

# Advocate

Advocating for social justice



Connecting with the



Virginia Advocate

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

P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058

Phone: 1-800-768-6040 or  
804-521-1100

Fax: 804-521-1174

E-mail: [advocate@vaumc.org](mailto:advocate@vaumc.org)Website: [www.vaumc.org](http://www.vaumc.org)

Detailed guidelines for the following  
available upon request.

### Subscriptions

Print subscriptions are \$20/one year and \$30/two years. Special bulk rate for five or more copies going to a single address is \$12 each for one year. For both printed copy and online access, subscriptions are \$25/year and \$35/two years. For online only, cost is \$10/year and \$15/two years. Subscribe online at [www.vaumc.org](http://www.vaumc.org), under "Resources>Publications."

### Deadlines

The Advocate is published once a month. The deadline to submit news and ad copy for the June 2018 issue is May 25. For more information on future deadlines, contact the Advocate office or visit the website.

### Advertising/Tributes

Rates for advertising and tributes are available upon request.

### Local Church News

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

### ©2018 Virginia Advocate

USPS 660-740 ISSN 0891-5598

Published monthly by Virginia United Methodist Communications, Inc., an agency of the Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. Periodical postage paid at Glen Allen, Va., and at additional mailing offices. The Virginia United Methodist Advocate is owned by Virginia United Methodist Communications, Inc.

POSTMASTER: Send changes of address to Virginia United Methodist Advocate, P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058. Editorial and business offices are located at 10330 Staples Mill Rd., Glen Allen, Va. Office hours are 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

# PILLOW TALK



**Madeline Pillow**  
Editor

**We are  
called...**

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love,  
show us how to serve the neighbors we have from you.

These are the ones we should serve,  
these are the ones we should love;  
all these are neighbors to us and you.

-United Methodist Hymnal

Christians have been called by God to care. As United Methodists, we believe in speaking to the injustices of the world.

The problem today is that many people confuse the church commenting on societal issues as the church being political.

What I would love is for those persons to visit our Social Principles to remind themselves what we say we believe. You can find our Social Principles at <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/social-principles-social-creed>.

In this issue's feature, you will find several examples of how social justice is being lived out.

Where do you see in justice in your community, in your world?  
How could you help address it?

Until our next issue,

*Madeline C. Pillow*



# TABLE OF CONTENTS



## SECTIONS

- 7-15 Virginia News
- 17, 27 Local News
- 28 Events
- 30-31 Living the Word
- 32 Clergy & Diaconal
- 33 One Last Word
- 34 From the Bishop

## FEATURE

- 18-26 Advocating for social justice

## SPECIAL SECTION

- 4-6 Guide to 2018 Virginia Annual Conference

## STORIES

- 7 Movie event promotes kindness
- 8 Latino Clergy Caucus holds lay ministry course
- 10-11 Changes to conference staff
- 14 Conference event opens dialogue on race, reconciliation



Scan this code to go to the  
conference website:  
[www.vaumc.org](http://www.vaumc.org)

### The Virginia Advocate Staff

Madeline Pillow | Editor, Director of Communications

Forrest White | News Associate

Cathryn Huff | Graphic Designer

Pam Culler | Administrative Secretary

Board of Directors of Virginia United Methodist Communications, Inc.: Keri Marston, chair. The *Virginia United Methodist Advocate* uses the services of United Methodist Communications and United Methodist News Service. The reporting of news regarding any person or event, or the placement of any advertisement within these pages, does not constitute endorsement by the *Virginia Advocate* or any entity of The United Methodist Church. Opinions of writers are solely those of the authors and not necessarily those of this publication.



# GUIDE TO ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2018

To view the corresponding forms and links mentioned below, visit [www.vaumc.org/AC2018](http://www.vaumc.org/AC2018).



## 2018 VIRGINIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE JUNE 15-17, 2018 HAMPTON ROADS CONVENTION CENTER



Guest speakers  
at the 2018  
Virginia Annual  
Conference will  
be Bishop B.  
Michael Watson  
and the Rev.  
Ileana Rosario.

## AGENDA OVERVIEW

View the **full** 2018 agenda of the Annual Conference  
at the conference website.

### Thursday, June 14 (Registration 4:00 p.m.- 8:00 p.m.)

### Friday Morning, June 15 (Registration: 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.)

- 9:00 a.m. Report on Commission on a Way Forward..... Rev. Tom Berlin  
10:30 a.m. Laity Session ..... Halls B, C  
10:30 a.m. Clergy Session..... Ballrooms D, E, F, G

### Friday Afternoon, June 15

- 2:00 p.m. Call to Order Bishop ..... Sharma D. Lewis  
Recognition of New Faith Communities ..... Rev. Kathleen Overby-Webster  
Laity Address..... Mr. Warren Harper  
Site Selection Committee Report..... Mr. Neal Wise  
Board of Pensions Report ..... Mr. Ken Peterson  
Resolutions..... Rev. Melody Tanner  
5:30 p.m. Recess for Dinner

### Friday Evening, June 15

- 7:30 p.m. A Service of Remembrance and Holy Communion Rev. Ileana Rosario

### Saturday Morning, June 16 (Registration: 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.)

- 8:15 a.m. Singing Our Faith ..... Ms. Christal Heyward  
Recognition of Retirees ..... Rev. David Forrest  
Report on 2019 General Conference..... General Conference Delegation  
Recognitions United Methodist College Presidents..... Rev. John Peters  
Worship Bishop B. Michael Watson  
Annual Conference Offering  
12:00 noon Recess for Lunch

### Saturday Afternoon, June 16

- 2:00-5:00 p.m. Great Day of Service

### Saturday Evening, June 16

- 7:30 p.m. A Service for the Ordering of Ministry..... Bishop B. Michael Watson

### Sunday Morning, June 17

- 8:15 a.m. Singing Our Faith ..... Ms. Christal Heyward  
Report of the Statistician and Treasurer ..... Mr. David Dommis  
Denman Awards..... Rev. Don Jamison  
11:00 a.m. Worship  
Distribution of the Appointments Edition of the *Advocate*  
Fixing of the Appointments..... Bishop Sharma D. Lewis



## Great Day of Service

Following the Mission Service on Saturday, June 16, Bishop Lewis is asking all clergy and lay members to participate in a Great Day of Service from 2 to 5 p.m. This event will be broken into three sections:

- ❖ **Ministry within the City of Hampton**
- ❖ **United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) kit building in the convention center**
- ❖ **Presentations on social justice issues at the convention center**

Each clergy and lay member will be asked to sign up for one of these activities prior to Annual Conference. Registration is available at [www.eiseverywhere.com/ereg/newreg.php?eventid=321113&](http://www.eiseverywhere.com/ereg/newreg.php?eventid=321113&). Each participant will receive a T-shirt to be worn during the Great Day of Service. How will you help create an impact on the Hampton Roads area with your service? Learn more about the special day with a series of three “teaser” videos or download a flyer at the conference website.

## Virtual Promo Packet

In an effort to be good stewards of the environment and the financial resources of the conference, the annual conference “promo packets” will continue to be virtual. Electronic copies will be accepted for inclusion in the Virtual Promo Packet, which will be posted on the conference website at [www.vaumc.org](http://www.vaumc.org) under **Resources>2018 Annual Conference Information**. The Virtual Packet will be available for viewing on the website beginning June 1. Information for the Virtual Promo Packet needs to be submitted in PDF format to the Office of Connectional Ministries ([BevMyers@vaumc.org](mailto:BevMyers@vaumc.org)) for approval by Friday, May 18.

## Daily Advocate

Due to increased printing costs and a tighter Annual Conference session, there will be no Daily Advocate at the 2018 Annual Conference. This small publication was a one page (front and back) handout given out at the beginning of each day. The Communications Office is aware that members typically use these sheets to report

Annual Conference news back to their churches. Every year, Madeline Pillow, Director of Communications and *Advocate* editor, creates a report for the United Methodist News Service the following Monday or Tuesday after Annual Conference. Conference attendees will receive this report as an aid for their local church reports by their email. This report will also be posted on ClergyNet and LaityNet, the conference website and social media following Annual Conference 2018.

## Livestreaming of Conference Sessions and Sunday Worship

Annual Conference will be available on livestream again this year, and local churches will also be invited to participate in Sunday morning worship led by Bishop Sharma Lewis. The annual conference committee is working on details. Information will be shared as it is made available. Live stream will begin June 15 at 9 a.m. at <https://livestream.com/VAUMC>.



# GUIDE TO ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2018

To view the corresponding forms and links mentioned below, visit [www.vaumc.org/AC2018](http://www.vaumc.org/AC2018).



## Kits for Conference

As your church begins preparation for collecting items for kits, there is currently an appeal from UMCOR for Hygiene, School, and Cleaning Kits only. Complete list of items and instructions are on the conference website. Collection times will be from Thursday, June 14 from noon to 8 p.m. and on Friday, June 15 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. For questions, contact the Kit Collection Coordinator, the Rev. David Magruder at Zion UMC in Seaford (York River District) at (757) 898-7417 or [davidmagruder@vaumc.org](mailto:davidmagruder@vaumc.org). Money for the kits should be sent to Conference Treasurer, Virginia Conference UMC, PO Box 5605, Glen Allen, VA 23058. Checks should be made payable to Virginia Conference UMC.

## Display Space

To reserve display space at the Hampton Roads Convention Center for 2017 Annual Conference, please see the Display Guidelines on the conference website and send in a Display Request and check to the Rev. Eric Vaudt at the address on the form. Deadline to reserve space is May 15.

## Child Care

Child care will be available at Wesley UMC, 2510 N Armistead Avenue, Hampton for children ages 0-12 years old. Deadline for registering is May 31. No walk-ins or children over the age of 12. Cost is \$8 per child per session. Cost for 2 or more children per family will be \$14 per session. Snacks will be provided but no meals.

### Times available:

**Friday - 8:30 am to 12:30 pm; 1:30 pm - 6:00 pm**

**Saturday - 8:00 am to 12:30 pm; 1:30 pm - 5:30 pm; 7:00 pm - 10:00 pm**

**Sunday - 8:00 am to 12:30 pm**

For questions regarding childcare, please contact Evonne Dickey, York River District administrator, at (757) 596-3476 or [YorkRiverDistrict@vaumc.org](mailto:YorkRiverDistrict@vaumc.org). Please access the link <https://www.eiseverywhere.com/330714> to register.

## Annual Conference Offering

Bishop Lewis has announced the Annual Conference mission offering goal of \$200,000 to focus on the following missional priority projects:

### ❖ **Cambodia: \$50,000**

Church Growth and Development and Community Health & Agric. Development

### ❖ **Brazil: \$25,000**

Shade and Fresh Water Ministry with Children

### ❖ **Mozambique: \$25,000**

Lay Leadership Development



### ❖ **Native Americans: \$10,000**

Support for Volunteers in Mission teams working with Native American Ministry and Tribal Youth

### ❖ **Cuba Recovery: \$25,000**

Hurricane Recovery for Churches in Cuba

### ❖ **Haiti: \$25,000**

Funds to support Volunteers in Mission teams to Haiti

### ❖ **Puerto Rico Recovery: \$25,000**

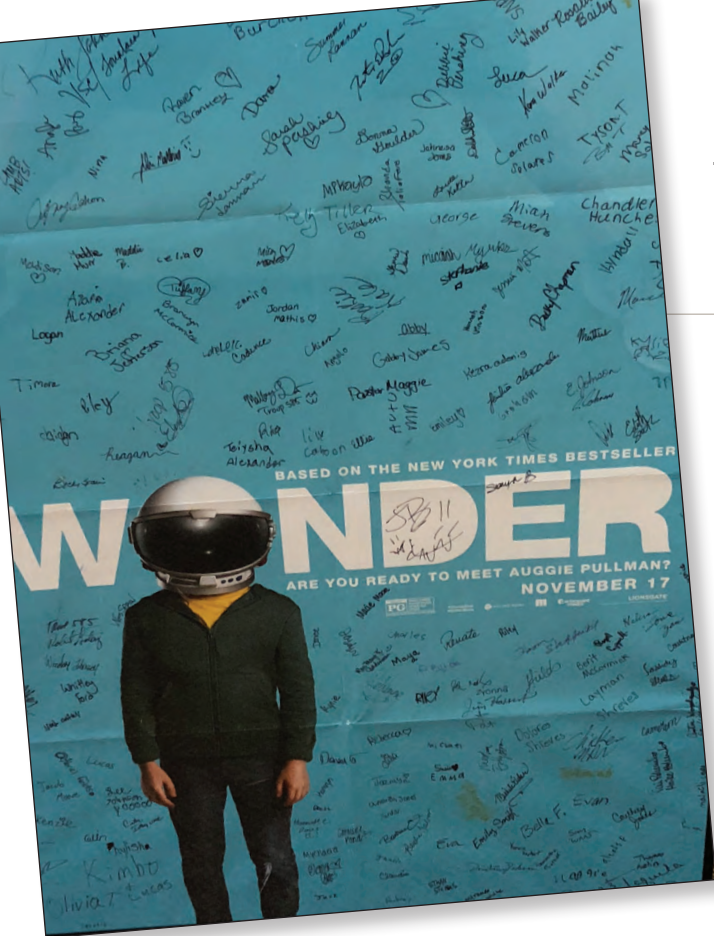
Hurricane Recovery support for Puerto Rican churches

### ❖ **Moscow Seminary: \$15,000**

Support for student scholarships



## The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



### Movie event promotes kindness to local area students

By Madeline Pillow

Kindness was the theme of a recent movie event at the Beacon Theatre in Hopewell, Va.

Showing the 2017 movie "Wonder," local United Methodist churches and the city of Hopewell Office on Youth partnered together for students in the Hopewell and outside communities on April 22. Approximately 500 people were in attendance.

The Rev. Jacob Sahms, part of the Fort Lee Branch of the James River District of The United Methodist Church, helped plan this

event that reached out into the local community. The intent of showing the film was not only to promote kindness but also to give lower income families the opportunity to see it.

The movie "Wonder" is about choosing kindness. It features Auggie Pullman, played by Jacob Tremblay, who has a rare facial deformity. He experiences both friendship and bullying as he goes to school for the first time after being homeschooled. The film also stars Julia Roberts and Owen Wilson. A quote from the movie that emphasizes its theme is, "When given the choice between being right

or being kind, choose kind."

Following the movie, actress Izabela Vidovic, who plays Via in the movie, took part in a Q & A with the audience. The event's planners raised more than \$15,000 which in part made it possible for Vidovic to attend.

When Vidovic and her parents learned the aim of this event, they decided to donate most of the money minus their travel back to the event for Sahms to give to a charity of his choice. Sahms surprised Vidovic by announcing at the event that the money will be used

"When given the choice between being right or being kind, choose kind."

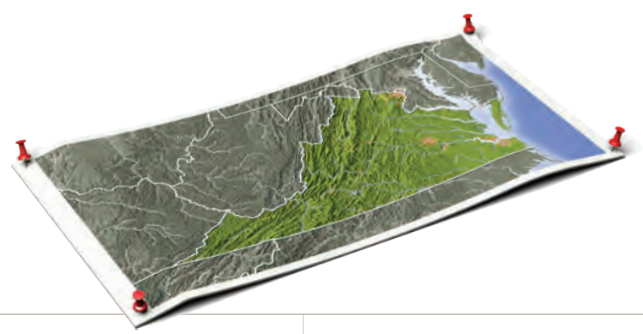
(Con't. on page 29: "Wonder.")

The Beacon Theatre on April 22. Photos courtesy of Jacob Sahms.





# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



## Latino Clergy Caucus holds successful lay ministry course

By Forrest White

On any given weekend at Trinity United Methodist Church in Amelia County, the Rev. Callie Walker, 49, feels her age.

So, how exactly does it feel? Well, it depends on the worship service.

"In the English speaking worship, I'm always the youngest," she said, with a chuckle. "I'm always the oldest at the Spanish speaking worship."

The Spanish service averages about 42 worshippers each week, the English service about 33.

"I am energized, I am

invigorated, I am challenged by our Latino worshippers," Walker said. "Whether they are parents who immigrated here or youth who grew up here, they are a blessing, a treat. I think they give the whole congregation energy."

### Energized.

That word also describes the work of the Virginia Conference's Latino Clergy Caucus, formed in the spring of 2017, that held its second annual retreat April 19-21 in Richmond. It consists both of Latino clergy and clergy who serve Latino congregations.

The retreat comes on the heels of a successful event for laity, organized and led by members of the Caucus and held at Trinity UMC Amelia.

Over the course of three

Saturdays in March, Latino leaders from Floris UMC Sterling, Ramsey Memorial UMC Richmond and the host church gathered for Introduction to Lay Ministry: The BASIC Course, taught in Spanish.

Twenty-one people began the study and 18 completed it, heartening numbers for organizers.

"Frankly, it went better than I anticipated," said the Rev. Dr. Victor Gómez, first president of the Latino Clergy Caucus. "Those who came were very eager to learn, very eager to serve."

Among those completing the training were a handful who feel called to pastoral ministry, Gómez said. Others expressed a desire for continued lay ministry studies and certification.

Buoyed by excitement over the recently completed training, organizers offered it in Spanish once again on May 5 at Basic UMC Waynesboro, where the Rev. Chad Beck serves a multicultural congregation with both English and Spanish worship services. The training was done in one day this time, rather than spread across three weeks.

"We are looking for new and creative ways to support Latino ministries and to reach unchurched Latinos in the conference," said Beck, who became fluent in Spanish while living in

Eighteen people completed the lay ministry course.  
Photo courtesy of Ileana Rosario.





# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

Mexico for three years.

Basic UMC's mission statement also describes his family – “We are a multicultural family sharing the redemptive love of Jesus Christ.” His wife is from Mexico. Together, they have two children, growing up in a bilingual home.

At the Amelia event, Beck led the portion of training focused on ministries of compassionate care and justice.

“Everybody shares similar human needs ... food, shelter, compassion, the need for Jesus,” he said. “But the daily lives of people are different, based on where they’re from, the language they speak, how they’re treated by society. We need to equip our churches for inclusion and hospitality for all people.”

Some churches within the conference have offered ministry to the Latino community for years. Walker tells the story passed down to her at Trinity of a monthly dinner held by the church for Latinos in community, which began about 15 years ago, she said. Out of that dinner leaders emerged. But those attending wanted more than food and fellowship.

“People began to say, ‘You’re feeding our bodies, but can you give us the Word?’” Walker said. “All along the way, the leaders were saying, ‘We need more training. We want

to learn more about what United Methodists believe.”

## The time has come.

Those who complete BASIC and advanced lay servant courses will receive a diploma. Caucus leaders have applied for grant funding to expand this pilot project to equip more Latino leaders in the conference.

They see their work not simply as equipping Spanish-speaking congregations around the Conference, but also as helping to shape the general church into a more diverse and inclusive body, celebrating the gifts of all.

Beck reminds folks that Basic UMC isn't two churches – one for those who speak English, one for those who speak Spanish – but rather one congregation, with worship services in two languages.

“The conference is full of folks who have a wonderful sense of calling,” said Walker, who is eager to eliminate any language barriers that may hinder people from answering that call.


Beck envisions the Latino Clergy Caucus taking the lead in areas such as church planting and mentoring, guided by a fundamental element of our faith.

“Jesus said ‘Make disciples of all nations,’” Beck

said.

Sometimes making disciples means traveling 10,000 miles.

Sometimes it means traveling across town.

“I’ve got 10-15 more people who want and need this training right here,” Walker said. 

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

## MOVING? RETIRING?



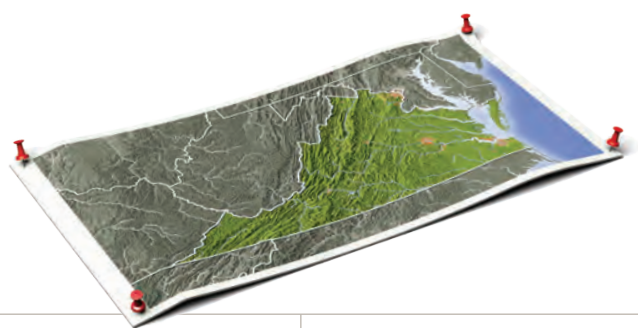
Larry Buxton Coaching can help you explore new options, identify fresh paths, set goals, and move forward confidently.



*Larry Buxton*

Coaching for Clergy  
Transitions  
[larrybuxton@vaumc.org](mailto:larrybuxton@vaumc.org)  
[www.larrybuxton.com](http://www.larrybuxton.com)

# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



## Pat Hickman retires from the conference staff after long-time service

By Forrest White

**A**fter 41 years of service to the Virginia Conference, senior administrative assistant, Pat Hickman retired in early April, leaving behind the legacy of a hard worker, a team player, a trusted confidant and a woman of deep faith.

Pat Hickman



"I was ultimately inspired by the depth of her faith," said the Rev. Mark Ogren, director of Congregational Excellence for the conference, and Hickman's boss for the past seven years.

"She and I shared with each other things we didn't share anywhere else when we both had serious family concerns or crisis. She is steadfast in her faith."

Hickman served in administrative roles with every office within the conference, with the exception of the Commission on Disabilities.

"She was an awesome coworker, a hard worker," said Cindy Ingroff, a fellow member of the administrative staff whose office was across from Hickman's at the conference center in Glen Allen. "She would do anything to help you."

Another member of the administrative staff team agreed with Ingroff.

"She was always willing to assist wherever she was needed," Becky Tate said, "and she never complained."

Hickman has a depth of knowledge about The United Methodist Church, and specifically about the Virginia Conference, after more than four decades of service. It made her a go-to person for fellow staff members seeking insights.

Described by all as a "quiet, private person,"

Hickman has retirement plans that include spending more time with her three grandchildren.

Though she's only been retired for a couple of weeks, her coworkers already miss her.

"When something was upsetting or something was going on in the conference, she always had this positive, assuring line, 'It's going to be OK, it's going to be OK,'" Ogren said.

Perhaps no one will miss Hickman more than Marian Loving, the receptionist who greets all who enter the conference center.

"I shared many secrets with her, as I knew she was a family person that loved her kids," Loving said. "She became my work mom."

Tate summed things up for everyone.

"She will be terribly missed by all of us," Tate said. "I wish her the very best on this new journey in retirement." 🍷

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



# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

## MaryKaye Cochran joins conference center staff

By Forrest White

After 16 years as a Christian educator in local churches, MaryKaye Cochran joined conference staff with the Center for Congregational Excellence on April 2 and hit the ground running.

That didn't come as a surprise to the Rev. Mark Ogren, conference Director of Congregational Excellence, who has known Cochran for 30 years.

"She's very well-organized, and she greets people well," he said.

Cochran came to the conference position after nearly 12 years at Woodlake UMC in Chesterfield where she served as Director of Discipleship. Her primary responsibilities there included children, youth and adult ministries, with direct supervision of staff for those ministries. She also worked with welcome ministries – guest follow up, greeters, ushers, parking and new member classes.

"It was a big job," she said, with a laugh.

The heavy administrative load prepared her well for the new position.

Before Woodlake, Cochran served on staff at Farmville UMC and Duncan Memorial UMC in Ashland.

Why the move from the local church to the conference position?

Family.

Her husband Larry is pastor at Belmont UMC located in Richmond.

"I felt God moving me to be at Larry's church," Cochran said. "I had to be at Woodlake on Sundays. I tried to go to Belmont one Sunday a month. When I saw this position, Larry and I talked and thought a Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. job, might be good for our family. I can be a pastor's wife. I love to sing in the choir. I can do that every Sunday now and go to choir practice every week!"


Cochran cites organization as one of her biggest strengths. She's looking forward to supporting training events and planning and coordinating events, among her many responsibilities.

Having served on the Board of Higher Education, the Virginia Christian Educators Fellowship and the Richmond District leadership training team, Cochran already knew several of the administrators who are now here teammates.

"I know I have a lot to learn, but I believe I have a good framework in place," she said.

Ogren was pastor at Farmville UMC when Cochran joined the church in 1988.

"She has a passion for the United Methodist Church," he said. "MaryKaye and Larry are two of the most deeply spiritual people I know."

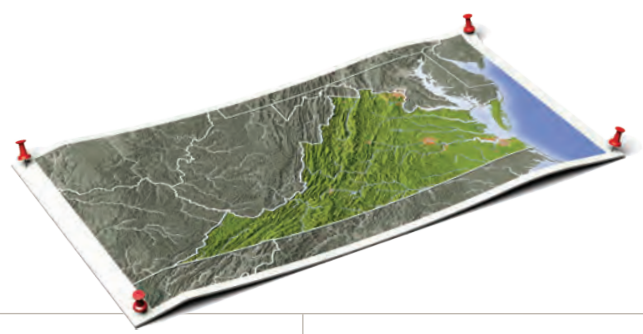
You can reach the Center for Congregational Excellence at (804) 521-1100 and ext. 156 for Ogren and ext. 155 for Cochran. 

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

MaryKaye Cochran



# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



## Virginia Beach communities learn to address homelessness

By Ashley Kline

Three dozen faith-based communities and area nonprofit organizations gathered on March 15 to learn the best way to address a common concern in communities across the United States: homelessness. A cross section of citizens from Virginia Beach and surrounding cities came together at New Jerusalem Church of God in Christ for the interfaith forum, “Moving from Charity to Change: Effective Strategies for Ending the

Cycle of Homelessness.”

The Interfaith Alliance at the Beach (IAB) played host to the event in collaboration with BEACH Community Partnership and the City of Virginia Beach.

An informal coalition of faith-based communities, nonprofit organizations and service providers, the IAB works to address unmet needs and social justice issues. It supports nonpartisan advocacy and initiatives that build on individual and family strengths to help achieve self-sufficiency. Housing stability, affordable health care, access to healthy food, restoring the family unit and financial security are among IAB’s initiatives.

In her remarks as forum keynote speaker, Tracy

Flaherty-Willmott, associate director of OrgCode Consulting, Inc., which advises the City of Virginia Beach Department of Housing and Neighborhood Preservation, addressed the importance of faith-based organizations in the effort to implement a housing-first model to end homelessness. The model makes housing those who are homeless a priority, as opposed to simply helping them feel comfortable where they are.

Faith-based organizations in the United States hold 30 percent of the country’s emergency shelter beds and can cumulatively house 150,000 individuals per night, Flaherty-Willmott said.

Additionally, she said, faith-based organizations provide a strong volunteer base and have access to flexible financial resources.

However, Flaherty-Willmott said she the primary way faith-based organizations can assist in the battle against homelessness is to debunk common myths by looking at the issue through the eyes of faith. Such myths include: many who are homeless want to be homeless, everyone who experiences poverty is at the brink of homelessness, people who are homeless find themselves in their present condition due to mental illness and any-

Deborah Houck and Kay Bess represent the Virginia Beach Family Emergency Shelter Team and the Beach Closet at Memorial United Methodist Church at the Interfaith Alliance at the Beach 2018 Forum about ending the cycle of homelessness on March 15. Photo courtesy of Ashley Kline.





# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

one who is homeless has an addiction to drugs or alcohol.

"Everyone who experiences homelessness is someone's mother, father, daughter or friend. That's all we need to know," Flaherty-Willmott said.

Faith-based organizations can additionally help provide relief to the homeless by communicating through their words and actions that homelessness is not a person's defining feature.

"How do we get people to think, homelessness is just one part of the tapestry of my life," Flaherty-Willmott said.

The event featured a panel discussion among three leaders of the Virginia Beach faith community who have strived to be part of the solution to homelessness – Jennifer Vaughan, Potter's House at Virginia Beach United Methodist Church; Todd Walker, executive director of Judeo-Christian Outreach Center; and Kay Bess of Memorial United Methodist Church who organizes the Virginia Beach Family Emergency Shelter Team and Beach Closet.

Vaughan said she sees helping the homeless population as an offshoot of faith-based organizations' responsibility to help their neighbors. She mentioned that since implementing a housing-first approach

at Potter's House, she's seen many of their regular patrons who are homeless find housing and later return as volunteers.

Walker described a move away from a more programmatic approach to ending homelessness, where clients must attend certain programs in order to secure housing, to a more client-centered approach at the Judeo-Christian Outreach Center.

"The client needs to be the priority, not the programs," Walker said.

Bess described her efforts to incorporate a housing-first approach into her initiatives by assembling move-in kits to assist individuals who are moving into residences.

"Housing is a right, not a reward," Bess said.

The forum also featured information regarding the long-anticipated City of Virginia Beach Housing Resource Center, a \$19 million investment by the city. The center will be located on Witchduck Road and is expected to be fully operational by August. "This is the city's way of saying, 'We care about the least of these,'" said Ruth Hill, Housing Resource Center Homeless Services administrator.

According to Pam Shine, Homeless System coordinator, the new building will feature permanent efficiency-style housing for

individuals as well as temporary housing for families. Beds for LGBTQ individuals, as well as those with disabilities, will also be provided.

In terms of services, the new center will provide showers, laundry, a health clinic, learning facility and a cafeteria featuring a full-service kitchen. Job preparedness training will be made available to all clients.

Hill described the facility as a "one-stop shop for those experiencing a housing crisis." The City of Virginia Beach Human Services Department will be located on the building's third floor. There will be an interfaith office located in the building as well.

"The mission of the center is the same as that of the community: to make homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring," said Andrew Freidman, director of Housing and Neighborhood Preservation for the City of Virginia Beach.

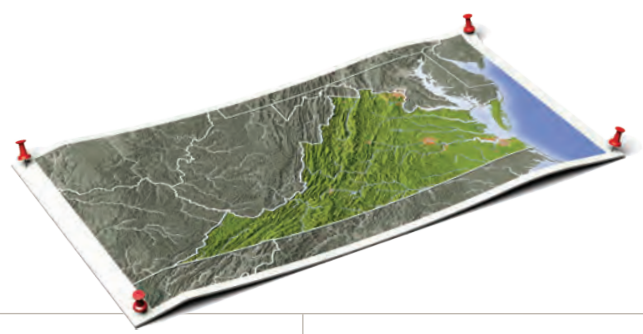
– Ashley Kline is a junior double majoring in psychology and religious studies at Virginia Wesleyan University. She is an editor at the school newspaper, "The Marlin Chronicle."

The Virginia United Methodist  
**Advocate**  
**EQUIPS**  
**CONNECTS**  
**INFORMS**



[vaumc.org/Advocate](http://vaumc.org/Advocate)

# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



## Conference event seeks to open dialogue on race, reconciliation

By Madeline Pillow

**C**alls for discussion on racism have been rampant not only in the church but in the nation due to events such as the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville last year. According to Lori Valentine de Segovia, conference

Below (top): Participants listen to keynote address.

(Bottom): Open conversation was part of the keynote address as well as the afternoon small groups.



Committee on Ethnic and Minority Concerns and Advocacy (CEMCA) co-chair, there is a need for open dialogue especially in the church to counteract the negativity of racial stereotypes in society and perpetuated in the media.

The Convocation on Race and Reconciliation, called by Bishop Sharma D. Lewis, was held April 14, 2018 at Annandale UMC. The aim of this event was to empower participants in conducting necessary difficult conversations related to racial division, justice and reconciliation.

Beginning as the Virginia Conference’s resident bishop in 2016, Lewis said she felt such an event would be necessary, especially after her visits around the conference where clergy and laity alike shared the need to discuss racism and its presence in the conference.

The convocation featured a keynote address and small groups later in the afternoon with facilitators. The keynote speaker was Romal Tune, a full-time speaker and author. A social entrepreneur, Tune’s nonprofit “ClereStory Education” has created access to scholarships and career opportunities for high school students in impoverished communities around the world.

### Inherent and Experiential Narratives

In his address, Tune, who is African American, shared his past experiences with racism and his own assumptions based on others’ racial identity. He shared that these assumptions and our own experiences start in our childhood.

“Each and every one of us is the sum total of a set of stories, life experiences, that have shaped who you are in this very moment. Things that were said to you when you were growing up, things that were not said to you, because for some of us it’s not simply the things that were said it’s also the things were not said that we needed to hear,” Tune said.

The challenge, Tune said, is questioning our experiences and assumptions to learn what they mean and if they are true.

“I have beliefs about myself based on how other people treated me,” Tune said. “What would change in your life now if you decided to believe something positive about yourself? If people were genuinely good, how would it change your behavior, your thoughts and actions when you interact with other people?”

Tune shared that a reconciliation within a person and who they think they



# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

are with who God says they are needs to happen prior to a conversation about race and reconciliation.

Through our inherited and experiential narratives, Tune said, every person is choosing a narrative to accept that may not be true. He said that often people staying in a false narrative feel safe from people but are actually denying themselves freedom.

"Is the Gospel being made real through your beliefs and interactions around race and reconciliation? If not, what is the counter story that you feel more comfortable with and why? What are the benefits? Do those benefits really outweigh leading in to God's story? When we know for sure God can do exceedingly and abundantly more than we ever ask or imagine, there's so much more God can do with you and for you and through you when you submit your story."

Tune said that you will honor God when you are willing for God to show you a new story, a new way of being toward people.

"The thing about racial baggage is it's heavy, for everyone, not just the person who has been impacted by racial discrimination but the person who has imposed it carries a burden too, especially as believers."

For Tune, reconciliation is a process of recognizing



false narratives in your life and opening yourself up to what the Kingdom truly looks like. He shared that in taking on these assumptions you have to offer yourself grace through the change.

"When you see someone who doesn't look like you and you're ready to lean into those assumptions, whisper to yourself, 'No, thank you. I want to try something different. I want to see what God is going to do in this moment.'"

## Making the event a reality

In planning this event, CEMCA formed a design team one year ago and partnered with the General Commission on Race and Reconciliation (GCORR). Us-

ing materials from GCORR, event planners hoped that the model could then be replicated across the conference, in districts and in local churches.

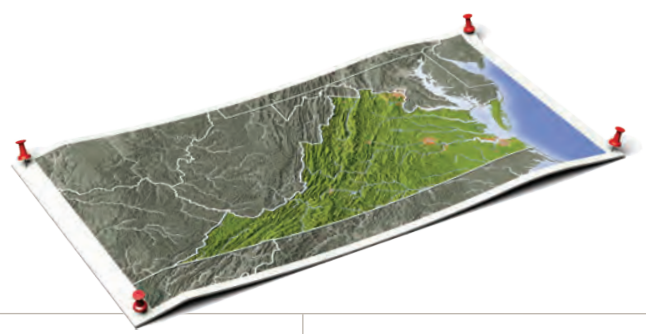
For CEMCA, a group that has been in a re-visioning process for the last few years, this event could be the start to open conversations and communications.

"Our hope as a commission is that everyone realizes that we all see people when we look at them and we have a certain perception, but we want everyone to see the rich colors and the diversity that's underneath," said de Segovia. "We're hoping the conversations of today will help set the groundwork for that. We also hope that

Romal Tune was the keynote speaker for the April 14 event.

(Con't. on next page: "EVENT.")

# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Bishop Lewis talks with the Rev. Larry Jent (right) at the event.

(“EVENT,” cont. from page 15.)

as a commission you all will know that we’re here and we’re present and we’re active and we’re your resource.”

## Working toward change

In holding this event, the Rev. Clarence Brown, pastor of Annandale UMC, said that the conversation must grow in order for change to occur.

“I am hopeful that participants learn how to engage the work of having conversations with their neighbors,” said Brown. “We are in such a place, so polarized, that we don’t find places to come to the middle where I think Jesus resides and have the kind of conversations to under-

stand how history plays into it, how government plays into it, and unfortunately many times how the church plays into it, to understand that this is not about the individual but how we together participate in larger systems that are historically conditioned that contribute to this thing we call and know as racism.”

Reconciliation, Brown said, is an important work for United Methodists theologically because of its indication that an existing relationship is broken and in need of repair. The relationship that needs to be fixed first, he said, is the relationship with God.

“Our country, for better or worse, is in a bad place when it comes down to issues of race and racism and race relations,” said

Brown. “We have for many years had conversations about this. We have had services of repentance, we’ve had workshops, but yet this insidious thing called racism continues to endure. We must do more than sing songs. We must do more than have worship. We must do more than hold hands. We must begin the active work of reconciliation.”

For Bishop Lewis, the event was a catalyst for change.

“I felt the Convocation on Race and Reconciliation was well attended, informational and well received,” said Lewis. “My hopes for the future is for the Virginia Conference to be the leading conference in the Southeastern Jurisdiction (SEJ) that is committed to fighting against racism.”

You can learn more about Romal Tune and his latest book at <https://romaltune.com/>. To view an overview video from the event or to view Tune’s full keynote address, visit [vimeo.com/virginiaumc](https://vimeo.com/virginiaumc).

– Madeline Pillow is editor of the Advocate.



# DISCIPLES HELPING TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD



▲ The United Methodist Women (UMW) at **St. Luke's UMC, Richmond District**, have started a trend: turning plastic grocery bags into mats for homeless veterans. The ladies asked for donations of bags and were overwhelmed as the church and community responded to their request. Boxes of bags even arrived by mail as the project was featured on the church Facebook page. Then, the

UMW started recruiting friends and community members to help crochet the abundant supply into something missional. The mats they crochet are durable and warm to sleep on. This small group of ladies has begun a big and wonderful mission project which is spreading. Who knew there was a godly purpose for those old plastic bags?

▼ **Resurrection UMC in Chesapeake** recently held a Women's Sunday. The church is a 90 percent Filipino-American church that works to bring awareness to human trafficking as their social action for this year. Pictured are the ladies from Women's Sunday, all dressed in blue to honor victims and survivors.

Since 2011, during the season of Lent, the children and youth at **Bethany UMC in Forest** have raised money to help the children and families in Rwanda. They have raised a total of \$18,908 which has purchased 65 pigs, 165 goats, 267 chickens and 565 rabbits. Nancy Strachan, a missionary friend from Bedford and founder of Rwandan Hugs, goes to Rwanda each year and purchases the livestock. This year, the young people have raised \$3,790 to buy water filters so that the families in Rwanda can have clean, safe drinking water. The \$40 water filters are made in Rwanda and will last for 30 years. The nearly 95 water filters will provide clean water for a generation and improve the quality of

(Con't. on page 27: "DISCIPLES.")









# Advocating for social justice



The United Methodist Church has long concerned itself with social justice. John Wesley and the early Methodists shared their opposition to slavery and inhumane prison conditions.

The denomination's Social Principles are the way the church attempts to prayerfully speak to contemporary issues through a biblical and theological lens and "to apply the Christian vision of righteousness to social, economic, and political issues." (*Book of Discipline*)

The work of advocacy is tasked specifically to the United Methodist Board of Church and Society to provide "witness and action on issues of human well-being, justice, peace" through research, education and training.

According to the *Book of Discipline*, through spiritual disciplines "works of piety" such as prayer, Bible study, participation in corporate worship and communion – we grow and mature in our love for God. By engaging in acts of compassion and justice – "works of mercy" such as visiting the sick and those in prison, feeding the hungry, advocating for the poor and marginalized – we live out our love for God through service to our neighbor. "Our love of God is always linked with love of our neighbor, a passion for justice and renewal in the life of the world." (§102, *Book of Discipline*)

United Methodists believe that salvation entails renewal of both individuals and the world. The faithful response to God's saving grace has both a personal and social dimension as we grow in "holiness of heart and life."

The work of United Methodists is more than just helping individuals but it is about transforming conditions that create injustice and inequality. "It is our conviction that the good news of the Kingdom must judge, redeem and reform the sinful social structures of our time." (*Book of Discipline*)



# Advocates, witnesses remain in spite of Mountain Valley Pipeline project

By Madeline Pillow

The Rev. Morris Fleischer can look out of his office window at Newport-Mt. Olivet UMC (NMO-UMC) in Newport, Va., and see the path of the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP).

Once in place, the pipeline will cross Rt. 42 about 60 yards to the north of the church. Currently, the initial clearing for the pipeline has begun with a group of hardwoods already toppled to the ground.

The MVP, according to the website, will be a “natural gas pipeline system that spans approximately 303 miles from northwestern West Virginia to southern Virginia — and as an interstate pipeline will be regulated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).” The pipeline will be constructed and owned by Mountain Valley Pipeline, LLC, which is a joint venture with other partners.

This project will affect the Virginia counties of Giles, Craig, Montgomery, Roanoke, Franklin and Pittsylvania.

The sight of these broken trees has affected Fleischer deeply as the fight against this pipeline has been going on for three years now.

“I found myself having to leave my office the day that

the crews were cutting as I felt my blood pressure rising from the visible destruction of the trees against the cacophony of the roaring chainsaws,” said Fleischer.

The church is in a central location in the community and while the pipeline will not directly cross the church property, Fleischer shared concern that the blasting part of construction could cause damage to the building’s foundation.

The pipeline’s path has already affected a nearby elderly couple, as they had to relocate from their home, visible from the church, where they have lived for more than 50 years.

Due to the pipeline’s intended location, the 168-year-old church will be situated in what industry officials call the “incineration zone.”

Fleischer shares his optimism for the church building in spite of this.

“My guess is that since this church survived a Civil War skirmish and a fire in 1902 that destroyed nearly every structure in the Village of Newport except for the church, NMO-UMC will, by the grace of God, survive this too.”



The “Giving Witness” event was held in March 2018.  
Photos courtesy of Morris Fleischer.





## What the pipeline means for the area

Because of its location in the community, the church has served as a meeting place for groups such as Preserve Giles County as well as for several community forums for local and state officials to hear concerns from local citizens and to share information about the project. Two primary groups have been actively working to prevent its intrusion through Newport: Preserve Giles County and Preserve Newport Historic Properties.

Fleischer said that Preserve Giles County has approached this issue primarily from an environmental standpoint. Sharing about the dangers that the pipeline presents to water and the local wildlife, the organization has also been working with Dr. Ernst Kastning, a preeminent expert on the karst geology\* of the region.

Kastning issued a study about the dangers of positioning the pipeline in the region due to factors such as the steep mountain, the fragility of the karst and the county's status as an active seismic zone.

Kastning's study also highlights the potential threat to drinking water and the process of blasting on underground streams.

Fleischer noted that the lease on the pipeline easement will run out in 20 years following the pipeline's construction.

"If the profitability of natural gas declines and the pipeline is abandoned, what happens to the chemicals that are used to hasten the natural gas through the line as the pipe itself begins to rust and decay?" Fleischer asked. "Will future generations have to deal with poisoned soil and the dangers inherent from contaminated water due to short-

sighted, economic gain?"

Fleischer also shared concerns about the origins of the natural gas that will flow through the pipeline.

Preserve Historic Newport Properties (PHNP) has approached this issue from a standpoint of immanent domain.

"How does EQT (a partner in the project), a limited liability corporation, have the right to use existing immanent domain laws for profit that were originally designed for public utilities?" Fleischer asked.

PHNP has also looked at the village of Newport and its current recognition by the State of Virginia as an historic community and what protections might be offered by such a designation. Just this past year, Newport was named as one of the three most endangered historic communities in the Commonwealth.

## Giving Witness event

The "Giving Witness" event was held on March 18, 2018 as an ecumenical service to bear witness to God's creation, uplift the importance of stewardship as people of faith and a recommitment to working for the care of creation. More than 180 people attended from the immediate community, across the commonwealth and West Virginia.

"Newport is in a season of lament. The Giving Witness event was designed to give voice to the concerns that have seemingly gone unheard by both federal and state regulatory agencies and officials who have given carte blanche to the Mountain Valley project," said Fleischer who organized the event with another local church.

Throughout these years of protest, and this event in particular, Fleischer has found himself in pastoral care mode. As the MVP project moves ahead, Fleischer has shared that local landowners are angry and feel dejected.

The Giving Witness event seemed to bring attendees a sense of relief however.

"Residents were finally able to verbalize and share their frustrations within a community of those similarly concerned," said Fleischer.

The event has opened up dialogue about holding another event soon as well as one in West Virginia.

Fleischer has found Roanoke District Superintendent, the Rev. Kathleen Overby-Webster, to be a great source of encouragement and wisdom along the way.

The Rev. Glenn Rowley, conference director of Justice and Missional Excellence, attended the prayer vigil in Newport. He was moved because he sees the people's witness

\*Karst is a topography formed from the dissolution of soluble rocks such as limestone, dolomite, and gypsum. It is characterized by underground drainage systems with sinkholes and caves. (wikipedia.com)



in spite of the pipeline moving ahead.

“Even in this small town battling corporate greed people are still holding onto hope in spite of a lot of reason to despair as the pipeline company is already clearing trees and some are being taken down that aren’t in the original plan,” said Rowley. “It was a great opportunity to see faith in action as the Body of Christ!”

### United Methodists and social justice

So why are Fleischer and his church community so passionate about this topic? It might have something to do with the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church.

*“All creation is the Lord’s, and we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it. Water, air, soil, minerals, energy resources, plants, animal life and space are to be valued and conserved because they are God’s creation and not solely because they are useful to human beings. God has granted us stewardship of creation.” – UM Social Principles ¶160 I. The Natural World*

For Fleischer this is all about loving what God loves.

“The Social Principles remind us of our particular place in the created order as responsible stewards and the importance of using our freedom and creativity to its benefit. We are all interconnected in the greater web of life — when one part suffers, we all suffer. This leads to other questions about our gluttonous consumption of energy and our incessant need for convenience and acquisition,” said Fleischer.

Moving forward, Fleischer and the church community will continue being a witness. Fleischer has a summer sermon series planned called “Overcoming Disappointment.” He will also be participating in the EarthKeepers training at the General Board of Global Missions in Atlanta this May. He hopes to share about what they have learned through their experiences and learn about more ways in which they can become better stewards of God’s good creation.

“This violation of our community will not define who we are and the good that we are about,” Fleischer said. 🍅

*-Madeline Pillow is editor of the Advocate.*



Cutting down trees is the first step for the Mountain Valley Pipeline project



The Giving Witness event





# Nonprofit organization creates long-term relationships with marginalized persons



By Forrest White

Deep into a 45-minute discussion, Angie Williams paused to gather herself, as tears began to roll down her cheeks.

Williams is Regional Director and Senior Model Trainer for The Open Table – a nonprofit organization equipping local churches to transform communities through sustainable, long-term relationships with individuals (called “Brothers” and “Sisters”) who have been marginalized.

It’s clear that this isn’t simply a job for her, but rather a calling. She has formed “a lifelong relationship” with a Sister whom she met through a Table at her home church, River Road UMC in Richmond.

“The average person in our congregations has no idea what people in poverty go through,” Williams said, as she wiped away her tears. “I feel like I’ve been involved in mis-

sion and social justice my whole life and I’ve learned so many things actually walking with our Sister in her everyday life.

“The church is never really going to be able to end poverty if we don’t put ourselves in a place where we actually see it. I could tell you stories of all the places I’ve gone with our Sister, the way she gets treated because she’s poor and because she’s black. Of course I know in my head that people get discriminated against, but to experience that with her, I can halfway feel what it’s like because I’m with her.”

## With her.

Those words summarize a key component of Open Table.

Its design helps churches move beyond simply doing for individuals by being with them in a mutually transformative relationship designed to equip and empower.

The marginalized often lack the support systems that many people take for granted.

“I’ve never felt so accepted and loved from so many people,” said a Sister, who asked to remain anonymous. “I never feel judged or alone now that I have my Table. I finally have a great support system and people to help me be the best mom I can be to my daughter.”

Open Table has been at New Life UMC in Midlothian, Va., for two years.

“It began with a hunger to offer real help to real people facing real challenges,” said the Rev. Michael T. Maxwell, pastor at New Life. “We were no longer satisfied to offer what seemed to be temporary assistance to long-term problems. We hungered to be involved in ministry that ‘teaches people to fish’ and if possible ‘changes the pond.’ We have truly experienced a movement from transactional ministry to transformational ministry as we embrace the value of relationship. Open Table is that kind of ministry.”

Founded by Jon Katov and born out of an Arizona church’s relationship with a homeless man, Open Table came to Virginia in 2016 through the efforts of United Methodist Family Services (UMFS), where Williams worked at the time, providing a natural support piece for families served by UMFS and giving churches a chance to engage in



deeper ministry.

“With the nature of the UMFS work – foster care and adoption and residential treatment – there aren’t but so many ways for volunteers to engage,” Williams said. “Again, a lot of it winds up being transactional – providing Christmas gifts for the kids, providing clothes for the kids. When we learned about The Open Table, we were like, ‘Oh my goodness, this is an amazing way churches can partner with us.’”

With UMFS located in Richmond, many of the first United Methodist churches to form Tables naturally have been in Central Virginia – New Life, River Road, Reveille, Chester, Gum Spring – but Braddock Street in Winchester will join them soon.

The conference has set a goal of having an additional 32 churches committed to Open Table by the end of 2018, according to the Rev. Glenn Rowley, director of Justice and Missional Excellence for the conference.

“It is the best thing I’ve seen come along in quite some time,” Rowley said.

As many as 12 congregational members bring their vocational and life experiences to a church’s Table, committing to a year with the Sister or Brother seeking to achieve life goals. Tables meet for an hour each week; however, members often spend three to five hours weekly with the Sister or Brother, building trust, building relationship.

“It may be having the Sister or Brother over to your house for dinner or going bowling or going out for ice cream,” Williams said.

The relationship building may go on for two to three months before the first actual Table meeting, she said.

Around the country Tables serve a variety of populations – homeless, working poor, young people transitioning out of foster care, victims of human trafficking, veterans, immigrants, etc. (Open Table is endorsed by the U.S. Department of Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration.)

Consider an example offered by Williams:

“Kids who age out of foster care are the highest risk population for poverty, incarceration and homelessness,” she said. “For every kid who ages out, it costs a state \$300,000 over their lifetime because they are at such high risk for needing extra services and support. Seventy-two percent of females who age out of foster care are pregnant by their 21st birthday. The cycle is just repeating itself.”

Community organizations and occasionally churches identify and refer potential Sisters and Brothers, who take a change-readiness assessment to determine their level

of openness to the Table process. If they aren’t deemed ready, they may take the assessment again in six months.

A church’s Open Table mission team – ideally with two leaders who aren’t on staff – recruits Table members, oversees training, and makes sure Tables “launch.” The “Positions” at the Table depend on the needs of the Sister or Brother.

Open Table offers extensive training to churches, which pay a licensing fee ranging from \$500-\$1,000 annually depending on membership size of the church. Individual Table members pay a one-time \$120 fee. The money collected pays for training and other resources including an online project management system, consulting support, quarterly continuing education and more.

Among the five-point theory of change for Open Table is this – Through a shared purpose, a faith community builds a powerful understanding of the human potential of each and every individual and of how to actualize true love for each other through mutual and humble service.


“As a result of our partnership with Open Table, I have witnessed growth and maturity by every person involved,” Maxwell said of New Life UMC’s experience. “It has caused our minds to be challenged, teamwork to be forged, unity in vision to be clarified, hearts to grow in compassion and hands equipped to serve. Each person has been stretched beyond their comfort zone and voluntarily sacrificed beyond convenience to work for the common good.”

Williams grew up in a United Methodist church which had a strong emphasis on mission and sent members to serve in community ministries that provided such things as food, clothing and shelter.

“But there was still this hole in my heart,” she said. “I felt like nothing we did was ultimately changing the day to day reality of the people we were serving, the people who were experiencing economic and relational poverty.”

That hole has now been filled through her work with Open Table.

“Open Table is more than just a support system, more than just a friend base,” said the Sister who asked to remain anonymous. “They are a family. My family. And I wouldn’t change this for the world.”

For additional information on The Open Table, contact Angie Williams at 804-852-3862 or email [angiewilliams@theopentable.org](mailto:angiewilliams@theopentable.org). 

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





## Not just a step down, a step in the right direction

Nick doesn't have much to say about orange jumpsuits, handcuffs or the cell in which he stayed for more than three years. In fact, he's decided he'd rather just put the whole juvenile corrections facility experience behind him.

"There's more to life than sitting in a cell all day," he said.

Nick first got into trouble at age 13 and was placed into a residential treatment facility. While there, he got into more trouble and landed in juvenile corrections, where he stayed from ages 14 to 17. And when it came time for his release, Nick made a decision that was equally as difficult as it was wise.

"I've been institutionalized for three years," Nick said to his mother, Shannon. "I'm not ready to come home. Can you respect that?"

The news that Shannon's only child was choosing to enter a three-month step-down program rather than return immediately home hit her hard. After all, he'd already been gone a long time. "He's my whole world," she said. "Of course I wanted him to come home, but I was just thinking about myself."



After his release from the juvenile corrections facility in mid-2017, Nick came to United Methodist Family Services (UMFS). He was the first child to do so as part of the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice's (DJJ) ongoing efforts to rehabilitate. DJJ is working to prevent kids from reoffending and therefore reduce the size of its institutions. Forty-eight percent of those who were released in 2016 were re-arrested within a year.

"We want to support the transformation of juvenile justice to a systems-of-care approach," said Nancy Toscano, Chief Program and Strategy Officer at UMFS. "It can happen one child at a time. If things went well with Nick, then we'd be able to help another child and another."

Therapist Angelo Cabrera had "a therapeutic hunch" that Nick was going to succeed, and that hunch turned out to be right. Nick went all in on his 90-day residential program. He responded well to therapy, but he also was able to heal by just participating in regular kid stuff, Cabrera said, like playing basketball and football.

"Angelo knew ... he just knew that Nick was a pioneer for other kids," Nancy said. "And Nick was successful by pretty much every measure."

"Nick took the challenge of setting an example," Cabrera said. "Pulling kids aside and talking to them, telling them: 'You've got it good here, I came out of a place where they didn't let you do a lot things you're allowed to do here.'"


Thanks to Nick's success, UMFS is already serving another child from a juvenile corrections facility.

"He made the right choice when he decided that he had lived that kind of lifestyle for too long to come home and just have a bunch of freedom," Shannon said, adding that UMFS went "above and beyond" in its service to Nick.

Nick said he's thankful for UMFS and the work that staff did to help prepare him both physically and emotionally to go back into the world. "I just needed some time to get back to reality."

Now 18, Nick's back home with mom, back in school and working toward the future. He's also working on the important things in life, like his crossover dribble and step-back jumper.

"I love sports," he said with a smile.

UMFS provides children with 24-hour, year-round residential care at its Child & Family Healing Center in Richmond, and Leland House in Fairfax County. These programs focus on healing children who are struggling to overcome trauma, acute behavioral and emotional challenges, or children with autism and other neurological differences. 

— Republished with permission by UMFS.



## Marching against gun violence



**T**he past several years in the United States have been privy to the deadliest shootings in the nation's history from the Route 91 Harvest music festival in Las Vegas to Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla.

United Methodists have been among many who are now calling for gun control changes.

Blake Mitchell is a member of Fairview UMC in the Danville District and a regular lay member to Annual Conference. A graduating senior, Mitchell and a classmate, Alyssa Hill, organized a march against gun violence at the end of March.

He shared more about the march and social justice in The United Methodist Church below.

### Why did you and Alyssa Hill organize this march?

Ali and I organized this march not only because of our passion for gun activism, but also because of how close we feel to these students in Parkland. Every morning when I go to school, I wonder, "That could be me at any moment today." That is what makes me so passionate about this issue. I want to do anything I can to make my peers and

me safe on a day-to-day basis, and that is exactly what I'm going to do.

### What was the response to this march in your community?

We actually had a really good turnout for a small community like Danville. Danville is primarily conservative and is not very supportive of stronger gun legislation, however, we had about 60-80 people turn out for the march, which in my opinion, was great!

### Why is it important for the church to advocate on social justice issues?

I really feel that it is important for the church to advocate on social justice because the church is where so many people, myself included, have their foundations. If the very place that gave them their values and helped to make them the advocate they are today won't stand behind them, then what does that say about the church?

### What drives you toward social justice?

Social justice has always been a passion of mine. I am a homosexual male and have always faced injustice in all walks of life; including the church in some areas. However, I still keep my faith in God and I know that pushing for things that are morally right in our society, is what God put me on this earth to do.

### What do you think people misunderstand about social justice? About people of faith sharing their beliefs in this way?

I feel that a lot of people think social justice is just rebellion filled with violence and protests, when it is really filled with people that have a passion to see the world become a better place. I think a lot of people also think that social justice is basically just a synonym for liberals. And I really do not think that's true. So many people, conservative and liberal alike, are driven to make people realize the injustice of so many things that are present in our society.

### Other thoughts?

I really just want people to know that this march, whether you believe in the cause or not, was amazing because there were young people – high school aged –

*(Con't. on page 31: "GUN VIOLENCE.")*



# DISCIPLES HELPING TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD



("DISCIPLES," cont. from page 17.)

▲ life for the families using them. Pictured with the children are Nancy Strachan, founder of Rwandan Hugs, and the Rev. Kent Wise, pastor of Bethany and Oakland United Methodist churches.

The United Methodist Women (UMW) at **Andrew Chapel in Montross** hosted a Tea for 30 guests representing seven churches in the local community. Their guest speaker, Gaylia Hudgins, a retired nurse, from Mathews, Va., shared the experiences from her five mission trips with Operation Smile. This Virginia-based organization started in 1982 and now serves 60 countries with certified medical personnel comes from around the world. Participants learned that every three minutes a child is born somewhere in the world with a cleft palate or a cleft lip. The mission trips are for one week with five days devoted to the surgery. Pictured are Lori Runkle, UMW president, and Gaylia Hudgins. ►



# EVENTS



## JUNE

### **One Journey Festival** **June 2, Washington National Cathedral, Washington, D.C.**

One Journey is the first national celebration of refugee talents, stories, cultures and contributions. This free, all-day event will connect people through the shared languages of humanity: food, fashion, music, art and dance from the countries that today's refugees originally called home.

While the day is about fun and celebration, its goal is to inspire people from all backgrounds to engage with each other in a spirit of fellowship and understanding by shining a light on the resilience and contributions of this vibrant population. The event will be held on the grounds of the Washington National Cathedral from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Program includes: Chef Jose Andres and a refugee chef cooking session; actor, model and UN spokesperson Ger Duany; performances by refugee music and dance groups; multi-language calligraphy, henna and kite activities; artists, artisans, clothing; delicious foods and more. The One Journey Festival is organized by NOVA Friends of Refugees (the interfaith network started by members of St. George's Episcopal Church and Mount Olivet UMC) and Refugees International. Join for this national celebration of the common bonds that unite our entire human family. For more information and to register, visit [www.onejourneyfestival.com](http://www.onejourneyfestival.com).

## JULY

### **Southeastern Jurisdiction Annual Historical Society meeting** **July 17-20,**

**Williamsburg UMC, Williamsburg**  
Join United Methodist history lovers from across the Southeastern Jurisdiction's (SEJ) 15 annual conference as they meet July 17-20 2018 at Williamsburg UMC for the annual meeting of the Southeastern Jurisdiction Historical Society (SEJHS) of The United Methodist Church. The event's theme is "Religious Liberty in the Historic Advance of Virginia Methodism" and will be presented by the Virginia Conference Historical Society. You do not need to be an SEJ Historical Society member to attend.

Guests will enjoy an outstanding agenda of tours and lecturers sharing fascinating stories of Virginia Methodism and will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the 1968 Uniting Conference forming today's United Methodist Church. Keynote speaker will be David L. Holmes, Walter G. Mason professor of Religious Studies, Emeritus, College of William & Mary, who will discuss religious freedom in the colonial era.

Attendees who participate in all lectures and tours of the 2018 Annual Meeting of the SEJ Historical Society will receive one Continuing Education Unit (CEU)

Visit [www.vaumc.org/SEJHistoricalSociety2018](http://www.vaumc.org/SEJHistoricalSociety2018) to find a brochure, registration information and speaker bios.

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

### **Mission Encounter**

**July 27-29,**

**4-H Center, Smith Mountain Lake**  
Mission Encounter, a cooperative event sponsored by the Virginia Conference Missional Ministries Board and the Virginia Conference United Methodist Women, will take place at the 4-H Center at Smith Mountain Lake from July 27-29. The address is 775 Hermitage Road Wirtz, VA 24184.

The event is an opportunity for your whole congregation to come alive to mission by participating in a weekend mission education experience. If you have ever wondered not just how we DO mission, 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!

There will be four courses offered: "Missionary Conference of the UMC in the USA," "What About Our Money," "Embracing Wholeness," and "Children's Study: Money Matters."

Online registration will be available soon. To see a detailed brochure, visit the conference website at [www.vaumc.org/missionencounter](http://www.vaumc.org/missionencounter).

You can purchase books prior to the event by visiting [umwmissionresources.org](http://umwmissionresources.org) or call 1-800-305-9857 to order.

Registration will close July 15.

For questions, contact Gail Sutcliffe with question at 703-490-3381.

## SEPTEMBER

### **Embrace 2018: Virginia Clergywomen's Transformational Event**

**Sept. 25-26, 2018, Virginia Crossings Conference Center, Glen Allen**

Embrace 2018 is the first gathering of the Virginia clergywomen in 30 years! Join for two days of worship, study and community. Engage



in hands on missions, show off your skills in a Talent/No Talent Show and participate in panel discussions on change and growth within your own ministry context. But most importantly, connect with other clergy-women and claim a renewed sense of call. Be inspired. Be nourished. Be embraced. Continuing Education grants from \$200 to \$400 are available to part-time\* and full-time clergy under appointment by the Virginia Conference. The application form is available at [www.vaumc.org/ClergyContinuingEducation](http://www.vaumc.org/ClergyContinuingEducation). If you are submitting an application for grant funding, please choose Invoice as your payment method. The deadline for In-residence Registration is Wednesday, August 15, 2018. You may register as a commuter, and secure your own lodging arrangements, after this date. For pricing and more registration information, visit [www.eiseverywhere.com/ehome/index.php?eventid=320185&](http://www.eiseverywhere.com/ehome/index.php?eventid=320185&)



Rev. Jacob Sahms surprises Bela Vidovic with the announcement of a new 501(c)(3) named for her.

("WONDER," cont. from page 7.)

to start a new 501(c)(3) that will fund future events similar to this and scholarships to high school seniors who are interested in pursuing film and the arts. The scholarship will be named the *Bela Vidovic Scholarship*.

Also following the event, each student was challenged to "choose kindness" in the following week and to use the hashtag #ChooseKind to share moments of kindness on social media. Their group leaders received discussion guides to prompt follow-up dialogue on what it means to choose kindness.

Sahms shared that this particular movie is for both children and adults, especially because of its universal theme.

"Students and adults can learn that kindness is a choice for everyone, whether they are the person being bullied, the bully or a bystander," Sahms said. "By choosing kindness on a situational basis, we can make it a lifelong attitude that makes us more like Christ!"

Sahms found this community experience very collaborative as the different churches and their pastors, with their different gifts and ways of working together, allowed them to play to their strengths collectively. The event

was an example of how the community can work together in the future.

"The church belongs in the 'marketplace,' focusing on ways that it can walk alongside the community and point to the gospel," Sahms said. "By reaching out beyond our denominational walls, our church has leveraged volunteers, financing and community in the Moose Lodge, the local Junior Women's Club, other Christian denominations and the City of Hopewell. We're all focused on showing young people how to reach beyond our differences."

When asked about the importance of kindness in today's world, Sahms said that choosing kindness can have a Kingdom impact.

"If each of us chooses to be kind to our family, our friends, our colleagues and our enemies, the world would begin to take on more of the characteristics of the kingdom of God," Sahms said. "If we model and teach kindness to our children, we present them with a different option for how to handle adversity and injustice, and how to interact with others who are both similar and different from them on a daily basis."

— Madeline Pillow is editor of the Advocate.

# LIVING THE WORD



*Tim Craft will be an ordained deacon in the Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church at Annual Conference 2018. He is the pastor of Next Generation Ministry at Cave Spring United Methodist Church in Roanoke. He has been in young people's ministry for more than 25 years. He attended Virginia Tech, Wesley Theological Seminary and Pfeiffer University.*

## **June 3, 2018** **Wisdom for Living** **Proverbs 1-3**

**W**e are taught to look to our elders for wisdom as they have lived longer and experienced more. If you are an apprentice, you have an older mentor to guide you in your trade. Children look toward their parents and grandparents for wisdom. But at what age are you wise enough to share your wisdom?

As I passed the half-century mark in my life (how could that have possibly happened?), I started to wonder — are people looking to me for wisdom? What wisdom could I possess that would be of interest to anyone? The only possible wisdom I could offer is the example of how I try to live my life as a follower of Christ. For it is my relationship with Christ that defines who I am, whose I am and how to I strive to live.

The Message begins Proverbs with the heading of “Wise Sayings of Solomon; A Manual for Living.” In verse 7 it says that the first step in learning wisdom is to bow before God.

In teaching confirmation classes, one of the activities we do is to ask the students to see how high they can jump. We make it a competition and mark on the wall each jump. The rules are that before you jump, you have to have your legs locked completely straight. After we mark everyone's jump, we then take the challenge over again but this time you are allowed to bend down before you jump. The resulting jumps are always higher. The point is that we have to bow down in order to reach new heights. The same is true for our faith. If we want to reach new heights in understanding and growing closer with God, we must first bow down before God.

As followers of Christ, our path to wisdom begins and ends with God. Scriptures proclaim that wisdom is at the heart of the learning process. The promise in the text is that those who listen to her will live without dread, live at ease and will be in good hands.

As Christians, are we bowing before God and listening? As United Methodists, are we bowing before God and listening to where and what we should do as followers of Christ? Are our deci-

sions based upon wisdom from God? Can we drown out the “fake news” that the world can bring? We can if we bow before God.

## **June 10, 2018** **Number 1 & Number 2** **Proverbs 22-24**

**M**y friend Cecil consistently gives his friends the “number 1” and “number 2” finger salute. He first holds up his index finger as he sees you coming and then adds a second finger. Those of us who have known Cecil for years know that this salute is to remind us of what really matters in this world.

In Matthew 22, Jesus is asked, “Teacher, which command in God's Law is the most important?” Jesus said, ““Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence.”

This is the most important, the first on any list. But there is a second to set alongside it: “Love others as well as you love yourself.” These two commands are pegs; everything in God's Law and the Prophets hangs from them.” So Cecil's salute was to — ONE (finger) Love God, TWO (fingers) Love others!

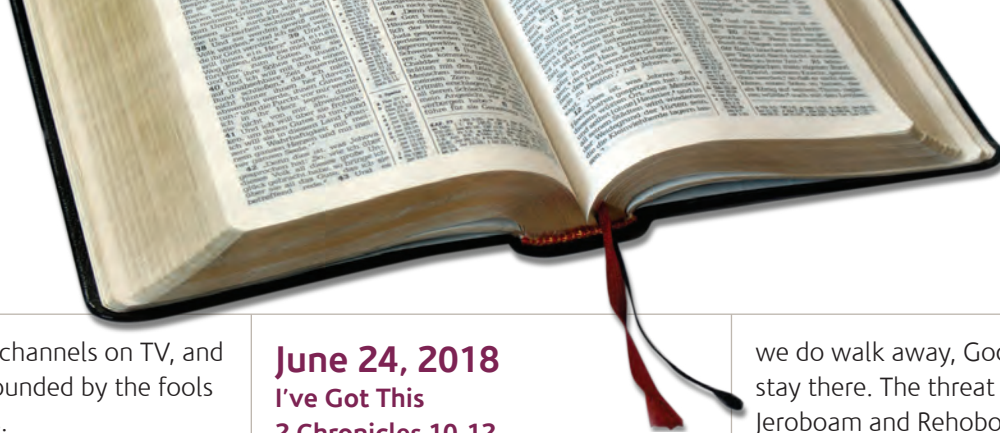
Proverbs 22-24 continues to tell us how we should live, who we should and should not associate with and how we should treat others. Every bit of advice listed in this Scripture passage can easily be summed up with Cecil's with number 1 and number 2 finger salute.

## **June 17, 2018** **Fools** **Proverbs 25-26**

**P**roverbs has a lot to say about fools and being foolish. Do you find yourself reading this passage and thinking that you might be a fool yourself? Many times in my life I have acted foolishly. Instead of focusing on my own foolishness, I often find myself pointing out the fools and foolish things others do.

I only need to go on Facebook and see many a fool. I start thinking to myself, how can anyone be so foolish? My frustration level rises with each new post that I read that does not line up with my own thoughts or convictions. I can flip





through the news channels on TV, and again I am dumbfounded by the fools and their thoughts.

I have watched many friendships end over heated discussions in social media. I don't remember a time when people were so divisive. It has reached a point where I even dread social gatherings if the potential for political discussions may arise. It seems safer to keep my mouth shut.

In Proverbs 26: 4-5 it says, "Don't respond to the stupidity of a fool; you'll only look foolish yourself. Answer a fool in simple terms so he doesn't get a swelled head."

But who really is the fool in all of this back and forth? When there are marches and protests happening more frequently, who is the fool? Which side is the more foolish?

Today as I write this, the country is remembering the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. On my last mission trip with my youth group, we took a visit to the King Center. What a powerful visit. I watched and read the many accounts of bigotry, riots and protests. But what struck me most is the way King responded. His speech was never demoralizing or violent. King believed in peaceful protests and peaceful dialogue. He never responded to the stupidity of a fool, and that is why he is so respected today. King spoke the truth. He spoke the Gospel, and he lived as a Christ follower.

That should challenge us. People are starving for an alternative to the folly of the world; they're starving for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## June 24, 2018 I've Got This 2 Chronicles 10-12

Throughout history we have always thought we know better than God. Scripture is riddled with this idea of "I've got this, God — I can handle and do things on my own." From the apple in the garden, to the Israelites turning from God over and over again, we, as humans, convince ourselves that it's not a big deal; we can handle it. Yet, we were never created to live on our own.

Have you ever partially subscribed yourself to something? Perhaps you decided to diet but you only partially followed the rules. More than likely, you did not meet your weight target. Perhaps you decided to take a class on a certain subject but you only partially read the book, partially followed the assignments and partially went to class. My guess is that you received a lower grade.

In 2 Chronicles 10-12, two kings decide to rely on their own power rather than God's. To Jeroboam, worshipping God looked more like a threat of loyalty instead of a way to unify a nation. Rehoboam had established the nation because of how he followed God. But eventually, he turned his back on the Lord. Both kings were partially obedient to God.

If we were to be honest with ourselves, how often do we do the same? We follow God on Sundays or when things are going well, but what happens when the cost of following is too much? Then we'll convince ourselves that it's not a big deal, we can handle it. Reality suggests that this isn't just a "them" thing, it's a human thing we all suffer from: to deny God and struggle through in our own power.

The grace of God is that when

we do walk away, God doesn't let us stay there. The threat of war humbled Jeroboam and Rehoboam and led them back to God. Sometimes the consequences of our decisions aren't just bad circumstances; they're God's grace because they create humility in us that draws us back to God.

Humility isn't a reminder of the bad that we do or a mindless act of submission. Humility is saying, "OK, Jesus, I really can't do this anymore. I'm going to follow you, regardless of the rest. I'm going to trust you'll make this good." As we move forward as United Methodists, may God give us the strength to say, "We can't do this on our own, so we are putting our full trust in you." 📖

The Living Word devotions will coincide with the 2018 Bible Reading Challenge from Bishop Lewis. Find the June schedule on pg. 35. Find all 2018 readings at [www.vaumc.org](http://www.vaumc.org).

("GUN VIOLENCE," cont. from page 26.)

finally being able to take a stand and make their voice heard. Young people's voices matter. We may not have as much life experiences as our older generations, but we have opinions that we can form on our own and we have a voice. Young people are not the future of the church, they're the right now. 📖



# CLERGY & DIACONAL



## DEATHS

**Bonnie Lee Traylor-Bender**, 76, wife of the **Rev. Harley Bender**, died on April 20 in Staunton. The Rev. Bender is retired clergy on the Staunton District.

**Jean Westphal Lynch**, 75, wife of the **Rev. H. Jack Lynch**, died April 16 in Yorktown. She was an active member of Crooks Memorial UMC. The Rev. Lynch is a retired elder.

**Ruth Dyer Groves Chaney**, 93, of Martinsville died on April 1. Two of her granddaughters serve as pastors in the Virginia Conference – the **Rev. Deborah Porras** at Beverley Hills UMC in Alexandria and the **Rev. Jennifer Coffey** at Fairview UMC in Danville.

**Roy Anthony Werner**, 73, husband of the **Rev. Paula Werner**, died on April 3. The Rev. Werner is pastor of St. John's UMC in Springfield.

**Janet Voorhis**, 83, of Hobe Sound, Florida, and Ridgewood, New Jersey, died April 10. She is the mother of the **Rev. Amy Lenow**, deacon on leave and wife of the **Rev. Larry Lenow** who is pastor of Trinity UMC in Richmond.

**Lucille Wilson**, 82, of Chesterfield died April 4. Her granddaughter, the **Rev. Christy Haga Turner**, is pastor of Westhampton UMC in Richmond.

Notice: The *Advocate*, due to the increasing number of entries for this section each month, will only publish death notices for individuals rather than full obituaries. To have additional information published, please contact the *Advocate* office at [advocate@vaumc.org](mailto:advocate@vaumc.org) or mail to c/o Communications Office, P.O. Box 5606 Glen Allen, VA 23058-5606. The Communications Office receives obituaries from a number of sources, but to ensure we receive a particular notice, please contact us with copy.

**Robert "Dale" Garner**, of Altamonte Springs, Fla., died, February 20, 2018. Garner was the son of Loretta and the late **Rev. Robert H. Garner** of Roanoke, Va.



Pew Upholstering & Refinishing  
Reversible Pew Cushions  
New Pews • Carpeting  
Complete Renovations  
[www.churchinteriors.com](http://www.churchinteriors.com)  
1-800-289-7397

**Church Interiors Inc.**  
The Nation's Leading Church Renovation Specialists.  
High Point, North Carolina

**Lewis & Hitchcock, Inc.**

Pipe Organ Builders Since 1915

11561 Edmonston Rd, Beltsville, MD 20705

Phone: 1-800-952-PIPE (7473)

Fax: (301) 931-2378

## Get a bus and peace of mind.

Choose from our great selection of buses You'll enjoy peace of mind knowing service is available on site at your church.

**Sonny Merryman INC.**

VIRGINIA'S  
BUS COMPANY

[sonnymerryman.com](http://sonnymerryman.com)

(800) 533-1006



Call for a free demonstration.

SALES AND SERVICE: CENTRAL VIRGINIA • HAMPTON ROADS • NOVA



## ONE LAST WORD

**IF YOU HAVE COME  
TO HELP ME, YOU ARE  
WASTING YOUR TIME.  
BUT IF YOU HAVE  
COME BECAUSE YOUR  
LIBERATION IS BOUND  
UP WITH MINE, THEN  
LET US WORK TOGETHER.**

ABORIGINAL LEADER, LILLA WATSON

# FROM THE BISHOP



## Reflection on the Bishop's Convocation on Race and Reconciliation

*Dear Virginia Annual Conference.*

**O**n April 14, 2018, more than 225 people from the north, south, east and west areas of Virginia and beyond came to dialogue about the most crucial conversation of our lives — the conversation on race and reconciliation.

As we gathered at Annandale United Methodist Church, I noticed the excitement in the area as we exchanged polite greetings. However,

as I moved around the church and experienced brief exchanges, I could feel a sense of uncertainty in the air. The topic of race and reconciliation is a hot topic but can scare the average individual.

When I hosted the first Bishop's Chat and Chew, several individuals shared unapologetically that the Virginia Conference needed to work on the racial division in our conference. I was pleasantly surprised by the honesty from the clergy and laity who wanted to work on this issue. However, as I prayed and discerned, the Holy Spirit revealed the Virginia Conference resources and the resources of our apportioned dollars in the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR). I shared with our Commission on Ethnic Minority Concerns and Advocacy (CEMCA) that I wanted to tackle this monumental issue, and the rest is history.

Our keynote speaker, Romal Tune began the event by telling a story that was so appropriate for the conversation. Interestingly, he experienced a delay in the arrival to the church because his iPhone was "frozen," and he had to depend on several individuals that did not "look" like him for directions to the church. The story was quite relevant as he articulated the assumptions we make about individuals we encounter.

Romal pushed us to examine our own stories of race (both experiential and inherited.) He articulated, "Just about everything begins and ends with the story you have accepted as truth about yourself and others. These stories will shape our thinking, actions and assumptions about

different races." The "a-ha" moment was the realization that until we are able to examine our own stories we can never have an authentic conversation about race and reconciliation. He emphasized, "When we surrender our stories to God then we are able to embrace a new Kingdom narrative about race."

The video "Deconstructing White Privilege" by Dr. Robin DiAngelo was viewed in the afternoon session. The Rev. Giovanni Arroyo and the Rev. Michelle Ledder, Programs Ministry for GCORR, led the convocation in several small group conversations on race and reconciliation based on the video and workbook. As I listened intently to the conversations, individuals were highly engaged, owning their truths, learning new language and listening to each other. I walked away from this session with a sense of assurance that our conversations on race and reconciliation have just started. 🍷

*Peace and Blessings.*

Bishop Sharma D. Lewis





## Bishop's Bible Challenge readings for June

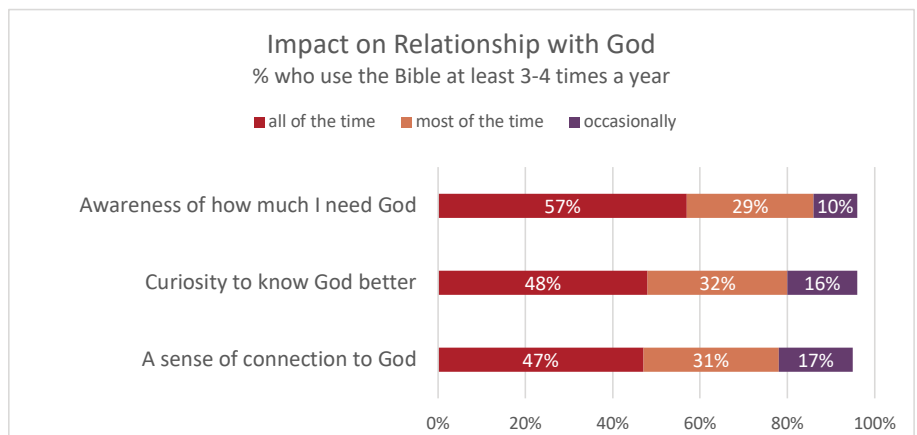
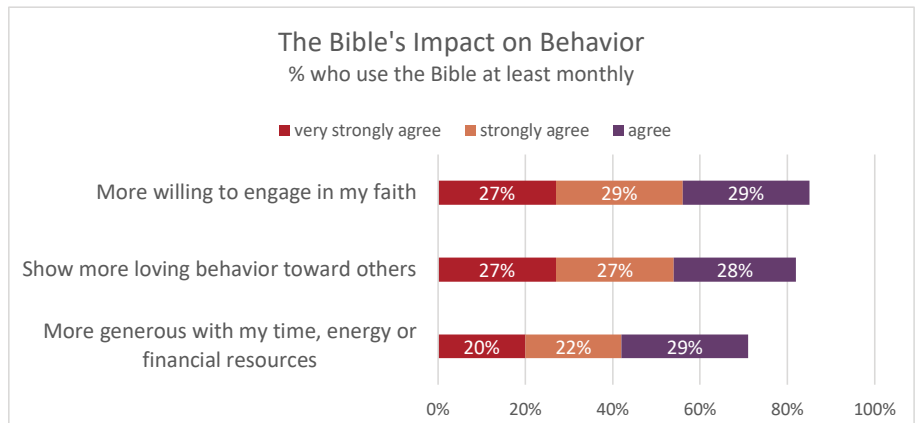
June 1	Psalm 119:89-176
June 2	Song of Solomon 1-8
June 3	Proverbs 1-3
June 4	Proverbs 4-6
June 5	Proverbs 7-9
June 6	Proverbs 10-12
June 7	Proverbs 13-15
June 8	Proverbs 16-18
June 9	Proverbs 19-21
June 10	Proverbs 22-24
June 11	1 Kings 5-6, 2 Chronicles 2-3
June 12	1 Kings 7, 2 Chronicles 4
June 13	1 Kings 8, 2 Chronicles 5
June 14	2 Chronicles 6-7, Psalm 136
June 15	Psalm 134, Psalm 146-150
June 16	1 Kings 9, 2 Chronicles 8
June 17	Proverbs 25-26
June 18	Proverbs 27-29
June 19	Ecclesiastes 1-6
June 20	Ecclesiastes 7-12
June 21	1 Kings 10-11, 2 Chronicles 9
June 22	Proverbs 30-31
June 23	1 Kings 12-14
June 24	2 Chronicles 10-12
June 25	1 Kings 15:1-24 2 Chronicles 13-16
June 26	1 Kings 15:25-16:34 2 Chronicles 17
June 27	1 Kings 17-19
June 28	1 Kings 20-21
June 29	1 Kings 22, 2 Chronicles 18
June 30	2 Chronicles 19-23

“We are finding the more engaged with the Bible someone is, the more hopeful and peaceful they are.”

*Roy Peterson, American Bible Society president and CEO*

According to the latest research from the State of the Bible research, commissioned by the American Bible Society, “the more engaged someone is with the Bible, the more likely he or she is to recognize their need for it on a daily basis.”

Here are a couple of graphs from [StateoftheBible.org](http://StateoftheBible.org) to encourage you to keep up with the Bishop's Bible Challenge. By the end of June, you'll be halfway through reading the Bible chronologically!



For more information about the latest State of the Bible research, visit [StateoftheBible.org](http://StateoftheBible.org).



Ready to change the world?  
Start by exploring it.

VWU students and faculty take a boat tour on the Sea of Galilee.

## GROWING IN FAITH THROUGH UNDERSTANDING

### **Opportunities to Grow, Learn and Serve at VWU**

- Religious Studies major/minor
- Center for the Study of Religious Freedom
- Center for Sacred Music
- *Marlin Ministries*: 12 opportunities/week to engage in community, living out our faith in Christ together
- Weekly SOAR Worship Service in the Monumental Chapel
- Worship Band and Gospel Choir
- Active Community Service program
- *Study Away* opportunities and travel scholarships

### STUDYING ABROAD IN ISRAEL

Following coursework completed in "From Conflict to Peace in Modern Israel: Challenges in Daily Life," Virginia Wesleyan students studied abroad in Israel. Students experienced key historical sites in Israel and Palestinian territories, and began to recognize how to negotiate diverse perspectives and challenges in daily life.



VIRGINIA  
WESLEYAN  
UNIVERSITY

[www.vwu.edu](http://www.vwu.edu) | 757.455.3200

