

# Advocate



Developing  
Christian  
Leaders

Connecting with the



Virginia Advocate

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

# PILLOW TALK



**Madeline Pillow**  
Editor

## Equipping the called

### "God doesn't call the equipped, God equips the called."

I was really shy growing up. The kind of shy that had me running behind my mom every time I saw a stranger — or the organist at my church.

Joel was a young guy who was both the organist and choir director at Amelon UMC in Madison Heights.

At a Wednesday night dinner, I peeked around my mom at Joel and heard them talking about singing lessons. I had no idea what singing at home in my hairbrush had to do with him.

Now my mom was never one to push me into anything just to rid me of my shyness, but I guess she figured we could start small.

It became a first for Joel and me: he had never given voice lessons, and I did not understand the concept of voice lessons.

At first those weekly lessons were terrifying. But through Joel's humor (blonde jokes were his specialty) and the wonderful music (especially of Broadway) that he introduced me to, it became something really special.

When Joel talked to my mom about me offering a solo during church service, she was wary. But I was adamant and ready. Looking back, it still shocks me how quickly fear had turned into strength.

What led to the first of many solos, roles in musicals, plays and more, was the first time I realized I had confidence in something — that I trusted myself to be skilled in something.

It was later in middle school, during an award ceremony for achievements, that I learned something else about myself. When I won an award, what was impressed upon me more than the award was what my teacher said about me while presenting. She said I had a "quiet strength."

It was between these two events that I realized leadership doesn't always look like I imagined with people who are naturally outspoken, secure and ready to lead the charge.

Then and now, I realize that I had the confidence to be a leader on my own terms.

In the Virginia Conference, developing leaders for ministry is integral to the future of the church. Programs like Calling 21, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, is a way for young people to explore their call and understand, just like I did, that their ministries and leadership can look different in a number of ways.

It's a good and hard reminder that God doesn't call us when we have everything figured out: neat and tidy. God calls us and gives us the tools along the way.

God hasn't created one direction for leadership — God has many kinds for a variety of purposes. 🍷

Until our next issue,



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### Local Church News

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

### Letters

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

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### Correction:

The photo with Barbara McPhail's article about rescue dogs in the May *Advocate* issue is not McPhail, as stated, but rather Lynn Nelson, a member of Main Street UMC, Suffolk, and her rescue dog.

### The *Virginia Advocate* Staff

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# LETTERS

## Stating beliefs

**W**ith General Conference approaching, it is time for the normally timid to be heard. I never have believed that religious faith should be presented so as to be complicated. Jesus came to make it simple. So, please permit an 83-year-old retiree to state mine.

I believe that a creative force (which we call God) created this universe and all life within it. What God created, God saw that it

was good (Genesis 1:31). Therefore, we are to love, respect and protect all that God has created.

I believe that Jesus came as a great witness for God and invited us to be his friends. He said, "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:14). He did not say that we have to be renowned theologians or proficient in biblical law. Jesus said, "My commandment is this, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

Therefore, I believe that every person who has recognized the claim of God upon his or her life — young or old, of every color, male or female, heterosexual or homosexual — has a witness to make and a love to share.

It is my hope and prayer that in all of its deliberations, our General Conference will allow Jesus to speak.

— The Rev. Frederick A. Arndt,  
Lexington, retired elder

## Follow the pacer

By Bill Pike

**A** couple of mornings a week, I'm up before five heading to the Tuckahoe YMCA. I work out with some weight machines and get my heart pumping with the stationary bike. Hercules, Samson and Charles Atlas need not fear my weight machine workouts, as I am wiry like Barney Fife. This is a significant change from my days as an overweight, pudgy youth.

In January at the YMCA, there seems to be an increase of activity. I'm assuming people are wrestling with their New Year resolutions, but by March that initial commitment is as fleeting as winter's last snow flurry.

As I ride the stationary

bike, the large color monitor on the peddling machine beside me is often a distraction. This cleverly animated display of bike riding options flashes: "Working out has never been this much fun!" And later, I'm intrigued by another brief prompt: "Follow the pacer."

Sometimes I wonder what I am doing at the YMCA when people with more sense than I have are catching extra minutes of sleep. But in those solitary moments of exercise, my mind roams all over the place, and recently I've been thinking about the phrase "Working out has never been this much fun," and occasionally I switch the words to: "Attending church has never been this

much fun."

So is attending church fun? As that pudgy youth, often I felt church was boring. After college, church attendance for me was Christmas and Easter and nothing else. With marriage and starting a family, church slowly became a consistent habit again.

But what does it take to make church fun? While I'm clearly no expert on the topic, I do have some observations.

Over the last few years, I've heard the phrase "radical hospitality" used in reference to churches. I agree that hospitality is a key piece for newcomers within the walls of the church. First-time visitors will probably feel awkwardly unwelcome if, upon finding a seat in the sanctuary on a Sunday



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



# COMMENTARY

morning, they are shortly greeted with the territorial “I’m sorry, but you are sitting in my pew!”

Another key piece is a church’s capacity to help people find their way within the church. Can the church staff and its congregation match their offerings to a person’s interests or needs? This is a matter of helping an individual find their comfort zone while also providing opportunities for spiritual growth.

Navigating large churches can be overwhelming, and it is incumbent for hefty


churches to have a balance of offerings. A critical piece of these offerings is designing programs that touch every age demographic from infants and their families to the elderly and everything in between.

Churches that rely upon a tired template of doing the same things over and over again because that’s the way we have always done it, will probably mire deeply in their own redundant mud. Taking some calculated risks are opportunities to grow and who knows, some fun might be generated!

Another piece of the tired template is related to our eyesight and how we see our church facilities. Viewing the building and grounds with “tired eyes” can create complacency in maintaining and managing a facility. By taking the time to really see interior and exterior areas from a different perspective, the “tiredness” can be improved.

Churches must actively pursue opportunities to move beyond their existing walls. When I think about the encounters Jesus had with people, walls did not contain him. Jesus was like

a pacer, moving through assorted environments, interacting, leading his disciples, assisting and rarely slowing his pace.

If churches aspire to be vibrant, fun places for people to connect and grow, then maybe we need to more carefully revisit the work of the steady pacer, Jesus, by following his practical examples of love and wisdom both inside and outside the walls of the church. 

– Bill Pike is director of Operations at Trinity UMC in Richmond.

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# COMMENTARY

## Group follows God's urging to hold revival

By Shaun Smith

**L**ate August 2015, I received a call from a Christian colleague, Harold Mullins, who attends a local Baptist church. God had kept him awake four nights in a row calling him to hold a revival in Southside

Virginia.

Harold explained he was a more of a “behind-the-scenes” guy and wanted me to be the front person. After saying “yes,” we kicked around ideas and began to put the plan into action. Neither of us had any experience holding a revival of this magnitude, but trusted God would lead us. One thing we had was faith—faith that God wanted this

and would guide us. Each time our faith waned or the devil sent one of his soldiers, God sent us an angel.

We pulled together people we knew, shared the passion for this revival and scheduled our first meeting. We chose our scripture for the revival: Mt 28:19-20, “Therefore go and make disciples in all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and then teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you; and be sure of this—that I am with you always, even to the end of the world.”

We set a target date for October, put together a list of speakers we would like to invite, created a to-do list and made assignments. Budgeting was essential, so we started to get pricing for the things as well as getting sponsors to cover the cost and/or provide services. We reached churches through mailings and follow-up phone calls. Reaching the churches, 10 counties in Southside Virginia and north central N.C., was done by mailing letters to each and then following up with a phone call.

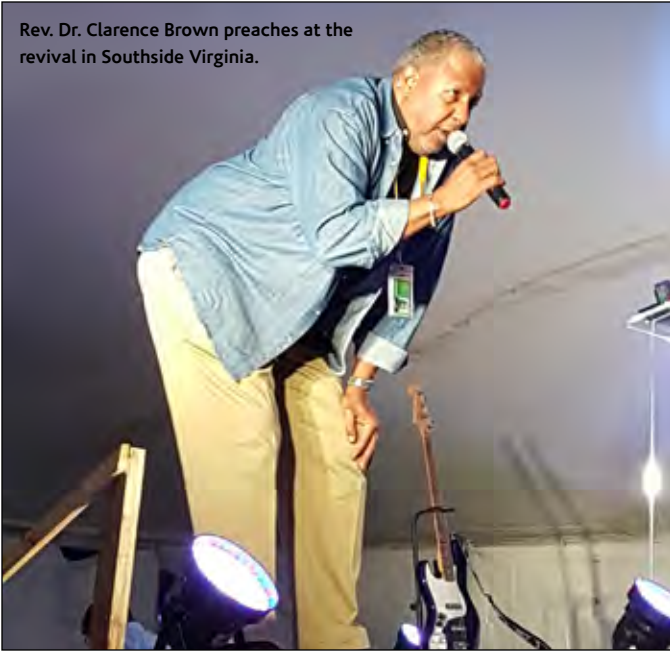
In preparing for the event, I went to see my district superintendent, the Rev. Dr. Rob Colwell. He told me, “You have to have three things for a successful revival: a speaker, a witness and music. As long as one

Tent erected in private park holds old-fashioned revival.



# COMMENTARY

Rev. Dr. Clarence Brown preaches at the revival in Southside Virginia.



of those is really good and the other two are okay, the event will be successful.”

As for speakers, we were intent on a speaker that was well known to most everyone in our primarily Baptist community and sent an invitation to Jonathan Falwell. Jonathan was available, but for only one night. We also asked the Rev. Dr. Clarence Brown, he also was available for only one night.

Not able to get a speaker for both nights and the witness we wanted—a local sports legend—led us to put the event off until the spring.

In 2016, there was good news: our event site, a private park, was donated, a couple of key sponsors came on board and we received some significant personal donations.

We again requested

Jonathan Falwell’s availability. Again, Jonathan was available for only one night, April 7. We were perplexed. Why, with this much lead time, was he available for only one night? God gave us the answer, “I only want him to speak for one night; someone else is to speak the next night.”

Brunswick County and surrounding counties have an approximate 50-50 split demographic between whites and blacks. We now realized that God wanted two speakers, one for each demographic. Having spoken to the Rev. Clarence Brown about being our speaker for October, we called him again about April 8. Clarence was available—God’s plan was coming together.

By February, God had put together a solid team,

and sent our witness—Larry Wright of Heal the Land Ministries in Fayetteville, N.C. Larry had a gunman walk into his Watch Night service on New Year’s Eve this past year. Larry, a retired Army veteran, approached the man with the anticipation he would be shot, but would be able to prevent others from being injured. The man didn’t shoot. He surrendered his gun, stayed for the remainder of the service, and gave his life to Christ at the end.

Two pieces to the revival puzzle were in place. Now we needed music.

At the beginning of March, Harold, our primary fundraiser, ran into setbacks. Donations were lower than projected, and we needed to put a 50 percent deposit on the tent and insurance. In came an angel, Kathleen Poulton. A recently licensed minister with the Assembly of God church, Kathleen felt pulled to put together a revival in Brunswick County. Lifting it to God in prayer, she saw our Facebook page and called us.


Kathleen was at our next meeting with new and fresh ideas. She knew many people in the area, was willing to work and had the time. She also knew the best Christian band in the area, NFocus. Within a few days of that meeting, NFocus was scheduled—the third piece of the revival

puzzle was set!

A grant was received from the James River District Missions Board for \$1,000. With this, and the money Harold and others continued to raise, we had what we needed to pay for the tent and cover speaker and insurance costs.

It is impossible to express the power of the Holy Spirit that filled the tent. I have chills just thinking about it. Over 400 people attended over the two nights, and 14 we know of gave or rededicated their lives to Jesus. Yes, that is less than we planned for, but we know in our hearts it was just what God wanted.

God’s plan for Southside Virginia continued to be revealed during the revival. I met two families that sold their homes and moved to the area in response to God’s call for revival here, and there are others I have met in the past.

Park Place UMC is currently planning a revival in Norfolk. We have gladly shared our experience, provided the documents we created and our lessons learned. This is available to anyone else that is interested, and I am willing to come to your kick-off meeting. 

— The Rev. Shaun Smith is pastor of the Philadelphia Charge in Brunswick County, James River District.



# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



## Food, faith is topic of Ministers' Convocation



By Madeline Pillow

**M**inisters' Convocation 2016 — a time for fellowship and spiritual renewal — was held April 18-20 at the Wyndham Virginia Crossings Hotel and Retreat Center in Glen Allen. The theme was “Come to the Table—Bringing Food and Faith Together.”

Not only was the location different this year but it was also scheduled at a time when the convocation design team hoped more clergy would be able to engage with colleagues and with the topic.

“A high percentage of our participants were first-

time convocation attendees, and the immediate feedback from the group was that people were thrilled to have worshiped God well, pondered food and faith in new ways and connected with colleagues,” said Meredith McNabb, conference director of the Center for Clergy Excellence.

The topic also resonated with many clergy because it spoke to work that they are currently doing in their churches.

“What I’ve gleaned from this [the plenary] is this partnership between God’s creation and us and ministry and it gave me some ideas. We have a community garden at our church, which we just started last year, and there was something that the speaker said that made

me realize that we need to take this garden to another level,” said Lynda Moore, pastor of West End UMC in the Elizabeth River District.

For Larry Cochrane, pastor of Belmont UMC, Richmond District, this convocation helped him see expansion as well as education in his church’s feeding ministry.

“We do a feeding ministry at our church where we provide groceries for about 375 families a week, every Friday morning. I’m looking to offer classes for nutrition, look at establishing gardens and how we can work with our community better and get our community involved,” said Cochrane.

Keynote presenter was Dr. Norman Wirzba, professor at Duke Divinity School and leading expert in the field of theological ethics around food that is eaten and how it is grown.

Other presenters included Dominic Barrett, executive director of Shalom Farms, an innovative United Methodist-related initiative to both grow good food (on the grounds of Westview on the James camp) and to fundamentally shape nutritional access and food justice in the Richmond area. 🍷

— Madeline Pillow is editor of the Advocate.



The theme for Ministers' Convocation centered on food and faith.



# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

## Linda Rhodes, Communications director, to retire Sept. 1



Linda S. Rhodes

Linda S. Rhodes, director of Communications, has announced her upcoming retirement projected for Sept. 1. Linda has been director of Communications since April 16, 2007.

Prior to her ministry as Virginia Conference director of Communications, Linda served for 15 years as Communications direc-

tor for the Northern Illinois Conference. She had also been marketing director for commercial banks and had owned her own marketing and communications consulting firm.

As director of Communications, Linda has provided supervision for the conference Communications staff and worked closely with the Bishop and Cabinet related to communication concerns. Beyond the Virginia Conference, Linda serves as a "Rethink Church" (Igniting Ministry) trainer and provides General Church leadership with United Methodist Association of Communicators.

In announcing her retirement, Linda noted that she has mixed emotions about her decision. "I have loved my time working here for the Virginia Conference," she said, "and I will miss being with members of the conference staff on a regular basis. I will particularly miss the wonderful members of the Communications Department, whom I consider friends as well as co-workers. But I trust that our friendships will continue past my retirement date. And I feel confident that I leave the communications ministry of the Virginia Conference in capable hands."

The Rev. Marc Brown, director of Connectional Ministries, said that "Linda has been a valuable member of our Connectional Ministries staff. Her expertise and Christian compassion have been evident in many ways as she has witnessed to her faith in Christ through her ministry in Virginia. We pray for God's blessings for Linda and her family as she enters a new chapter in her life."

Shirley Cauffman, Common Table Personnel Committee chair, has announced the committee will review the director of Communications position description in beginning the search process for this ministry position. 🍀

## Workshops offer financial wellness to clergy

By Madeline Pillow

Recognizing a need to share financial information with clergy in the midst of their ministry, John Fuller, executive director of Virginia United Methodist Pensions (VUMPI); Jim Eads, CEO of Virginia United Methodist Credit Union; and Stephen Clark, president of Virginia United Methodist Foundation, joined with Strawbridge Financial Services to offer a new opportunity.

The group offered two workshops in April, at Fishersville UMC, Fisherville, and Community UMC in Virginia Beach, covering a fairly comprehensive overview of personal finance and retirement planning topics.

Through feedback from VUMPI's retirement transition seminar, which is held just a couple of months prior to ministers' retirement date, Fuller realized there is a need among clergy for more financial guidance before retirement.

"Often participants have indicated that they would have benefited from hearing more about various financial topics before they had made the decision to retire," said Fuller.

Ron Mentzler of Strawbridge, Eads and Clark have often provided guidance to clergy who need to know more about money management, investment management and estate planning.

Together, they developed the idea for a one-day seminar to equip attendees with the knowledge necessary to address current needs related to topics such as risk management and money management, to plan ahead for retirement and estate planning and to take advantage of programs already existing that can help Virginia Conference clergy manage their own financial risks.

"Studies indicate that most Americans devote insufficient time to planning for their own finances in retirement. That condition could be especially true for clergy, who tend to focus most of their energy on the welfare of others and leave little time to take care of themselves," said Fuller. "We wanted this one-day seminar to be an opportunity for Virginia Conference clergy to be reminded of the need to take some time to address their own financial situation, and to review the various conference and denominational programs that are available to them, including the insurance and pension programs that are designed to be part of a clergyperson's overall financial plans."

The group hopes to conduct these workshops periodically. 🍀

— Madeline Pillow is editor of the Advocate.

# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



## Northern VA culinary program invests in Hispanic community

By Kenn Speicher

Something wonderful is cooking in Estela Chavez' kitchen. In addition to tasty cakes, pastries and tamales, hope for a better life is on the menu as she launches her new home-based business.

U.S. Senator Tim Kaine visited La Cocina in 2015 and recognized that the program was "helping people get jobs." Photo courtesy of Kenn Speicher.



Estela is a recent graduate of La Cocina VA, the bi-lingual culinary training and workforce development program at Mount Olivet United Methodist Church in Arlington. She moved to Arlington from Peru 19 years ago. A housewife and mother, Estela had picked up work when she could, but language was always a barrier to getting training and jobs. La Cocina VA changed this.

"La Cocina VA empowers unemployed and low-income people in northern Virginia's Hispanic community by investing in their potential," said Patricia Funegra, program founder and CEO. "Our students receive the training and support to find good sustainable jobs and break the cycles of poverty that hold too many people back."

With its sixth class of up to 10 students about to begin, the 13-week program offers bi-lingual training in food preparation taught by a professional chef in the certified kitchen at Mount Olivet UMC. The program includes vocational English classes, food safety and sanitation course, career readiness training and job placement assistance. There is no cost to the students, who each graduate with a ServSafe certification, a Certificate of Completion from the Northern Virginia Community College's workforce

development program in the culinary arts and a four-week paid internship with Whole Foods or an area hotel.

Although the program is less than two years old, it is producing remarkable results. "90 percent of our students complete the training," said Funegra.

Of these, 85 percent have found good jobs with employers such as Whole Foods and the Hyatt hotel in Arlington. They receive an average wage of \$13 an hour. To put this in perspective, the minimum wage in Virginia is \$7.25 an hour. Graduates start out ahead of the game.

But there is more to La Cocina VA than training alone. The program has made healthful eating and food assistance integral parts of its mission.

"Obesity and its consequences, such as diabetes, are serious problems in the Hispanic community," said Funegra. "Our students learn about nutrition and healthy cooking, which they can then share with their families and on the job."

The program supports an active food assistance effort. During training, each student prepares 10 meals a day. That has translated into more than 13,000 healthful meals, with lots of fresh fruits and vegetables, which the program has distributed at no

# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

charge to the homeless and families in need. The goal is to make healthful eating possible for people who can't afford or have limited access to fresh food.

**“La Cocina VA empowers unemployed and low-income people in northern Virginia’s Hispanic community by investing in their potential.”**

*Patricia Funegra,  
program founder and CEO*

As a non-profit, La Cocina VA depends on assistance from a diverse range of organizations, including important donors like the Meyer Foundation. Nevertheless, funding remains a big challenge. The UMC’s GRACE Ministries was an early supporter, and Mount Olivet UMC has provided facilities, financial support and volunteers, but the program has a long way to go to reach sustainability.

“La Cocina VA is a superb example of our congregation’s commitment to answering Jesus’ call to serve through ministry with our neighbors in need,” said the Rev. Ed Walker, senior pastor at Mount Olivet UMC. “I am so impressed with the difference this program makes for its students and for our community. And when those mouth-watering aromas come wafting from the Mount Olivet kitchen, we get samples! How great is that?”

For La Cocina VA, small business development is the next step in its mission. Estela Chavez calls her new home business *Cakes & Sweets*.

“We advised Estela on all the things she needed to get her business up and running,” said Funegra.

This included connecting her with Northern Virginia Family Service, which helps people like Estela start new businesses. She learned how to register her company and prepare a business plan. She prepared her kitchen to meet Loudoun County’s inspection requirements, and program staff helped her develop access to the capital she would need. Soon, *Cakes & Sweets* will be satisfying many a sweet tooth in the area, but Estela also made sure to add her favorite tamales to the menu: beef, chicken and veggie.

Two more graduates are also working to establish new businesses in Fairfax and Arlington Counties, where they will need access to a commercial kitchen. Seeing another way to help, La Cocina VA has plans underway for a state-of-the-art kitchen incubator facility to launch new businesses and expand its culinary training and food assistance missions.

“We are so thankful to Mount Olivet for being a launching pad for us,” said Funegra, “but success will mean growing into our own kitchen incubator.”

And those two new businesses? Someday soon, look for *Empanadas by Mabel* and *Tres Leches by Carolina*.

To find out more about La Cocina VA and how your congregation might support its mission, visit [www.lacocinava.org](http://www.lacocinava.org) or contact Patricia Funegra at (202) 316-5614. ☎

– Kenn Speicher is Mission and Outreach chair at Mount Olivet UMC in Arlington.

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# EVENTS



## June

### UMVIM Team Leader Training

**June 4, Franktown UMC, Franktown**  
Virginia Conference United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) Team Leader Training will be held on Saturday, June 4, at Franktown UMC, 7551 Bayside Rd., Franktown. Training will begin promptly at 9:30 a.m. and end at 3:30 p.m. Doors open at 9 a.m. Team Leader Training is required for all first-time team leaders, but all interested persons are welcome to attend whether leading a team or not. All participants must pre-register by noon Monday before the training event. There is a \$55 registration fee for each participant. For more information, contact Forrest White, conference UMVIM coordinator, at (804) 938-1026 or [VirginiaUMVIM@gmail.com](mailto:VirginiaUMVIM@gmail.com).

### Annual Conference

**June 17-19, Berglund Center, Roanoke**

### Helping Hands for Children

**June 22-23, St. Paul's UMC, Staunton**  
This two-day mission experience for children is offered to all member churches of the Virginia Conference. Rising 4th through 6th graders, parents and adult leaders can come and learn about mission opportunities and the importance of being a caring Christian. Cost is \$36 per person. This includes t-shirt, meals, snacks and overnight stay. Complete registration form by May 30 on the conference website at [www.vaumc.org](http://www.vaumc.org) under "Events" and the date. For more information, contact Beth Christian at [BethChristian@vaumc.org](mailto:BethChristian@vaumc.org).

### Harambee!

**June 24-28, Rust College, Holly Springs, Mississippi**  
For rising 7th graders through high

school graduates (ages 12-18) and adult workers with youth, this is a youth conference planned by the HARAMBEE planning committee under the guidance of the executive board of the Southeastern Jurisdiction Black Methodists for Church Renewal, Inc. The conference is held annually to help youths develop spiritual, leadership and interpersonal skills. Come to work, pray, sing and build meaningful relationships with God and each other. Speaker will be the Rev. Jerome Scales Jr., pastor of Spirit Of Truth UMC in Mason, Tenn. Registration ends June 2. All necessary paperwork is on the conference website at [www.vaumc.org](http://www.vaumc.org) under "Events" and the date. Refer any questions to the Rev. Constance Nelson Barnes, [RegistrarHarambee@yahoo.com](mailto:RegistrarHarambee@yahoo.com).

## July

### Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference

**July 13-15, Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center, Lake Junaluska**

The 2016 Conference theme is "Hope and Unity in Christ" based on Hebrews 6:18-19a. The conference opens at 9 a.m. on July 13 and concludes on July 15 with the Service of Consecration for newly-elected episcopal leaders.

### Helping Hands for Children

**July 21-22, Woodlake UMC, Chesterfield**

This two-day mission experience for children is offered to all member churches of the Virginia Conference. Rising 4th through 6th graders, parents and adult leaders can come and learn about mission opportunities and the importance of being a caring Christian. Cost is \$36 per person. This includes t-shirt, meals, snacks and overnight stay. Complete registration

form by June 24 on the conference website at [www.vaumc.org](http://www.vaumc.org) under "Events" and the date. For more information, contact Beth Christian at [BethChristian@vaumc.org](mailto:BethChristian@vaumc.org).

### Mission Encounter

**July 29-31, Randolph Macon College, Ashland**

Mission Encounter is a cooperative event sponsored by the Virginia Conference Missional Ministries Board (formerly Board of Global Ministries) and Virginia Conference United Methodist Women. This event offers a wonderful opportunity for your whole congregation to come alive to mission by participating in an exciting week-end mission education experience. If you have ever wondered not just how we DO mission, but also where we are in mission and most importantly why we are called to live out missional lives as disciples of Jesus Christ, this is the event to attend. Open to clergy and laity, men and women, participants can choose one of three classes: Issue Study, Geographic Study of Latin America and Spiritual Growth Study. Register online at [www.vaumc.org/MissionEncounter](http://www.vaumc.org/MissionEncounter). For more information, contact Dennis Lipke, dean of the Mission Encounter committee, at [dennislipke@vaumc.org](mailto:dennislipke@vaumc.org) or (804) 262-8651.

# Congratulations to our **VOLUNTEER** and **CHAMPION** Award Winners



Leadership in Philanthropy - Jim & Jill Gaynor

Corporate Supporter - Richmond Strikers Soccer Club

Media Advocate - Bill Lohmann

Lifetime Achievement - Skip Coston & Ken Gassman

Child Advocate - Sen. Barbara Favola

Volunteer Leadership, Individual - Rick & Sharon Kessler

Volunteer Leadership, Group - Dr. Kit Sullivan & Windsor Farms Garden Club

Volunteer Leadership, Faith-Based - Reveille United Methodist Church

Foundation Supporter - Meador Foundation



Visit [www.umfs.org](http://www.umfs.org) to learn how you can be a champion for high-risk children and their families in Virginia.



*Thy will be done*



2016 VIRGINIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

## 2016 Annual Conference June 17-19, 2016 Berglund Center, Roanoke, VA

The 2016 session of the Virginia Annual Conference will be held June 17-19 at the Berglund Center in Roanoke. Theme of the 2016 Annual Conference is "Thy Will Be Done." The logo was developed by Cathryn Huff, contract graphic designer for the conference Communications office.

### Annual Conference preachers

Preacher for the Saturday evening ordination service will be **Bishop Mark Webb** from the Upper New York Annual Conference. Preacher for the Saturday morning mission service will be the **Rev. Eun Pa Hong**, senior pastor of Bupyeong Methodist Church in South Korea. Preacher for the Friday evening memorial service will be the **Rev.**

**Myrtle Frances Hatcher**, pastor of Main St. UMC, Suffolk. Preacher for the retirement service will be the **Rev. Jim Tongue**. Annual Conference teacher will be **Dr. L. Gregory Jones**, Duke Divinity School.

### Annual Conference Special Offering

The 2016 Annual Conference offering goal will be \$150,000 and focus on both international and Virginia-based mission needs. The offering goal includes:

- ❖ \$50,000 for Methodist Mission in Cambodia;
- ❖ \$25,000 for Methodist Church of Brazil programs with at-risk children;
- ❖ \$25,000 for training laity in United Methodist churches in Mozambique; and
- ❖ \$50,000 to help fund disaster response in the Virginia Conference.

### Banquets

If you are planning a banquet for this year's Annual Conference and would like to have your event listed in the Conference Banquet Schedule, forward the following information to the Annual Conference Banquet coordinator at **michaelreaves@vaumc.org** or mail it to Fletcher's Chapel United Methodist Church, 8330 Fletcher's Chapel Rd., King George,

VA 22485.

- ❖ Name of your group or gathering
- ❖ Date and Time
- ❖ Location
- ❖ Contact Information for those who may want more information

### Child Care

Bonsack United Methodist Church (4493 Bonsack Rd.) will be hosting paid child care during Annual Conference this year. Child care is available for ages 0-10 and will be offered Friday, June 17, 12:30-5:30 p.m.; Saturday, June 18, 8 a.m.-5:30 p.m. and 7-9:30 p.m.; and Sunday, June 19, 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Registration is required for child care at **www.etchouches.com/16vacc**. For questions, contact Susan Wagner at **Susan@bonsackumc.org**. Registration deadline is May 31.

### Computer-Assisted Notetaking

Individuals are needed who can offer their time and talent in communicating the spoken word to persons who need computer assisted note-taking during Annual Conference. Assistance is needed to type text of reports, worship and music using Microsoft Word, at times as the speaker is presenting. Good typing speed and accuracy is a must! Individuals will be needed for all sessions

Above from left to right: The Berglund Center in Roanoke; Bishop Mark Webb; Rev. Eun Pa Hong; Rev. Myrtle Frances Hatcher; Dr. L. Gregory Jones; a session at the 2015 Virginia Annual Conference; cleaning buckets; a family participating in the potato drop in 2015.





for shifts of one hour or longer. Further information is available from the Office of Inclusivity and Lay Leadership Excellence at **1-800-768-6040, ext. 154, or (804) 521-1154** or e-mail to **CherylEdleyWorford@vaumc.org**

## Displays

The Displays Committee reserves the right to limit the number of tables available to each organization. If you have questions, contact the Rev. Joanna Paysour at **(540) 989-3673** or **JoannaPaysour@vaumc.org**.

## Housing

To assist in determining your reservation time frame, please be aware that the Clergy and Laity Sessions begin at 1 p.m. Friday, June 17, and the first plenary session begins at 3 p.m. The following hotels are sold out as of Feb. 29, 2016:

- ❖ Cambria Suites
- ❖ Comfort Inn Airport
- ❖ Hampton Inn and Suites
- ❖ Holiday Inn Express
- ❖ Residence Inn by Marriott

## Kits for Conference

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

supply. Local churches are encouraged to collect items for any of the most requested UMCOR kits — Bedding, Birthing, Cleaning, Health, Layette, School and Sewing Kits — and bring them to Annual Conference. Please note that Health and School Kits are most needed this year.

Please bring the kits in boxes (not bags), labeled and with a count of the items. For kit instructions, go to **www.umcor.org/UMCOR/Relief-Supplies**. Kits should be taken to the two tractor-trailers at the far end of the Berglund Center parking lot A, near the intersection of Williamson Road and Orange Ave. (across from the Sheetz Gas Station.)

Kits will be received 12-5 p.m. Thursday, June 16; 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Friday, June 17; and 8 a.m.-12 p.m. Saturday, June 18. Send cash for kits directly to conference treasurer. If you prefer to contribute cash to enable UMCOR to purchase relief kits, you can contribute:

- ❖ \$50 for each bedding kit
- ❖ \$8 for each birthing kit
- ❖ \$65 for each cleaning kit
- ❖ \$12 for each health kit
- ❖ \$45 for each layette kit
- ❖ \$11 for each school kit
- ❖ \$28 for each sewing kit

In addition, UMCOR asks for \$1 per kit (\$1.50 for

cleaning buckets) to cover processing and shipping and \$1 for toothpaste for each health kit. Please do NOT bring checks to Annual Conference. ALL checks (for processing and shipping, for toothpaste and in lieu of providing kits) should be made payable to “Virginia Conference UMC,” earmarked for “kits” and mailed to **Treasurer, Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 5605, Glen Allen, VA 23058** any time prior to Annual Conference, and no later than Aug. 31.

## Virtual Promo Packet

In an effort to be good stewards of the environment and financial resources of the conference, the Annual Conference “promo packets” will again this year be virtual. Electronic copies of materials previously submitted in hard copy for the tote bag will be accepted — at no cost to the organizations submitting them — for inclusion in the Virtual Promo Packet, which will be posted on the conference website beginning June 1. Those organizations still wishing to disseminate their information in a hard-copy format may arrange for a display table at the Berglund Center by contacting Joanna Paysour at **(540) 989-3673** or **JoannaPaysour@vaumc.org**.

## Volunteer Opportunities During Conference

Help is needed in the following areas:

- ❖ ushers/greeters
- ❖ registration
- ❖ setting up or packing up
- ❖ assisting in the parking lot, with the potato drop
- ❖ collecting for CANS 4 Conference.

To volunteer for these and other opportunities, register online at: **www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0848abaf2ca0fc1-2016**.

More volunteers are also needed for this year’s “Kits for Conference” collection at Annual Conference. You can help (1) write information on a clipboard; (2) sort kits; (3) seal boxes; or (4) load boxes onto the tractor-trailers. Kit collection will take place Thursday, June 16, 12-5 p.m.; Friday, June 17, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.; and Saturday, June 18, 8 a.m.-12 p.m. If you can volunteer to help, e-mail Virgil Decker at **vdecker@cox.net** or contact Jeff Wilson at Huntington Court UMC, **(540) 366-3465**, to indicate what time you would be available. Also, you may register on-line at **www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0848abaf2ca0fc1-2016**. 🍅





"Calling 21" is a conference-wide, grass roots, congregation-based, youth-focused approach to the Virginia Conference's emerging culture of call. During the summer, college students are placed in church internships. These students spend a summer immersed in the life of a local church, not their own, discerning God's call into church leadership. They are trained on the Shenandoah University campus.







## Increasing leadership is church goal

By Madeline Pillow

**T**his month, we focus on another area of ministry focus for The United Methodist Church—developing principled Christian leaders.

Leaders — both clergy and laity — must be rooted in Christ and have a vision for changing the world. Key to this is creating an inclusive church no matter differences in gender, age or race. The act of doing this includes equipping leaders and also strengthening them to be at every level of the church.

Keep reading to discover how the Virginia Conference is not only equipping but also strengthening the paths of ministry for emerging new leaders.





# Center strengthens leadership

In 2008, the Virginia Conference decided that resourcing leadership should be the primary focus of the conference to better empower the witness of Jesus and his ministry.

In 2012, this idea was aligned by the creation of “ministry centers for excellence” including The Center for Clergy Excellence. The center focuses mainly on clergy leadership including developing, supporting and training these leaders. This includes, right now, 1,000 active clergy and about 600 retired clergy.

For the director of the center, the Rev. Meredith McNabb who started in 2014, the name change from Ministerial Services moved the office away from self-focus and redefined its mission not only to serve the ministry but also to empower clergy toward a level of excellence.

The name change has been a reminder of what the center is called to do and reaffirmed its processes for developing leaders.

“I genuinely do believe in our processes, and I think they really have been honed and prayed for over the years, so that when someone answers a ‘call,’ an inkling or when folks observe a capacity within them to say, ‘Have you thought about set apart ministry,’ that there’s a pretty supportive, relatively broad-minded and rigorous process that helps people sort out both the internal call from God and the external call from the community.”

– Meredith McNabb, Virginia Conference  
director of Clergy Excellence

## Growth in the Center for Clergy Excellence

The center will see renewed growth in the upcoming appointment season when the Rev. Lindsey Baynham joins the office as associate director. In her role, Baynham will focus on call, candidacy and discernment, expanding the conference’s current capacity to reach people for leadership development.

“A benchmark of Lindsey’s position is to look at young clergy, non-Anglican clergy and clergy who have a kind of entrepreneurial church planting — reaching people who are not reached by the current church — and to expand the capacity of what we can do,” said McNabb.

The position will be both in the office as well as in the field at job fairs and colleges.

“We’ve got amazing public and private schools full of students who may or may not have heard that ministry is a thing. That these people may have the vocation for it. I really want them to see the VAUMC. And not so much in a recruiting sense — we can’t control who God calls to ministry and we don’t want to — but I think people are being called and just don’t know how to answer.”

## Exploring the call

There are a number of ways that the center helps people explore their calls and possible ministry vocations. Two of these programs are the Candidacy Summit and Calling 21.

“Folks who have grown up in other parts of the Christian tradition, lots of people, once they discover United Methodism, discover they really like it — and that it resonates with their spirit. We would love for more people to discover and explore, and that’s part of the Candidacy Summit,” said McNabb.

The Candidacy Summit is open to everyone and allows people to “explore without having to write that call letter” which they may not know anything about, McNabb said. The bi-annual 24-hour retreat is a time of self-discovery and exploring the number of roles, whether clergy or laity, that one could serve in The United Methodist Church.

The summit has brought together a diverse group of people based on age, gender, educational or professional



backgrounds and race. A fact, McNabb says, that “Is a joy for us. This is the church.”

Another program, Calling 21 has been a flagship in a lot of ways with 82 interns over the last 10 years. The summer internship program allows college students to explore their calling by serving in a local church.

These interns have come from diverse backgrounds from all over the country and through the program have discerned calls into different kinds of ministry from elders to lay ministers.

### Strengthening the call

It's been exciting, McNabb says, to see at provisional time people who first started at the Candidacy Summit moving into course of study, licensed local pastor path and provisional elders and deacons.

Once people become candidates, the center begins to focus on their spiritual lives.

“Some people have incredibly great prayer lives but aren't great at inviting people into that. It's an incremental process. With such a large conference, we have people in every corner of the state, in every kind of church, who are responding to their perceptions of God's call. We are trying to help guide them into the right avenue for that.”

What's also important to McNabb is that the conference is offering opportunities for people, especially outside the church, to have a place to live into a call when they feel it.

The Virginia Conference is no stranger to clergy and lay leaders who start a ministerial vocation later in life after another vocation. The gifts these laity and clergy bring to a ministerial vocation are important, but it also highlights something that McNabb hopes to strengthen in the Virginia Conference.

“There's something to be said for helping people answer the call when they feel it or help to explore it at least as opposed to not knowing how to answer it.”

To learn more about the Center for Clergy Excellence, visit [www.vaumc.org/ClergyExcellence](http://www.vaumc.org/ClergyExcellence). 🍷

So Christ himself gave the apostles,  
the prophets, the evangelists, the  
pastors and teachers, to equip his  
people for works of service, so that  
the body of Christ may be built up.

EPHESIANS 4:11-12





But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

1 PETER 2:9

## Online classes help equip laity

**T**he Book of Discipline recognizes that no ministry is subservient to another and that laity, just like clergy, are to be active advocates to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

*"Every layperson is called to carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20); every layperson is called to be missional. The witness of the laity, their Christ-like examples of everyday living as well as the sharing of their own faith experiences of the gospel, is the primary evangelistic ministry through which all people will come to know Christ and The United Methodist Church will fulfill its mission." (§1127)*

Lay ministry is divided into five categories: local church lay servant, certified lay servant, lay speaker, lay missionary and certified lay minister. Learn more about the ministry of the laity at [www.umcdiscipleship.org/leadership-resources/ministry-of-the-laity](http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/leadership-resources/ministry-of-the-laity).

In the Virginia Conference, laity have been equipped through lay servant district trainings as well as Lay Servant

Academy. Districts around Virginia have held four or five classes twice a year, and Lay Servant Academy offers multiple courses in a weekend format.

On Feb. 26-28, almost 200 people gathered at the Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center in Blackstone for Lay Servant Academy to learn more about personal faith development and the church itself. Thirteen courses were offered including those required to become a certified lay servant.

### Broadening the scope of the equipped

On Feb. 20, Lay Servant Ministries with the Virginia Conference began offering online courses available to all those serving the local church.

Because there are people who are not able to attend Lay Servant Academy for a number of reasons, these courses have been developed by the office of Lay Servant Ministries in order to better reach potential lay servants in the conference and to help course requirements be more accessible to those who need certification.

It is an exciting venture that has taken much planning and preparation and, above all, seeks to meet students when and where they have time to learn. David Bailey, conference director of Lay Servant Ministries, says all courses available online can be used for lay servant recertification.

With a grant from the Bishops Foundation, six leaders in the Virginia Conference including Beth Christian, Lay Servant Academy director, and Cheryl Edley-Worford, conference director of Inclusivity and Lay Leadership Excellence, formulated and produced this new style of learning.

### It's an idea that has excited pastors who know the importance of laity in the church.

"Lay servants are so important in the congregation because they help the pastor to do the work of the church. I'm looking for people in my congregation to recommend as lay servants who are good at doing missions, who can lead Bible studies, who can lead worship, who can preach. It allows me to take a step back and ensure that nature and mission of the church are being enacted in our local church," said Andrew Ware, pastor of the Twin Groves charge, James River District.

As the first presenter for the online courses, the Rev. Nathan Decker, High Street UMC, James River District, is excited by the potential.

"It will not replace Lay Servant Academy but it will broaden our outreach and broaden discipleship within





smaller groups and ages,” said Decker. “Our context has changed. We’re no longer a people of faith who always gather on Sunday mornings. We’re no longer a people of faith who can travel and spend a weekend away from our families. Our context requires us as a church to change the way that we disciple...to change the way we are moving through this.”

### Looking to the future

Looking ahead, both Ware and Decker envision how the online learning can better equip laity. Ware, who will be a presenter for the online courses, also recognizes that this is a necessary addition for laity training.

“My goal for On Demand Learning is to see more lay servants in our churches. To see more people who have the knowledge and are equipped for the ministry,” Ware said. “As I look back through church history, there’s this time where the clergy held all the power in the church. And the laity couldn’t read the Bible because the Bible was written in Latin. The laity couldn’t learn. That just doesn’t seem the way that church should be. Church should be the laity being empowered to do the work of Christ in the world, and if they don’t understand the church and they don’t understand theology and tradition then how can we expect them to do that at an adequate level?” Ware said.

Decker agrees that the church has to include laity. “I cannot do this on my own. I cannot do ministry in the local church, in the community in the context of where we are without having lay servants be a part of it. Nor am I supposed to. It’s a Christ event. It’s a Christ event that happens in all of us through the Holy Spirit,” Decker said.

### Online courses being offered

The first On Demand course was March 19 with Decker leading “Laity Leading in Worship.”

Courses are available for \$30 and for 90 days after their posting. Other training sessions to come this year include spiritual gifts and the heritage of the UMC.

To learn more about the online training, see the upcoming classes or view upcoming district lay servant training events, visit [www.vaumc.org/LayServantTraining](http://www.vaumc.org/LayServantTraining). 🐟

– Madeline Pillow is editor of the Advocate.





## Calling 21 reflection

By Doug Gestwick

In 2007 I was asked by then district superintendent Myrtle Frances Hatcher if we would be willing to participate in a program from the Fund for Theological Education named “Calling 21.” It was explained to me they were looking for 21 churches who could call forth 21st century leaders. These individuals would be college students who were experiencing some sort of call from God but who had not yet fleshed it out. St. Luke’s enthusiastically agreed, and thus began a 10-year love affair.

Our first year we sent both an intern from our church as well as received an intern. Her name was Megan Roth. She is now the Rev. Megan Roth Clayton and was the first Calling 21 intern to be ordained in Virginia last year. This year and one other year, we are also sending an intern as well as receiving one.

One year Doug Forrester, chair of Calling 21 at the time, called and asked whether we could accommodate an intern that would need to be driven wherever she went. We agreed, and in the course of that conversation, Doug said it was one of the best group of candidates he had seen since coming on board, and that they even had to turn a qualified candidate away because some churches had backed out.

When we got off the phone our director of Discipleship Ministries, James Pace, turned to me and said, “We cannot let this happen. No one young person who is feeling a call



from God should be turned away because we don’t have a church for them. You call him back and tell him we will take two interns this year, and then as senior pastor it’s your job to find where the money will come from!”

We called Doug back and by the end of the day we had two interns for the summer. We were so impressed with Josh Hagstrom that as he was leaving for the summer I asked him to do me one favor and not take another job after graduation until he had talked to me. James Pace died that year from leukemia, and we kept his full-time position open on our staff as we waited for Josh to graduate. After graduation from Greensboro College we created a new staff position, director of Emergent Ministries, and hired Josh Hagstrom. I told Josh the only “condition” for his employment was that he could not let St. Luke’s stand in the way of his call. He left us

last summer and enrolled at Wesley Theological Seminary where he is pursuing his M.Div.

We hired another of our former Calling 21 interns to take his place. Emily Howdyshell came back after her graduation from Shenandoah University and has been on fire as she has fully embraced the job of uncovering new and emergent ministries.

Every intern has brought his or her own gifts and has been challenged to grow and learn. Since entering the Calling 21 program, five persons from St. Luke’s have recognized their own call and have gone into or are preparing to go into the ministry. Calling 21 has been a very fruitful ministry and one that our whole congregation looks forward to each year. 🍷

– The Rev. Doug Gestwick is pastor of St. Luke’s UMC in Yorktown.



# DISCIPLES HELPING TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD



▲ Pictured is the special Native American Ministries Sunday (April 10) altar at **First United Methodist Church in historic downtown Hampton**. Artifacts from several different tribes were displayed.

Four years after a ministry that began with nine pans of lasagna and a graduation party for homeless high school students, Change the World RVA at **Bon Air United Methodist Church in Chesterfield** was honored by Gov. Terry McAuliffe with a 2016 volunteerism and community service award. During the awards ceremony in April at the governor's mansion in Richmond, McAuliffe recognized the group with the statewide award for a community organization. It was one of nine awards given for outstanding efforts by individuals and organizations.

"These individuals, organizations and companies set an example for us all to give back to our communities and embody the spirit of service which makes Virginia a special place to live and work," McAuliffe said.

Since 2012, Change the World RVA has helped 27 homeless high school students, six of whom have gone on to college. The mission of the nonprofit organization is to support students with a network of caring volunteers who assist students beyond high school graduation, helping them succeed in college and life. The all-volunteer ministry, which includes people in the community, provides an after-school program, host families,

food pantry, college textbook scholarship fund along with practical things like cell phones, laptops and bus tickets.

"This award is a great recognition of our students and our volunteers," said Natalie May, the group's founder and executive director. "Our volunteers embody the magic that really is at the heart of Change the World RVA. We are deeply honored." ▼





# EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY



## Eight creative ways to explore a Bible passage

By Jeremy Steele

**L**et's be honest. We clearly believe that the Bible is the word of God and the source of spiritual life. Sometimes, though, it can be hard to understand. When that happens, we have a tendency to disengage from this powerful source of light. In those moments, it helps to have a tool to help unlock the meaning or simply keep us engaged.

Once we understand the meaning, we can better communicate the message of each passage.

Here are some creative ways to help you do that.

### Decode the story

Remember how you learned the parts of a story in high school English class? This same structure is present in many biblical stories. Read through a passage and then list some basic plot elements: setting,

main characters, conflict, rising action, climax, falling

action and resolution.

Identifying all of these elements can help you clarify the overall message of a story and see the application for your life.

### Design a comic strip

Break the passage into eight or fewer discrete scenes and draw the key action of each scene paired with dialogue or important narration. This is all about exploring the passage by imagining what else is happening in the surroundings. What are the reactions of the other people? Do any props come into play? How are they held/used? How does the setting shape the scene?

Don't be afraid to use stick figures! If the passage inspires you to create something brilliant, you can always hire an artist to develop the concept.

### Create a meme

The current trend of placing a catchy word or phrase on top of an image is not only fun, but can also help you explore the Bible. Imagine that you are encouraging people to read a specific passage of the Bible. What phrase would hook people to read more? What image both matches the theme of the verse and inspires curiosity? Once you have an idea, you can use Photoshop, GIMP or one of many free online meme generators to superimpose the text onto the image like Canva.com.

### Become a Bible translator

Translating the Bible into your context and vocabulary can make any passage come to life. The goal here is to translate every piece of the text into your current vocabulary. This extends beyond the words to the metaphors. If you don't know anyone who is a shepherd, think of an image from your life that conveys the same ideas and emotions and use that instead. Once you have finished translating the words and metaphors, review your work to see how close you can come to matching the overall feel of the narrative or rhythm of



# EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY

the poem or other passage.

## Get it down to a sentence (or two)

It is difficult to imagine how many billions of other words the Bible has inspired. Most of the time, our posture toward Scripture is to multiply the words; however, Jesus does the opposite. When asked for the greatest commandments, Jesus gives two sentences that he says summarize all of the law and the prophets. Two sentences. Sometimes the best thing we can do is get simple. For this method, you boil down an entire passage to a single sentence. This can be fun to do with chapters or entire books. When taking a larger chunk, it is easiest to start by tackling several sentences or paragraphs first, then boiling down those summaries to a single sentence.

## Experience it with all five senses

Far too often, we only engage our eyes when exploring the Bible. Next time you open the Bible, try to experience the passage before you with all five senses. What might you hear? Are there birds or waves or the crackle of a fire close enough to hear? Is it cold or hot? Is there sand between your toes or wind blowing through your hair? Are you close

enough to the sea to taste the air? Once you build the scene through your senses, new pieces of the narrative come to life or are given deeper meaning, and the whole passage becomes very real.

## Practice Lectio Divina (divine reading)

One of the most ancient ways to experience the Bible comes through a practice called lectio divina (Latin for "divine reading"). The practice moves through four phases with an underlying confidence that God speaks to us whenever we read the Bible. The first step is to read the passage over and over, savoring each word and waiting for one to rise above the rest. Once a single word or phrase sticks in your mind, you begin to explore the word. What feelings, emotions or memories does it evoke? After a time of experiencing the word, it's time to ask and listen to God for the answer to what this word is meant to say to you. Why this word? What is God saying? Finally, use the word as a focus point to let go of every distracting thought so that you can rest in the presence of God.

## Scrapbook it

For the crafty people, it's time to pull out your curvy scissors and glue sticks and get to work. Take a passage or verse and use all the tools at your disposal to illustrate it. You might decide to make the key word the center of your page or use pictures from your own life to convey the emotions behind the passage. The goal is to create a visual expression of the truth in the passage using as much crafty creativity as you can. 📌

— Jeremy Steele,  
United Methodist Communications

## MODESTY MATTERS



## Biblical Marriage Prayer Breakfast

VA Annual Conf.  
Saturday June 18th 7-9 AM  
Buffet - \$9 - pay at door.

## Location

TBA-Contact  
Modesty Matters

P.O. Box 20582  
Roanoke, VA 24018

Modesty@cox.net

540-556-5338

# Devotions from International Lesson Series

## LIVING THE WORD



*The Rev. Debra Lucas is pastor of St. Peter's United Methodist Church, Montpelier, Richmond District. She earned a bachelor's degree from Eastern Mennonite University and her Master's of Divinity from Emory University's Candler School of Theology in Atlanta. Debra and her husband, Boyd, feel blessed by their ministry through the Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church.*

**June 5, 2016**

**Zephaniah 1:4-6, 14-16; 2:3**

**The Day of the Lord**

**H**oly Scripture opens with “a wind from God” sweeping across the vast, dark emptiness of the cosmos. God creates the heavens and the earth, divides the darkness into night and day, calls to life the plants and animals and breathes into life humankind, a people etched with the image of the Creator. But before taking a day of rest, God stops, looks around and declares creation good!

Comprehending the wholeness and goodness of creation moves us toward better understanding Zephaniah’s “day of the Lord’s anger.” God created an astounding world of beauty and plenty for all of us; it was our gift. Before long, however, God’s creation became tainted by sin.

We, the people of the land, failed in loving God and neighbor, turned a blind eye to oppression and injustice and worshiped gods of our own making. In the opening chapter of Zephaniah, the prophet paints a gloomy, anti-creation picture and tells us the “day of the Lord’s anger,” the day of reckoning, quickly approaches.

In the Old and New Testaments, the day of the Lord describes a time when God will intervene in history to restore creation and right all of its wrongs: the oppressor will be defeated, the wicked will be judged and the captive will be released. On the day of the Lord, the righteous will be rewarded, the humble will be exalted and a perfect king will bring peace, justice and prosperity. Christ the King will come again, and of his rule there will be no end.

How easy it is for me to embrace the God of grace and flinch away from the God of judgment. Perhaps, you feel this way, too. Yet, both Old Testament and New Testament scripture tells us that God’s judgment, like God’s grace, is real.

Scripture tells us, also, that God prefers to renew and recreate, to build up rather than tear down. Zephaniah assures us that all who seek to follow God’s expectations of justice and righteousness, and who humble themselves before God, just might escape God’s angry judgment.

How might our day-in-and-day-out Christian

lives be transformed if we approached each day as “the day of the Lord?” Considering Zephaniah’s prophetic words, what would we do differently?

**June 12, 2016**

**Zephaniah 3:1-8**

**The Consequences of Disobedience**

**T**he Chesapeake Bay Watershed covers 64,299 square miles and includes the mountain ranges in Pendleton County, West Virginia, the area of West Virginia I call home. For a long time, I wondered why the Chesapeake Bay Watershed included these mountains, some 650 miles from the Chesapeake Bay. Surely, farmers fertilizing their hayfields or shoving out ponds near natural springs have no bearing on the Chesapeake Bay, do they?

But as I have learned, they do. Natural springs feed the North Fork River that flows through these Eastern West Virginia mountains. The North Fork River flows into the South Branch of the Potomac River, and the Potomac River flows into the Chesapeake Bay. Environmental choices made by the West Virginia mountain people have consequences for the water supplied to millions of people in West Virginia, Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C.

It seems simple, really. Choices have consequences, and consequences can be far reaching. The prophet Zephaniah makes this point quite clearly.

If we could travel back to the Jerusalem of Zephaniah’s time, we would meet a people who have found themselves on the wrong side of God’s judgment. Especially, Jerusalem’s leaders, the princes, the judges, the prophets and the priests ignore God. Driven by their own selfish interests, they lead in ways contrary to God’s will. The consequence for their blatant disobedience will be far reaching; it will be global.

What will be the consequences of their choices? Well, according to verse eight, the consequences are death and destruction, complete and utter destruction. The harshness of God’s language of judgment on Jerusalem takes us aback. It is not that judgment scripture is foreign





to us, even Jesus speaks about separating the sheep from the goats, but we would much rather hear “the Lord is my Shepherd” or “for God so loved the world.”

However, until we grasp the power of God’s words of judgment in Zephaniah and comprehend that in a split second God’s wrath could overcome us, we will not fully grasp the power of God’s grace, comprehend the depth of God’s love, realize the magnitude of God’s mercy or recognize what a patient God we serve. God is always ready to forgive us.

God begins with high hopes and great plans for creation, for Jerusalem, for us. How closely do our choices align with God’s hopes and plans for creation? What have been some of the consequences for our choices?

## June 19, 2016

**Zephaniah 3:9-15, 20**

### **Assurances and Joy for the Faithful**

**A**fter an extended illness, my mother-in-law, Betty, died at the age of 62. I recall many things about the day of her funeral: fixing breakfast, getting our clothes ready and even applying make-up in front of the bathroom mirror. Most vividly, however, I remember humming, continuously, the chorus to the Bill Gaither gospel song, Then Came the Morning. On a day of loss and sadness, these words brought me comfort and joy.

*Then came the morning,  
night turned into day;  
The stone was rolled away,  
hope rose with the dawn.  
Then came the morning,  
shadows vanished before the sun,  
Death had lost and life had won,  
for morning had come.*

Finally, after ploughing through two-and-a-half chapters of Zephaniah’s prophecies of judgment, warning Jerusalem’s people that the “day of the Lord’s anger” fast approached, we read very welcome words of restoration. Morning has come!

Zephaniah tells the people that after Jerusalem’s destruction, and after years of exile from their beloved city, there will be a period of renewal. God will lift them up like a phoenix rising from the ashes. To a beaten down people, Zephaniah concludes with these words:

*At that time, I will bring all of you back,  
at the time when I gather you.  
I will give you fame and praise among  
all the neighboring peoples  
when I restore your possessions and  
you can see them—says the LORD.  
(Zephaniah 3:20 CEB)*

Why this sudden shift in Zephaniah? Why this sudden burst of joy? Because the God of love and grace has removed their punishment. Disobedient people upon whom God once directed anger, now experience the deluge of God’s mercy. The Lord says, “Let’s start over.”

It is because of this that we rejoice today!

We rejoice in the God who removed the punishment that we deserved and brought us into a right relationship through Jesus Christ. We rejoice because we experience the grace of forgiveness, and we get to start over. We rejoice because Jesus Christ, our Savior, turned back our enemy, death, by his willing death and triumphant resurrection.

What greater reason could there be for us to rejoice than the knowledge that the Lord has taken away our

punishment and has turned back our enemy?

Morning has broken!

## June 26, 2016

**Romans 1:18-23, 28-32**

### **Ignoring God’s Plain Truth**

**D**uring an interview with NPR’s Terry Gross, Canadian astronaut and author Chris Hadfield spoke about his views on space, faith and our place in the universe. When asked if being in space has changed his perspective on spirituality, Hadfield, who has spent a total of six months in space and has orbited Earth thousands of times, said that his faith has “absolutely” been reinforced by his time in the cosmos.

“The world, when you look at it, it just can’t be random,” he said. “I mean, it’s so different than the vast emptiness that is everything else and even all the other planets we’ve seen, at least in our solar system, none of them even remotely resemble the precious life-giving nature of our own planet.”

When it comes to knowing the will of God, the Apostle Paul says “humans are without excuse.” Paul asserts there is available to every person a certain knowledge of God. To strengthen his argument, Paul mentions God’s invisible attributes. These attributes include God’s eternal power and divine nature, two aspects of God available to every person since the creation of the world.

How do we see these attributes of God? Paul taught it was “in the things that have been made.” In other words, the created world reveals a Creator far greater than anything a mere mortal could conger up. Who other than God could design earth’s orbit around the sun so perfectly? Who other than God

*(Continued on pg. 29: “LIVING WORD.”)*



# CLERGY & DIACONAL

## DEATHS

**The Rev. Dr. J. Paul Rowe**, 82, husband of Kathy (Moreno) Rowe, died April 9, 2016, in Catawba, N.C. During his 60 years of pastoral ministry, Paul served as pastor of Magnolia United Methodist Church in Sufolk and St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Staunton. He was named Chaplain Emeritus at Augusta Medical Center and Pastor Emeritus at St. Paul's. He was widely known as an accomplished photographer. He is also survived by his twin children, Cammie Rowe Adams and Kevin Rowe; son, Jim Rowe; three daughters, Cathy Hatley, Mary B. Eslick and Nancy Marshall; their mother, Sarah Nell Hutcheson; 11 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; and one great-great-grandchild.

**The Rev. Mark F. Wimmer**, 81, of Dry Fork, Va., died April 14, 2016, at Forsyth Medical Center. The Rev. Wimmer served many United Methodist churches in the Western North Carolina Conference. After retirement in North Carolina, he served as interim pastor at several United Methodist churches in Virginia, in the Danville area. After his Virginia retirement, he attended Whitmell United Methodist Church. He is survived by his wife, Paige Wimmer; sons, Sterling Leon Wimmer of Charlotte, N.C., Robert Nelson Wimmer (Xochitl) of Atlanta, Ga., and Grier C. Wimmer (Mary) of Winston-Salem, N.C. Also surviving are five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren and a sister, Clara Bowman, who resides in Danville.

**Tom Thompson** died April 21, 2016. Tom was former district lay leader of the Arlington District (2006-2010), associate district lay leader of the

Alexandria District and member of the Conference Council on Finance and Administration.

**Mrs. Sandra Newcomb**, widow of **the Rev. Robert Newcomb**, died April 13, 2016.

**Mrs. Mary Magdalene Warrick Wooten**, 89, of Richmond, died April 12, 2016. She was predeceased by her husband of 51 years, **The Rev. Moody G. Wooten Sr.** She is survived by her three daughters, Delores Beggarly (Van), Deborah Wooten and Mary Ellen Wooten; her son, CDR M. Gray Wooten Jr. (Diana), USN (ret). She is also survived by four grandchildren: Lori, Hunter and Brian Beggarly, and Connor Wooten; a great-grandson, Avery Beggarly; and many friends.

**Russell Kilgore Price (Rusty)**, husband of Jennifer Owens Price (Jenny), died suddenly of cardiac arrest April 11, 2016. Rusty was the son of Catherine W. Price (Cathy) and the **Rev. John C. Price**, and the father of Kaitlyn, John and Addy. Rusty is also survived by his brother, Billy Kilgore of Gloucester, Va.; sister, Susan Kilgore Clemmer of Raleigh, N.C.; and extended family.

**Mrs. Phyllis Ann Holdredge**, 91, widow of the **Rev. Gene R.R. Holdredge**, died April 3, 2016 in Norman, Okla.

**Mary M. Owens**, 61, sister of **the Rev. Helen Zottoli**, died April 1, 2016, after her battle with cancer. Mary lived in Silver Spring, Md., with her husband, Jerry Owens.

**Kenneth T. Decker Sr.**, father of **the Rev. Kenneth "Thad" Decker Jr.**, died March 31, 2016. A memorial ser-

vice will be held in May. He resided in Halifax, Va. Thad serves Halifax UMC, Farmville District.

**Rebekah T. Weir**, 90, of Charlottesville, Va., died on March 28, 2016, from complications of dementia. She was preceded in death by her husband, **the Rev. Thomas Weir**. Rebekah spent much of her adult life devoted to community service. An active member of Rotary International, she earned the Paul Harris Fellows award for supporting ambassadorial scholarships. She was also a proud supporter of the Boy Scouts of America, becoming the first American woman to earn the Wood Badge Award. Survivors include granddaughters Elizabeth Craddock (Brad) of Ruckersville, Va., and Emily Goss (Scott) of Charlottesville, Va.; daughters-in-law Constance Potter (Thomas) of Arlington, Va., and Susan Weir (Charles) of Charlottesville, Va.; and a great-granddaughter Lauren Craddock.

**Evelyn Newton Gibson**, mother of **the Rev. Suzanne D. Gibson**, died Easter Sunday, March 27, 2016, at her home in Falls Church following a long battle with cancer. The Rev. Gibson is the pastor of Bethany UMC in Hampton, York River District. Evelyn is survived by daughters Suzanne D. Gibson, Janet Adessa (Tony), Kathy Doering and Martha Aldrich (Robert); five grandchildren, Amanda B. Colton (Wes), Jessica H. Vance, Laura F. Vance, Matthew P. Williams and Joshua F. Vance; four great-grandchildren, Bryce A. Colton, Mina S. Colton, Dominic A. Vance and Nash T. Colton; a niece, Lauren Lane Phillips; a nephew, David Miller Lane; and a host of other loving relatives and friends. She was preceded in death by her husband of 50 years, and her sister, Frances Lane.

**Mrs. Lillian B. Wilson**, 88, of Springhill, Kan., died March 23, 2016. She was the widow of **the Rev. Howard Wilson**.

## BIRTHS

**The Rev. Joshua King**, Danville District, his wife, Jackie, and their son, Parker, are pleased to announce the arrival of **Aaron Liam King**. Born March 31, 2016, he was 7 lbs., 6 ounces and 18 3/4 inches long. All are home and doing well. Rev. King is also the grandson of **the Rev. Stephen King**, pastor of Disputanta UMC, James River District


("LIVING WORD," continued from pg. 27.)

could carve out the majestic Grand Canyon?

But let's face it: we all make excuses. We find an excuse to get out of that unsolicited lunch date or to explain why we did not finish the job on time. Sometimes we make excuses to avoid responsibility for our actions. Our excuses become a way of deflecting the consequences of our choices. While we may make excuses for other things, according to Paul, we have no excuse for not knowing God's will.

Our study series began with "a wind of God" sweeping across the vast, dark emptiness of the cosmos and creating the heavens, the earth and all living things. Paul's assertion about seeing God in creation, brings us full circle. We don't have to be circling the earth on the International Space Station to recognize that creation is not "random."

*Psalm 66:4*

*All the earth worships you,  
sings praises to you,  
sings praises to your name!* 

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# FROM THE BISHOP



## Leadership, Leadership, Leadership!

*May the grace and peace from our risen Lord be with you.*

**I**t is already June, and our 2016 Annual Conference is approaching. When you receive this June issue of the *Advocate*, General Conference (GC) will be over. The decisions on the issues we have been struggling with will have been made. I hope and pray that the GC prayerfully and humbly discerned God's will and followed this will in all their decisions. I also pray that, through the decisions of the GC, the mission of The United Methodist Church and our unity in Christ will be strengthened and uplifted.

The theme of the *Advocate* this month is leadership. Many years ago when we started a new church, church leaders used to emphasize the importance of location by saying, "location, location, location!"

But nowadays that has been changed. Now, we say, "leadership, lead-

ership, leadership!" This is true not only in starting a new faith community, but also in revitalizing existing churches. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of leadership in our mission and ministries today.

When we look at Scripture, we find the same principle. Before the great acts of salvation history happened, there was always a time for the leaders to be prepared. The book of Exodus begins with the birth of Moses. When Moses was ready at the age of 80, God began liberating the people of Israel from Egypt by using Moses. When Samuel was ready as the spiritual leader for Israel, the history of transition from Judges to the kingdom started. In the Gospels, the salvation story of all human beings begins with the birth of Jesus. When the right time came, Jesus began his ministry. In the book of Acts, before the disciples, including Paul, went out to the world to proclaim the Good News, there was a time for them to be prepared for this great mission.

Leadership is that important in Scripture. It is also that important in our churches today. When an effective pastor is appointed to a church, we see differences beginning to take place, although the church, the people of God, is the same congregation. Leadership can make differences in our churches and in their mission and ministries. So, it is very important, and the right thing, that the UMC sets leadership development as one of its four areas of focus.

I think Christian leadership has two important components: servant leadership and spiritual leadership. This is what our Lord taught us. Christian leadership is servant leadership. We were called to serve, not to be served. Our Lord Jesus repeatedly spoke of this leadership in many places in the Gospels. His act of washing his disciples' feet is a great example of this servant leadership, and

he told us to do the same thing.

Christian leadership is also spiritual leadership. We can define spiritual leadership in many ways, but in a simple sense, this leadership is about being in relationship with God. Being a spiritual leader means having a deep and profound relationship with God. There is no limit to our growth in this leadership. The deeper we know God, the more humbly we love God and the more faithfully we obey God's will.

It has been my great joy to emphasize the importance of leadership, especially the importance of spiritual leadership, for the past four years. If our spiritual leadership is not strengthened, there is no way for our churches to be revitalized. It will not be possible for our churches to be turned around from decline. I thank God and all our clergy and laity who took my challenge and began the journey to strengthen their spiritual leadership by humbly opening themselves to God in prayer.

Soon we will gather again in Roanoke for our Annual Conference. We will gather, seeking for Thy will to be done in our worship and in our business items. Seeking Thy will is the best way for us because our God is wiser than we are and stronger than we are. And our God loves us much more than we love ourselves. If God is not wiser than we are, and seeking our will is better than Thy will, why do we need to believe in such an unwise God? Seeking and following God's will will be best for us, for our churches and for the world. Please keep on praying for our gathering in June and for the future of our beloved United Methodist Church. 🌹

I look forward to seeing you soon.  
In our Lord,

# ONE LAST WORD

## Fascinating facts about John Wesley



By Jeremy Steele

### John Wesley coined the term “agree to disagree.”

Over the years, Wesley had serious theological differences with another popular pastor named George Whitefield. Though they both argued passionately, Wesley reflected on these differences in a memorial sermon for Whitefield by saying: “There are many doctrines of a less essential nature. ... In these, we may think and let think; we may ‘agree to disagree.’ But, meantime, let us hold fast the essentials. ...” This appears to be the first recorded use of the term. It was a hallmark of Wesley’s way of holding to his convictions while remaining in connection with those with whom he disagreed.

### John Wesley rode far enough on horseback to circle the earth 10 times.

Wesley rode 250,000 miles! He was convinced that it was important for him personally to spread the gospel through relationships and continue to grow closer to God in those relationships. Asked if he would consider walking instead of riding, he replied, “Nay.”

### “Methodist” was originally a derogatory term.

Though the origins of the term “Methodist” are in dispute, it is clear that

it was originally used by outsiders to mock John Wesley and his early societies because of their dedication to following a method for growing closer to God. They ended up accepting the term, considering it a positive descriptor of their movement. Way to own it, Methodists!

### Wesley never said this famous quote attributed to him.

It has been on the back of more than one United Methodist youth camp T-shirt: “Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, as long as ever you can.” Though the quote is often attributed to John Wesley and is consistent with his perspective on life, many historians have confirmed there is no record of Wesley ever saying that.

### Wesley believed you could not be a Christian on your own.

He said that we needed to be involved in “social holiness.” Though some often think this term is synonymous with “social justice,” its meaning is quite different. Wesley believed we could only grow as Christians in community. In his preface to the 1739 hymnal, he was adamant that “the gospel of Christ knows of no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness.”

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