

Nearly 300 United Methodists lobby General Assembly



Virginia United Methodist

Advocate

\$2.00

March 2011



*'Generosity
begets
generosity.'*

Luke 6:38 - from 'The Message'

"We envision faith communities where all God's people are welcomed at table, nurtured and transformed to be Christ to others in the world."

— Virginia Conference Vision Statement

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From the Editor's Desk

Generosity helps us know God



Neill Caldwell
Editor

One of Bishop Robert Schnase's *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* is "Extravagant Generosity." He describes the act of giving as offering "material resources in a manner that supports the causes that transform life and relieve suffering, that enlarges the soul and sustains the spirit." In Schnase's latest book, *Forty Days of Fruitful Living*, he defines "extravagant" giving as "sharing that exceeds all expectation and extends to unexpected measures."

It's easy for us as Christians to respond to specific events, such as the massive earthquake in Haiti, or the tsunami in Southeast Asia. The empathy we feel for those affected people, knowing that they are also children of God, is part of being a Christian. We see people who need help, and like the Good Samaritan helping the man who had been attacked on the road to Jerusalem, we respond.

"Regular" giving, the ongoing commitment of time, talents, gifts and service which we do throughout the year, can be much more challenging. I know people for whom generous giving is as natural as breathing. I know those who give nothing at all. And I know people who try to rationalize their giving: "I spend X number of hours at the church each month, and since we know time is money, I can reduce the amount of money I would pledge otherwise because I am giving the church my time..."

Then there's the push-back from members when pastors try to do what the *Discipline* requires of them, to be leaders in the area of giving.

These problems are multiplied when the economy is bad, like it's been around the country since fall 2008. When money gets tight it's easy to cut out the church, because giving to the church does not put food on MY table or pay MY power bill. It does, however, help us be salt and light to the world, as Jesus directed in the Sermon on the Mount.

John Wesley tithed and expected the early Methodists to give regularly and generously. He knew that everything belongs to God, making earning, saving and giving away money theological acts of responsible living.

One of the solutions offered by Dr. Clif Christopher in his book *Whose Offering Plate is It Anyway?* (See his ideas on giving in hard times on page 8) is that churches should be mission focused. Identifying specific mission focus areas to support helps members unite around a common purpose, he writes. "Exemplary giving begins with people knowing your mission and wanting to be a part of it."

Back to Bishop Schnase's advice: "People who practice extravagant generosity live with a sense of gratitude. They give thanks in all circumstances. ... They consecrate their giving to God. They delight in generosity."

Neill Caldwell

Good stewardship means managing

time talents & treasure

by Alex Duncan



I was four months into my first appointment when I spoke on stewardship. A couple of days later one of the members in attendance that Sunday came to me quite aggressively and said, "Reverend, we need to talk." "Sure," I replied. "How can I help you?" Then he said, "Reverend, we are tired of hearing about money." He went on to say that, "we ain't got no money, and we are tired of hearing you preach to us about money."

Mind you, that was the first time I spoke to that particular congregation about money. Actually, the sermon was about stewardship.

I will not elaborate any further on the content or vehement emotion that followed. I would only say that this member was not happy. I believe that unhappiness illustrates the perspective that many in the church have about preaching and teaching on the subject of stewardship.

When the topic is stewardship, people hear "money," even though stewardship means a lot more than money. Stewardship (especially in the Christian context) means the faithful management of time, talents and treasure. Money is a part of it, of course. But stewardship is not entirely about money.

Good stewardship is vital for all who sincerely profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Good stewardship is pleasing and acceptable to God. Christians are entrusted by God to be stewards; always remembering that "all things come of thee..." (1 Chronicles

29:14). It is also written that, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there..." (Job 1:21).

Nothing belongs to us. It all belongs to God. We are simply managing "it" for a little while (stewards, if you will). And Christians ought to be good stewards. Not because there are consequences for not being a good steward. There are consequences for mismanaging what belongs to the Lord.

When considering the parental relationship between God and the body of believers, the consequences of mismanagement are clearly seen. The divine/humanity parental relationship is all throughout Scripture (cf. Matthew 4:45, 5:16, 6:9, 6:26). God's grace is evidence of the parental relationship. God's grace precedes, justifies and sanctifies us along this journey we call life. Just as loving parents lead, guide and direct their children, God's grace does likewise for us. All loving parents want the best for their children. The Lord wants the best for us as well.

Loving parents know that their children need direction as they grow and develop. The Lord knows that we, too, need direction. The loving parent teaches the child. The Lord teaches us, too. The loving parent teaches the child to care for all things. If the child does not show care; if the child mishandles what he or she has; or if the child wastes; this indicates to the loving parent that the child is not ready

(consequences) to receive anything greater. On the other hand, when the child shows evidence that he or she can take care of "things," then the loving parent gives more (i.e., rewards or blessings). It is the same with our heavenly Father.

We show the Lord that we can take care (as good stewards) of what God has provided when we manage what we have. Good stewardship is vital. Identify what is a waste of time, and then, stop wasting time. Recognize your talents, and then use them to the glory of God. What treasures do you have? It does not matter how much. The Lord requires that we manage God's treasure.

When we manage our time, talent and treasure to the glory of God, then we are good stewards. This is what good stewardship is all about. This is what I talked about that first time I preached on stewardship. Stewardship is not just about giving money to the church. It is about giving your complete self to God. Give yourself to God as a living sacrifice, holy and accepted to the Lord. This is our reasonable service.

Regarding money, I am a practical person. I like money just like the next person. So I leave you with these words spoken by John Wesley: "Earn as much as you can ... Save as much as you can ... Give as much as you can." □

— The Rev. Alex Duncan serves Jackson Street and Trinity UMCs in the Lynchburg District.

Miracle on

Henry Street:

Church's financial turnaround is product of careful effort

Early in 2010, Duncan Memorial UMC in Ashland was facing extraordinary challenges. As was the case with many congregations across the Virginia Conference, the national economy was having a profound impact on church finances.

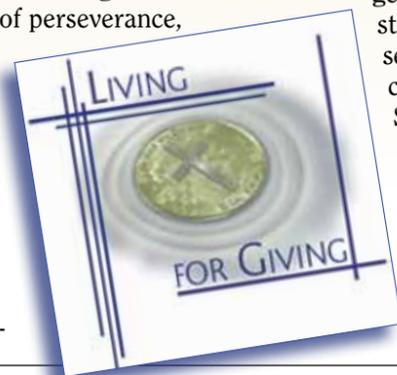
The church began the year by borrowing \$15,000 from reserves to meet some basic financial expenses, then had the unpleasant task of laying off some employees and significantly reducing the salaries of remaining staff, including the senior pastor. To balance our budget we regretfully made the decision to eliminate all apportionments (except Prior Claim items) from our basic budget and invited members who wished to do so to make additional sacrificial gifts that would be directed toward paying apportionments as funds were available.

Duncan Memorial UMC was facing a crisis with economic, spiritual and missional implications.

At year's end, by the grace of God, our church paid back the funds borrowed from reserves, met all of our 2010 apportionments (not just the Prior Claims), created a 2011 budget that is balanced and continues our commitment to our connectional responsibilities, and had a 20 percent increase in pledged financial commitments.

It was nothing short of a miracle. What were some of the ways that miracle happened? We think these were the key ingredients:

Strong lay and staff leadership: Even though the remaining staff took significant salary cuts, they never stopped working hard, never complained and were frugal with spending. Again and again, lay leadership affirmed the goal of paying apportionments and getting our financial house back in order, made the tough decisions that were needed and kept a spirit of perseverance, hope and good will. Even when there were disagreements about how to proceed, everyone exhibited a high level of trust that we were in this together and wanted to find the best way forward in a difficult situation. Laity also presented the membership with accurate reports on our financial situation and how we were address-



ing it, and kept the congregation informed throughout the year about our progress or continuing challenges.

2 New contact with the congregation: Many church members complain (with good reason) that the church only contacts them when it needs money. In July, when a new pastor was appointed to the church, he introduced himself to the congregation by calling every active member of the church as well as folks who had become inactive in the last five years. A few weeks later members of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee called the membership inviting them to a series of "Meet the Preacher" sessions for pastor and people to get to know each other a bit more. Early in the fall, 30 members of the church volunteered to call the membership to talk about some aspect of the church the callers enjoyed, to learn if there were joys or concerns to share with the church and to invite folks to a congregation-wide dinner scheduled later that fall. The dinner was to be the culmination of our fall stewardship campaign, but that was not mentioned in the phone conversation. These phone calls and meetings generated extraordinary energy and good will among members.

3 Stewardship was re-defined and emphasized in new ways: Stewardship is much more than meeting a budget or raising money – it is a way of being in the world as followers of Christ. In the summer, our pastor preached on a recipe for healing that included inviting the membership to become generous people – not just financial generosity, but spiritual and interpersonal generosity as well. When we began planning our stewardship emphasis for the fall, we included several important components, namely a) we celebrated Stephen Ministry Sunday and Laity Sunday as expressions of generous sharing of self, time and talents; b) each week featured a different speaker addressing the question, "How have you experienced generosity of spirit in your life?"; c) our congregation engaged in a church-wide study (youth and adults) of retired Bishop Ken Carder's *Living for Giving: A Wesleyan View of Stewardship*, which



fostered a broader conversation about stewardship; d) our theme was "Duncan in Mission" and we continually stressed that we were not being invited to give to a budget but to give ourselves to Christ and Christ's mission and ministry; e) we intentionally broadened the scope of our stewardship focus and made it more holistic by inviting members to make commitments to praying for the church, attending worship, participating in Sunday school and/or small groups for discipleship development, serving the poor and pledging financial support via a commitment card; f) our stewardship and finance teams generously underwrote the costs for our catered celebration lunch on Commitment Sunday. We did not present a budget to the congregation as part of our stewardship campaign, but rather crafted our budget once we knew what resources we would have available, thereby reinforcing the idea that our giving was to Christ's ministry and not to a budget.

4 End of the year race to the finish: As December began, we were still significantly short of our goal of meeting budget and paying all apportionments. The pastor told the congregation what the situation was and how much money was needed to meet the goal. Each week our bulletin contained a status report on how we were doing. As one of us described it, the message was delivered in a way that didn't leave the church "guilt-ridden" but in a place where we could ask more of ourselves.

It was a miracle, but we believe in a God who makes miracles happen through those who put themselves at God's service and disposal. To God be the glory! □

– The Rev. David Hindman, Stewardship Team Chair Ed Gay and Lay Leader Dave Stoakley serve Duncan Memorial UMC, Ashland District.



Assess your church's financial health

Every church can benefit from ongoing efforts to improve its financial health. Financially fit congregations spend extra time and energy in planning and analyzing their budgets.

Strong churches always work to cultivate and encourage givers. Do not assume people have enough information, experience and understanding of the ministry of giving. Doing annual financial checkups is important. Here are tips to determine your church's fiscal health.

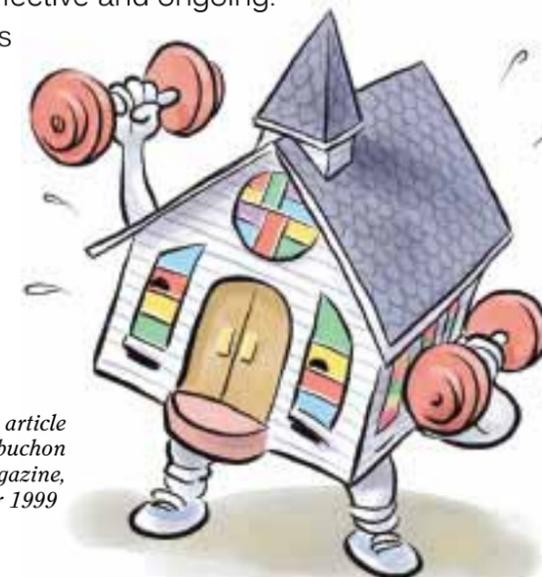
Your church is fiscally healthy if:

- You pay current expenses on time.
- You have adequate emergency funds.
- You keep sufficient undesignated reserves.
- Your giving campaign is effective and ongoing.
- Your membership supports missions beyond the local church.

Your church is fiscally unhealthy if:

- You have a low ratio between fixed costs and the number of "giving units."
- You have inadequate emergency reserves. □

– Adapted from an article by David Aubuchon in *Interpreter* magazine, September 1999



All that we have comes from God

by Shirley Huffman

I am married to a retired Army officer and spent 26 years moving from community to community and church to church. Most were United Methodist churches, but they were all very different.

At one church in Northern Virginia, we had no annual financial campaign or pledges; apparently enough money just appeared. In Missouri, we had a “saddlebag” campaign. The saddlebag was delivered to each house by the pastor, who then returned to pick it up a few days later. But the most unique experience was at a young suburban church in Texas.

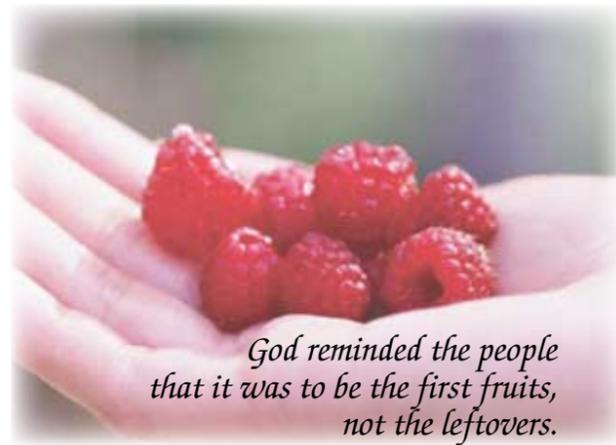
The congregation met in a day care center for a single service on Sunday and had about 100 people in worship each week. When it was time for the financial campaign, materials were mailed to each family with information on the nearby land that the conference had acquired for the church,

the ministry goals for the coming year and biblical teaching about proportional giving. A pledge card and blank envelope were included.

On the “commitment” Sunday, something resided on the altar in place of the Bible. It looked to my

son like a padlocked Pirate’s treasure chest with a slot in the top. The sermon was about making a promise to God to give back to God from what God has given to us. The congregation was invited forward for Holy Communion and before we received the elements, we passed by the chest to deposit our commitments. After Communion, the pastor offered our promises to God in prayer and the locked chest was placed in the trailer that housed the altar, pulpit and other equipment.

When we asked weeks later if the church received enough to support the budget, we were told that they don’t open the chest until the end of the year and then it’s only to shred the old pledges and make room for next year’s. This church never ran short of funds and built the first phase of a building after three years and the final phase after nine years!



God reminded the people that it was to be the first fruits, not the leftovers.

As a church treasurer, this concept is very scary. Our income is unreliable when we base our budget on pledges so operating in the dark would be disastrous.

If we look to the Bible, we see that those who followed God did it on faith. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew people set out many times across the desert with nothing; relying on God to provide. In the New Testament, the disciples followed Jesus without worrying about their own comfort and provision.

In the 21st century, many of us don’t really trust God all that much. We want to know that

we are provided for first. God established tithing as 10 percent of what we produce when the 12 tribes came into the Land of Canaan. In Malachi, God reminded the people that it was to be the first fruits, not the leftovers.

Many of our church members were not raised in families where tithing was taught. I have seen members write “tithe” on their check when I know it represents less than one percent of their income. How can we as church leaders help them to understand the true meaning and joy of tithing?

I spoke with a “mega-church” pastor once about how his congregation had accomplished all the things they had done. He responded that they teach the congregation “It’s not our money that we are giving to God. One hundred percent of what we have belongs to God. He just lets us use it. We owe it all to Him.”

God did give us everything we have. Then God gave everything God had for us, through God’s Son. Don’t we owe something for that? □

— Shirley Huffman is treasurer for Woodlake UMC in Midlothian and serves on the conference Council on Finance and Administration.

I know the church needs my money, but that’s not why I give

by Jim Dake

When my wife, Dotty, and I joined Mount Olivet United Methodist Church in Arlington in 1975, I assumed that we would support the church by making some kind of a financial contribution, but I had no idea of how much to give. For better or worse, I decided I could put a dollar value on what I was receiving from the church. I concluded that a worship service at Mount Olivet was worth at least as much as a night on the town with fast food and a discount movie. And this is how much I concluded that Dotty and I should give to the church each week.

In our second year at Mount Olivet, Dotty was teaching the kindergarten church school class, together we were youth counselors, and I was elected to serve on the administrative board. We were becoming solid citizens. That year, I wanted to do my part to support all the ministries of the church. I was eager to make our financial pledge equal to the average pledge in the congregation, at that time a small step up from what we were already giving.

As the years passed, I became more aware of the good things that were happening through the ministries of the church and the critical need for financial support for these ministries. Each year, Dotty and I increased our giving in hope that the ministries of the church would be strengthened and expanded. This was hard work, not much fun, and often disappointing when we learned that the church, despite our having dug deeper into our pockets, still had insufficient funds to expand its ministries.

Then came the big lesson — the light bulb drawn over the head of the cartoon character. During a meeting of the church’s Finance Committee in the early 1980s, those of us gathered

around the table were having the usual anxious discussion about how we could bring together the obvious needs of the church with the reality of how much the congregation was giving. I cannot recall what I said, but I remember with vivid clarity that my good friend, Hank, looked across the table at me and said, “Jim, you have a need to give that is more important than Mount Olivet’s need to receive.”

What a breakthrough! For the first time in years, I could let go of the financial burden I had felt in trying to support the ministries of the church.

For the first time, Dotty and I began to look at our giving as a percentage of our income. At the time, we were giving about five percent of our income to the church. Tithing appeared to be an admirable goal, but when I calculated the number of dollars required, I balked. Tithing

was perhaps OK for a few saints, but not for me.

As I reflected on Hank’s words, I thought that perhaps Dotty and I could sneak up on tithing. Five percent this year, six percent next, then seven, then eight. In this simple way we addressed our need to give.

Tithing remained a frightful thing. I think we stayed at nine percent for three years. You’ve heard of “fear of flying,” but have you ever heard of “fear of tithing”?

As the years went along, Dotty and I attended to our need to give and eventually became tithers — giving 10 percent of our income to the church. And we didn’t stop there. We found that giving away a significant portion of our income to our church was actually fun. We had found the joy of giving. □

— Jim Dake is a member of Mount Olivet UMC in Arlington.



Then came the big lesson... the light bulb [moment]... “You have a need to give that is more important than [the church’s] need to receive.”

What do churches do in a bad economy?

by Clif Christopher

In 2008, the American economy started on a downward spiral that most of us had never seen. What an opportunity!

What is the opportunity in the midst of crisis? The opportunity is that people who for decades would not listen to us are now ready and, in many instances, are begging us to speak. To people wondering if there is an answer, we can say, "yes" and tell them about a life greater than this one. We can talk about how temporary all this is and how eternal life is offered through Jesus Christ. We can talk about how it is one's soul that needs to be nourished more than one's portfolio. We can talk about how all the money in the world will not prevent cancer, or heartaches, or death, but we have a word for the Good Friday moments, and it is "Easter."

This is a time to raise up what faith is all about after years of parishioners with shut ears. We have a real opportunity to get people to hear, but we have to speak.

A crisis can help define us like nothing else... It is easy to say you would be strong in the face of cancer invading your body, until one day you have that cancer. People in the American church could easily proclaim how much they loved Jesus when their bank accounts were overflowing. This is our moment and this is our time to raise up and answer and be heard.

Here are some things I have been sharing with many who have called:

1. Don't panic. Fear quickly overcame faith as the dominant controller of one church after another. Do we not believe that the Via Delarosa is mightier than Wall Street? Now is a time for us to be bold and not shy. Now is a time to remind people of how firm a foundation we believe in.



- 2. Tell more stories.** When times are hard, go back to the basics and fundamentals. Redouble your efforts to tell churches how they are changing lives and making a difference.
- 3. Be a servant church.** Far too many churches have responded to the economic crisis by saying "woe is me." Communicate clearly that you know some of your people are in financial distress and the church wants to help. The best chance to receive is for you to give.
- 4. Be honest.** Be upfront about the condition of the church in crisis without crying that the ship is sinking.
- 5. Preach, preach, preach.** People are more open to hearing sermons on money. There is no better time to talk about it than an economic crisis.
- 6. Visit your major donors.** Your church probably has 5-10 percent of its donors supporting 70-80 percent of the budget. Talk to them. Ask how they are doing and what their plans are in the midst of what is occurring in our country.
- 7. Start a weekly prayer group.** People and churches fell into the trap of believing that the cures were to be found by bankers and legislators and that the church had little to offer. I believe that the cure for our financial woes lies in our spiritual condition far more than our economic condition.
- 8. Do planned giving now.** Churches that have strong endowments are weathering this storm much better than those that do not.
- 9. Start financial planning classes yesterday.** They teach people to manage their finances like Christians who put God first in their lives. □

— Dr. J. Clif Christopher is the founder of Horizons Stewardship Co. and served as a local church pastor for more than 20 years. This article is adapted from his newest book, *Whose Offering Plate Is It?* (Abingdon 2010)

Electronic donations increase ease of giving

Fewer people today are using cash and checks for their financial transactions. As a result, churches have new options to expand their giving opportunities. This is not about credit-card giving which could lead members into debt. Many companies offer "debit only" giving that eliminates this worry and presents a chance to overcome giving obstacles.

Here are seven reasons why your church should offer online giving options:

- 1. Giving is a biblical mandate.**
Being a disciple of Jesus Christ means giving of one's self faithfully and regularly. Churches need to support a variety of ways to let this happen.
- 2. Checks are becoming outdated.**
Some people don't even carry checkbooks, and cash in the offering plate is no longer tax-deductible without documentation. Do not limit people's options when technology grants so many other options such as debit cards and smartphone apps to transfer funds.
- 3. Sunday attendance is lower than total church membership.**
Those missing a Sunday service may also miss out on giving. Some members may account for this during the next service and give more, but statistics prove otherwise for the vast majority.
- 4. Some church attendees don't attend worship.**
Think about the people serving in the nursery or who choose only to attend a weekly small group. Again, you lose their contributions when you limit their options.
- 5. Online giving is here to stay.**
Why not embrace technology when it can aid members in their financial planning and provide an easy way to give and meet their stewardship commitments?
- 6. Easily promote and account for special offerings.**
People like to contribute to ministries, missions and special offerings. Electronic giving can generate extra gifts because people can easily account for where their money is going.
- 7. Economic recession forces us to rethink giving opportunities.**
Now more than ever, we need to offer people more options to be extravagant givers. If people must work on Sunday, we need to provide a way to give that is convenient.

The United Methodist Electronic Funds Transfer Service (UM EFT) offers United Methodist congregations a convenient and low-cost alternative to traditional collection methods. Note that there are small fees to process electronic giving. However, the costs incurred will be far less than what you gain.

Electronic giving is only a means to bolster your efforts, so don't stop what you're currently doing. Add to your current methods and give people options to contribute to God's work in any form they wish.



Finding a Good Electronic-Giving Solution

Here is a checklist of what to look for in a company that provides electronic-giving solutions:

- **One-time or recurring offerings.** Be sure to ask if people can transfer funds on a weekly, biweekly or monthly basis.
- **Debit-only option.** Some churches prefer to use only debit-card solutions so people will not overuse their credit cards.
- **PDA and Smartphone apps.**
- **Facebook fan page donations.**
- **The ability to process debit card information** that comes in mail-in offering envelopes, sanctuary offering envelopes, or registration forms for retreats, conferences and so on. □

— United Methodist Communications



Virginia

Nearly 300 United Methodists descend on Capitol Hill for annual legislative visit

About 280 United Methodists from across the Virginia Conference participated in the Feb. 3 United Methodist Day (UMDay) at the General Assembly, an annual opportunity to lobby the Commonwealth's lawmakers on issues dear to the heart of The United Methodist Church.

"United Methodist Day is the biggest threat to injustice all year," said the Rev. Doug Smith, director of the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy. "I've been threatening legislators with your arrival all week. Your presence does really matter."

After gathering at Bon Air UMC for breakfast and a pep talk, participants loaded on to buses for the trip to the legislative office building and the historic State Capitol. Once there, they fanned out, visiting their own lawmakers, attending committee hearings and filling the gallery for the day's Senate and House sessions.

Some of the key issues had already been decided as both chambers rushed toward a "crossover" deadline to move bills forward in both the Senate and the House. Gov. Bob McDonnell's plan to privatize alcohol sales – and triple the number of outlets selling liquor – was effectively killed by members of his own party the day before United Methodists visited.

"There are a lot of things still going on, including the budget," said Smith. "They are trying to scurry around and find money for transportation, but we helped prevent them from taking those funds from cops and teachers. It's right to fund transportation, but don't steal the money from other places."

Bishop Charlene Kammerer, grandparent of three, participated in a news

conference on the issue of childhood obesity with Burt Schmidt, a public television executive from the Tidewater area. Faith communities must step up and help address this problem, the bishop said.

"Very often when I visit churches I am treated to a pot luck, for which the United Methodists are so famous, and I see a 'groaning board' of food. Now I am starting to see many more healthy choices among those items, including sugar-free and gluten-free choices."

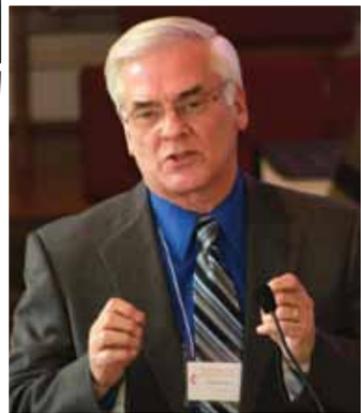
This was the bishop's seventh time to participate in United Methodist Day at the General Assembly, a chance as she described it, "to exercise our presence, our voice and our convictions. It's an opportunity to speak truth to power, and very often we wind up speaking for those who have no voice."

Bishop Kammerer met with several senators and delegates, including Sen. Roscoe Reynolds, a member of Wesley UMC in Martinsville, who helped the bishop understand how energy costs have risen by as much as 60 percent for many residents in the Southside and southwest part of the Commonwealth.

Following the trip back to Bon Air UMC and lunch, participants heard a panel discussion on immigration issues, and received information about environmental issues.

"Members of The United Methodist Church want to be a force for good in God's world," Kammerer reminded participants. "Christ has called us to be a light to the nations." □

– Neill Caldwell



(From the top): United Methodists assemble outside the new entrance at the State Capitol. Bishop Kammerer talks about the growing problem of childhood obesity at a news conference, with Burt Schmidt, CEO of WHRO Public Television looking on. Glenn Rowley, Virginia Conference director of Mission and Global Justice, who lived in Arizona for eight years, talks about immigration issues. New Delegate Matthew James (Tidewater area) introduces himself to Elvira Shaw, a mainstay of UMDay.

Young Adult Council uses Skype technology to plan trip to Brazil

The Young Adult Council of the Virginia Conference met at the Virginia United Methodist Center in Glen Allen on Jan. 22 for its monthly meeting and "Skyped" with João Victor, member of the Young Adult Federation of the Methodist Church in Brazil. Skype is a software application that allows users to make video voice calls over the Internet. The reason for the Skype conversation was to plan a journey of mission and mutuality to Brazil with a team of young adult clergy and laity from Virginia. The team will travel to Brasilia, where they will participate in a young adult event sponsored by the Brazilian Methodist Church called "The Week for Jesus." Following this week, the team will stay with host families for a few days and join in intentional conversation with a small group of

(Below): Members of the Virginia Conference's Young Adult Council spoke with a young adult in Brazil via Skype. Even though miles apart, Virginia and Brazil (both in yellow on map at right) are close partners in mission.



Brazilian Methodist young adults on topics that are of mutual interest. This trip is focused on building



relationships through mutual ministry and sharing between young adults in Virginia and Brazil. The team will be staying with Brazilian counterparts for the entirety of the trip, at a camp as well as in host family homes during the second week. □

– Angie Williams, conference director of Children's, Youth, Young Adult, and Higher Education Ministries

Ogren to fill Congregational Excellence post

The Personnel Committee for the Common Table for Church Vitality announced that the Rev. Mark Ogren has been selected as new director for Congregational Excellence of the Virginia Conference, effective July 1.

Ogren is currently Ashland District Superintendent and has been Cabinet liaison to the Congregational Development Team with a primary focus on the planting and support of new faith communities. His responsibilities as director of Congregational Excellence will include staffing oversight for new faith communities through the Congregational Development Team and resourcing existing congregations through the 5 Talent Academy and the conference Board of Discipleship.

"Mark brings a unique blend of experience through his leadership in having assisted with the development of a conference-wide system for the planting of new faith communities and through his ministry as a pastor and a district superintendent," said Shirley Cauffman, chair of the Personnel Committee. "The Personnel Committee is excited that Mark will be a member of our conference ministry team as we continue to live into the Virginia Conference's vision of 'All Things New.'" □

Conference Board of Discipleship sets new directions

A new year brings exciting challenges and changes for the Virginia Conference Board of Discipleship as it takes a new approach toward helping local faith communities develop congregational excellence.

A newly adopted structure featuring regional Discipleship Teams will enable board members and other resource people to work with laity and clergy at the local level and district superintendents to identify needs and provide resources to help meet those needs.

An assessment tool is being developed for use by local leaders, with the help of a "discipleship coach" available through the regional team. Whether the request is for assistance with music, worship, evangelism, stewardship or other related areas, a resource person/specialist can be provided to help the congregation assess needs, establish goals and evaluate progress toward accomplishing the desired results.

With its new structure focusing on the local level, the Board of Discipleship seeks to help build relationships between local congregations, to encourage local faith communities to participate more fully in the connectional system, and to help them find a sense of vision and voice within the Virginia Conference.

The Board of Discipleship pages of the conference Web site are being revised to enable leaders at district and local levels to interact with the Board of Discipleship to discover resources, request assistance, ask questions and share success stories for the benefit of other congregations.

While implementing the new approach, the board will continue its role in recommending General Evangelists and assessing their effectiveness; in accepting nominations for the Denman Awards for Evangelism each year and deciding who will receive the awards, and in other tasks mandated by *The Book of Discipline*. □

– Betty Whitehurst, member of the new Awareness Team-Connecting Group for the conference Board of Discipleship

Virginia Wesleyan College winter shelter for the homeless completes its fifth year

It's day five of the fifth annual Winter Homeless Shelter on the campus of Virginia Wesleyan College (VWC), and more than 75 guests and nearly 90 volunteers – mostly VWC students, faculty and staff – fill the gymnasium inside Jane P. Batten Student Center with activity and conversation.

Each night at the shelter has a different theme. One night it's Latin dance. Another night it's haircuts. Tonight happens to be church night. The Rev. Kathleen Hayes of nearby Heritage UMC leads about 20 shelter guests and volunteers in a brief but moving service complete with music by the Wesleyan praise band, while others are socializing, playing basketball, enjoying a turkey dinner with macaroni and cheese or taking advantage of one of the many services available to guests during their stay.

Looking on is former VWC student Felecia Kiser, one of two co-founders of what organizers believe to be the only homeless shelter in the nation operated on a college campus. In her red "Shelter Manager" vest, Kiser quietly reflects on how a simple idea has grown into a campus tradition that, while designed to offer comfort to those in need, has proven a meaningful, even life-changing event for so many involved in its operation. Kiser has not missed a single year of the Shelter's annual weeklong January run. This year, she traveled all the way from Staunton to be a part of it.

"It amazes me to come back five years later and see that there is a waiting list of volunteers," she remarks.

Kiser, along with fellow former student Nuni Rae, originally pitched the campus shelter idea to VWC director of Community Service Diane Hotaling. Hotaling told them to write a proposal. They did, and when the time came to bring their proposal to Dean David Buckingham, they went in prepared for a long, drawn-out process and a likely rejection. That's not what they got.

"We were in there for maybe three minutes," says Kiser. "He just said, 'Sounds good, girls, let's do it.' I

couldn't believe it."

Then came the hard part: planning, organizing, establishing safety procedures, recruiting volunteers, collecting supplies. Once the logistics were in place, what emerged in January 2007 was an event that goes beyond providing folks a warm place to sleep and a hot meal.

"I initially thought it was a cool thing to do," Kiser says. "But I also thought: Why? Any church can give them shelter. We just do it so much differently."

The difference, Kiser and hundreds of other Shelter volunteers and guests have found, is in the personal touches and human interactions. Established as a partnership with the Portsmouth Volunteers for the Homeless, Shelter has evolved into a truly collaborative campus-wide effort, which now includes official academic tie-ins such as the interdisciplinary service learning class offered during winter session, for which participation in Shelter is a requirement.

Other unexpected tie-ins, such as the origami napkins created by a winter session math class for this year's Shelter, have left surprising yet indelible impressions on guests and volunteers. The napkins were part of a lavish table display set out one night for dinner about halfway through Shelter week.

"A guest asked me, 'What's the deal with this setup? You expecting the President?'" wrote Felecia Kiser in her "volunteer reflections" for the evening. "I replied, 'No sir, we were expecting you!' With tears in his eyes he said, 'Well, ain't that a wonderful thing,' and then walked away. This guest and others got to enjoy a moment of warmth that comes from the knowledge that someone cared enough to do something special for them at a time in their lives when they rarely feel special to anyone. It is the tiniest gestures of kindness that fuel the fire in a person's soul."

Of course, Shelter is also a tangible opportunity for students and other volunteers to come face to face with the human toll of homelessness and to make meaningful connections with guests.



(Left): Former VWC student Felecia Kiser, one of the co-founders of Winter Shelter, has returned to volunteer every year since its inception.



(Above): VWC Sociology Professor Dr. Kathy Stolley (left) prepares student volunteers for the Winter Homeless Shelter on campus.

"I tell students this is real. Shelter is reality," says director of Community Service Diane Hotaling. "So many of us are not touched by the real world: pain, suffering. Or we think we're the only ones who are in pain, or at least what we define as pain."

Transcending social barriers and stereotypes is a big part of the Shelter experience.

"I feel like that's where a true education begins and ends," Hotaling says. "We are so blessed to be at a place that values that kind of learning."

In keeping with the college's Wesleyan heritage, VWC students are encouraged to become engaged citizens who care about their community in active ways. As the brainchild of two young people with a simple idea to make a difference, Winter Shelter is just one amazing example of what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. meant when he said, "Everybody can be great... because anybody can serve." □

— Leona Baker,

VWC assistant director of Communications

'Undie Sunday' service at Shenandoah University collects new underwear for area homeless

Students at Shenandoah University (SU) are building relationships in the Winchester community with hot meals, Bible studies and fresh underwear.

For the first two months of the year, SU students served dinner and conducted Bible studies for participants in the Winchester Area Temporary Thermal Shelter (WATTS) program, which provides the homeless with a warm place to sleep during cold weather.

Running through March 7, 12 churches accept WATTS participants from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. for a one-week period on a rotating basis.

Worshipers who attended the university's noon church service on Jan. 16 were asked to participate in "Undie Sunday" and bring unopened packs of fresh underwear for WATTS clients.

Alex Woody, an 18-year-old volunteer for the program, said SU students want to extend their "church family" to the surrounding community.

"Our Spiritual Life is very mission-oriented, and we want to have a relationship not just here on [the] SU [campus] but also with the community," said the religion and psychology major from Chesterfield. "We found out about the WATTS program at the different churches, and we thought it would be nice to pick up at least one day, because



The Rev. Rhonda VanDyke Colby (fourth from left) checks out the packs of new underwear collected on a recent Sunday at Shenandoah University for clients of the WATTS program. (Photo by Rick Foster/The Winchester Star)

the churches are feeding them seven days [a week]."

SU student volunteer Leslie Purcell from Richmond said SU's food vendor Sodexo is helping cook, deliver and serve 50 meals each Sunday. The company also offered each meal at a discounted rate of \$2.

Students from Spiritual Life, the Music Theory Association, and the student resident dorm assistants will serve the meal each Sunday. Each weekly group will be responsible for raising half of the required \$100 in meal costs. The

remaining \$50 will be matched by the Spiritual Life Office.

"One guy got a raise and he decided to donate \$150 of his raise," Woody said. "So it's really just everybody chipping in what they can."

Purcell said WATTS officials asked if students could also provide a Bible study following dinner. She said students hope to use the opportunity to connect with those seeking spiritual uplifting.

"We will be going every week, so it's like we are going to see the same people every week and we can build relationships – that's the biggest thing here," said the 19-year-old sophomore nursing major. □

— Joel Danoy, The Winchester Star, reprinted with permission



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To order your CD, call Laurel Hill UMC at 804-795-2772 or William Balz at 804-794-1860 (home) or 804-437-3738 (cell).

Youth welcome at April SpL@Sh event

Spiritual Life at Shenandoah University will host University SpL@Sh for youth on April 2. All youth (grades 6-12) are welcome. The event is free; just bring donations for Teens Opposing Poverty. There will be a concert, worship, mission opportunity, small groups and a training event for youth ministers. For more information, visit <www.su.edu/spirituallife> or contact Amy Howard at <ahoward2@su.edu>. □

Highlights of Ministers' Convocation include more young clergy leadership

While the long-standing goals of the annual Ministers' Convocation were the same – bring Virginia Conference clergy together for a high quality continuing education event of learning, inspiration, worship and fellowship – this year's event included a new success. There were more young adult clergy in leadership roles, with at least one from each of the 18 districts leading District Reflection Groups, which enhanced opportunities for engaging in meaningful conversation with colleagues serving on the same district.

Two key presenters gave addresses which not only stirred the mind, but also moved the heart and inspired

participants to action as leaders who are "Shaping God's People" through the metaphor of the Exodus story. Dr. Joel LeMon, a provisional member of the Virginia Conference and assistant professor of Old Testament at Candler School of Theology at Emory University, taught everyone to sing in Hebrew. Few will forget, nor will be able to watch again through the same lens, the Disney film, *The Prince of Egypt*. Neither will participants read or preach from Exodus 15 with the same perspective.

Dr. Gil Rendle, senior consultant for the Texas Methodist Foundation Institute for Clergy and Congregational Excellence, offered clear words of instruction, challenge, hope and practical

applications with his typically warm, relational and caring manner.

The Rev. Lisa Yebuah, minister of Community Witness at Edenton Street UMC in Raleigh, N.C., brought powerful messages that both "comforted the afflicted and afflicted the comfortable." She helped participants think about the holy ground on which we stand – everywhere we are.

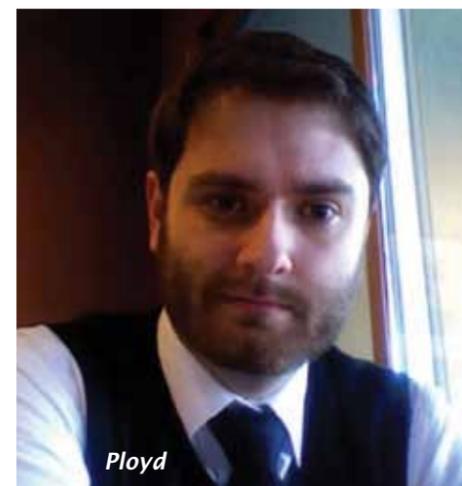
Updates were given on some of the successful new church starts and the number of younger clergy entering ministry in the conference. Many of the questions were related to the changes in district lines, apportionments and pension and health benefits costs to the churches. □

– The Rev. Lynne Blankenship Caldwell, pastor at Brookland UMC, Richmond District

Virginia seminary student named 2011-2012 Dempster Scholar

First Virginian in more than 10 years to receive this prestigious award

A seminary student from Virginia is one of 13 students selected for the Dempster Graduate Fellowships, which supports students who are committed to serving the church by becoming seminary professors who will educate the next generation of United Methodist pastors.



Ployd

Adam Ployd is a member of Warwick Memorial UMC in Newport News. He is a graduate of Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, N.C., and Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta. He will be enrolled in his fourth year at Emory University's Graduate Division of Religion this fall. His major research interest is early Christian theology and literature, specifically the Trinitarian and ecclesiological thought of Augustine.

Ployd, who is a certified candidate for ministry seeking ordination as a deacon, is the first candidate from Virginia to receive this award in more than a decade.

Dempster fellowships are funded by the Ministerial Education Fund through General Board of Higher Education and Ministry's Division of Ordained Ministry. Awards – based on the student's academic achievement, their commitment to Christian ministry, and their promise as educators – carry a value of up to \$10,000 annually, with a maximum of \$30,000 over a five-year period.

"These awards represent The United

Methodist Church's strong commitment to excellence in theological education and have helped graduate students move toward careers in theological education for the past five decades," said the Rev. Helen Neinast, who works with ministerial education as a consultant for the Division of Ordained Ministry.

The award is named for the Rev. John Dempster, a pioneer in United

Methodist theological education. Converted at a Methodist camp meeting in 1812, Dempster preached in New York, served as a missionary in Argentina, and founded Boston University School of Theology and Garrett Biblical Institute (now Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary) in Evanston, Ill.

Scholars' fields of study range from biblical studies to Christian ethics to preaching and music to historical theology, early church history, and missions. "All these scholars have committed themselves to the education of pastoral leaders for the church and have shown promise for that work," Neinast said.

To learn more about Dempster Fellowships, visit <www.gbhem.org/dempsterfellowship>. □

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The **Retired Clergy Housing Corporation of the Virginia Conference** maintains a program to provide retirement homes for eligible United Methodist pastors who need it.

This program has been made possible by the gift of homes willed to the Corporation for this purpose. Other contributions come through the Covenant of Gratitude whose members contribute \$1.00 a year for each person ordained a commissioned probationer at the Virginia Annual Conference.

If you would like to consider willing your home to the Retired Clergy Housing Corporation of the Virginia Conference or if you would like to share through the Covenant of Gratitude, please mail in the coupon below with your name and address.

 c/o Tom Coffman, President
 4837 Village Lake Dr.,
 Richmond, VA 23234
Retired Clergy Housing Corp.
 Phone: (804) 271-7219; Fax: (804) 271-4558
 E-mail: <nlctlc@comcast.net>
Please send me information on:
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2011 Conference UMVIM Team Leader Training Events

Saturday, March 12 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
 Redwood United Methodist Church Rocky Mount, Va.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: Noon, Monday, March 7

Saturday, April 16 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
 Bethia United Methodist Church Chesterfield, Va.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: Noon, Monday, April 11

Team Leader Training is required for all first-time UMVIM team leaders leading teams locally, nationally, or globally; but all interested persons are welcome to attend whether leading a team or not.

A registration form is available online at <www.vaumc.org/umvimtraining>.

If registering by mail, send completed registration form, along with a check made out to: "Virginia Conference UMC" (earmark for "UMVIM Training Event") to: Office of Mission, P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

(Please print)

Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Day Phone (____) _____ Evening Phone (____) _____ Cell Phone (____) _____

E-mail _____ Desire a CEU credit _____

Local Church _____ District _____

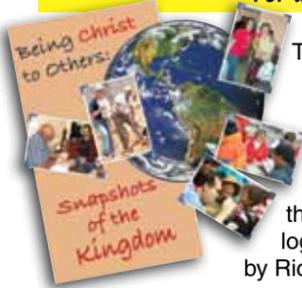
Event Attending: March 12 ___ or April 16 ___ Food Allergies _____

Use **mapquest.com** for directions to Redwood UMC, 3001 Old Franklin Tpk., Rocky Mount, VA 24151; phone: 540-483-9090 and Bethia UMC, 10700 Winterpock Rd., Chesterfield, VA 23832; phone: 804-739-3459

NOTE: The Team Leader Handbook will be available at the training session.

2011 Annual Conference Info – June 15-19, Roanoke Civic Center

For updates, visit the Web at <www.vaumc.org>, and click on the 'snapshots' logo or '2011 Annual Conference Info.'



The 2011 Virginia Annual Conference theme is "Being Christ to Others: Snapshots of the Kingdom." The logo was designed by Richard H. Jenkins.

KITS FOR CONFERENCE – The 2011 Virginia Conference kit collection is being conducted to replenish the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) supply. UMCOR's Sager Brown Depot reports there is a need for all types of kits. Local churches are encouraged to collect items for any of the following most requested UMCOR kits and bring them to Annual Conference for delivery:

Health Kits, School Kits, Baby/Layette Kits and Birthing Kits. (Details of kit contents can be found on the Web at <www.vaumc.org> and will be listed in a future *Advocate*.)

If your church has already collected other kits not mentioned here, they will be accepted.

Questions regarding **kit contents** should go to the conference Mission Office at 1-800-768-6040, ext. 144, or (804) 521-1144, and by e-mail at <Mission@vaumc.org>.

Questions about the **kit collection site** should be addressed to Kits for Conference coordinator, the Rev. Thomas Lee, at (540) 263-2238 or by e-mail at <tglslr@verizon.net>.

PACKET MATERIALS – In an effort to be good stewards of the environment and financial resources of the conference, the Annual Conference packet again will be in a virtual format. Electronic copies of materials previously submitted in hard copy for the tote bag may be e-mailed to <BevMyers@vaumc.org> in the office of Connectional Ministries by **May 6** for approval by the director of Connectional Ministries. The Virtual Promo Packet will be available on the conference Web site, <www.vaumc.org>, under "Resources >> 2011 Annual Conference Information," beginning June 1.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE OFFERING

– Each year, members of local churches are encouraged to help raise money for global mission projects designated by the bishop. The pastor or lay representative of each church will take that money to Annual Conference where it will be collected during a special time of the session.

This year's offering goal is \$200,000 and will benefit the following projects: **MOZAMBIQUE – Leadership Development/Living Water: \$50,000** – In support of our conference theme: "Being Christ to Others" in the world, the generosity and outreach of local churches of the Virginia Conference will enable our partnership to attain significant forward strides in the following areas of mutual ministry:

1. Equipping Lay and Clergy Leaders:

Provide direction and support for experiential leadership development training with our Mozambican partners through:

- On-site leadership training seminars;
- A six-week clergy exchange for at least three pastors from each conference;
- Funding support for distance learning strategies for local pastors;
- Funding support for translation of critical leadership materials into Portuguese.

2. Drinking Water to Living Water:

Fund and assist the Living Well Society in its ministry of drilling new wells for drinking water, as the opening step in a comprehensive evangelism project which creatively shares Jesus' gospel of "living water."

BRAZIL – Shade and Fresh Water/Children At Risk: \$50,000 – Funds received for Brazil will be used to minister to the spiritual, physical, educational, social and emotional needs of at-risk children in Brazil through the Shade and Fresh Water program and the John Wesley Medical Boat. Faced with an increasing number of at-risk street children, The Methodist Church in Brazil has made children its number one social priority. Contributions

from the Virginia Conference will help to provide more after-school centers, train volunteers and provide grants for resources and materials. Funds also will be used to develop preventative health programs and Shade and Fresh Water projects for children and teenagers in three towns in the interior of the Amazon region. These Holistic Health/Shade and Fresh Water projects will utilize the medical boat to take health teams and educators to each of the three communities three times during the year 2011-2012.

LOCAL MINISTRIES – 1. Agape Christian Children's Community Center, Inc. – Eastern Shore: \$50,000

– Money received for the Agape Christian Children's Community Center will help with the center's ministry in the small rural ethnic minority community of Horntown as it strives to provide a healthy nurturing environment for at-risk children. The center operates a preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds that is open 11 hours daily, Monday through Friday; after-school program for kindergarten through second grade; and Vacation Bible School during the summer months.

2. Shalom Zone: Grace Ministries – Roanoke: \$50,000 – Your gifts for Shalom Zone: Grace Ministries will be used in ministering to the disenfranchised of downtown Roanoke with an emphasis on the recovering community, the immigrant community and marginalized people. Shalom Zone offers help with immigration and Fair Housing law, jail ministries and worship opportunities, and education and nutrition opportunities.

More information about these projects and promotional materials can be found on the conference Web site at <www.vaumc.org> under "Resources >> Annual Conference 2011." Or contact the conference Mission office at 1-800-768-6040, ext. 144, or (804) 521-1144, or <Mission@vaumc.org>.

For information on **HOUSING**, reserving **DISPLAY SPACE** and **BANQUETS**, visit the Web at <www.vaumc.org>.

Upcoming Events – for all ages!

MARCH

PAUMCS Spring Retreat, March 20-21, Camp Overlook in Keezletown. This retreat sponsored by the Professional Association of United Methodist Church Secretaries (PAUMCS) is for all church administrative staff, full-time, part-time, paid and volunteer, including but not limited to, administrative assistants, financial secretaries, office managers and newsletter editors. Leader for this year's event is the Rev. Marc Brown, director of Connectional Ministries for the Virginia Conference. Brown will speak on "All Things New" and its connection with how church staff can influence the culture of their individual church family for mission and fruitfulness. To download a brochure and registration form, visit <www.vaumc.org>, click on "Events" and then the date. **Registration deadline is March 5.**

Middle School Confirmation Retreat: 'Following Jesus,' March 25-27, Camp Westview on the James, Goochland. Students will have the opportunity to see how Jesus lived his life and his effect upon people. Youth will consider the experiences of their own lives in light of Jesus' example and will be challenged to commit to Christ and Christ's way. Students will be led by former and current Westview staff and have interaction with leaders from their home churches. Justin Hicks, youth minister at River Road UMC, will be keynote speaker, and Steve Kropp will lead the group in energetic worship experiences. **Register by March 12 for \$92/person.** Online registration and a full brochure are available on the Web at <www.westviewonthejames.org> or register via paper using the registration attached to the brochure. Group registration is also available using the "Group Registration Form" found on the Web site in the News and Events section.

APRIL

'Social Salvation: Claiming the Radical Roots of the Gospels' Retreat/Workshop, April 2, 10 a.m.–3:30 p.m. Duncan Memorial UMC, 201 Henry Street, Ashland. This event, sponsored by the Virginia Chapter of the Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA), is designed to help deepen the Christian life and strengthen Christian ministry. The workshop will be led by the Rev. George McClain, United Methodist pastor, civil rights leader, executive director of the MFSA for 25 years, and professor at New York Theological Seminary, who is currently co-writing a book on First Corinthians as a biblical basis for progressive social action. For more information and a registration form, visit <www.vaumc.org> and click on "Events," then the date. Or, to register directly, send a check for \$25 to: VA MFSA Treasurer, 2315 Davis Road, Waynesboro, VA 22980-2011. 0.5 CEU is available. **Registration deadline is March 26.**

Confirmation Camp, April 15-16, Blessings Lodge, Overlook Retreat and Camp Ministries in Keezletown. Gather with youth from other United Methodist churches to discover what it means to "Claim the Name" *Christian* and bring an interactive and connectional element to the content already being shared with the confirmands in your church. Six sections (4-8, 12) of the "Claim the Name" curriculum will be shared through a variety of experiences and from special guests. Cost is \$46 per youth or adult (one or more adult with each group). Discounts apply for early registration. For more information, call 540-2MY-CAMP, or send an e-mail to <campoverlook@gmail.com>.

MAY

Middle School Confirmation Retreat: 'The Walk,' May 13-15, Camp Westview on the James, Goochland. Youth will encounter the commandments and the example of Jesus, recognize the need for trust and for action in response to Christ's call, and strengthen their relationships with Jesus. They will be challenged to discover new ways to walk the talk. Confirmands will be led by Westview staff in cooperation with youth pastors, Sunday school teachers and Christian educators. Justin Hicks, youth minister at River Road UMC, will be keynote speaker, and Steve Kropp will lead the group in energetic worship experiences. Cost is \$92/person. **Registration deadline is April 21.** Online registration and a full brochure are available on the Web at <www.westviewonthejames.org> or register via paper using the registration attached to the brochure. Group registration is also available using the "Group Registration Form" found on the Web site in the News and Events section.

'Ordering of Ministry' event, May 15-16, Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center (VUMAC), Blackstone. At the 2012 General Conference, changes to *The Book of Discipline* will likely be proposed that could significantly impact everyone who serves in appointed ministry in The United Methodist Church. Virginia Conference clergy have an opportunity during this event to learn about the proposed changes and to reflect on these as they impact clergy's ministry. Guest speakers will be the Rev. Ken Carter Jr., chair of the Division of Ordained Ministry of the General Board of Higher Education Ministries and a member of the Study Commission on Ministry, and Dr. Mary Elizabeth Moore, dean of the Boston University School of Theology. For more details and to register online visit <www.vaumc.org>, click "Events" and then the date. .5 CEU is available. **Registration deadline is May 6.**

For more Events, visit the Virginia Conference Web site at <www.vaumc.org>, and click on "Event Calendar."



Nation & World

Retired bishops call for lifting ban against ordination of gays

Thirty-three retired United Methodist bishops have released a statement calling on The United Methodist Church to remove its ban on homosexual clergy. The bishops noted that the church has lifted other restrictions on clergy before.

“Our United Methodist Church, ashamed and repentant in the past, ended official and unofficial restrictions on candidacy, ordination and appointment for reason of race, gender and ethnicity,” says the “Statement of Counsel to the Church – 2011.” “We believe the God we know in Jesus is leading us to issue this counsel and call – a call to transform our church life and our world.”

Nearly 40 percent of the denomination’s 85 retired bishops have signed the statement, released Jan. 31. Signers include two retired leaders from the denomination’s central conferences – Bishops Joseph Humper of Sierra Leone and Franz Schäfer of Switzerland.

Retired Bishops Sharon Rader and Don Ott said they felt led to circulate the statement to their fellow retirees after studying Advent texts that emphasized the need of people not to be afraid.

The statement is the result of a prayerful consideration of the Bible, the church’s Wesleyan heritage and the bishops’ experience and “conviction of God’s intention for a world transformed,” the document says.

The Book of Discipline, the denomination’s law book, for 39 years has stated that “the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be cer-

tified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.”

The subject of homosexuality has surfaced every four years at the gathering of The United Methodist Church’s General Conference. Only General Conference can change *The Book of Discipline*, and delegates consistently have voted to keep the restriction.

“This statement tells of a widespread concern that episcopal leaders have,” Ott said, “and I hope that the church and the world see this as an opportunity to once again (look at this) and maybe this time take the step of removing this. Once upon a time, it wasn’t there, and it doesn’t have to be there.”

However, the denomination’s current policy on ordination has many supporters in both church and lay leadership.

Florida Bishop Tim Whitaker said he supports the denomination’s basic position.

“It’s in agreement with Scripture and ecumenical Christian tradition in the broadest sense,” he said. “We have the Church – with a capital C – in many different cultural settings, and in those different cultural settings, there are different understandings of human sexuality.”

Whitaker said he might change *The Book of Discipline*’s current wording to take less a tone of condemnation and emphasize the need for all clergy’s celibacy in singleness. But, he said, the change urged in the retired bishops’ statement “would create a lot of problems in the life of the church.”



Supporters of full inclusion of gays and lesbians in The United Methodist Church share a time of witness at the 2008 General Conference. (UMNS file photo by Mike DuBose)

Retired Bishop Neil Irons, executive secretary of the Council of Bishops, said this is the first time in his memory when this many retired bishops have released a public statement such as this.

“The significance of this is that these are all bishops who have abided by the law of the church since it was instituted in this particular matter,” Irons said.

Bishop Larry Goodpaster, president of the United Methodist Council of Bishops, called for “thoughtful, prayerful dialogue about sensitive and challenging issues.”

Goodpaster said the Council of Bishops remains committed to living within the covenant defined by *The Book of Discipline* and it understands “that it is the General Conference that re-examines that covenant every four years and has the responsibility to define our covenant for the next four years.” He asks church members to pray and fast for the whole church with the approach of General Conference in Tampa, Fla., in April 2012. □

— Heather Hahn,
United Methodist News Service

United Methodists caught in Egypt protests

The recent street demonstrations in Egypt provided some tense moments for New Jersey United Methodists who, like many other foreign visitors, were forced to escape the unsettled political situation there.

But with the help of their Egyptian tour hosts, U.S. travel planner and the congregation back home, the 18-member tour group from Bridgewater (N.J.) United Methodist Church found seats on a Jan. 31 flight to Rome, where they rested and went sightseeing before returning to the United States Feb. 3.

“We’re very thankful for all of the prayers we felt surrounding us at the time,” the Rev. Vicki Miller Brendler, lead pastor, said from her hotel in Rome.

Constant protests calling for an end to the 30-year rule of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak continued Feb. 1 with a massive demonstration in Cairo’s Tahrir Square that was largely peaceful, according to news reports.

But the future of the Middle East nation is anything but certain at this point, and Christians around the world have expressed both hope and concern about the situation.

The Rev. Stephen J. Sidorak Jr., top executive of the United Methodist Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, noted that it is difficult to conclude whether the events in Egypt are part of a political or Islamic revolution. “I don’t see telltale signs of Islamic extremism at work at this moment,” he said. “It certainly warrants ongoing watchfulness.”

The situation in Egypt reminds Thomas Kemper, who leads the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, of the peaceful revolution in East Germany. Despite Egypt’s former position as a stable presence in the Middle East, “to have peace built on injustice is never a lasting peace,” he said.

On its Web site, the World Council of Churches offered prayers for Egypt “for the safety of citizens, for wisdom and compassion on the part of the authorities and for a nonviolent and just resolution of conflicts and grievances.”

The council called “for peaceful dialogue and joint efforts at every level of

society” to secure a future that benefits all Egyptians.

Political instability in Egypt was not on the minds of the 36 Bridgewater church members who arrived in the Middle East Jan. 18 for a Holy Land tour. Afterwards, the 18 group members who had signed on for the extension trip decided it was safe enough to proceed.

But when they arrived in Cairo on the afternoon of Jan. 28 and headed toward their hotel, with a tour guide and guard aboard the bus, some protests had turned violent. “As we came in, we kept getting turned back because of police lines,” Brendler recalled. “Different parts of the city were cordoned off.”

Someone from a crowd of young people tossed a bottle at the tour bus, shattering the window where David and Shirley Wu, retired staff of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, were seated. Brendler said the Wus only suffered minor cuts from the broken glass. “The tour guide and the guard were shocked,” she said. “They really did not expect this kind of violence.”

The group was hustled into a nearby hotel, the Swiss Inn, where they spent the night in the banquet room. One person had an international cell phone, which allowed them to keep in touch with Educational Opportunities, their U.S. tour operator. “Through the curtains, we could see the movement in the street,” Brendler added. “That was a little frightening and disconcerting. We really didn’t know what was going on.”

Still, the group felt God was with them. “We prayed and had a devotional time and talked together,” she said. “We prayed for the Egyptian people at that point, too.”

Back in central New Jersey, the Rev. Christina Zito – associate pastor for Bridgewater, a congregation of about 950 – had confidence the group would

find a way home and that Brendler would keep their spirits up. “She has a very calming presence about her,” she explained. “I fully expect she had them surrounded in prayer. We were trying to do the same here.”

The New Jersey delegation also felt comforted by their tour guide, who “watched over us like a mother hen,”



Egyptian protesters called for an end to President Hosni Mubarak’s 30-year rule.

Brendler reported. At 5:30 a.m. the next day, he got them back on the bus and over to the Pyramids Plaza Hotel, their original hotel.

But there was no chance of catching anything more than a glance of the famous pyramids because the Army had closed the tourist site down and surrounded it with tanks. Instead, they remained inside the hotel. “There were gunshots through the night and we could hear tanks moving through the highway near the hotel,” Brendler said.

On Jan. 31, after delays caused by two cancelled flights, the group and a few others touring Egypt, including the Rev. Bob and Alita Phelps of the denomination’s Yellowstone Conference, were finally given seats on an Egyptair flight to Rome. Brendler credited their tour guide and another Egyptian travel official with helping them make that flight. “If it weren’t for them, we would still be in the Cairo airport,” she said.

Brendler hopes to return to Egypt someday. But, for now, she said, “Our hearts and prayers are still with the (Egyptian) people, who have a long journey ahead of them.” □

— Linda Bloom,
United Methodist News Service

2010 election produced dramatic shift in party affiliations of United Methodists serving in Congress

United Methodist Republican legislators outnumber United Methodist Democrats two to one, or 32 to 16, in the 112th Congress. Democrats had a slight edge of 27 to 26 in the outgoing Congress.

Overall, five fewer United Methodists serve in the new Congress. In the Senate, United Methodists increased from nine to 11. They declined from 44 to 37 in the House.

Texas still has the largest United Methodist contingent, with nine members, followed by five in Ohio, and four in Florida and Kansas. There was at least one United Methodist elected in 24 states.

The South and Border South are home to 27 United Methodist legislators, while 16 represent states in the Midwest and five are from the Far West. There are no United Methodists from the Northeast serving in the 112th Congress.

There are seven new members of Congress who are United Methodists, all Republicans. They are Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio and Reps. Steve Stivers and Bob Gibbs of Ohio, Rob Woodall of Georgia, Kevin Yoder of Kansas, Stephen Fincher of Tennessee and Richard Nugent of Florida. Jerry Moran of Kansas moved from a House seat to the U.S. Senate.

United Methodists remained in third place in the number of congressional lawmakers, behind Catholics, who were first, and Baptists.

On the state level, there is one new United Methodist governor. Republican Nikki Haley is South Carolina's first woman governor and the first woman governor of Asian Indian ancestry in the United States. Haley joins Democrat Jay Nixon of Missouri and Republican Rick Perry of Texas among United Methodist governors now serving. □

— Albert Menendez,
Americans for Religious Liberty



The Capitol in Washington, D.C., is the meeting place of the United States Congress, the bicameral legislature of the U.S. Federal government. The building has housed the Senate and House of Representatives for almost two centuries. In addition to its active use by Congress, the Capitol is a museum of American art and history.

United Methodists serving in Congress

HOUSE

Mike Ross (D) Arkansas
Doris Matsui (D) California
Mike Coffman (R) Colorado
Jeff Miller (R) Florida
Richard Nugent (R) Florida
Bill Posey (R) Florida
Bill Young (R) Florida
Rob Woodall (R) Georgia
David Loebsack (D) Iowa
Lynn Jenkins (R) Kansas
Kevin Yoder (R) Kansas
Ed Whitfield (R) Kentucky
Dutch Ruppersberger (D) Maryland
Mike Rogers (R) Michigan
John Kline (R) Minnesota
Bennie Thompson (D) Mississippi
Russ Carnahan (D) Missouri
Emanuel Cleaver II (D) Missouri
Lee Terry (R) Nebraska
Bob Gibbs (R) Ohio
Steven LaTourette (R) Ohio
Steve Stivers (R) Ohio
Betty Sutton (D) Ohio
Dan Boren (D) Oklahoma
Tom Cole (R) Oklahoma
Stephen Fincher (R) Tennessee
Phil Roe (R) Tennessee
Joe Barton (R) Texas
John Culberson (R) Texas
Lloyd Doggett (D) Texas

Kay Granger (R) Texas
Gene Green (D) Texas
Ralph Hall (R) Texas
Sam Johnson (R) Texas
Pete Olson (R) Texas
Pete Sessions (R) Texas
Rick Larsen (D) Washington

SENATE

Jeff Sessions (R) Alabama
Johnny Isakson (R) Georgia
Daniel Inouye (D) Hawaii
Richard Lugar (R) Indiana
Jerry Moran (R) Kansas
Pat Roberts (R) Kansas
Debbie Stabenow (D) Michigan
Ben Nelson (D) Nebraska
Jeff Bingaman (D) New Mexico
Richard Burr (R) North Carolina
Rob Portman (R) Ohio



Stephen Fincher of Tennessee is one of seven new congressmen who is United Methodist.

Baltimore-Washington Conference gives half million dollars to church's anti-malaria efforts

Bold faith builds hope. Members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference recently experienced such a response when they donated a half million dollars to the Imagine No Malaria campaign and gave \$10,000, along with their efforts, to build a dormitory for orphan girls in Zimbabwe.

The \$10,000 was part of a \$35,000 gift which the Board of Child Care and the General Board of Global Ministries also contributed.

"There are moments when God calls us to move beyond what's expected to make sacrificial gifts to impact the lives of God's children, opportunities when we are called to partner with God to transform the world," said Bishop John Schol. "We're living in a time when United Methodists can eradicate malaria from the continent of Africa. How can we not sacrifice to be a part of a miraculous healing?"

With the \$500,000 gift to the denomination's Imagine No Malaria campaign, the Baltimore-Washington Conference becomes a leader in church-wide efforts to raise \$75 million to eliminate malaria deaths in Africa. This is part of a \$2 million commitment the Baltimore-Washington Conference has been asked to fulfill.

"Every 45 seconds a child in Africa dies of malaria. Malaria claims more than a million lives a year and consumes 40 percent of Africa's public health funds. With the Nothing but Nets campaign we started a movement; this new 'nets-plus' approach, which systemically addresses the epidemic, could change millions of lives for generations to come," the bishop said.

"Reaching out beyond one's daily ministries also revitalizes people's faith," said Schol, who recently led a group of Baltimore-Washington Conference leaders on a trip to Zimbabwe. Part of the trip included visiting a new dormitory for 68 orphan girls, ages 11-15, who will live at the Murewa Mission School, built in part with funds from Baltimore-Washington

Conference apportionment funds.

Jo Chesson, the conference's associate director of Growing Spiritual Leaders, met three of the girls walking along a dirt path at the school. They will live in the dormitory, which is opening this month. "What does this mean to you?" Chesson asked.

"Hope," said the first girl, who grew up in a middle-class home until her father died in an accident and then her mother was lost to malaria.

"It means a chance to study, to learn," said the second.

"It gives me a future," said the third, whose name is Tatenda, which Chesson learned means "thank you" in Shona.

"She was a walking symbol of thanks and we were able to give her a future," Chesson marveled.

The completion of the dormitory at Murewa stems from efforts by area United Methodists, like Charlie Moore of Community UMC in Crofton, who this month, will lead his 15th Volunteers In Mission team to Zimbabwe.

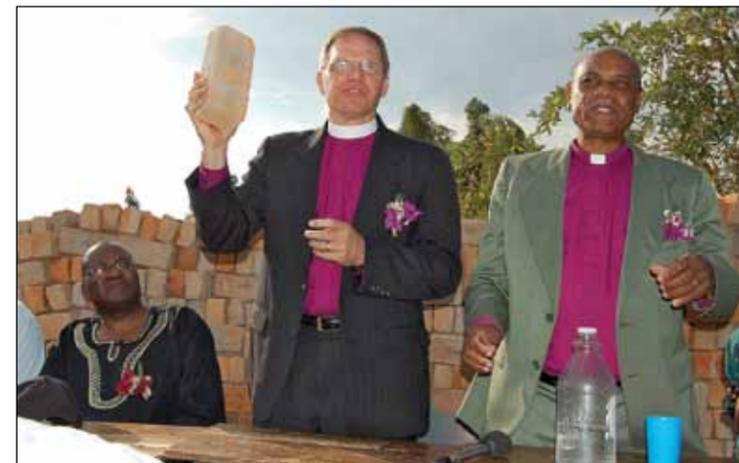
When considering per capita income, Zimbabwe is the second poorest country in the world. In addition, AIDS wiped out a whole generation. One of every three children is an orphan, that's more than a million orphans in the country, Moore said. "What they've suffered through in the past 10 to 15 years is a tragedy."

"What gives them hope is their faith in Christ," Moore said. "The United Methodist Church is explod-

ing in Africa. Zimbabwe is part of that exponential growth."

And their hope is contagious. As its vision statement for mission in Zimbabwe, Community UMC adopted the theme "Hope Lives, Because He Lives."

It was a conviction that this hope is real that spurred Moore and others to believe a dormitory at Murewa School, which was only 50 percent completed and abandoned because of a lack of



United Methodist Bishops John R. Schol (left) and Eben Nhwatiwa address the congregation gathered for a Muradzikwa United Methodist Church ground-breaking ceremony in Zimbabwe. Schol heads the Baltimore-Washington Conference, which has been in partnership with the two Zimbabwe conferences since 1996. Schol was part of a 13-member conference delegation in the African country to distribute insecticide-treated bed nets to prevent malaria.

funding, could be completed.

Moore approached the Board of Child Care in Randallstown, which 10 years ago had contributed an ambulance (still in operation today) to Old Mutare Hospital in Zimbabwe.

Thomas Curcio, the Board's CEO, enthusiastically supported the opportunity to contribute toward the \$35,000.

The conference and the General Board of Global Ministries also combined resources to contribute an additional \$21,500 to fully complete this project. □

— Melissa Lauber, Baltimore-Washington Conference UMConnection

2011 marks 400 years of the King James Bible

Four hundred years after its creation, the King James Bible still has resonance in everyday life.

That is why the anniversary celebration of its publication warrants extensive coverage, says Christine Morgan, Methodist lay preacher and head of radio for the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) Religion and Ethics department. The United Kingdom's major publicly funded broadcaster has devoted significant broadcast resources and air time to programming about the King James Bible during 2011.

The translation "still continues to influence art, literature, religion, music and even laws" in 21st-century Britain, she pointed out. "Most people don't even realize many of the phrases we continue to use in our everyday life come from the King James Bible."

Those phrases include familiar idioms such as "the blind leading the blind" (Matthew 15:13), "a fly in the ointment" (Ecclesiastes 10:1) and "no peace for the wicked" (Isaiah 57:21).

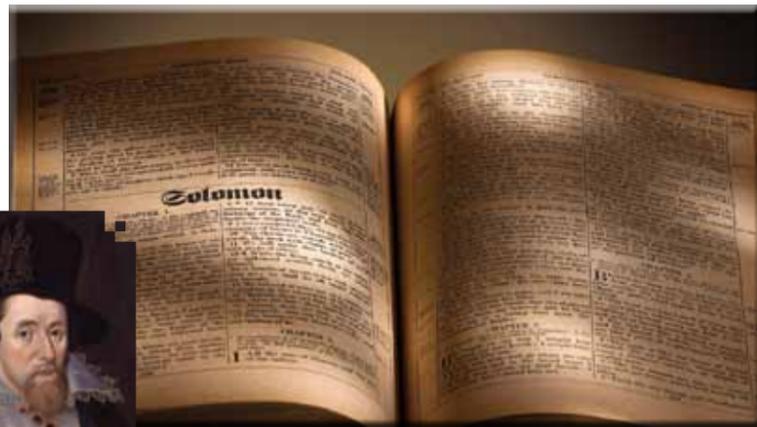
Who wrote the King James Bible?

In 1611, this Bible translation was commissioned by King James I, who was unhappy with existing translations. Work was completed by 47 scholars based in Oxford, Cambridge and London and drew heavily on the work of William Tyndale, who first translated the Bible into English from Hebrew and Greek. The group worked in six panels, each responsible for a different part of the Bible. The king regularly visited the scholars at work.

Morgan and her eight-member production team were responsible for a BBC 28-part radio series of 15-minute programs in which leading British actors read sections of the King James Bible. The 28 episodes comprised seven hours of broadcast time. It was an enormous

undertaking and a huge gamble, Morgan admitted. "Everyone knows these stories so well and listeners could have said, 'Oh, that again.'"

But they didn't. In the seven days after the broadcast, there were more than 150,000 demand downloads of the



King James I of England

series from the BBC's Web site. Morgan thinks she knows why: the King James Bible was written to be read aloud.

"When beautiful text is read by talented and skilled people, it draws you in," she explained. "We had fantastic feedback from our audience. People who are Christians loved hearing the stories again. On the Radio 4's Facebook page, people identifying themselves as atheists have said, 'thank you,' 'this was so lovely' and even 'I'm now prepared to be an agnostic.' It was an absolute privilege to be involved with it."

British Methodists have also pledged to transcribe all 66 books of the Bible by hand during the first five months of this year.

The "Written by Hand, Taken to Heart" national initiative is part of the denomination's recognition of the 400th anniversary of one of the world's best-selling books of all time.

Each of England's Methodist districts – roughly equivalent to U.S. annual conferences – will transcribe 25 Old Testament chapters, five Psalms and eight New Testament chapters. The completed transcribed Bible will be presented at the 2011 British Methodist Conference in June.

The impact of the King James Bible, which was published 400 years ago, is still being felt in the way we speak and write, says British journalist and church historian, Stephen Tomkins.

No other book, or indeed any piece of culture, seems to have influenced the English language as much as the King James Bible. Its turns of phrase have permeated the everyday language of English speakers, whether or not they've ever opened a copy.

A recent book by the linguist David Crystal, appropriately called *Begat: The King James Bible and the English Language*, counts 257 phrases from the King James Bible in contemporary English idiom.

Readers absorbed its language both directly and through other reading. Tennyson considered Bible reading "an education in itself," while Dickens called the New Testament "the very best book that ever was or ever will be known in the world."

The U.S. statesman Daniel Webster said: "If there is anything in my thoughts or style to commend, the credit is due to my parents for instilling in me an early love of the Scriptures." Equally celebrated as a British orator, TB Macaulay said that the translation demonstrated "the whole extent of [the] beauty and power" of the English language. □

– Compiled from various sources, including an article by Kathleen LaCamera for UMNS

Common phrases from the King James Bible still used today

- **God forbid** – Romans 3:4
- **The powers that be** – Romans 13:1
- **Feet of clay** – Daniel 2:33
- **A fly in the ointment** – Ecclesiastes 10:1
- **No peace for the wicked** – Isaiah 57:21
- **The blind leading the blind** – Matthew 15:13

Southwest Texas pastor is nominee for Higher Education and Ministry top slot

The Rev. Dr. Kim Cape, executive director of New Church Growth and Transformation for the Southwest Texas Conference, has been selected by the Search Committee as the nominee for the General Secretary position of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM).

"The Search Committee has spent hours in discussion, discernment, reflection and prayer after reviewing and vetting candidates for this position. The committee supports her nomination and believes she has the vision, experience, gifts and graces to lead GBHEM into the future," said

Bishop Marcus Matthews, president of GBHEM's board of directors.

Matthews, who said he made the announcement with "great pleasure," added that Cape has demonstrated leadership in The United Methodist Church at the local church, annual conference and general church levels. Cape will be presented to the full board for election at its March 17-19 meeting in Nashville.

"She is clear in being called to lead the GBHEM in developing leaders. She is well-prepared based on her education and background to lead our board in a collaborative style with

other boards and agencies of the church. As president, I look forward to sharing the journey with her," Matthews said.

Cape has a Master of Divinity degree and a Doctor of Ministry degree with Leadership Focus from Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. As executive director of New Church Growth and Transformation for the Southwest Texas Annual Conference, she has worked to help recruit and train new-church pastors.

Her previous experience includes serving as the district superintendent in both Austin and McAllen, Texas, and working for the General Board of Discipleship on the Upper Room Development staff. She served the Texas Methodist Foundation and was senior pastor of four churches in Texas.

She has served on the conference Board of Ordained Ministry, taught the Perkins Course of Study, represented the Southwest Texas Conference on the Jurisdictional Episcopacy Committee, and served as an elected member of GBHEM. She was chosen to lead the Southwest Texas Conference delegation at General Conference in 2004 and 2008.

"I am both excited and humbled to be nominated as General Secretary of GBHEM. The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry has a long and rich history and is charged with leadership development, through its work with ordained ministry and in partnership with UM-related institutions of higher education. I look forward to joining the board, the staff and GBHEM's partners in this mission," Cape said. "I am grateful to my bishop, Jim Dorff, and my colleagues in the Southwest Texas Conference for their support and encouragement to continue to be open to God's call in my life."

To learn more about the work of GBHEM, visit <www.gbhem.org>. □

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Letters & Commentary

Tucson tragedy can be a 'watershed moment'

On the heels of the tragic shootings in Tucson, politicians everywhere are calling for an end to incivility in politics.

Commentary by
Steve Drachler

The question is: Can they do it? Can we, as a culture, change how we debate our differences? Nastiness has become ingrained in our political discourse. It's no longer enough to simply disagree. In our political campaigns, and in our capitals, the polarization of our political process turns opponents into evil demons. This evolution from disagreement to hate has infected the political spectrum, contaminating Democrats and Republicans, conservatives and liberals.

Within minutes of the shooting, journalists and partisans began the blame game. First, it was Sarah Palin and other right-wingers. And then it was Keith Olbermann and left-wingers. The truth is no one really knows what caused the tragedy in Tucson. It may simply turn out that Jared Lee Loughner is another of those insane persons who feel possessed in some way to go after a public official.

No matter what the shooter's reasons end up being, these events can serve as a watershed moment in American political life. Our discourse – on both the right and the left – has gotten way out of hand in recent years. Civility has become a relic, when it should be one of our key values.

In many places, even being seen having a casual conversation with an opponent is seen as disloyalty, say nothing of sharing a meal with your political opposite. It happens in Washington, D.C. It takes place in state capitals, and in county courthouses and city halls across the United States. Come election time, political consultants of every philosophical stripe tell candidates they must go negative in order to win. Extensive research repeatedly shows that extremely negative campaigning does work. It moves polling numbers.

Anyone who watches television during campaign season recalls the grainy, dramatically voiced television commercials that make opponents appear to be bad people. Not simply an opponent, but a truly bad person deserving of scorn and hate, and maybe, by extension, deserving of a bullet to the brain.

Demonizing your opponent is no longer confined to campaigns. We see and hear it on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. We see and hear it on the news every day.

While the immediate aftermath of the Tucson shootings sparked a bipartisan call for civility, politicians continue to



State of the Union address Jan. 25.

fall prey to the temptation of the extreme negative. During debate on repealing the 2010 health care law, one House Democrat compared Republicans to Nazis. It seems he just couldn't resist the razor-edged quote.

This latest rhetorical episode shows it's going to be really difficult to change the behavior of our elected leaders.

Fixing this problem will require a lot of people stepping forward: One, to take responsibility for their words and actions of the past. Two, to learn and practice better, more civil ways to debate the important issues of the day. Three, to hold one another accountable for the language we use. And, four, to begin teaching our children to model this new behavior. Remember that children mimic adults. That's not a comforting thought in today's environment.

This is a problem of the heart and soul. It's not about needing more laws, especially laws regulating speech. They won't work.

For those of us who profess to follow Jesus, we should do just that. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus offers a clear lesson on hate speech, and how we should respond. It's no stretch to say this should apply to political speech as well.

"I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you." (Matthew 5:44, NKJV)

As our nation continues to examine its heart and soul in the wake of this senseless violence, I pray that a change in how we deal with our differences will begin to emerge. I pray that our leaders will begin to talk with one another, not simply yell at each other. I pray that our leaders will learn the power of building relationships across the political and philosophical divides.

Disagreement is a vital part of our democratic process. Let's learn how to disagree in a healthy, not destructive, way. □

– Steve Drachler is executive director of United Methodist Advocacy in Pennsylvania and former executive director of public information at United Methodist Communications in Nashville, Tenn. This commentary was first published in the Harrisburg, Pa., Patriot-News.

Henderson Settlement mission deserves more publicity

May I call attention to the article on pg. 21 of the January *Advocate*, "Appalachian Ministry Network draws attention to increasingly overlooked rural poverty," and to the fact that there are other ministries that support the people in the area mentioned? One of these is Henderson Settlement, located in Frakes, Ky., which serves the people of Bell County and a small portion of eastern Tennessee.

Henderson Settlement, founded in 1925, reaches out to hundreds of people each year. The Maternal Infant Health Outreach Worker (MIHOW) project is directed to pregnant women that need financial assistance, maternal education and dietary direction and support. At the other end of the spectrum, it serves senior adults with day care, trips "into town," lunches and dietary supplements. In the middle you will find day care, after-school care, a thrift shop, rent and utility assistance, emergency housing and much more. Henderson Settlement has built more than 25 Habitat for Humanity houses. Its work camp, from February to October, provides home improvements, ramps, restored housing and more to those in the community who cannot afford these things.

Henderson Settlement depends upon churches, foundations and individuals to sustain its ministry. Those who come for work camp provide their own materials and pay for their room and board. Most come back year after year to share their time and talents in working for the community or in maintenance work at the settlement itself.

We need more exposure through the Virginia Conference. In October of last year, I e-mailed the director of Mission of the Virginia Conference, asking for an opportunity to expose the conference to the work done by Henderson Settlement. There was no response. I have volunteered my time and at my expense, to come to churches or district meetings to present a program about Henderson Settlement. No takers. I have asked to be allowed to have a display table at Annual Conference in June. No reply.

I concur with the writer of the article that there needs to be more exposure about mission work in Appalachia. The Virginia Conference needs to set the tone for improved relationships with its mission outreach centers here in this country, not just those in other parts of the world. There are people and families here in this country that are hungry, live in substandard housing and cannot afford to pay utilities and rent.

Henderson Settlement does not stop at just focusing on hunger, it focuses on the family, from the unborn child to the elderly, with no direct support from the Virginia Conference or the Red Bird Mission Conference. We depend entirely upon donations from individuals, churches and organizations around the country.

If other conferences can give recognition to Henderson Settlement, like Kentucky, which last year donated its Bishop's Offering to Henderson Settlement, then why can't our own conference dedicate offerings to Henderson

Settlement, or allow us to have a booth or table display at the Annual Conference meeting in June, or suggest to the district superintendents that they include a representative of Henderson Settlement in their monthly meetings? □

– The Rev. James Salmon, retired pastor in Covington who serves on the board for Henderson Settlement

Faith differences should not make Christians and Muslims enemies

I commend the Revs. Dennis Perry and Jason Micheli of Aldersgate United Methodist Church [Alexandria] for extending a hand of friendship and opening the doors of their church to our Islamic brothers and sisters in their time of need. The heart of the Christian gospel is that God extends "unconditional" love to all creation, no exceptions! None of us are worthy of God's love. Yet God's grace is extended to us all. It is not earned. It is freely offered.

In response to the criticism from *Christianity Today's* Jason Hood, who charges Aldersgate UMC with violating the love command by facilitating false worship, I say this: Dr. Perry and Rev. Micheli are standing firmly in the tradition of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. To paraphrase Wesley, "the duty of a Christian is to love our neighbors as we love ourselves; to love every person as we love our own soul; to love all humanity because God is the creator of all flesh. Just because someone is not personally known to us is not a barrier to our love; nor do we retaliate if our love is met with hatred, for the Christian loves their enemies and 'even the enemies of God,' including the evil and unthankful. And if we are not in a position to do good to them that hate us, we will continue to pray unceasingly for them even if they spurn our love and persecute us." (Wesley's sermon, "The Character of a Methodist")

Christians and Muslims do have differences of faith, but that doesn't make us enemies. Nor do you have to believe as a Muslim to extend a hand of friendship to a Muslim. In fact, we have more in common than not. I agree with Dennis Perry that it is important to start building bridges with our Islamic brothers and sisters.

If fear of Muslims is behind the criticism of Aldersgate UMC's hospitality, let me remind you that the isolated Islamic terrorist is no more representative of the Islamic faith than the isolated Christian terrorist who kills abortion doctors is representative of the Christian faith.

The Apostle John writes: "We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister." (1 John 4:19-21)

Thank you Dr. Perry and Rev. Micheli for extending the hand of God. □

– The Rev. Keary Kincannon, pastor of Rising Hope United Methodist Mission Church in Alexandria



Local Church



▲ The Rev. Lisa Blackmonson (left), pastor of **Broad Street UMC**, Portsmouth District, and Karen Day, Mission Chair, are pictured with Thanksgiving baskets for local needy families. Members were able to complete 32 baskets.



▲ On the first Friday of every month, **Fairview UMC** in Stephens City opens its doors for an open mic jam session of bluegrass/gospel music. Anyone who plays music or sings is invited to participate. Most of the musicians are from the surrounding community. The church serves dinner and collects an offering to benefit the missions of the church. Fairview has been doing this project for a little more than a year, and it has fast become a favorite activity for the community.

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Children and their teachers at **Trinity UMC**, Danville District, have been concentrating on mission outreach during the fall and winter. Exploring ways to do this, they decided to rake leaves for a donation, and have a craft and bake sale. Enough money was raised by the second- through fifth-graders to fill Operation Christmas Child shoe boxes, purchase baby chicks for overseas and purchase toys and clothing for two local families. And there is a waiting list for yards to be raked this spring.



◀ On Jan. 16, at **Bethlehem UMC** in Rocky Mount, Doris Kirk was celebrated for more than 60 years of membership at the church. "Mama Doris" joined Bethlehem in 1949 and has been involved with almost every activity in the church. At 95 she still lives by herself, does her own shopping and drives. "I'm thankful for my mind and that I can do for myself," she says. "I'm still able to drive to church and get back home."



▲ The seventh through ninth grade Sunday school class at **St. Stephen's UMC**, Alexandria District, adopted a family for Christmas. The youth shopped for the children's wish lists and wrapped the gifts during the Sunday school hour.



▲ **Lebanon UMC**, South Sussex Charge, extended "radical hospitality" by opening its doors to the community as a participant in the annual Christmas Home Tour sponsored by the Riparian Woman's Club of Emporia. This was the first time that a church was included on the annual tour. The 125 people who toured the historic church, dedicated in 1850, included residents from several nearby counties, as well as others from North Carolina, Maryland and New Jersey. The guests toured the sanctuary with many of its original features, as well as the newly renovated vestibule and the recent additions and renovations to the educational wing. Although preparations for the tour involved months of "sprucing up" and weeks of decorating the church for Christmas, the members' efforts were rewarded by all the positive feedback from the guests concerning the history of the church and the beauty of the building. The majority, however, seemed most surprised to learn that this country church, unlike many of the other rural churches in the area, has such a thriving membership with a large number of youths.

The Church of the Good Shepherd in Vienna will publish its 12th annual *Devotions for Lent* and distribute more than 19,000 copies to church neighbors by Ash Wednesday. The church also shares the devotions each day by e-mail or blog to those who request it. To sign up to receive the daily devotions via e-mail or the Lenten Devotional blog as an RSS feed, visit <www.GoodShepherdVA.com>.



▲ United Methodist Women (UMW) of **Fairview UMC** of the Fairview-Refuge Charge, Winchester District, are celebrating their 19th year as UMW, after having been a Ladies Aid Society since 1935. Members are known for their "home-style cooking" and through fundraisers have assisted in financing projects for the church including the stained glass sanctuary window, the recent addition of a new refrigerator and electric skillets and other appliances for the church kitchen. Pictured, Fairview's UMW members.

Welborne UMC has designated March 27 as "Earle Paylor Day." The Rev. Paylor will be made pastor emeritus during worship and honored at a luncheon. Those wishing to attend can make reservations before March 13 by contacting the church office at (804) 740-7128; sending a note to Welborne UMC, 920 Maybeury Drive, Richmond, VA 23229; or by e-mail at <pastor@welbornechurch.org>.

The Igniting Ministry Team at United Methodist Communications recognized the following as an official "Welcoming Congregation" for the second year: **Emmanuel UMC**, Charlottesville District. Our denomination recognizes hospitality as a vital ministry. "Welcoming Congregations" are a select group of United Methodist congregations nationwide that meet criteria including embracing newcomers and providing opportunities in discipleship. For more information on how your church can become a "Welcoming Congregation," visit the Web at <www.RethinkChurch.org> or call 1-877-281-6535.

Correction on apportionment listings of churches

In the listing of 2010-2011 Virginia Conference pastoral appointments on pages 6-16 of the July 2010 issue of the *Virginia Advocate*, churches listed in red represent congregations that have paid 100 percent of all their conference and district apportionments for 2009.

The conference treasurer's office regrets that the following church was incorrectly listed and should be recognized as also having paid 100 percent of its 2009 apportionments: **Christ UMC** in Staunton, Staunton District.



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FACULTY POSITION IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION — The Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology of Virginia Union University (VUU), invites applications for a faculty position in Christian education and practical theology which opens fall 2011. For more information and a full announcement description, visit the VUU Web site at <www.vuu.edu>.

DEAN OF SPIRITUAL LIFE/DIRECTOR OF THE WESLEY INSTITUTE FOR CHURCH PROFESSIONS — for Shenandoah University, by July 2011. For full ad/qualifications, visit the Web at <www.su.edu> and click on "About Shenandoah >> Employment Opportunities >> Job Listings."

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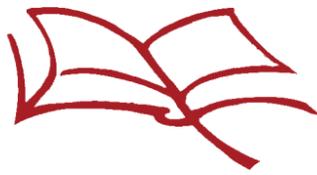
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Living the Word



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: The Rev. Valerie L. White is Minister of Discipleship and Evangelism at St. Luke's UMC, Danville. She earned an undergraduate degree at Virginia Commonwealth University and Master of Divinity degree at Duke University Divinity School. She entered the Virginia Conference in 2010 as a provisional deacon. Her ministerial passions and gifts are healing prayer ministries, domestic violence prevention advocacy, teaching, pastoral care and spiritual writing. Her hobbies include sewing, knitting for the church's prayer shawl ministry and jewelry making. Val is married to Jim White and they have five children and six grandchildren.

March 6, 2011 Worshipping God 1 Timothy 2:1-6; 3:14-16 (NIV)

For much of my adult life, the Church here in America has been engaged to one degree or another in what has been dubbed the “worship wars.” What began this discussion were disagreements over what style of music should be played during a worship service – traditional hymns or the up-and-coming “praise songs” which included repetitive stanzas. Eventually, the disagreements included discussions over what types of instruments would be allowed in a worship service, up to the present-day controversy over the use of large hanging projection screens and PowerPoint presentations as part of the worship experience. Many congregations have seen people leave the church over these differences. How does a congregation decide what to do?

The answers can be found in Scripture, and these passages from 1 Timothy are very helpful. Once again in the life of the church, we return to our earliest roots – in this case our roots within the first-century church about worship – and relearn what is most important to consider.

1 Timothy 2:1-6 reminds us of the great importance of first coming to God in the practice of prayer. Paul’s comments here are specific about what types of prayer need to be used in worship: prayers of request, prayers of intercession and prayers of thanksgiving. Prayer – which is talking with God – is to be the first and foremost integral in the worship service. Paul then continues on by stating who is to be included in prayer: everyone. No one is to be excluded!

So often when we gather to worship, we forget that worship is all about God and not about us. The apostle Paul first met with new believers in the place – whether physical or spiritual – where they were, whether it was his chosen

preference or not. He then taught the people about grace and salvation for everyone, through the one mediator from God, “the man Christ Jesus.” He taught that the community of faith should always be in communication with God, just as Jesus Christ was in constant communication with God, through a life of constant prayer. We can never go wrong in worshipping God by choosing to imitate Jesus’ example and Paul’s teachings. Henceforth, when we find ourselves engaged in debate over how we should worship, let us re-hear these words of Paul to Timothy and come together on our knees in prayer. □

March 13, 2011 Pondering church leadership 1 Timothy 3:1-13 (NIV)

As a provisional deacon in the Virginia Conference, I am part of the ordination process for clergy. This process scrutinizes and evaluates carefully those individuals who are called by God, to be sure that they are ably equipped both with their gifts and graces from God and by human training, to effectively shepherd God’s people into a sustaining, lifelong relationship with God. But are clergy the only leaders within the church? By no means! Each one of us by the very nature of our faith which is revealed in our baptism, is called to be a minister to the world. Thus, all are eligible to hold positions of leadership within the church. How, then, do we choose our best leaders?

Today’s Scripture provides us with some guidance when considering individuals to become spiritual leaders within the faith community. To better understand Paul’s words, we must remember that the model for church leadership in the first century was based upon the model of a well-managed family – which worked given that most churches were house churches, meeting within private

homes. Comparisons could be drawn between the two social constructs. However, as both family life and church structure have changed greatly in the two millennia since, we want to be careful about transporting these guidelines literally to the present day. We would be remiss to exclude from leadership women, single persons, divorced persons or single heads of households, for example. So what parts of this Scripture are the most helpful for us in the 21st century?

Although soberness, gentleness and generosity are admirable qualities in a leader, the most important admonition for us to hear are Paul’s words that leaders must “keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.” And what are those truths? That Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, and that as Christ he died for our sins so that we may have salvation, that he was resurrected from the dead and ascended into heaven, where he now sits with God. These are the deep truths, the mysteries of the faith, which make us Christian. Every other “qualification” pales in comparison.

At the beginning of my ministry, I was afraid of my call from God. I knew who I was, and I would hardly have chosen myself for leadership. Yet an older, wiser voice of ministry said to me, “God does not call those who are equipped, God equips those whom God calls.” I have found this to be continually true. God constantly directs, teaches and hones each one of us in order to fulfill the leadership roles to which God may call us.

May we “Be not afraid!” □

March 20, 2011 Leadership “boot camp” 1 Timothy 4:6-16 (NIV)

In every appearance to humans from God via angelic messenger, the initial greeting is the same: “Be not afraid!” Last week, we were counseled to “be not afraid” to accept God’s call to positions of leadership. We discovered what qualifications are required for a leader to possess with the most necessary one being a firm belief in the “deep truths of the faith”; the “deepest truth” being belief in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. And we discovered that if we feel totally inadequate to serve the Lord, to

“never fear” for God will equip us with whatever knowledge and skills that we need. How so?

Today’s Scripture answers this question for us by outlining some features of “God’s Spiritual Boot Camp.” Paul frames his teaching to Timothy using the then familiar image of physical training done within a gymnasium, stating that “physical training is of some value, but godliness (training) has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.” This is a bold and daring claim indeed!

“God’s Spiritual Boot Camp” first entails not listening to secular myths and old wives’ tales of the prevailing culture that seek to lead us astray down non-godly paths. Instead, we are instructed to hold fast to the “deep truths” concerning Jesus and to not only teach this belief to all, but also to exemplify it daily in our living. Our spiritual training involves modeling Christ “in (our) speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.” This is a tall order and only possible when we give ourselves over to another “deep truth”: being empowered by God’s Holy Spirit.

You may have heard it said in faith circles, “Once saved, always saved.” That is not our Methodist heritage. John Wesley was fully aware of the sinful nature of humanity to “backslide.” Instead, Wesley envisioned our Christian life to be an ongoing journey “to perfection,” which would require being forever engaged in God’s “Spiritual Boot Camp”: engaging in continual practice of modeling Christ through our speech, our lives, our loves, and our faith. Let us join together and “suit-up” for the Lord! □

March 27, 2011 Inspired to serve 1 Timothy 5:1-8, 17-22 (NIV)

My favorite Methodist theologian, Dr. Randy Maddox, wrote a book on Wesleyan theology titled *Responsible Grace*. In this book, Maddox shares John Wesley’s belief that being saved by God’s grace does not “send us home scot-free.” Instead, we have a responsibility to God to evidence our gift of salvation by serving God through service to others. Today’s Scrip-

ture particularly points out our need to serve those most marginalized in our community. In Timothy’s day this group was the widows amongst the congregation.

Paul’s words to Timothy regarding care for the widows might seem harsh to our ears as he seemingly attempts to “qualify” into categories the varieties of widows. Shouldn’t we treat all who have need alike? Paul’s words are not meant to be viewed as penalizing one group over another, but instead as a direct call to family responsibility. Widows who have surrounding family should be cared for by their families as a sign of respect for their position and importance within the family structure. As Christians, we come together in the context of family. We are called to remember the commandments – to honor father and mother – and by extension all those in our personal families. Young widows who have the possibility of remarrying should do so, in order to allocate whatever resources there are to the neediest of situations.

How are Paul’s words to Timothy relevant to us and our churches today? As Christians we are still called to service. Although our world view has greatly broadened, God’s call to care for the marginalized people within our communities remains the same. And we are called to remember God’s greater commandment: to care not just for the widows, but also the orphans, the stranger, the poor. Perhaps our communities’ needs are obvious, or perhaps we need to get creative or work in coalition with other groups in our community. But most of all in serving those who are marginalized, we are called to service with dignity. We are called to respectful service to those less fortunate. We are not called to judge. Instead we are called to notice, to listen to and to love them as God has so graciously noticed, listened and loved us.

When we gather together to praise and worship God, we make a public statement to the world that we belong to God and live to God, not according to the world. This change within ourselves is seen in the world through our service to God. When we serve God’s least, last and lost, we truly bring glory to God’s name. Worship and service go hand in hand. Praise God! □



Clergy & Diaconal

Deaths

The **Rev. Walter S. Green III**, 86, retired elder, died Jan. 18. He began his ministerial career in 1943 with the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, then with the Peninsula-Delaware Conference and West Ohio Conference. He transferred to the Virginia Conference in 1951, where he served Design-Mount Olivet, Bruen Chapel, St. Paul in Woodbridge, Hinton Ave., Larchmont, Welborne, Granbery Memorial, Messiah in Springfield, as superintendent of the Staunton District from 1980 to 1985, and then Fort Hill. He retired in 1987. During his retirement, he served churches in South Carolina.



Green

Survivors include his wife, Marjorie Strickland Green; daughters, Rebecca Joyce Green and Mary Anne Byrd; sons, Ted T. Green, Dr. John W. Green and Joseph H. Green; 11 grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren. He was predeceased by four grandchildren.



Thornton

Carol R. Thornton, 65, retired local pastor, died Jan. 27. She began her ministerial career in 1997 at Mineral UMC, Charlottesville District. She retired in 2008. During her retirement, she served Mount Zion UMC (Albemarle County), Charlottesville District.

Survivors include her husband, the Rev. James W. Thornton Sr., pastor of Ivy Creek UMC, Charlottesville District.

Notie Carol Bunch, widow of the Rev. Harry Wells Bunch, died Jan. 13.

Carolyn McGuire Bennett, mother of the Rev. Kathy Gochenour and mother-in-law of the Rev. Robert Gochenour,

died Jan. 16. Kathy is pastor of Zion UMC in Seaford, Peninsula District. Robert is pastor of Chestnut Memorial UMC in Newport News, Peninsula District.

Pearl Smith Whittaker Gaines, mother of Sandra Baker and mother-in-law of the Rev. H. Eugene Baker, died Feb. 2. Eugene is a retired elder living in Winchester.

Carolyn Gresham, mother of the Rev. Russ Gresham, died Feb. 8. Russ is pastor of Hopewell UMC, Danville District.

Frances Hodges "Fran" Smith, mother of the Rev. James M. Smith, sister to Lieu H. Lewis, sister-in-law to the Rev. David B. Lewis, and aunt to the Rev. Barbara Lewis, died Feb. 8. James is pastor of Emmanuel UMC, Winchester District. David is a retired elder serving Smith's Grove UMC, Petersburg District. Barbara is pastor of the Brunswick Charge, Petersburg District.

Darlene Gestwick, mother of the Rev. Douglas Gestwick, died Feb. 10. Doug and his wife, Clara, are pastor and associate pastor of St. Luke's UMC, Peninsula District.

Ernest L. Nesselrodt, father of the Rev. David Nesselrodt, died Jan. 28. David is pastor of Cameron UMC, Alexandria District.

The **Rev. Thomas A. Jones**, father of the Rev. John Robert Jones Sr., died Jan. 29. John is pastor of the Northumberland Charge (Afton UMC and Fairfields UMC), Rappahannock District. Thomas was a retired North Carolina Baptist pastor.

William Douglas Tanner Sr., father of the Rev. W. Douglas "Doug" Tanner Jr., died Feb. 7. Doug is Senior Advisor of the Faith and Politics Institute in Washington, D.C.

Timothy Carl Webster, son of the Rev. William O. "Bill" Webster and his wife, Katherine, died Jan. 26. Bill is a retired elder living in Richmond.

Peggy Rash Phillips, sister of the Rev. David Rash, died Feb. 9. David is pastor of Woodstock UMC, Winchester District.

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Lack of 'culture of faithful giving' presents unique challenges for church



Charlene Payne Kammerer
 Bishop of the Virginia Conference

I am reflecting on stewardship through the lens of ministry as a pastor in The United Methodist Church. I confess that my United Methodist seminary education had no required courses in stewardship for my generation. Stewardship was briefly covered in the classes on polity and administration, but little focus was given on the role of the pastor in that regard. In my homiletics classes, I never heard a sermon on giving, tithing or stewardship. Thus, when I began serving as a local church pastor, I was unclear about my responsibilities to help inspire good stewardship expressions among the people where I lived and served.

What I remember are these things over several decades of ministry:

- 1) I grew up in a culture of faithful giving, where all the churches I served, whatever size, always paid 100 percent of their apportionments. To not do so was unthinkable. There were two times I refused a raise so that our church could meet its apportionments.
- 2) The strong lay leaders in churches I served usually conveyed to me that they were responsible for the raising of the apportionment money and meeting the needs of the budget. They would inform and rally the congregation whenever we had specific needs or were running a little behind in our giving. The lay leadership never failed in their responsibilities.
- 3) Over the years, I worked with lay members to help lead stewardship campaigns, learning to preach and, hopefully, inspire my congregations along the way. Most of the time, this was joyful work.
- 4) I learned that the laity always knew the giving level of my husband, Leigh, and me in every place we served, even though I never advertised that. I also learned that we always were among the highest givers in our churches, even though it was never true that we earned the most compensation in our family unit.
- 5) The culture around giving and supporting the mission needs of our wider connection were of high value in places where I lived and served. I did not need to defend the apportionments or justify why we as United Methodists were bound together in covenant and polity to receive and pay our "fair share."

I am aware now, in the 21st century, that there is not in place the United Methodist culture of giving that was true in past decades. I am aware that young adults and the new generations of disciples are not committed in the same way I was taught to be. The younger generation seems to be strongly supportive of designated giving and hands-on ministry. It will be harder to support the institutions and annual conference and General Conference structures that served us so well for so long. Our pastors need ongoing and specific training in how to help lead stewardship efforts within the local church setting. Our laity need training as well, and encouragement and courage to lead in sacrificial ways of giving. We have unique challenges ahead.

I believe that in all things, GOD IS ABLE. And so will we be made able to lead lives reflecting generous and abiding stewardship patterns, for God's sake and for the sake of the world.

Grace and Peace,

Charlene Kammerer
 Charlene Kammerer

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Deadlines

The *Virginia Advocate* is published once a month. The deadline to submit news and ad copy for the April 2011 issue is Feb. 28. For more information on future deadlines, contact Peggy Cribbs in the *Advocate* office or visit the Web.

Advertising/Tributes

Tributes are published for a fee on a space-available basis. 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 (please no more than one item per issue). Color photos 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* reserves the right to edit all letters.

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