Bruce Lugn, pastor

of the Southern Albemarle Charge, Charlottesville District.

Dorothy Holland died Nov. 16, 2012. She was the mother of Dori Richardson, spouse of the Rev. Mark Richardson, who serves Gogginsville UMC in the Danville District. A memorial service was held at Community UMC in Virginia Beach.

James "Jim" William Liskey, 79, of Harrisonburg, died Nov. 19, 2012, at Emeritus in Harrisonburg. He was the husband of JoAnn Liskey, Harrisonburg District Treasurer:

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FROM THE BISHOP



A new opportunity

A new year has dawned. This is another gift from God and a new opportunity to live for the glory of God. May the Lord continue to bless all churches in the Virginia Conference and their mission and ministries. I am very grateful and excited about this opportunity and possibility given to us this New Year.

More than four months have passed since I began to serve as your bishop. During these four months many new things and serious discussions have happened, and we are trying to move toward a better and more fruitful future. Based upon these conversations and prayer, this year I will continue to focus on the following areas:

1) All things New-Equipping Vital Congregations: The conference has already organized the Bishop's Steering Team for Vital Congregations and has been organizing and working to implement this initiative. As you know, from Jan. 1, all churches in the conference

will be invited to record statistical data weekly. I will continue to work with the Steering Team and other teams to help this initiative to become a movement to restore a biblical and authentic church. I will also work with the Board of Ordained Ministry to help the clergy to be more equipped to do an effective ministry in today's changing world.

2) Strengthening spiritual foundation of our mission and ministries: Originally, the prayer covenant was set to last 100 days from the start date of my appointment as bishop. But I strongly encourage and continue to invite clergy and laity to dedicate one hour daily for their spiritual disciplines. We need to keep on praying for a renewal and a revival of our conference. The theme for the 2013 Annual Conference will be "Teach us to Pray," and having a convocation on prayer has been discussed. The Cabinet plans to work more prayerfully in making appointments, focusing on our mission.

3) Developing new faith communities: This is a part of the "All Things New" Invitation to Plant. Thinking of the changes and growth taking place in Virginia, we have to develop new faith communities to reach out to the people. I will continue to encourage the work of the Church Development Team and our efforts to train the pastors for this mission.

4) Working together in ministries: We are one of the largest conferences and have many boards and agencies. All of these parts of the body of Christ are important, and their ministries are special, but we need to work together for our mission. We need a balcony view and ought to restore the beauty of our connection. I will work with Common Table and other boards and agencies to help create a culture of cooperation and coordination.

We United Methodists are called to a new future. We feel the need to change. But change is not always pleasant. Change can bring pain, risk and anxiety. Change brings pain because it

will break the present. Change is risky because we do not know whether the change will bring a better future or not. No matter how carefully we plan, change is always a challenge and requires our courage. Change means getting out of our comfort zones.

But we, God's children, are not alone in this journey of change. The Lord who calls us into a new future will lead and guide this change process. Because He lives, we can face change and dream a new dream. The Lord will give us hope, strength and guidance. If we humbly open ourselves to God, and seek and rely on God's wisdom, we will be able to overcome fear and reluctance for change and bring a better future to our churches.

I read an interesting article in a book one of my seminary classmates edited (*The Letter of Christ II*). It is called *Twelve Ways to Kill a Good Idea*, and lists the following responses to change:

1. "It will cost too much!"
2. "We tried that before!"
3. "It is not our responsibility!"
4. "We do not have the time!"
5. "It's too much of change!"
6. "Someone will object!"
7. "We have never done that before!"
8. "Why change? It's still working OK!"
9. "We did all right without it!"
10. "Let's give it some more thought!"
11. "Has anyone ever tried it?"
12. "It just won't work here!"

My prayer is that 2013 will be filled with many meaningful changes and signs of new life. ☺

ONE LAST WORD



Tweets heard 'round the conference

Beth Givens @bethgivens5
Santa is working out on the treadmill at the end of my row. In full suit.

Lindsey Baynham @LMBaynham
quite the spread before the SPRC meeting. I mean i'm not complaining. #churchmtgs #goodfood

Larry Davies @sowseeds
"If you aren't fired with enthusiasm, you will be fired with enthusiasm." - Vince Lombardi

Keith Elgin @keithelgin
The fire is going. The music is rockin'. The parking lot is getting full. Our drive-in theater Christmas in Hollywood outreach has begun.

Kirk Nave @knav25
God knows the pain of losing a child to a violent world. May God's arms embrace those who mourn. I am praying for the people of Newtown CT.

Alison Carmack @lilmeezer
Via @nprnews: "Mormon Women Dare To Wear Pants To Church"

Jon Woodburn @JonWoodburn
#Advent: be prepared, be attentive, be hopeful...

Gina Anderson-Cloud @pastorgina
Great worship today @TheStand! Interesting to think about how God brings those from the margins to the center of His story!

Jason C. Stanley @jasoncstanley
#hug someone



The Teddy Bear Brigade

Each year at the conference-sponsored fall retreats for middle school and youth, students do a "Walk for Change" where the young people have a service-oriented study and then have a tangible service experience. This year the group brought stuffed animals to be donated to the Teddy Bear Brigade, which is part of Gleaning for the World. The bears are sent to folks young and old around the world and domestically. Our young people write a personal note telling the recipient that they are a child of God and are loved and attach it to each animal.

This year's retreat leader was, Rachel Held Evans (pictured center), a well-known blogger and author. Over the last couple years she has



written two books, *A Year of Biblical Womanhood* and *Evolving in Monkey Town*. "In the last month or so her book about biblical womanhood has really taken off," said Alison Malloy of the conference Council for Youth Ministry, "and she has received some really positive but some really hateful feedback as well."

For one year, Evans took all the Bible's instructions for women literally – and then wrote a book about the experience. She's been denounced by megachurch pastor Mark Driscoll and other evangelicals, and refused space on the shelves of Christian retailer Lifeway because of the company's alleged discomfort with Evans' frank mention of female genitalia.

The Teddy Bear Brigade, a ministry of Gleaning For The World, collects new and gently loved stuffed animals, which are distributed to children who have suffered abandonment, a natural disaster, sickness, disease and war.

In addition to special collection events, The Teddy Bear Brigade has several partner sites across Virginia that collect donated stuffed animals throughout the year. Visit <http://teddybearbrigade.com/ongoing-collection-sites/> for a list of places where you can donate stuffed animals. ☺

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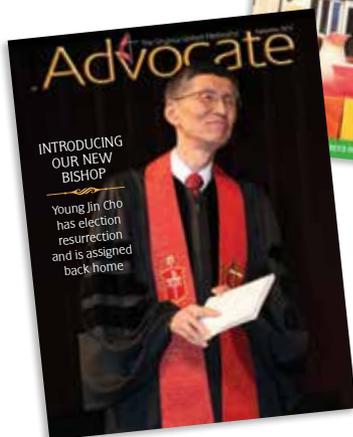
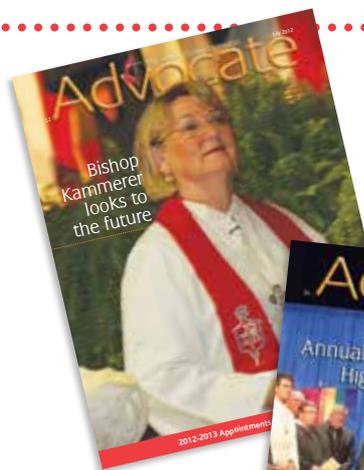
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