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Advocate

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FROM THE EDITOR



Neill Caldwell
 Editor

Where are
 the young
 people?



It's difficult to recruit young adults and youths into leadership positions in the church when the pool of prospects gets more and more shallow. George Barna Research reports that 8 million "twenty-somethings" who were active church-goers as teenagers will no longer be active in a church by their 30th birthday. An article in *USA Today* suggests that 7 of 10 Protestants age 18-35 who attend church regularly in high school quit attending by age 23.

Young adults today are the most un-churched generation ever. But it's not just that young people are walking away from church. In many cases, they never walked in in the first place.

I'm talking about cultivating lay leaders and local pastors in addition to ordained clergy, of course. But in terms of recruiting pastors, there are some major hurdles:

- ❖ Eighteen percent of all United Methodist candidates for ordained ministry are under 30 years old (but only 13.5 percent of the 18 percent are racial-ethnic candidates);
- ❖ Undergraduate (and grad school/seminary) debt is a huge problem;
- ❖ There are no young clergy recruitment programs in half of our annual conferences.

This current group of youths and young adults is certainly full of contradictions: both self-absorbed and eager to help others, strongly committed to important issues and non-committal about most things, socially "out there" and yet often feeling very alone. Today's young adults are marrying later, if at all, are technologically savvy and hold world views alien to their upbringing. They're concerned with social justice issues, mistrust authority, but would appreciate a mentoring relationship.

Barna Research President David Kinnaman has written a book on all this called "You Lost Us." Kinnaman crunched the numbers and believes that the cause at the top of most young people's reason for leaving church is simply that we Christians don't act very much like Christ taught us. They see churches as fear-based, risk-averse, shallow, judgmental about sexuality and inhospitable to doubt.

The research points to two opposite, but equally dangerous, responses by faith leaders: either minimizing or catering to the concerns of the next generation. We either hope the problem will go away as young adults "mature" into the faith, or throw the latest Christian rock song at them in hopes they will set foot in church. The better path between these extremes, Kinnaman writes, is to cultivate "intergenerational relationships as one of the most important ways in which effective faith communities are developing flourishing faith in both young and old."

I don't have a magic solution. I do agree that the church is one of the last safe places where intergenerational diversity can happen. We must truly share power instead of just having youths and young adults as token members of committees. And we must continue to encourage ministry in the local and global communities, something young people want to be on board with. 

Neill Caldwell

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COMMENTARY

'Y' are there so many 'nones'?

By Amanda Yanchury

"The reason I don't go to church is that many churches have a negative outlook on anybody who does not fit the standard Christian mold," my roommate, Gemma, told me recently. "If churches were more positive and accepting I'd be more likely to go."

Gemma's viewpoint is fairly typical of those of us in our 20s. As more and more of my generation Y peers describe themselves as having no religious affiliation, I am both disheart-

Engage us. Get us to be the hands and feet of Jesus first – and then invite us to worship. Get us out there in the community, or engaged in an awareness campaign on Twitter – and then get us on your e-mail list.



ened and hopeful about the future of The United Methodist Church amidst this trend.

A recent study by the Pew Research Forum on Religion and Public Life (pewforum.org) describes the growing tendency for young adults to claim no religious affiliation. Look around the church pews and you will see that for yourself.

Where are the young people? Why aren't they coming to church?

The United Methodist Church is a missional, global, connected network of disciples. As United Methodists, we have some-

thing powerful to offer that millennials crave: the ability – the need – to change the world for the better.

As I'm writing this, the umc.org web page features the story "12 ways to fight hunger," which appears right under "help with Hurricane Sandy relief."

The United Methodist Church is engaged in the things young people care about.

The United Methodist Church is engaged in mission all around the world and in local communities. According to the Rev. Larry Hollon, general secretary of United Methodist Communications, "In 2011, some 4,500 churches mobilized more than 500,000 volunteers, serving 4,000,000 people in 16 countries" ("Have mainline denominations lost their voice?" *21st Century Faith, Media & Culture*, March 2012).

The United Methodist Church's campaign to eradicate deaths by malaria in sub-Saharan Africa, *Imagine No Malaria*, has raised millions of dollars to fight this disease of poverty – with Minnesota leading the denomination at \$2.5 million donated or pledged.

United Methodists give generously of their time and financial resources for the betterment of the world. This is something that this denomination has in common with millennials.

Last October, at the annual meeting of the United Methodist Association of Communicators, former

White House press secretary Mike McCurry urged communicators to make these stories a priority.

"Unless you communicate it like you mean it, people are not going to get the message," McCurry says. What we are doing is good and powerful and it changes the world – and we need to not be afraid to tell the world about it!

United Methodist organizations should find millennials where we are: online.

"Join this event to help underprivileged school children in the inner city! Come pack meals for starving infants in Haiti! Buy this album and the proceeds will be donated to those suffering from homelessness!"

This stuff works.

Engage us. Get us to be the hands and feet of Jesus first – and then invite us to worship. Get us out there in the community, or engaged in an awareness campaign on Twitter – and then get us on your e-mail list.

"Unless we can do something to reach that young person, we've got a big problem as this generation continues to enter adulthood," McCurry said. "How does our conversation shift to include them? How do we reach them in the ways they get their information? It's not through the church newsletter."

As a 25-year-old, I agree.

So we come to an event, or we attend a worship service. Now what?

Millenials have a mixed view of the church. It's dependent upon our childhood experiences, or what we see from the media – whoever or whatever speaks the loudest.

Though most of the increased number of "nones" – people with no religious affiliation – grew up in a religious family (74 percent!), upon entering adulthood they have given it up. I think part of this is simply a convenience factor – for example, without having a marriage to be blessed and children to send to Sunday school, it just may never occur to some of us to go there – and since more and more of my peers are wait-

ing to do these things, this may partly be an explanation.

But I also think that the perception of church is important. The United Methodist Church must live up to having "open hearts, open minds, and open doors" if we want the emerging generation of adults to consider being involved in church.

We prefer places that are welcoming to all, and that spans the gamut from those who wear blue jeans to worship to those who want to know that their LGBT friends will be accepted.

Millenials crave community and collaboration for

the greater good. They are more likely to join up and keep up with the church if they believe the church is both doing good in the community and the world and is open to "people like them."

United Methodists have a real opportunity to be the community that young adults crave. I believe that United Methodist churches can be the places young adults seek when they start to seek faith again – if we proclaim our opportunities to change the world and are truly welcoming to all whom God sends our way. ☞

-Amanda Yanchury is a Communications assistant for the Minnesota Conference.



Amanda Yanchury poses with Christian Ponder, quarterback of the Minnesota Vikings.

Will You Help UMFS Send a Child to Summer Camp?



Tim's Story

My name is Tim. This picture was taken at summer camp last year. I wasn't always this happy though. When I was eight my dad was put in jail and my mom and I ended up in a shelter. One day, when I was 13, I went to live with a new family who could take care of me. I was angry at my mom and dad, and I was scared of what was going to happen to me.

My foster family did their best to ease my fears. They got me a scholarship from UMFS to go to summer camp. For an entire week I got to just be a kid and not a foster kid. I made so many friends at camp and was able to work through some of my fears and anger too. Thank you UMFS.

Help us send more kids like Tim to camp this summer! You can donate online at www.umfs.org. You can make the difference a child remembers for a lifetime.



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The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



2013 Annual Conference will be first for Bishop Cho

By Neill Caldwell

The 2013 Annual Conference will be notable as the first for Bishop Young Jin Cho to preside over, will feature preaching from home-grown clergy, and will be on the same concise schedule as last year's gathering.

on Sunday, June 23. Annual Conference activities will begin with the Clergy Session and the Laity Session at 1 p.m. meeting in difference spaces on Friday, June 21.

The gathering will be held in the 344,000 square-foot Hampton Roads Convention Center, not the Coliseum as in previous meetings in Hampton. Picture a giant open room normally home to events like boat shows. Seating will be all on one level, which will also mean an adjustment. There will be a platform for speakers and three large viewing screens, with the addition of smaller screens in the middle of the seating area.

The theme of the 2013 Annual Conference will be "Lord, Teach Us to Pray," continuing the emphasis on prayer that Bishop Cho has encouraged in his first year as episcopal leader. The Rev. Dr. Clarence Brown Jr., pastor at Annandale UMC, will preach for the Service of Remembrance on Friday evening. The Rev.

Tom Berlin of Floris UMC will preach for the Service for the Ordering of Ministry on Saturday night. And the Rev. Dr. Marg Kutz will preach during the recognition of clergy retirees, to be held on Saturday afternoon.

Bible study leader will be the Rev. Dr. Steve Harper, professor of Spiritual Formation at the Florida campus of Asbury Theological Seminary. Harper has also served as a youth minister, evangelist, pastor, dean of the Upper Room Chapel in Nashville and director of the Pathways Initiative. He has authored 14 books, including several on prayer. Harper is a retired elder, having served in the Northwest Texas and Florida conferences.

Bishop Cho will deliver an Episcopal Address on the first day of Annual Conference. Conference Lay Leader Warren Harper will give the Laity Address.

The Saturday morning session will celebrate our new Initiative of Hope partner, the United Methodist

mission in Cambodia. The head of the United Methodist mission in Cambodia, the Rev. Dr. Romeo del Rosario, will be a special guest speaker.

Among other notable elements of 2013 Annual Conference:

- ❖ This year the Conference Offering will help mission projects for children in Mozambique, Brazil, Cambodia and Virginia.
- ❖ Participants will have the opportunity to bring cans of non-perishable food for the Peninsula Food Bank, and relief kits for United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) distribution. The Society of St. Andrew will again sponsor

its annual Potato Drop, at 5:30 a.m. on Saturday morning in the Best Lot (about a five-minute walk from the Convention Center). More than 20 tons of potatoes will be bagged by volunteers for transport to regional feeding agencies.

- ❖ The bishop's All Things New-Equipping Vital Congregations Task Force will report on its progress over the past year.
- ❖ The Common Table for Church Vitality will make a proposal for a change in its structure.
- ❖ Members will debate four resolutions and vote on four proposed constitutional amendments from

the 2012 General Conference.

- ❖ Members will vote on a 2014 budget that shows a 3.35 percent increase from 2013. An actual decrease in money for conference ministries is being offset by a doubling of the pension liability assessment for those persons enrolled in the Pre-82 pension plan. This figure is calculated by the General Board of Pensions based on a number of factors.
- ❖ The statistician's report will show a slight decrease of 193 members throughout the conference.
- ❖ Joanna Dietz, a deacon from Centreville, will be

the music director this year.

- ❖ The registration area for conference members and guests will be in the lobby of the Convention Center. Many of the banquets will be held in the Convention Center facility as well.
- ❖ There will be a display area again this year, right next door to the plenary space, and Cokesbury has committed to again participate.
- ❖ Life Touch employees will be on hand to take photos for the conference pictorial directory.
- ❖ There will not be a blood drive this year.

-Neill Caldwell is editor of the Virginia Advocate



The 231st session of the Virginia Annual Conference will happen in less than 48 hours if all goes as planned, officially opening at 3 p.m. on Friday, June 21, and ending around noon



2013 Annual Conference will be held at the Hampton Roads Convention Center.



Eastern Mennonite Seminary congratulates our United Methodist graduates:

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The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Clergy peer groups offer support, education

By Vicki Brown

Interaction with other clergy from diverse backgrounds, support for taking risks, and a better understanding of current trends in worship and church attendance were among the benefits of clergy continuing education peer groups.

Three groups in three annual conferences – Virginia, New York and West Michigan – formed as part of the Nurturing Innovative Clergy Leadership program, a pilot continuing education program sponsored by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM). The peer group model is now being used for a Clergywomen’s Health Initiative. About 90 clergywomen have expressed interest in forming peer groups through this program.

“The peer learning method is a biblical way of forming Christian leaders;

Jesus formed and developed 12 disciples and nurtured collegiality and creativity among them based on trust. The uniqueness of GBHEM’s clergy peer group program is the collaborative funding of it. I trust that annual conferences will see the value of financial investment for these groups, which will enable more clergy to receive the benefits of their professional development and the renewal of their mind and spirit with their colleagues,” said the Rev. HiRho Park, GBHEM’s director of Clergy Lifelong Learning.

The Rev. Alan Felumlee, pastor of Centreville UMC in the Virginia Conference, said his group’s work included a meeting at the Disney Institute in Anaheim, Calif., about creativity and collaboration. His group, made up of seven pastors of large churches, is still meeting regularly and plans to continue getting together after the two-year pilot group is finished.

Felumlee said one event – a two-day meeting with Wesley Seminary President David McAllister-Wilson and three professors – helped him come to a better understanding of the current trends in worship and church attendance, including the decline of the mainline denominations.

“It was helpful to understand that this is cyclical and that the church has been through this before. We discussed the changing face of the church and how

we can make adjustments to reach new generations,” Felumlee said. He said the pastors talked about the multi-ethnic makeup of communities, and how to reach younger generations in ways that do not rely on institutions.

“If we are resurrection people, then we shouldn’t fear the death of the church as we know it, trusting in God to resurrect a new form of church that will relate to new people. Having that assurance and knowledge gives me a satisfaction that all is still in God’s hands and not mine,” he said.

The peer learning group set four goals:

- ❖ Creating and modeling a beloved community that practices joyful collegiality and challenges the group to recapture the joy of our ministry.
- ❖ Investigating holistic approaches to maximize our self-awareness and confidence as authentic leaders who practice creative and innovative leadership.
- ❖ Exploring alternative ways of managing expectations and time; setting appropriate boundaries; articulating personal and professional goals related to health, finances, personal relationships, public ministry; and the identification of tools, resources, strategies, and next steps toward meeting these goals.

- ❖ Identifying effective processes for discerning, applying, and sustaining spiritual gifts for our peer learning group and for our congregations.

Activities included a midnight run handing out food and sandwiches to homeless people in New York City. The peer group read three books and had day-long gatherings to reflect on those readings. Books included Kevin Cashman’s: “From the Inside Out: Becoming a Leader for Life,” followed by a day with a life coach assessing core values as related to life balance and goals.

They attended an event with Brian McLaren and Richard Rohr that focused on innovative clergy leadership, spiritual renewal, action, and contemplation.

Pastors in the Virginia group were pretty close together geographically, and they meet twice a month for breakfast just to touch base and chart the future, Felumlee said.

He said the meeting at the Disney Institute focused on defining creativity as the collective expression, analysis, and implementation of new ideas within an organization.

“One concept we all carried with us from the institute is collaboration – working together with clergy, laity and lay staff to come up with new ideas. This begins by building genuine relationship with the aforementioned groups of people. It involves creating an atmosphere where ideas can be expressed honestly and without fear, and producing the most and best ideas using available resources,” Felumlee said.

-Vicki Brown is associate editor and writer for the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

Campus ministers get together to share ideas, encourage one another

United Methodist campus ministers from across the Virginia Conference met at the University of Virginia’s Wesley Foundation building in Charlottesville April 22 to talk strategy and voice encouragement for each other’s ministries.

About two dozen campus ministers and Wesley Foundation directors talked about what they are doing in their specific locations, about what is successful in drawing young people into the love of a fellowship group of Christian believers. In sharing these designs, it was hoped that participants could take back fresh ideas for their own groups.

Among the interesting ideas that various campus groups have tried: bringing in therapy dogs to help relax students during exam time; distributing ashes to all students on Ash Wednesday; hosting a food pantry for students without a meal plan... The Rev. Delano Douglas mentioned three students at Virginia State who walk the campus each morning for the purpose of praying over the entire campus.

“We must lead in such a way that when our students leave us and go out into the world that they may be ethical and moral leaders in the community whatever their vocation,” said the Rev. J.D. Daniely, director at Pace Campus Ministry at VCU. “Our job is to walk along side of the students. It’s important to have students own the ministry.”

Individuals met in small groups and as the larger body to encourage one another in the important mission of ministry in our schools and colleges.

“The meeting was designed to say thank you to all of the campus ministers across Virginia for being on the frontline of ministry with young adults,” said the Rev. Derrick Parson, conference director of Ministries with Young People. “We are so grateful for the work of every campus ministry.”



The Rev. Max Blalock (center), campus minister at William and Mary, and others share a laugh during their time in Charlottesville.

Members of a Virginia Conference clergy peer group of large church pastors are pictured during a meeting at the Disney Institute in Anaheim, Calif. From left: Revs. Jeff Mickle, Larry Buxton, Denise Bates, Ralph Rowley, Alan Felumlee and Denise Honeycutt. Not pictured: Tim Craig.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Laity in Elizabeth River hear Bishop Cho's message on power of prayer



District Superintendent Joe Carson (above) introduces Bishop Cho. Below, Bishop Cho speaks at the gathering of laity at the Wesley Foundation at William and Mary in Williamsburg.

by Neill Caldwell

Bishop Young Jin Cho used a recent Elizabeth River District laity dinner to repeat his message of the power of prayer for renewal of the Virginia Conference.

Cho met with district clergy during the day and then with laity gathered for a meal at the Wesley Foundation at the College of William and Mary. Students put the meal together despite being in mid-preparation for their final exams.

Bishop Cho repeated his strong emphasis on prayer as the firm foundation of his episcopal service in the Virginia Conference. Cho asked his audience to "spend time on your knees

in prayer. Always be praying for renewal and revival of the Virginia Conference. If we pray together we can have a different future. ...

"Some people worry about The United Methodist Church," Cho added. "They wonder if we are all on a 'sinking ship.' But do they sincerely pray for The United Methodist Church? So I encourage you to get together and pray together for your church and The United Methodist Church."

That focus on prayer resonated with the students who were present.

"It's easy to lose focus on prayer," said sophomore Marni Robins. "We tend to think of it (in worship) for the social aspect."

Andrew Bresson, also a sophomore at William and Mary, called prayer a rallying point of the church and added that "prayer is not just for the superstitious, but should be part of our everyday life."

During a Q&A time, Bishop Cho was specifically asked about involving more young people in the church.

"That our average age (in The United Methodist Church) is 57 is our reality," he responded. "The most important thing is how we develop leadership that will reach out to young people. There are so many young people today who call themselves 'spiritual but not religious.' We must teach them that Christianity has depth, is not superficial. They have a spiritual hunger and we have to be

"There are so many young people today who call themselves 'spiritual but not religious.' We must teach them that Christianity has depth, is not superficial."

sensitive to their needs."

Doing ministry the same way is no longer an option, the bishop said. "Not everyone likes change," he said to chuckles around the room, "but in repeating the same actions you will get the same results. We must let Jesus Christ be the Lord! We cannot save this church. We cannot turn around this church. But Jesus can."

Bishop Cho also spoke of the need for having a strong campus ministry system within the conference to help show God's love to everyone, especially those who feel alienated or marginalized.

"That's one of the reasons I'm a Christian," said Jannette Morris, a sophomore. "God calls us to love our neighbor, and that means everyone." ☞

-Neill Caldwell is the editor of the Advocate.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

Virginia Conference laywoman helps arrange burial of Boston bombing suspect

A United Methodist woman from Richmond said she was acting out of Christian compassion in helping to arrange the burial of Tamerlan Tsarnaev, a suspect in the Boston Marathon bombings.

"Jesus tells us to love our enemies, not hate them after they're dead," said Martha Mullen.

Mullen, a 48-year-old counselor in private practice who studied at United Methodist-related United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, was distressed at news accounts about the difficulty of finding a burial place for Tsarnaev, who died in an April 19 shootout with police.

The body had been kept at a funeral home in Worcester, Mass., as cemeteries in Massachusetts and some other states refused to accept it for burial.

Mullen said she suspected his religious background was part of the problem.

"I understand he's a terrorist and he did something terrible, but it seemed like the hatred was coming out of the fact that he was Muslim, uniquely – and that bothered me," she said.

Mullen said she reached out by e-mail to representatives of local Muslim, Jewish and Hindu congregations. An offer of a donated burial plot came from Al-Barzakh Cemetery in Doswell, run by a group called Islamic Funeral Services of Virginia.

Mullen said she contacted Worcester police, who worked with the funeral home in Worcester and Tsarnaev's family, resulting in the burial in the Doswell cemetery, in accordance with Islamic law

and practices.

"I just kind of coordinated things and took a step back and let the family make their decision," Mullen said. "They had many, many offers of burial places."

Mullen would not identify her Richmond District church. "I don't want to put the church out there because I think it would be perturbing to some members," she said. "Not everybody is going to agree with me."

Mullen said she did talk to her pastor about helping arrange the burial.

"Let me ask that you and your members hold their courageous and compassionate sister Martha in your prayers," Richmond District Superintendent the Rev. Steve Jones wrote in a note to district clergy. "As she has said, she simply sought to live out the command of Jesus that she should love her enemy. Just as your church and its members have prayed – and should continue to pray – each week for the many victims of the Boston bombings, so we should pray for every act of healing and love – even if the world around us fails to understand those acts."

Mullen said her Wesleyan background informed her decision to get involved in the matter.

"John Wesley advocated practicing a social gospel," she said. "I take that very seriously – that I am to be involved in life, and I am to be an ambassador for Christ, even if it's uncomfortable or inconvenient or dangerous." ☞



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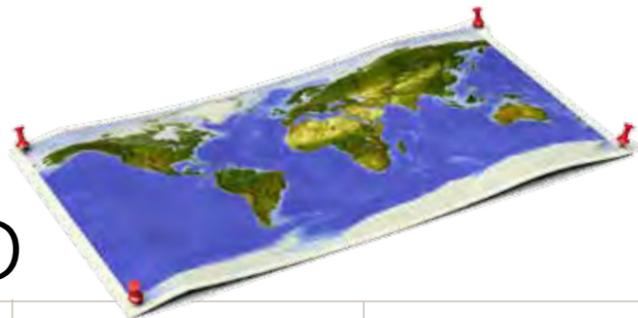
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Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD



United Methodists prepare for annual conferences



Dan and Dot Ivey (center) are among persons singing "And Are We Yet Alive?" during opening of the 2012 Virginia Annual Conference in Roanoke.



By Barbara Dunlap-Berg

It's annual conference time in the United States and around the world. United Methodists in Africa, Europe, the Philippines and the United States are packing their suitcases, gathering their *Books of Discipline* and perusing reams of documents as they prepare for days of deliberation and celebration.

May and June are the most popular months for United Methodism's annual conference sessions, with Eastern Pennsylvania starting the U.S. cycle May 16. The last U.S. conference to convene will be Desert Southwest on June 27.

United Methodists in the Liberia Conference launched this year's sessions by meeting Feb. 4-10. Members of the South Mozambique Conference will wrap up the year when they gather Dec. 4-8.

On the agendas for all annual conferences are four proposed amendments

to The United Methodist Church's constitution. The 2012 General Conference approved all four amendments.

To be ratified, a constitutional amendment first requires a two-thirds majority vote at General Conference. It next must win a two-thirds majority of the total annual conference voters.

- ❖ The first amendment would add the word "pray" before the words "seek, and work for, unity" in a paragraph on ecumenical relations (2012 *Book of Discipline*, Division One, Paragraph 6, Article VI).

- ❖ The second amendment would affect the *Discipline*, Division Two, Section II, Paragraph 14, Article II. The words "in the month of April or May," which currently limit General Conference dates, would be replaced by the following, pending Council of Bishops vote: "The General Conference shall meet once in four years at such time and in such place as shall be determined by the General Conference or by its duly authorized committees. The change in the preceding sentence shall become effective at the close of General Conference in 2016."

- ❖ The third amendment would change the term "Lay Speaking Ministries" to "Lay Servant Ministries" (*Discipline*, Division Two, Section VI,

Paragraph 32, Article I).

- ❖ The fourth amendment would affect *Discipline*, Division Two, Section VII, Paragraph 40, Article I. The revised copy would read: "The number, names, and boundaries of the annual conferences and episcopal areas shall be determined by the jurisdictional conferences in the United States of America and by the central conferences outside the United States of America according to the provisions under the respective powers and pursuant to the respective structures of the jurisdictional and the central conferences. The authority of jurisdictional and central conferences provided herein is not circumscribed or limited by the authority provided to the College of Bishops to arrange a plan of episcopal supervision."

Topping agendas in several conferences are health insurance and pension changes, budgets and new structures. A broad range of social issues such as alternative fuels, gun control, human sexuality, hunger, immigration and military spending also will compete for delegates' attention.

Visit www.umc.org/ac to see the schedule of annual conferences and reports as they are available. ❖

-Barbara Dunlap-Berg is internal content editor at United Methodist Communications.



By Stephanie Drum

On June 25, 1913, after five years of planning and development, Lake Junaluska in the mountains of western North Carolina hosted its first events. At the time, Lake Junaluska consisted of Stuart Auditorium, which was an open-air structure with a dirt-covered floor, a man-made lake, and a small number of homes.

Over the past 100 years, Lake Junaluska has grown into a much beloved retreat center and residential community. Lake Junaluska will be hosting a series of signature Centennial events, including the Centennial Homecoming Week, June 30 – July 7.

Week activities include:

The Centennial Concert Series, featuring Balsam Range, the Lake Junaluska Singers, and the Lake Junaluska Singers Alumni.

Historical Lake crossing re-enactments, as well as tours of the train depot, historic homes across Lake Junaluska, and the gardens.

Lake Junaluska Family Olympics. Activities include Field Day relays and activities, water competitions, and a Centennial scavenger hunt.

Replication of the 1913 opening worship service photo in front of Stuart Auditorium. (All are welcome to be a part of this historic photo.)

Annual July 4th festivities, including annual parade ("Lake Junaluska Through the Years"), barbecue picnic with bluegrass band, evening performance and fireworks.

Lake Junaluska Centennial reunions, including the Lake Junaluska Singers Alumni Reunion, Lake Junaluska staff reunions (1970s-2000s).

Charity golf tournament; all proceeds will support the Lake Junaluska Annual Fund.

Special showing of "The Swan," starring Alec Guinness and Grace Kelly. Portions of the movie were filmed at the Lake Junaluska train depot.

Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD

Lake Junaluska celebrates 100th anniversary



The Lake Junaluska cross (above) has been a place of gathering and reflection for many years. The Lake Junaluska Singers (below) are a favorite part of the experience of visiting the lake for many.



Additional information about Lake Junaluska Centennial Homecoming Week can be found at www.lakejunaluska.com/100 or by calling 1-800-222-4930. Special centennial lodging packages are available.

In addition, on Aug. 3 there will be the premier performance of "Light of the Lake," the Centennial Celebration theatrical production which will highlight time periods of the lake's history through photography and performance. Tickets are \$20 for reserved seating, \$17.50 for general admission. ❖

-Stephanie Drum is director of Marketing at Lake Junaluska Assembly



▲ Members from six local churches – **Calvary, Floral Hills, Kearns Memorial, Rock Springs and Wesley Chapel United Methodist**, along with Williamson Presbyterian Church – worked together to package 12,510 meals for Stop Hunger Now’s international feeding efforts on April 13 at Wesley Chapel, Danville District.



▲ In April, United Methodist Men of **Sleepy Hollow UMC**, Arlington District, sponsored a local mission workday to refurbish the handicapped access ramp for **Faith UMC** in the Alexandria District. Five men and two women replaced warped and weathered boards and reset the fasteners to ensure users have a safe walkway and railing. Several of the volunteers had helped construct the original 165-foot ramp in 2008.



▲ **Main Street UMC in Suffolk** observed Child Abuse Prevention Month during April. Pastor Myrtle Hatcher was infected with “Blue Ribbon fever” some years ago. Picture is the “Blue Ribbon Fence” at the church. There were almost 600 ribbons bearing the names of children prayed for during the month. Girl Scouts, Brownies and Daisies placed blue and silver pinwheels on a lighted tree in front of the church, and there was a Children’s Festival on April 28 during and after the 11 a.m. worship.



▲ Immediately following the tragic bombing at the Boston Marathon, Pastors Pamela Clark-Egan and Jennifer Ailstock of **Sleepy Hollow UMC**, Alexandria District, set up a tent alongside their church to take prayer requests from passers-by. Not all folks who stopped were Christian, and many who did not stop did give a “thumbs-up” or honked in appreciation as they passed.

Every Girl Scout pledges “to serve God” as part of the Girl Scout Promise. At each level of Girl Scouting, girls can earn the My Promise, My Faith pin, which fosters a girl’s connection with her faith. A group of nine Girl Scout Juniors completed the God and Family recognition for fourth and fifth graders at **First UMC Fox Hill** in Hampton. In order to earn the recognition, the Scouts learned about growing God’s love, created a pizza representing a family and memorized the Ten Commandments. They were honored recently alongside five Boy Scouts who earned God and Me and God and Church recognitions. Pictured: front row, from left: Brandon Tanner, Ashlin Schultz, Corbin Struhs, Maddison Steele, Madison Ward, Trent Richmond, Steven Ward; back row: Steven Tanner, Mallory Covalt, Conniya Gardner, Allison Stacy, Hannah Steele, Brandi Chandler and Astanzi Struhs. ▼

JUNE

Voices of Youth tour

June 27-July 14, across the conference

The Voices of Youth “In Our Own Backyards” summer tour is June 27-July 14. The choir will travel for 2½ weeks around the conference participating in local mission projects during the day and presenting worship experiences in host churches in the evenings. For more information, e-mail Jennifer Dixon at coordinator@voyva.org or visit <http://voyva.org>.

JULY

Mini-SPY

June 7-9, Fieldstone UMC, Christiansburg

Mini-SPY will offer rising first- to fifth-graders and their parents a chance to work with the Fieldstone for a Project SPY experience: mission opportunities, worship, crafts, games and fellowship. For more information, visit <http://fieldstoneumc.org/#/missions>.

Camp Rainbow Connection

July 7-12 and Aug. 11-16,

Blackstone Conference and Retreat Center

Camp Rainbow Connection is a week-long respite camp for individuals with intellectual disabilities. A ministry of the Commission on Disabilities of the Virginia Conference, it has been in operation since 1985. For more information, contact the office of Inclusivity and Lay Leadership Excellence by telephone at **1-800-768-6040** or **(804) 521-1100 ext. 153** or by e-mail: cindyngroff@vaumc.org.

Youth Workers Retreat

July 11-14, Eagle Eyrie, Lynchburg

A three-day personal growth retreat with the theme “Finding Your Own Way.”

Camp Loud and Clear

July 12-14, Appomattox County

Camp Loud and Clear will be held at Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center for the third year. The camp is designed to meet the needs of children who are deaf and hard of hearing regardless of their degree of hearing loss or their chosen communication mode. For more information, contact Dr. Lissa Power-deFur at powerdefurea@longwood.edu or **(434) 395-2972** or Jennifer Kingsley at jkkingsley@hotmail.com or **(434) 391-3679**. The camp flyer and application can be found on the Virginia Conference website at: www.vaumc.org/loudandclear.

‘Helping Hands’

July 18-19, Woodlake UMC

July 29-30, Springfield UMC

July 29-30, Fairview UMC, Danville

“Helping Hands” is an annual two-day mission experience for rising 4th-6th graders, parents and adult leaders. Check the “Children’s Ministry” web page at www.vaumc.org/Children for more information.

‘Launch’

July 21-23, Shenandoah University, Winchester

The Spiritual Life office at Shenandoah University and the Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry invite high school students to an outdoor adventure in the Appalachian Mountains while exploring a call to ministry. For more information contact Beth Downs at bethdowns@vaumc.org, **(804) 521-1127** or **1-800-768-6040 ext.127**.

LEAD

July 26-Aug. 4, Roanoke

LEAD is a leadership training event offered by the conference Council for Youth Ministry. District and local church youth councils are encouraged to select as many as 3-5 youths who are willing to commit to this 10-day intensive experience.

‘Connexions’

July 26-28, Shenandoah University, Winchester

The Spiritual Life office at Shenandoah University and the Clergy Family Enrichment Committee of the Virginia Conference invite 9th through 12th graders who are children of United Methodist clergy to this first-time event to make connections with each other. For more information, contact Beth Downs at bethdowns@vaumc.org or call **(804) 521-1127** or **1-800-768-6040, ext.127**.

Mission Encounter

July 26-28 and July 29-31, Blackstone Conference Center

Formerly the School of Christian Mission, Mission Encounter is sponsored by Virginia United Methodist Women and the conference Board of Global Ministries. Two sessions are offered, including tracks for youths and children in the weekend session. Studies for 2013 are “Poverty,” “Roma of Europe” and “Living Sacramentally, Walking Justly.” For more information, visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org.

(Continued on page 28: “Events”)

Young people are looking for a place to belong



by Joe Torrence

There is a restaurant down the street from where I work. Every day after work, it is full of young adults eating food from local food trucks and hanging out in the parking lot. The place is not really that nice. There are a few picnic tables. It is outside. It has no air conditioning and no comfy chairs. Nothing screams young and cool. But, every afternoon they flock to this local establishment. They come from all walks of life; young bankers and business people, artists and poets, and even the occasional clergy person. They come, they gather, they often stay late into the night. They have found what we are all looking for: a place to belong.

(Continued on next page)

Is there anyone out there who gets me for me?

(Continued from previous page)

As I am thinking about the question “where are all of the young clergy?” It leads me to another question: “where are the 20-30-year-olds in our congregations?” The answer is looking for community, looking for a place to fit in. It drives everything from the work we do, to what we do for recreation and who we have dinner with. Is there anyone out there who gets me for me?

Recent studies have shown how most mainline denominations have lost tons of people over the last few years and decades. There are fewer youths and young adults in our congregations than there were just 20 years ago. The average age in our denomination continues to go up because we are losing more and more young people.

In Richmond, where I live, the kickball league participation and wiffle ball clubs have sky-rocketed over the last five years. The point is 20-30-year-olds are looking for a place to find community, and they are creating their own. And it isn't just any community, but a community that is authentic, real and tangible. The folks who show up at the restaurant are not just eating and socializing, they are friends walking through life together. Sometimes it's a messy life, but they stick around for one another. There is something powerful about doing life together in a real sort of way, all of the good things and not so good things. We find relationships that are real, and we commit ourselves to the place we found it.

I mean that is what Jesus did, he gathered his 12 together and they did life together. He even had an inner circle who really knew him. In fact, Jesus said in John 15:15:

I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends. (NRSV)

Jesus is surrounding himself with community, real relationships, people who knew him well and that he was connected to. I have a pastor friend and we were talking about friendships in the church. He said “I don't think I have ever had a real friend in my church; certainly no one who really knew me.”

I find that incredibly disappointing. We all need others. We need each other. If I were a young clergy, I know that I would not want to sign up for a life of solitude, a life of no authentic relationships, or no place to belong. And if our congregations see us as real people who have authentic relationships like Jesus did with his disciples, there is a powerful witness in that.

We, as ministers, are real life examples of not having it all together. But, God's grace is working in our lives. This reality is what young clergy and young adults are searching for because realness leads to belonging and belonging to transformation. That

is the Gospel.

Doing life together and being a community is the church in its most pure form. When we are with people as Jesus was, we show a life of healing, compassion, inclusion and restoration. It becomes less about the issues and more about a relationship. It becomes about community. Of course, a relational God wants us to be relational. That is how it all makes sense.

In the end, to see more young adults and clergy in our congregations, it requires us to be authentic now, to seek relationships with others, and to live the Good News out in those relationships. In so doing, we will be a part of a transformational community that is inviting others to join. Doing life together, no matter what that crazy life may look like. When we do that, kickball and restaurants will have nothing on the church. Jesus said so. 

-The Rev. Joe Torrence is a United Methodist deacon who serves as senior youth minister at Christ Episcopal Church in Richmond.



Fishers of youth: Ministers at middle school Career Day seems like a good idea

By Chip Giessler

These days we generally do not see our public schools as concerned with strengthening the spiritual well-being of our children. Nor, in general, do their leaders seem eager even to permit others who have that spiritual interest to carry it out in “their” time or space. (We can lament that our society, including us Christian parents, acts as if where our kids spend their first four years after high school is way more important than where they spend eternity.)

In contrast, a recent experience I had bears sharing... Last month I answered the call (a lower-case “c” sort of call) from my daughter's middle school guidance counselor to be part of the annual Career Fair. Perhaps you remember or have had this experience: Several dozen tables set around the perimeter of the gym, variously decorated and staffed by fire fighters, nurses, engineers, veterinarians, the rarer seafood salesman with a couple of live lobsters, the tech guy with a video camera attached to a Segway that he's remotely navigating through the crowd and the psychotherapist who's hyperventilating and rendered speechless as she ponders all the issues these budding adolescents are carrying with them.

Every half hour 150 sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders come in to spend 25 minutes wandering around asking questions they've been equipped with: “What do you like best about your job?”, “What's the most difficult thing about your job?”, “What's your advice for me if I want to be a ___ some day?”

I've learned a few things through

six years of doing this. I bring tabletop signs that say “Ask me about being a pastor ... Priest ... youth leader. ... missionary ... minister” to help them have some connection with what I do. I bring in Hebrew and Greek scriptures for them to glance at, because they think it's cool/weird (and to help the Jewish kids get a connection; I haven't come across a Greek kid yet). I play Toby Mac and Nicole C. Mullin and Tenth Avenue North music videos on my laptop. I have copies of Sports Spectrum magazine with Chris Paul and Albert Pujols on the cover (and their testimonies inside). I bring a skeleton of a “crucifix fish.”

And they realize that worshipping God is a lot more “normal” than they suspected.

And remembering that everyone likes free stuff, I bring individually wrapped mints and “Begin with Jesus” and “Hacia una Nueva ida en Cristo” tracks (from Discipleship Resources) because giving away gospel tracks in public schools produces a good sort of counter-cultural rebellion feeling, and because fresher breath in middle school is a blessing to everyone.

The best new thing I did this time: Knowing that I have an average of 45 seconds per group of three to five kids (that's how they appear), I initiated the conversations with/among them. I had a whiteboard and colored markers and asked them if they are part of the faith community to write the name on my board. All of a sudden these friends get to share with

each other for the first time whether they believe in God and where they practice their faith.

About half have enough of a connection to some faith community that they can remember its name. (The Hispanic congregations generally have the longest names.) Dozens of times I got to hear one surprised friend ask another “You go to church?!” and “You've never gone to church?!” And the conversations continued as they walked over to the lobster guy. And they all get to look at the board which quickly gets filled with 15-25 different faith communities every half hour. And they realize that worshipping God is a lot more “normal” than they suspected. And if they have nothing to write, they ponder, maybe for the first time, that maybe that's the thing they feel is missing from their life.

I also get the occasional kid who comes up alone in the last 15 seconds to say “My mom died last year and I've been praying a lot since and my family hasn't been to church since I was little and...” Or “I think I want to be a missionary...” I give them a church invitation card and fervently encourage them to come to visit.

One of my thoughts after packing up my Career Fair table this time, after speaking one-on-one (or one-on-five) with about 300 of the 900 students in my four hours in their school, was “Wouldn't it be great if we had United Methodist pastors in every middle school in Virginia?” I've never seen another pastor at any of these things. The fields are open for harvest. Ask the Lord to send out workers into His field. If you're up for it, I'd welcome a call. 

-The Rev. Chip Giessler is pastor of Evergreen UMC in Leesburg.

Is the development of young leaders about survival, or is it about discipleship?

To develop young leaders, we need more Elis and Naomis

By Alan Combs

“**W**hat does it look like to develop young leaders in our churches?” We regularly ask this question, though it is not always clear why. Does it emerge out of our institutional anxiety about the survival of The United Methodist Church? Or does it emerge out of the waters of baptism? To put it another way, is the development of young leaders about survival, or is it about discipleship? The intent behind the question matters because it will determine how we attempt to answer it. Essentially, the development of young leaders in our churches is grounded in journey of discipleship that begins when we emerge from the waters of Baptism.

Every disciple is not necessarily called to be a leader, but if we are speaking about the Church, leadership emerges out of discipleship. As Bishop Kenneth Carder and Lacey Warner point out, “Christian leadership begins, continues, and ends in followership, as we respond persistently through the power of the Holy Spirit to Jesus’ invitation, ‘Come, follow me.’” Discipleship, this ‘followership’ of Jesus Christ is the foundation of any leader, young or old, lay or clergy, in our communities of faith.”

The discipleship through which God births young leaders in the church is found within the promises we make

¹ Kenneth L. Carder and Lacey C. Warner, *Grace to Lead: Practicing Leadership in the Wesleyan Tradition*, (Nashville: United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 2010), p. 10.

Five steps in developing the next generation of leaders:

- ✓ Identify potential leader.
- ✓ Invite one or more to share leadership with you:
 - mentor/mentee, apprentice, co-chair or vice chair.
- ✓ Equip your new potential leader to serve.
- ✓ Coach the new leader to reach maximum effectiveness.
- ✓ Release your new leader to lead independently.



for each person who is baptized. When people are baptized in The United Methodist Church, we promise,

We will surround these persons with a community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in their trust of God, and be found faithful in their service to others. We will pray for them, that they may be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life.

Young leaders, lay and clergy, will develop in congregations that take this promise seriously. When we surround young folks with a community of love and forgiveness, where they may grow in their trust in God, and who are formed to serve others, we place them in fertile soil for the gifts of leadership to grow in them.

Growing in a community of love and forgiveness means that young folks have relationships with people who are older than they are, people who can create the space for young disciples to ask difficult questions about their faith. It is in such space where the trust of God grows alongside service to others, that those who

are older with more experience can begin to help identify the gifts that God has shared with that young person, whether that is leadership, or any other gift of the Holy Spirit.

When the Young Adult Council heard the voices of young clergy and lay leaders in the listening posts around the conference during the Common Table’s creation of the Young Adult Leadership Initiative, we heard the stories of these communities of love and forgiveness over and over. It wasn’t about the size of the church, the kind of worship, or the location. Each young leader told the story of a person or a group of people who took the time to get to know them, to know their story, to mentor them, and to help them see the gifts that God had shared with them and hear God’s voice calling them. Parents. Youth Leaders. Grandparents. Neighbors. Pastors. The person in the pew behind them. In essence, the Communion of Saints.

To put it another way, for young leaders to develop in our churches, we need more Elis and Naomis. In relationships like Eli and Samuel and

Naomi and Ruth we see in scripture a model of who we are called to be as a community of faith. We promise to be a community where older disciples help younger disciples pay attention to and hear God’s call in their lives. When we baptize people, we promise to be a community where younger disciples find themselves apprenticed to older disciples, so that as they grow up, they will be able to rely on the knowledge and experience of God of the older priests.

No matter our age, we can attest to the importance of having older disciples mentor us, and we can even tell stories where younger disciples actually provide mentoring to older disciples.

If we want more young leaders, we need more Elis and Naomis. It is Eli who helps Samuel recognize God’s call and to respond, “Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.” (1 Samuel 3:8-9). It is their depth of relationship that moves Ruth to declare to Naomi, “Your people shall be my people, and your God my God” (Ruth 1:15). Relationships like these birth holy conversations, means of grace, that help younger disciples to discern their gifts and calling, including a call to leadership. These communities of love and forgiveness become the holy laboratories where young leaders have the opportunity to try, to grow, and even to make mistakes as they develop as disciples and as leaders.

We focus on developing young leaders not because the church will one day belong to them, but because they are citizens of the kingdom of God that is unfolding in our very midst! It is God who leads us into our future, and it is leader-disciples, both lay and clergy, young and old, that are formed and shaped by churches that take seriously their baptismal promises who can help lead their congregations into the future God that prepares for us. ☞

-The Rev. Alan Combs is the pastor at Lane Memorial UMC in Altavista.



EXPLORATION 2013 is a three-day event for young adults age 18-26 to hear, discern and respond to God’s call to ordained ministry and to explore their gifts for service as a deacon or elder in The United Methodist Church. If you have sensed God might be calling you to ordained ministry, wondered what ministry in The United Methodist Church is all about, would like help sifting through issues involved in an ordained vocation, or want to learn more about United Methodist seminaries and theological schools, this gathering is for you.

Registration is open for Exploration 2013 in Denver. Featured speakers will include Louisiana Area Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey and the Rev. Jorge Acevedo, senior pastor of the multi-campus Grace Church in southwest Florida. To learn more or to register, visit www.gbhem.org/ministry/exploration.



We need to look past the flip-flops in church, holey jeans, and random pop culture t-shirts, and hear their voices.

Young leaders needed in our churches now...Today

By Jason Stanley

Be the change you wanna see!" the Newsboys rocked out at a Christian Rock Festival one summer. The church youth groups were spread out through the stadium seating around the green lawn, and yelled and cheered with excitement. This is how they felt. This band understood how they think about the church. Their energy was around being the change, not talking about the change.

Of course, Newsboys wasn't the first to say we should "be the change." Gandhi is most often quoted saying, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." And we've done with that what we do with most quotes we think are truly awesome: we plaster it everywhere imaginable. Bumper stickers: check. T-shirts: check. Mugs: check. Magnets: check.

But are we really being the change?

One of the greatest complaints that young people have about the church is that the church does not walk its talk. The church, through the eyes of many young people, is not faithfully being the change. The reality is that the church is situated on prime real estate for not just being the change, but for nurturing young people to be leaders of change in the world.

Nurturing young people to be leaders of change involves empowering them to be themselves. Whether it is adolescents or college students, they are on a journey of self-discovery developmentally. They are doing the same spiritually, and the church needs to be a safe place for them to be who they are, when they are,

because they are. This means that we in the church need to receive each young person with open hearts and open minds. We need to accept them for who they are. We need to look past the flip-flops in church, holey jeans and random pop culture t-shirts and hear their voices.

By hearing their voices, I mean listening deeply to what young people have to say, because they have a lot to say about a lot of things they see around them. Dori Baker and Joyce Ann Mercer remind us in their book "Lives to Offer" that "young people today are concerned about the deep wounds of the world." Young people have insights and opinions that are worth listening to and worth taking the risk of putting these opinions into action. It means being flexible with our own ideas, giving up some of the decision-making that we in the church tend to hold on to, and giving it over to the young people.

There is a saying that the young people are the church of tomorrow. Friends, young people are the church of right now. Leadership development of young people is not for the church to exist in the future. Rather, developing young leaders is a partnership for the church today; a partnership that nurtures change in the world. The church learns just as much from young people as young people learn from the church. This kind of partnership opens the door for intentional intergenerational opportunities, where mentoring happens.

About 15 years ago, while I was working in children's ministry, the third- to fifth-graders were pen pals with older adults in the congregation. One of the third-grade boys and one of the older men formed a close

mentoring relationship that resulted in them working together in leading others in the children's ministry to plant a community garden. The harvest from that small garden was used to make a difference to the hungry families in the community. This act of mission succeeded all because a third-grader saw a need.

A high school student returned from a mission trip to Central America with a heavy heart as she remembered the children she had met who had so little to eat. As she transitioned back into normal high school life of school, dance practices, exams and lunch tables, she could not shake the image of children sitting alone in dusty shacks waiting for a few pieces of rice and bread at the end of the day. She pulled a number of people from the mission trip together and she spear-headed a project called "Feed Diques." Now more than 50 children get at least one hot, nutritious meal a week because this high-schooler saw a need.

Why is this kind of partnership so important to the church? Because the way in which young people vision the church is a new and hopeful vision compared to the way we have always done church. ☞

-The Rev. Jason Stanley is minister of Youth and Education at Peakland UMC in Lynchburg.



By Allie Rosner

When I was a young 20-something beginning the candidacy process for commissioning and ordination, my District Committee on Ministry used to tell me I was part of the "Spotted Owl Society." They meant that as a young adult on the path to ordained ministry, I was rare and endangered.

I always remembered that comment, and it's part of the reason I find the work I now do with Calling 21 so important.

Calling 21 is the Virginia Conference's summer internship program for college students who are exploring a call to ministry. Interns are matched with local churches of various sizes, settings and ethnic demographics for eight weeks during the summer, with the goal of introducing them to as broad an experience of parish ministry as possible. Interns preach, teach, attend meetings, go on mission trips, visit people in the hospital and help with special church events and projects. They also meet throughout the summer with support teams who help the interns process their experiences and reflect further on their calls.

The goal of Calling 21 is twofold: to help individual young people explore

Calling 21 helps cultivate idea in young people that God calls all of us to ministry

their calls, and to deepen the "culture of call" in our congregations.

My district committee's "Spotted Owl" comment wasn't off base. In fact, the Lewis Center for Church Leadership reports that young adults (under 35) make up only 5.21 percent of United Methodist elders, compared to 1985, when they made up more than 15 percent. The good news is the percentage has increased slightly. (See www.churchleadership.com/research/um_clergy_age_trends08.htm)

One contributing factor seems to be that we as a church simply aren't doing a good job of openly recognizing young people's gifts for ministry or talking about God's call on our lives in general. Calling 21 can provide a way for churches to start talking about these things with their interns, with their young people and with each other in general.

When we interview applicants for Calling 21, we think about a few questions: How likely are we to see the fruits of their leadership in the church some day? And, are they truly exploring a call to ministry? If a candidate already has his or her seminary plan all figured out, Calling 21 might not be the program for them. And yet Calling 21 has produced and empowered an amazing number of candidates for ordained ministry in its seven years. Several of the very first interns are now provisional elders in the conference; of the 47 interns who have gone through the program since its inception, roughly two-thirds have begun the candidacy process. Seminaries have commented on the high quality of the students they get

who have been a part of Calling 21. In part, I believe, that's because we attract and select high-quality interns in the first place; but it's also because students who have done Calling 21 come out knowing something about parish ministry and what it entails, recognizing their own gifts, and already having begun to ask some of the questions about call that their colleagues are beginning to explore. Interns have had overwhelmingly positive experiences in their summer placements and many come out with an affirmed, if evolving, sense of call and an enthusiasm for ordained ministry and the church.

But the purpose of Calling 21 is not simply to churn out more young pastors. It is to cultivate the idea in young people and in our churches that God calls all of us to ministry, and to help people talk about and listen to and discern just how God may be calling them. Some of our former interns who haven't gone on to seminary or candidacy are now youth directors, high school teachers and nonprofit workers, among other things. Those are success stories, too, because they are stories of young people who know that God's call to ministry comes in all different shapes and sizes, and who will certainly be gifted leaders in the church as well. At the same time, young people in host congregations have gotten the chance to see another young person discerning God's call – and the chance to see parish ministry as one of many answers to that question. ☞

-The Rev. Allie Rosner is an associate pastor at Williamsburg UMC.

⁷But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift... ¹¹The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. Ephesians 4:7, 11-13 (NRSV)

Internship at the Virginia Conference office pays dividends for the future

By Laura Godwin

For the past two summers, I have had the immense privilege of being an intern at the Virginia United Methodist Center. Not only did I have the opportunity to see the behind-the-scenes work of so many conference initiatives, the conference staff encouraged me throughout my time to grow in faith and in life.

One of the most memorable aspects of the intern experience was the time spent with the other interns. Throughout the summer, we each had weeks that were busier than others. It became a group effort to pull off many of the intern tasks. This group effort idea translated well into my time at college. Group projects create a sense of common purpose and panic. The fear that one person won't do their part ignites the need for a steady stream of e-mails and constantly proofreading work. In the end, projects are accomplished on time, and there is sanity in knowing that it would not have happened without the entire team.

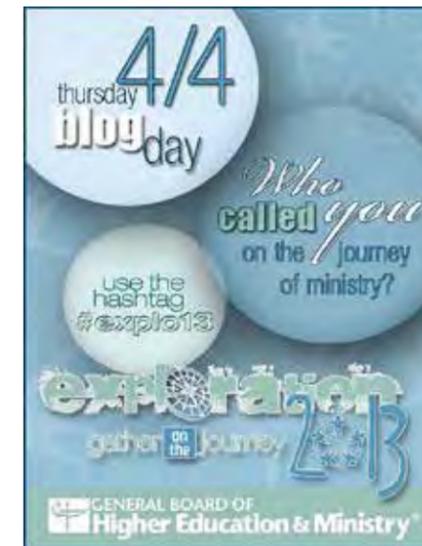
However, learning to work as a team was not the biggest take-away

from my time at the conference center. At the office, my voice mattered. I was allowed to think freely and be creative. Even though the interns were less experienced in the ways of the church, our ideas were valued, and we were treated like equals. Knowing that I was treated this way in such a professional setting has given me the courage to speak up and think big in ways I never would have before. My ideas matter and when meshed together with other big ideas, big things happen.

For a group project this semester we put together a business plan for an ideal non-profit. Some of the ideas were crazy and far-fetched, but that didn't matter. Our group pulled ideas from real life situations and things we'd been dreaming of for years. At the end of the semester, we realized that our non-profit could happen if we put a lot of work into it one day. If it wasn't for my experience at the conference office, I would not have had as much input. I learned to be confident that my ideas and my thoughts matter and can make a difference.

In fact, everyone's ideas can make a difference. I have employed the same compassion I was shown when working with middle and high school students in the local community. I want to show them that their ideas, dreams and input matter. Some days their ideas are more imaginative and impactful than mine would have ever been at their age. I want them to know that what they think is important, and so I listen, and most of the time I learn from them. Working at the conference office taught me to lead as an equal. God created no one more important than anyone else, and this is the way that we should be working with others. ☞

-Laura Godwin from Midlothian is a rising senior at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg. This summer she is interning at the Lackey Free Clinic in Yorktown.



'Blog Day' shares many different ways of hearing God's call

By Vicki Brown

God's call can be heard in a series of small daily moments, through the voice of a fellow church member, a pastor or a campus minister, or during a mission trip. And more than 30 United Methodists who have heard the call to ordained ministry blogged and tweeted about their personal experiences to generate buzz about attending *Exploration 2013*.

"I still was unsure of my call to ordained ministry. At the time I was told by my mentors, 'We see your call, so trust us. Get ordained and live into it.' So that is what I did, taking baby steps along the way, learning as I went, claiming my authority as I lived into

it," wrote the Rev. Beth Ann Estock, an ordained elder, during the April 4 blogging event.

Every call to ordained ministry has a story, said the Rev. Trip Lowery, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry's director of Young Adult Ministry Discernment and Enlistment.

"Sharing our stories strengthens our connection. We find common points of contact and places where our story intersects with the story of a fellow traveler. Stories offered can be affirming, encouraging, and enlightening to others. Hearing how God is moving in the lives of another helps us discern where God is moving in the midst of our own," said Lowery.

Registration is now open for *Exploration 2013* in Denver, an event for young adults age 18-26 to hear, discern, and respond to God's call to ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church.

Bloggers described many varied experiences.

"I never had that single moment when I turned to follow Christ. I can remember pieces of a lifelong series of small, almost daily moments when I am invited to reaffirm my desire to live and walk in God's grace. Discerning my call to ministry follows the same lines," said the Rev. David Morris, a pastor in Iowa.

Morris also wrote about how God's call continues throughout ministry. "We cannot rest secure in how we responded in the past, and we can't always be

waiting for something that might come in a future moment. God comes to us right here and right now and that is the best gift that we can be given. The best I can ever say in my life is that God is calling me now to the shape of my ministry," he wrote.

The Rev. April Casperson, a deacon who is director of Admissions at Methodist Theological School in Ohio and co-chair of the group planning *Exploration 2013*, wrote about how many people were involved in her call – her pastor, church members, professors, her husband, other clergywomen, the people who funded the scholarships that helped her complete her education and her peers in classes.

"I felt my own call to ministry when I was in high school," she said. From God, she felt "strange warming of the heart, paired with an unmistakable (and yet terrifying) sense of direction. And then gradual nudges over and over through the years."

The Rev. Jeremy Smith, an elder who writes the *Hacking Christianity* blog, said his call to ministry was a gradual process.

"There was no flaming dove that came down from heaven, there was just a little bit of empowerment that went a long way, that gave more saltiness to something that was already there that yearned for that saltiness. And I am forever appreciative," Smith wrote. ☞

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

Laura Godwin (left) with fellow intern Stacy Roberts worked at the Virginia Conference Center last summer.



Devotions from International Lesson Series

LIVING THE WORD



Jennifer Fletcher is a licensed local pastor serving her first appointment at the West Brunswick Charge in Brunswick County. She has been pastor of Bethel UMC and Macedonia UMC since September 2012. She received her Master of Divinity from Duke Divinity School, Durham, N.C., in May of 2011 and her Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies from Randolph-Macon College, in Ashland, in May of 2008. Jennifer anticipates being commissioned as a provisional elder at Annual Conference.

June 2, 2013
Call and response
Isaiah 6:1-8

Many people say that they do not need to attend Sunday morning worship to experience the presence of God. They feel closer to God more so in nature than in a pew. Scripture affirms “the whole earth is full of his glory,” (6:3, NRSV) so we can encounter God anywhere. But, in the worshipping life of the church we have the opportunity to connect with God in powerful ways.

The prophet Isaiah had a powerful experience of God in the Temple in Jerusalem. He had a vision of the Lord sitting on the throne, so large that all the Temple could hold was the edge of God’s robe! The seraphs were praising God with a song, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.” The building shook with their song and smoke filled the room. In response to this spectacular scene, Isaiah cried out, “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”

In worship, as we gather to sing, pray, celebrate the sacraments, read Scripture, and hear the word proclaimed, we are reminded in ways that touch all of our senses of who we are and who God is. We are reminded that God is Holy and therefore other than us and yet God chooses to meet us, sinful people that we are, in worship. It is in our corporate worship that we come to close encounter with God, even if just to touch the “hem of [God’s] robe.”

There is a popular hymn, “Here I Am, Lord.” In the chorus God poses the same question to us that God asked of Isaiah, “Whom shall I send?” (6:8). In corporate worship, we have opportunities to hear and respond to God’s calling to all Christians to ministry in the name of Jesus Christ.

I can remember my service of confirmation, when I professed the faith and claimed for myself the promises that were made in my baptism as an infant. It was in that service that I committed myself to a life of discipleship. We will all live out this calling in different ways, but it is in worship where we have the space to say, with Isaiah, “Here am I! Send me!”

June 9, 2013
Thank you, God
Isaiah 12

It’s that time of year again. The weather is warmer and the season is upon us for graduations, showers and weddings. After the festivities are over, many persons will find themselves at their kitchen table completing a large stack of thank you notes. Thank you notes are polite, tangible expressions of our appreciation and gratitude to another.

Isaiah says,
Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted (12:4).

For Christians, gratitude is much more than politeness. It is lifestyle that is at the root of our praise and worship of God.

The church practices thanksgiving most clearly in Holy Communion, often called the “Eucharist” meaning “thanksgiving.” When we break the bread and share the cup, we remember and give thanks for the events of Christ’s suffering, death and resurrection, and we look forward to the day when we will join him around the table in God’s kingdom. When we come forward to receive the elements, we approach the table with open hands because the grace that we receive when we come to the Lord’s table is a free gift.

This is why giving thanks is so important: because gratitude puts us in a right posture of faith in our relationship with God. While we are tempted to think that we have worked for and earned all of the things we have, persons who give thanks are reminded of grace – the undeserved, unmerited love of God which is available to all of us. We humbly acknowledge that every good gift in this life comes from the generosity of our loving God.

Ann Voskamp, in her book *One Thousand Gifts*, describes her journey of discovering what it means to practice gratitude by accepting a challenge to list the gifts – big and small – that God brings into her life. How will you choose to thank God this week?

June 16, 2013
Say it like you mean it
Isaiah 29:9-16a

Have you ever driven your car on a familiar route – say to work, or to pick the kids up from school – and when you reached your destination you couldn’t remember how you got there? Have you noticed that when you fail to vary your exercise routine you stop seeing results? Familiar activities risk becoming so routine that we disengage.

Worship can also become routine. We go through the motions rather than fully engaging our hearts. In this passage, God says about the people of Israel, “these people draw near with their mouths and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their worship of me is a human commandment learned by rote.”

How many elements of our weekly worship have become mundane for us? I imagine the words of the Lord’s Prayer which many of us have memorized, or the service of Holy Communion which some persons can follow without opening the hymnal. It is important for Christians to have these words tucked away in their hearts. Yet, there is always the risk that we will miss the transformative power in these well-worn words.

In Genesis, God spoke and the universe came into being (Genesis 1). In the Gospel of John, that same “Word became flesh and lived among us” (John 1:14) in the person of Jesus Christ. With God, words are not empty, but creative. When we speak with God in worship these words are for the glory of God and the shaping of our own hearts.

I can remember being young and needing to apologize for something I had done to a friend. So, I said “I’m sorry,” just like I was taught. But, inside I was not sorry, I just wanted to get back to playing. But, then, my

mother told me to “Say it like you mean it!”

What would happen if when we worship, we “say it like we mean it?” What would happen if we prayed “thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” and then lived like it? What changes would occur if we shared the Body of Christ and then took seriously our role in the Body? Even though God’s people worshipped as those who were in a “stupor,” God promised to “again do amazing things with this people.” May God again do amazing things with us.

June 23, 2013
Something New
Isaiah 65:17-21, 23-25

Prior to taking my first appointment, I had the privilege of serving for a year as a chaplain resident in a clinical pastoral education program in a hospital. It was there that I was faced with the depths of hurt and brokenness that we experience as human beings. I comforted mothers who lost their infants prematurely and prayed with families who had lost their loved ones to illness. I became all too familiar with the process of grief.

We hardly need to be reminded of the brokenness evident in our world. Beyond the personal losses that we experience, the recent bombing of the Boston Marathon, the shootings in Newtown, Conn., Hurricane Sandy – are all sobering reminders that things are not as they should be.

But, the prophet Isaiah caught a glimpse of God’s dream for all of creation, “For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating.” (65:17-18) God is actively working for the renewal and transformation of the entire creation and will bring

about future abundant life, justice and peace – where people will enjoy longevity, they will receive just reward for their labors, even natural enemies like the “wolf and the lamb” shall enjoy peaceful coexistence. Perhaps most importantly, we will enjoy such closeness and intimacy with God that God will know our needs even before we speak.

On this Sunday, United Methodists from all over Virginia are concluding our Annual Conference gathering and preparing to return to their churches and communities. The mission of The United Methodist Church is “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” God is going to accomplish this transformation, and God chooses to work through us. How is God calling us to participate in God’s transformative work in our churches and communities? Where do we see God’s vision for the new heavens and the new earth taking shape?

June 30, 2013
Homecoming
Ezra 3:1-7

They kept the festival of booths, as prescribed, and offered the daily burnt offerings (Ezra 3:4, NRSV).

We all know what it is like to have been away from home. Perhaps you have been away for a couple of days on a work trip, or a few years at school, or many years while you raised your family and now you long to come home.

The people of Israel had been away from home for a long time. After long years in exile in Babylon, King Cyrus of Persia allowed the people to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their lives – particularly the Temple where they worshipped God. When they returned they celebrated by worshipping God and observing their unique

(Continued on page 29: “Living Word.”)

CLERGY & DIACONAL



Deaths



The Rev. Edward Coleman Johnson, 73, died Friday, May 3, 2013. A native of West Virginia, Johnson was a graduate of Emory and Henry

College and ordained as a Methodist minister in 1958. During his ministry, he served more than 15 charges in Virginia and surrounding states, retired from Oxford UMC in Suffolk in 2010 and moved to Franklin. A memorial service was held at High Street UMC, where he had also served.



The Rev. Wrightson Samuel Tongue Sr., 96, died May 2, 2013, in Colorado Springs. Tongue was a graduate of Allegheny College

and Westminster Seminary (Wesley). His ministry spanned more than 40 years in the Virginia Conference serving pastorates at Tom's Brook, New Market, Calvary, Stuarts Draft, West End, Portsmouth, First, Lynchburg, Central, Hampton, St. Paul's, Woodbridge, and Wesley, Alexandria. Retiring in 1982, he moved to Colorado in 2000. He is survived by his wife of 73 years, Betty, and four sons and their families: the Rev. Wrightson S. Tongue Jr. of the Upper New York Conference, the Rev. James M. Tongue of the Virginia Conference, Lt. Col. (Ret.) William L. Tongue of Colorado, and Donald V. Tongue of New Hampshire.

Nolan Clay Dowdy Jr., 87, of Lynchburg, died April 28, 2013. He was the father of the Rev. Rodger Dowdy, director of Cross-Paths Ministry, and grandfather of Kristen Dowdy Hart,

who serves on the Virginia Conference administrative staff.

Mildred Flood, mother of **John Flood Sr.**, pastor of the Prospect Charge, Farmville District, died on May 4, 2013.

Emma Lee Davis Laine, 99, widow of the **Rev. Amos L. Laine**, died April 17, 2013, in Dunn, N.C. She was also mother-in-law to the **Rev. Donald H. Seely**, retired elder.

Mary Ann Minnick, wife of **Bishop C.P. Minnick**, died May 7, 2013, in Raleigh, N.C. Bishop Minnick was elected to the episcopacy in 1980 from the Virginia Conference.

Walter B. "Dick" Minter, 88, of Warrenton, died April 17, 2013. He was the husband of **Barbara J. Alloway**, retired local pastor.

Kathleen E. Stroud died May 4, 2013. She was the mother of the **Rev. Levi Stroud Jr.**, senior pastor of Good Shepherd UMC in Woodbridge.

William D. Thorne of Raleigh, N.C., died April 30, 2013. He was the father of the **Rev. Al Thorne** of Midlothian.

BIRTHS

Retired pastor the **Rev. Jim Mahaffey** and his wife, **Linda**, celebrated the birth of twin granddaughters, Lydia Haset and Sofia Emnet Mahaffey, on April 13.

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("Events," continued from page 15)

'Helping Hands'

July 29-30, Fairview UMC, Danville
July 29-30, Springfield UMC

A two-day hands-on mission experience for children (rising fourth-through sixth-graders), parents and adult leaders. Cost is \$36 per person. For more information contact Shana Barr (Springfield) at families@sumc-cares.org or (703) 451-2375; or Katherine Lewis (Danville) at director.fumc@comcast.net or (434) 792-3391.

AUGUST

All God's Children camp

Aug. 4-9 Camp Highroad
Aug. 4-9 Occohannock on the Bay
Aug. 11-16 Westview on the James
The All God's Children camps provide a week of sanctuary for children age 7-12 with a mother or father who is incarcerated. For more information, contact director Casey Torrence at (804) 521-1138 or 1-800-768-6040 ext. 138; or casey-torrence@vaumc.org.

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("Living Word," continued from page 27)

traditions of festivals and offerings. This was a joyful homecoming.

Homecomings are some of my favorite celebrations in the life of the church. Growing up, I always looked forward to greeting old friends whom I hadn't seen in a while. We observed special traditions each year: special music in worship, a potluck lunch after church and a concert by a local gospel band. It was a time of joy and laughter, and we would stay after church for hours enjoying each other's company. Traditions vary, but the joy is the same.

Perhaps the real reason that homecomings are such joyful occasions is because they are reflections of God's attitude toward us. They are reminders that no matter how far we wander from God, like the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) or the lost sheep (Luke 15:1-7), God is waiting to welcome us back home. And that is a reason to rejoice! ☺

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FROM THE BISHOP



Dedicating our future

This month we United Methodists of the Virginia Annual Conference will gather at the Convention Center in Hampton for our annual time of holy conferencing. We will hear reports and make important decisions for next year and the coming years. We will worship our God and celebrate what the Lord has done through us this conference year.

Our theme for this year's Annual Conference is "Lord, Teach Us to Pray." We will learn about prayer and pray together. I invite you to join me in praying for the upcoming Annual Conference; and I pray our gathering will be more than a business meeting. My prayer is that all of us will experience anew the presence of our risen Christ in us and among us and are encouraged and uplifted by the Holy Spirit.

One of the most serious challenges facing us today is that we are becoming an aging denomination. According to the statistical data, the average age of a United Methodist is 57. We have not

been effective in reaching out to the young generation for many years. As a result, we are now in danger of losing an entire generation. This is a very serious challenge we have to wrestle with. But an even more serious challenge is that there is no quick fix to turning around this challenging situation.

Another difficult challenge for us is that today's younger generation is living in a different culture from those of us who are older. The fast-paced development of technology has been giving them a different style of life and, in some cases, even different values. As an aging denomination, The United Methodist Church has been losing relevance with this generation. This is a huge challenge for us.

But I believe that these challenges also provide us with great opportunities in Christ. The situation we face is much more than a lack of skills or programs. We are asked to think about the true meaning of being Christ's church in today's world. We feel a strong need to seek God's wisdom and guidance as we seek to respond to this challenge. If we do not return to the Lord and humbly honor and obey the Lord's leadership, I do not think we can effectively meet the challenges we face.

One of the ways we can begin to reach the younger generation, especially young couples, is by setting as a priority the strengthening of our children and youth ministries. I know a church which intentionally focused their efforts here. The pastor set as his priority the development of an effective children's ministry. "Let the children come unto me" was the motto of his ministry. When some older members of his church raised concerns about this direction, he answered that this was what Jesus had said. As time passed, this church began to reach out more effectively to young couples through this intentional shift in the priority of ministry.

Another important way to respond to this challenge is to raise up and nurture young clergy. As I mentioned,

there is a huge cultural and generational gap between the younger and older generations. To reach out effectively to those who are younger, we need pastors who can effectively minister to and with those of this generation; and this demands of us younger clergy. The statistics of our church indicate that in the 1970s the percentage of young elders among the total number of United Methodist clergy was over 20 percent. By 2011 that percentage had dropped to only 5.6%. We in the Virginia Conference are doing better than this denominational average, but we still have a long way to go.

Reaching out to the next generation is an urgent mission Christ has given us. I remember a story which I read many years ago. When the Israelites were liberated from Egypt and reached Mt. Sinai, their leaders got together to discuss how they would express their gratitude to God. They considered collecting gold and dedicating it to God. But the Lord was not pleased with this plan. They thought of dedicating precious jewels to God. But God was not happy with this thought either. After much further reflection, they reached their conclusion. They decided they would dedicate their future to God by teaching God's salvation story to generation after generation. The Lord was very pleased with their decision.

If we have experienced God's amazing grace, the best way to express our gratitude to God is by dedicating our future to God. And the best way to dedicate our future to God is by reaching out to those of the rising generation and passing on the story of God's love in Christ to them. Our Lord will be very pleased with this plan. This is a very important mission we cannot ignore. This mission is not an option.

Lord, have mercy on us and help us to be faithful and fruitful in this mission. ✠

Floris UMC marks World Malaria Day with family fair



By Cynthia Lopynski

HERNDON – On April 26, Floris UMC hosted its first World Malaria Day celebration. The purpose of the event was to raise awareness around malaria and to raise money to support efforts to combat the disease.

The idea started when volunteers from Helping Children Worldwide (HCW) approached Melissa Ciavarella, Floris' director of Children Ministry, to suggest a special Sunday focused on malaria and timed with World Malaria Day. The idea grew into a Friday evening event for families from Floris and the local community and included African food and music.

Displays explaining malaria and how HCW's Mercy Hospital is making an impact in Bo, Sierra Leone, were placed around the Fellowship Hall. African music was piped in, and all were invited to participate in African dancing on the stage. The church's Gathering Space was filled with kids having fun making mosquitos out of pipe cleaners, making drums out of

Children at Floris UMC play with a Nerf basketball decorated with mosquitos (left). A youngster gets a mosquito painted on her arm during a fund-raiser to fight malaria for World Malaria Day (center). Kids play with a giant mosquito made of balloons (right).

plastic cups and enjoying face painting of mosquitos on their arms as well as faces.

Prior to the event, Melissa challenged the Sunday school classes to raise money noting that as little as \$5, the cost of a test and treatment kit, can save a life. The students took the challenge and set a goal of \$1,150. Many of them opened lemonade stands, held bake sales in their communities and did extra chores at home or for their neighbors. The highlight of the evening was hearing that the children exceeded their goal and raised \$1,250.65.

Another \$824 was raised through donations the evening of the event, and \$984 was given through generous donation from the congregation. The total proceeds, \$3,058, will be split equally to purchase nets through the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) No More Malaria campaign and test and treatment kits for Mercy Hospital. ✠

- Cynthia Lopynski is
director of Communications at Floris UMC



ONE LAST WORD



Tweets heard 'round the conference

tbrysonsmith @tbrysonsmith
#pastorperk doing a wedding and sitting at one of the head tables.

Keith Elgin @keithelgin
you want to come to our church tomorrow? It's small, but we have fun loving God. thevineva.org

Patti Money @pattimoney
I love the Shore. I really do. Most of the time. Until I need a baby-sitter at the last minute. Then it's #ihatetheshore.

mochel morris @preacher3
#dreamumc in Holy conferencing last week had to look at what is most imp for world to see in us-unity or honesty about how we don't agree

Gina Anderson-Cloud @pastorgina
Thanks to the fundraising efforts from our M&M kids they were able to purchase a flock of chicks, a flock of ducks, a share of a pig, and a share of a goat through the Heifer Project.

Five Talent Academy @5talentacademy Our fall #5Talent focus is #worship. Tell us: What lingers most in your heart/mind once you leave your worship space?

Brian Siegle @VATechRev9
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A Mission in Mind



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