

Conference center to add solar panels

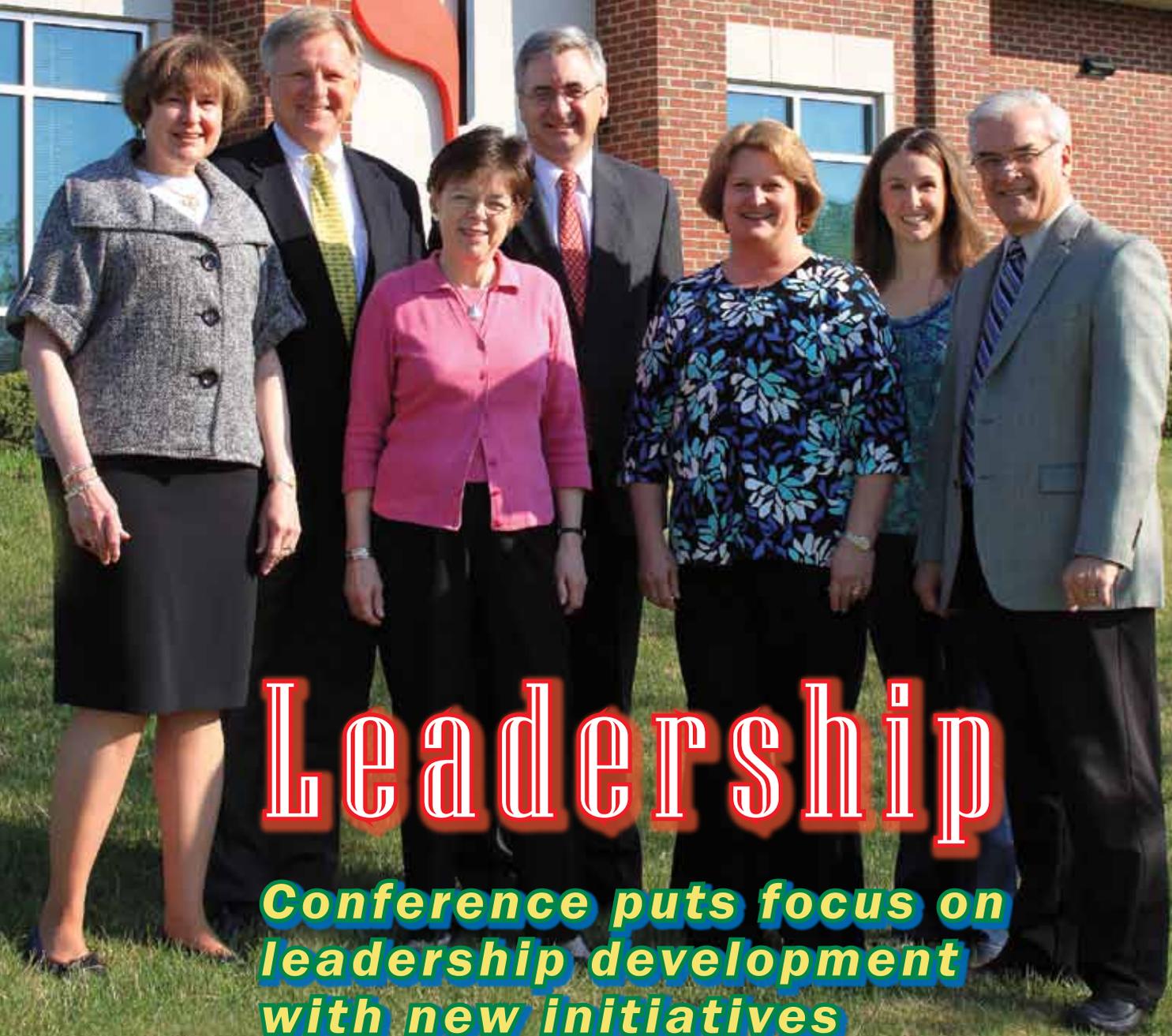


Virginia United Methodist

Advocate

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Leadership

Conference puts focus on leadership development with new initiatives

*“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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Lead, follow or get out of the way



Neill Caldwell
Editor

In early April, I sat through two events designed to highlight The United Methodist Church’s commitment to leadership development, one on the conference level and one on a denomination-wide level.

The United Methodist Leadership Summit was a webinar broadcast around the globe to discuss the “Call to Action” report. The good news is that there was a strong level of participation from all around the world. The bad news is that it seemed to be more about justification for a decision on the report that has already been made.

The conference event, held April 2 at Trinity UMC in Richmond, was more helpful. It was the second annual day of leadership training that the conference Connectional Ministries’ office has offered to members of the conference’s various boards and agencies. Consultant Christie Latona, who has worked with the conference on several key areas, including the “All Things New” strategy, gave a thoughtful presentation on motivation for leadership. Marc Brown and others gave updates on what their offices have been working on in recent months. But the best part of the day, according to feedback on a survey at the end of the day, was the opportunity for the group to get “mixed up” during the lunch time, that is, sitting with people representing various boards rather than members of each board sitting together. Not only did that get participants better connected to what other boards are working on, but also gave them a sense that problems and purposes are not as unique as they might have imagined. As I often say in this space, this connectional system is one of our greatest strengths.

Leadership development has become a key area of attention in our denomination. And it’s not just “new and improved” Christian education. It’s tackling some challenging issues like conflict response, difficulties in pastoral transitions, stewardship, planting and renewing congregations, and thinking about specific concerns of churches based on their size.

You’ve heard of people being “born leaders.” But Gary Minor, a United Methodist member who is a leadership coach to corporations and government agencies, says “leadership is not born, leadership is built.” You might argue both sides of that statement. But I do think a good leader sees the big picture and is able to build bridges to the future that others are willing to cross, and keep crossing despite setbacks. A good leader is a good listener who can discern the best route for progress in the middle of a lot of different “suggestions” on which way to go. A good leader is flexible, knowing that change is the one constant in the world. A good leader takes the blame and shares the credit.

There are many other qualities. Please take advantage of the opportunities for training. You just may be the leader we need.

On the Cover:
Virginia Conference Connectional Ministries directors stand together at the United Methodist Center. From left, Linda Rhodes, Mark Ogren, Beth Downs, Marc Brown, Martha Stokes, Angie Williams and Glenn Rowley.

Conference to develop new centers for leadership excellence

by Marc Brown

The stated goal of “All Things New: The Virginia Conference – Fruitful and Multiplying” is to transform the Virginia Conference into a culture of fruitfulness and multiplication. Evidence of this cultural change will be seen as our conference moves from worrying about the loss of members to the joy of meeting the risen Christ in our growing Commonwealth. Central to this stated goal is the understanding that leadership development must be the primary focus of our annual conference.

In response to this focus, the Common Table for Church Vitality (a circle of spiritual leadership empowered by the conference to envision, coordinate and prioritize the ministries and resources of the conference) has endorsed a new methodology of leadership development through Centers for Congregational Excellence, Leadership Excellence and Missional Excellence.

Aligned with the Conference Vision Statement – “We envision faith communities where all God’s people are welcomed at table [Congregational Excellence], nurtured and transformed [Leadership Excellence] to be Christ to others in the world [Missional Excellence] – the centers are staffed by the following directors of the Connectional Ministries office:

- **Center for Congregational Excellence:**
Director of Congregational Excellence
- **Center for Leadership Excellence:**
Director of Leadership and Inclusivity
- **Center for Missional Excellence:**
Director of Mission and Global Justice

Emphasizing leadership development for both congregations and individuals, the center directors will identify, initiate, and connect ministry initiatives that are designed to move the conference toward one vision for transformation. The other directors of the Connectional Ministries office (Director of Children’s, Youth, Young Adult and



‘Leadership development must be the primary focus of our annual conference.’

— Marc Brown

Higher Education Ministries and Director of Communications) will assist with initiatives that are related to their areas of ministry responsibilities. In addition, the Director of Ministerial Services will work specifically with the Center for Leadership Excellence and in partnership with the other centers on initiatives that include an emphasis on clergy excellence.

This new movement of centers is in concert with leadership processes that conference program boards and agencies have developed since the approval of “All Things New” at the 2008 Annual Conference. Guided by the desired outcome of a conference infrastructure working jointly toward one vision for transformation, the centers will provide a structure for nimble response to leadership concerns that emerge beyond the normal planning process of conference boards and agencies.

Persons who have suggestions for leadership ministry initiatives in the areas of congregational excellence, leadership excellence, or missional excellence are invited to contact Mark Ogren (Center for Congregational Excellence [effective July 1]), Martha Stokes (Center for Leadership Excellence), or Glenn Rowley (Center for Missional Excellence). Persons who have suggestions for leadership foci that are specific to the areas of clergy excellence, communications, or ministries with young people are invited to contact Beth Downs (Director of Ministerial Services), Linda Rhodes (Director of Communications) or Angie Williams (Director of Children’s, Youth, Young Adult and Higher Education Ministries). All of the directors may be contacted through the Virginia United Methodist Center at (804) 521-1100 or 1-800-768-6040. I also welcome thoughts, questions, and suggestions as the Virginia Conference continues to live into “All Things New.” □

— The Rev. Marc Brown is the Virginia Conference director of Connectional Ministries



Our call to leadership

by Martha Stokes

I think I've always felt God's call on my life. I certainly have not always been clear on exactly what that call is, and I still am full of questions. I keep waiting for the burning bush or flash of lightning.

Amid all the questions, it is difficult to remember at times that God has a history of calling people into servanthood and spiritual leadership who were simply going about their daily lives, not thinking their gifts and potential were more extraordinary than anyone else's ... Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Moses, Isaiah, Mary, Peter, James, John ... the list could go on. I may not yet recognize what God may call me to next, but there is one thing I know for sure: I'm called to be a spiritual leader in the church and in the world.

My journey started at the baptismal font at Fieldale Methodist Church a little more than 50 years ago. As a teenager, I thought my call was to be a teacher. At points along my way, I've entered into prayerful discernment of whether the call was to ordained ministry. In spite of the questions about my vocation, there is one thing I have known for sure all along the way: I have to respond, given my unique gifts and potential, to God's call to ministry that came with my baptism.

Each of us is indeed a minister and a leader in the church – called through our baptism to be disciples in all areas of our lives and examples of Christ's love to the world. It is through the sacrament of baptism that we are given our identity as people for whom Jesus lived, died and was resurrected. By baptism, we're initiated into the Christian church, incorporated into the Body of Christ, and commissioned into ministry: called to continue the work of Christ for the transformation of the world. Living our baptism is our highest calling and greatest responsibility.

Our ministry is what we do every day. It's our 24/7 commitment to live intentionally as Christ's own in the world

today. It is our commitment to live as spiritual leaders as we go about our daily lives inside and outside the church doors. Baptismal living is our willingness to share our faith – our call, the story of what God has done and is doing in our lives – in all that we do and say, in how we act and respond, in our relationships at home, at church, at work, and in the community.

More than ever, the church needs spiritual leaders who understand that we are called. We are called not just as leaders of meetings or ministry teams, not just as staff or volunteers, but to be spiritual leaders who respond to God's call which connects us in covenant with God and community. We are each called to identify our gifts and use them to glorify God. We also have a responsibility as leaders to help others identify their gifts and assist them in fulfilling the ministry that God has designated for them. In this light, we are all responsible for leadership development, a major component of the Call to Action issued by our Council of Bishops and the Connectional Table of The United Methodist Church and of "All Things New," our Virginia Conference strategic vision.

We are all called by virtue of our baptism to be ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We each have a call story that needs to be shared with others. You have read part of mine. If I had to summarize it quickly, it would read like this:

Still seeking – still questioning – but I know God loves me more than anything and wants me to live what I believe. Want to join me?

I may not yet recognize what God is calling me to in the next phases of my journey, but there is one thing I know for sure: I'm called to be a spiritual leader in the church and in the world. And so are you. □

– Martha Stokes (pictured) is conference Director of Leadership and Inclusivity. She is a member at Shady Grove UMC, Short Pump.

Small-Church Initiative under way to provide boost for smaller churches

by Susie Wolf

Some churches are smaller than others. So what? The Virginia Conference's Small-Church Initiative will attempt to answer that.

The Small-Church Initiative has started with a committee made up of clergy and laity, charged with understanding the unique challenges and gifts of smaller churches in the Virginia Conference. Too often, we equate being small with being less. The Small-Church Initiative will dispel this view putting a different face on the small church.

Sometimes small is just right. At our first and only meeting so far, we identified three sizes of small churches. The categories are defined by weekly attendance numbers of 50 or fewer, 50-100, and 100-149. The very small church is often called a "family chapel."

Currently these are the congregations that struggle financially leading some to believe they should close.

In rural areas this would no doubt prove a hardship on congregants who wish to continue in the Methodist tradition and perhaps increase the numbers of neighboring churches. Smaller churches have less difficulty keeping track of those living on the fringes of the community than a larger church. In a small town, everyone knows your business, and this is true in a small church, too.

There can be intimate knowledge of, and keeping track of others' needs in these environments

Small churches fuel mission in their communities. They make use of special worship services such as homecoming to keep memories alive

The Small-Church Initiative will develop strategies and training, equipping leaders and congregations to revitalize ministry.

and teach their history to the young people. Many families move to rural areas to escape the size and anonymity of the larger population centers. The clergy are aware of the unique challenges of pastoring the small church. The Small-Church Initiative will develop strategies and training, equipping leaders and congregations to revitalize ministry.

Goals are set, and the committee

has "homework" with a reading list, and some members are doing research and meeting with resource consultants. We will distribute surveys and pray you will answer honestly and return them to us. This is the beginning of our work to see how small churches are viewed across the conference. We will make recommendations to the Common Table, Bishop Kammerer and Cabinet for education, support, and networking opportunities for our smaller churches.

Understanding our United Methodist identity, baptism and worship are goals for the smaller churches identified by the Small-Church Initiative. They, like grains of salt, flavor our diverse conference with special gifts, for Christ's sake! □

— Susie Wolf, a lay member at Kenbridge UMC, Farmville District, is chairing the conference's Small-Church Initiative.

More than 40 trained mission mentors to be commissioned at Annual Conference

Glenn Rowley, conference director of Mission and Global Justice, leads the last of three Mission Mentor training sessions on April 9 at New Town UMC in Williamsburg. There are 43 persons trained to be available to resource churches in the conference about all aspects of service in mission. These persons will be commissioned during the Mission Celebration on Thursday night of Annual Conference. All district superintendents will receive a list of the trained Mission Mentors, along with suggestions about how to promote their use in their district.



Leadership summit tackles future of the church

“What is God’s vision for The United Methodist Church?”

That question was among several fielded by a panel of three bishops, a young adult leader and agency head at the Leadership Summit on April 6. There was a notable pause after the question as the leaders considered how best to respond on behalf of the Almighty.

Finally, Germany’s Bishop Rosemarie Wenner took a crack at it. “We took the words of Matthew 28 as the mission of the church, and that really is God’s wish for all of us: Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world,” she said.

Thousands of church members hoping to make more disciples gathered at sites around the world to participate in the Leadership Summit webcast. The summit was hosted in three locations in the Virginia Conference; there were about 40 participants at the Virginia United Methodist Center in Glen Allen.

It was the first chance for many to hear how denominational leaders plan to carry out the recommendations in the Call to Action Steering Team’s final report to increase vital congregations.

All five panel members were part of the Call to Action team. The team’s report, adopted by the Council of Bishops and Connectional Table, states that the status quo of a shrinking and aging U.S. church is “toxic” and unsustainable.

The denomination’s “adaptive challenge,” the report says, is to “redirect the flow of attention, energy and resources to an intense concentration on fostering and sustaining an increase in the number of vital congregations ...”

In short, the panel said, the denomination needs to change how it uses resources and invest more in fostering thriving, disciple-making local congregations.

Illinois Area Bishop Gregory Palmer, a panel member, said the goal of the summit was to build greater under-

standing of that challenge.

“People yearn for local congregations to be effective in the mission and to make a difference together in the world,” he said. But, he added, “Talking about change is both necessary and threatening.”

The panel fielded questions about how to promote evangelism, how to bridge racial gaps within the denomination and how to measure vitality.

In addition to Wenner and Palmer, the panel included Charlotte (N.C.) Area Bishop Larry Goodpaster, Council of Bishops president; Ben Boruff, a young adult and member of the Connectional Table; and Erin Hawkins, the top executive of the United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race.

Hawkins tackled the question about racial divides.

“When we look at the future of The United Methodist Church, it’s one that requires us to take a serious look at how we extend ourselves out into the world in a world that doesn’t look like the average United Methodist,” she said.

She said it is no longer effective to treat racial/ethnic, youth ministry or women’s ministries as add-on ministries.

“Unless we are willing to make the things we consider special interests the main interest or at least equal interest,” she said, “I think we won’t find ourselves much further down the road.”

Another aspect of diversity is age, and Boruff, 21, spoke to how the church in the United States has long struggled to draw in more teens and young adults.

“It would be easy for us to say right now that we need to continue the conversation of how to approach young people,” Boruff said. “The hard truth is that this is a conversation we’ve been having for quite some time.”

He pointed out that the terms the church uses on Sunday mornings sometimes do not translate well to younger visitors. “We need to do an internal audit of how to best communicate the love of Jesus Christ that we have.”



About 40 participants watched the three-hour webinar from the Virginia United Methodist Center in Glen Allen.

Church members following along on Twitter at #umclead also had their own sometimes critical take on the event.

One of the concerns on Twitter and among those questioning the panel was the church’s reliance on worship attendance and membership statistics in measuring vitality.

The panelists were gratified by the level of participation in the summit, especially from church members in the central conferences outside the United States. For example, some 300 United Methodists in Zimbabwe gathered at the country’s world trade center to watch the webcast.

By the end of the three-hour summit, the panel had received 513 questions – far more than the members had time to address in the time allowed. □

– Heather Hahn,
United Methodist News Service

Leadership Summit archive, survey online

An archive of the April 6 webcast is available at the United Methodist Leadership Summit Web site. A summary of participants’ survey findings also can be found on the Leadership Summit Web site, <<http://leadershipsummit.org>>.

'The Coach Approach' is one good way to develop effective leaders

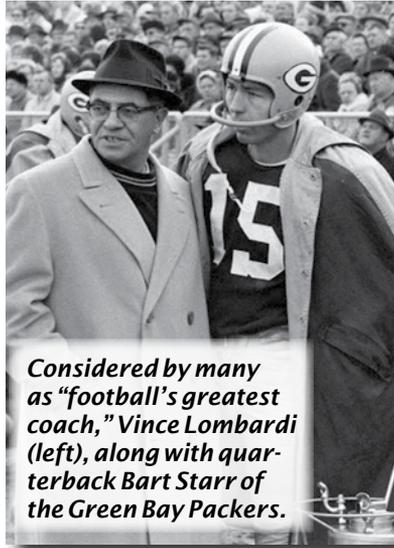
A coach is someone who gives instruction and imparts knowledge. This is also a popular model in developing leaders in corporate, educational and even church settings.

Consultant Christie Latona, who has been a part of The United Methodist Church's Path 1 training for new church planters, and has worked with the Virginia Conference's Common Table, recently spent a day with conference staff talking about coaching.

"People in ministry usually start out being driven, and this motivation is usually strongly rooted in their sense of mission of responding to God's call in their lives. Over time, this motivation can diminish or be threatened. Part of a leader's well-being is contingent on

maintaining healthy motivation. Without that, he or she will constantly struggle or exhaust themselves. Given both of these realities, it is essential that ministry coaches support leaders in maintaining or building up their own motivation.

"Building energy, commitment and alignment around call or mission is best accomplished through intrinsic rewards rather than a 'carrot and stick' approach. Often this means a coach asking good, open-ended questions like 'what are your biggest challenges?' or 'what do you want to accomplish next?' or 'how can I be praying for you?' Asking these kinds of questions and practicing affirmative listening make for more effective coaching and communication."



Considered by many as "football's greatest coach," Vince Lombardi (left), along with quarterback Bart Starr of the Green Bay Packers.

Other ideas:

What does a coach do?

- Creates desire for team excellence;
- Creates an environment where volunteers feel good about their role – that they are making a contribution;
- Develops next generation of leaders;
- Works to accomplish goals together;
- Increases motivation (making people feel good about their role);
- Helps keep the big picture in mind;
- Is a sounding board and asks the right questions;
- Places people in their right roles and makes sure they know what their roles are;
- Reflects what you see in them (God working in them, potential gifts).

In order to be successful, what does a coach have to believe?

- That the person being coached is strong enough to learn from failure;
- There is a role for everyone.

How do we make that work? How do we transition them into a new role?

- Be sure that the person is committed to goal/mission;
- Understand that not everyone or every situation is coachable;
- Be sure that the person has devoted the time to fully participate;
- Believe that the person has the ability and the answer within them.

How do we limit influence of leaders who aren't aligned with our vision?

- Plan to transition leader and find new leadership;
- Engage their friends to infect them positively;
- Continue to apply pressure for change.

Clear task purposes include:

- What? (Task)
- Why? (Purpose)
- Clarity
- How?
- By when?
- By who?
- What must not be violated?



Christie Latona speaks at an April leadership training event.

Board and agency members receive leadership training

About 75 Virginia Conference board and agency members gathered on April 2 for a conference-sponsored "Day of Equipping for Transformational Leadership."

Consultant Christie Latona was the keynote speaker for the event at Trinity UMC in Richmond, talking about getting everyone on "one bus" full of passionate people going in the same direction.

"Everything we do must be mission-driven at its core," she said. "If not, it will not have much energy."

Latona also spent time talking about motivation for leadership, specifically having "intrinsic" motivation, which is doing something simply for the joy of doing it. "If you are truly on fire for something you will catch other people on fire. 'It only takes a spark...' You (leaders) are not just sparks, you're blowtorches."

The idea of "call," Latona said, is not just for clergy. "God has gifted you with the gift of leadership," she said.

Participants also heard updates on the conference's "All Things New" strategy, including word of the 14 new faith communities started since 2008, ongoing training for conference "Mission Mentors," restructuring work of the Board of Laity and campus ministries, and plans for a nine-day intensive leadership training for youth coming up in August.

Conference sponsors two programs designed for college students interested in becoming church leaders

The Virginia Conference helps sponsor two major programs for students who are interested in becoming church leaders.

The conference Board of Ordained Ministry works with all laity called to professional ministry in the church, but “our priority is young clergy,” said Beth Downs, conference Director of Ministerial Services. “We do not want to lose that particular focus and that is where we are putting our efforts and attention. We also want to put attention on diversity and persons of color who may be called to ministry.”

“Calling 21” is a conference-wide, grass-roots, congregation-based, youth-focused approach to the Virginia Conference’s emerging culture of call. During the summer, college students are placed in church internships and spend the summer immersed in the life of a local church, not their own, discerning God’s call into church leadership.

The Shenandoah University Institute for Church Professions initiated the program in 2007. “Calling 21” partners with the Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, the Fund for Theological Education, the Cabinet, and its host congregations to give Calling 21 interns the opportunity to learn and lead. The host church will be a church that has been noticed and named for its potential to help young people hear God’s call upon their lives. The intern’s stipend will be \$2,500. Applicants should be college students interested in exploring their call to church leadership.

“Our focus is on calling, forming and sending leaders for tomorrow’s church and world,” said the Rev. Rhonda Van Dyke Colby, current vice president at Shenandoah University who was the design team chair for “Calling 21.”

For more information, go to <www.calling21.org>.

Randolph-Macon College, the United Methodist-related school in Ashland, continues to provide resources and en-

couragement to students who express interest in responding to the Christian vocation of ordained ministry. The **A. Purnell Bailey Pre-Ministerial Program for Ordained Ministry** is a unique program designed to support young adults in the discernment of a call to ministry. As a Bailey Scholar, a student will receive more than \$100,000 in scholarship aid, plus the support of a group of like-minded students and the guidance of the director.

The program offers an undergraduate experience leading to seminary and eventually to a rewarding clergy career.

Beyond that, the goal is that these students will become leaders in The United Methodist Church.

Each student participates in two internships, one for academic credit during a January term and one supported by a stipend in the summer months, usually between the junior and senior year. Bailey scholars also have the opportunity to travel to Israel.

Do you know high school seniors in your church who might be considering the ministry? Encourage them to consider applying as a Bailey Scholar. For

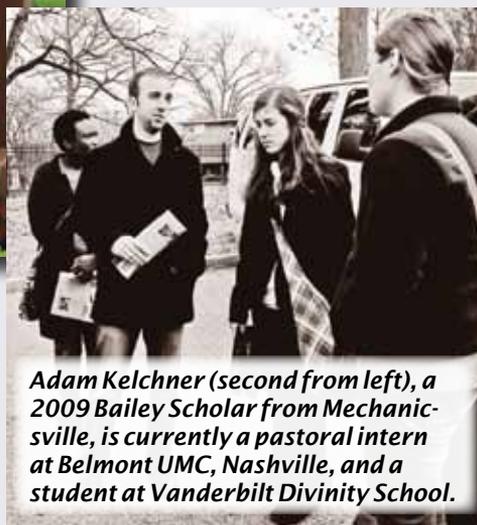
more information, see the “Scholarships” section of the Randolph-Macon Web site at <www.rmc.edu>, or contact the Rev. Margie Turbyfill at <mturby576@aol.com> or (804) 368-7276.

Also, the conference’s Board of

Higher Education Ministries and its Campus Ministry Discernment Team have worked to define a new vision for campus ministry in light of the conference emphasis on leadership development through “All Things New.” A new campus ministry vision emerged: “To call, form, and send principled Christian leaders for the transformation of church and world in ways that value our connectional strength and demonstrate faithful stewardship.” The team’s report will be presented at Annual Conference in June. □



Leah Williams, a member at Sycamore UMC, Petersburg District, served a summer internship at Highland UMC as part of the Calling 21 program.



Adam Kelchner (second from left), a 2009 Bailey Scholar from Mechanicsville, is currently a pastoral intern at Belmont UMC, Nashville, and a student at Vanderbilt Divinity School.

Young Adult Leadership Initiative targets churches' next generation

The 2010 Virginia Annual Conference approved the Young Adult Leadership Initiative. This initiative actually started in late 2009 with a series of focus groups involving young people and facilitated by conference staff to learn how to best engage young people in ministries of the local church and beyond. The conference Council on Youth Ministries and the Young Adult Council took those findings and began to explore ways to focus on young adult leadership.

The vision of the initiative states, "As leadership development is the primary focus of "All Things New," the Virginia Conference will intentionally engage in the calling, forming and sending of Christian Young Adult leaders for the transformation of the church and world." This initiative is a strategic plan that incorporates comprehensive involvement of almost every conference board.

In August, a new training event called "LEAD" will be offered to youth from across the conference. Local churches and District Youth Councils will be invited to select 3-5 youths who are willing to commit to this nine-day intensive experience and a covenant action plan



In February, Beth Downs, conference director of Ministerial Services (second from right), met with a group of students at Shenandoah University who are considering attending seminary. The Rev. Hyo Lee (far right) is serving as a mentor to these students.

to enact newly-developed leadership skills in their districts and local communities.

One of the elements of the initiative is VocationCARE, a discernment process created by the Fund for Theological Education. VocationCARE is for young

people searching for ways to honor their connection to God and explore their call. The approach is an adaptable process that leaders of your faith community can use to prepare young people and adult members to explore together their vocational questions, gifts and graces in service to the church and the world, and to support young members in considering the call to pastoral ministry.

There will be a VocationCARE training event on May 9-10 at Shady Grove UMC, Mechanicsville. The training for this practice is meant to be experienced in teams of three people from one faith community. Ten local churches throughout the conference will be invited to participate in this pilot training.

Another proposal is to create training and support for the associate pastors in the conference. There are 112 associate pastors serving in churches of all sizes and differing dynamics.

In order to create a meaningful network that supports and trains, an Associate Pastor Initiative Task Force has begun work. The task force will review the results and develop a strategic plan to address the needs and issues of associate pastors. □

Event will focus on leadership training for pastors in cross-cultural appointments

Bishop Charlene Kammerer, the Cabinet and the conference Board of Ordained Ministry have named a task force to develop a strategic plan for training and resourcing in the area of cross-cultural ministry.

Paragraph 430.4 of the 2008 *Book of Discipline* directs conferences to prepare clergy for appointments in cross-cultural situations, which is defined as a majority of the congregants are different from the pastor's own ethnic and/or cultural background. That preparation should include training for both clergy and congregation.

A leadership training called "Facing the Future: Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural Appointments in a Global Church," will be held May 16-18 in Los Angeles. The event hosted by the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR) and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) will be a seminar on cross-cultural competency.

About 200 participants have registered, including seven

from the Virginia Conference.

"This event is in response to the increasing number of racial ethnic persons seeking entry into the ordained ministry of our denomination," said GCORR General Secretary Erin Hawkins. "The reality that global migration is presenting us with new opportunities and challenges for reaching out to new communities makes this event a necessity for any church leader seriously committed to growing The United Methodist Church in the 21st century."

The event is designed to help church leaders, both clergy and laity, obtain the new skills, insights, ideas and commitments that will prepare The United Methodist Church to face this future boldly.

"We have the ability as The United Methodist Church to do wonderful work in cross-racial/cross-cultural appointments if we choose to do so," said Randy Cross, assistant general secretary for clergy supervision and accountability, GBHEM. □

Virginia

Virginia United Methodist Center to add solar panels to roof as part of Green Church Initiative

In its continuing effort to be a role model and encourage churches to participate in the Virginia Conference's Green Church Initiative, the Virginia United Methodist Center in Glen Allen will take a fairly radical step: installing solar panels on the roof of the building that houses the conference offices.

The cost of the 10 kilowatt system will be \$60,000, with \$20,000 each contributed by the conference Trustees, the Council on Finance and Administration and the Common Table. All three groups approved the plan at their spring meetings.

In addition to reducing the building's energy bill, it also will generate income of about \$3,500 annually, which will come from the power the system generates and the sale of renewable energy tax credits to organizations that have not added such systems.

While the system will take 17 years to pay for itself under current prices (less time if the cost of energy continues to climb), the rate of return on the conference's investment will be a healthy 5.88 percent annually.

The Rev. Pat Watkins, executive director of the conference's Caring for God's Creation ministry, said leadership at the Virginia United Methodist Center has "responded to the call of Jesus Christ to be a witness, not just to the people on earth, but to the entirety of all that God has made. Solar panels can help to reconcile God's creation. They can help to restore a good and healthy and appropriate relationship between people and creation; that's reconciliation, the restoration of a right relationship."

It is also hoped that the installation can be used as a way to teach more

about the process to local church trustees and others who are considering adding solar panels at their facilities.

The Virginia United Methodist

Center formed its own "Green Team" last October in response to the Council of Bishops' pastoral letter, "God's Renewed Creation: A Call to Hope and Action." In that pastoral letter was a pledge to measure the "carbon footprint" of all episcopal and denominational offices, to determine how to reduce that energy use and to implement those changes. The bishops also urged all United Methodist congregations and related schools to do the same.

"We pledge to provide, to the best of our ability, the resources needed by our conferences to reduce dramatically our collective exploitation of the planet, peoples, and communities, including technical assistance with buildings and programs, education and training," the letter reads.

The 2008 Book of Discipline, in ¶160B, says "... we urge wholehearted support of the conservation of energy and responsible development of all energy resources, with special concern for the development of renewable energy sources, that the goodness of the earth may be affirmed."

In just six months the conference office "Green Team" has instituted a more extensive recycling plan, gone to bleach-free paper products, all



Energy-saving solar panels such as these (above) will be installed on the roof of the Virginia United Methodist Center.

but eliminated the use of Styrofoam containers, made changes in the building's heating and air-conditioning systems to be more energy efficient, and begun use of both fair trade products and compostable paper products. Shalom Farm, a ministry of the Richmond District at Camp Westview on the James, already has made use of some of the Virginia United Methodist Center's compost material.

The Green Team also organized a "Green Fair" at the center to highlight these efforts to all employees and to bring in several displays of "green products." The conference Treasurer's office has been working with Staples office supplies to shift many of the building's paper products to recycled material.

You can learn more about the Green Church Initiative by going to the conference Web site, <www.vaumc.org>, under Ministries/Board of Church and Society/Caretakers of God's Creation. □

— Neill Caldwell

Virginia Conference's Kammerer to join faculty of Candler School as bishop-in-residence in 2013

Charlene Kammerer, bishop of the Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church, will join the faculty of Emory University's Candler School of Theology as bishop-in-residence in January 2013 and serve in this position until 2016. Kammerer is retiring from the active episcopacy in 2012.

As bishop-in-residence, Kammerer will teach, mentor students, and act as a key resource for spiritual formation.

"One of the priorities for The United Methodist Church is 'developing principled Christian leaders for the church and the world,' and I believe that Bishop Kammerer brings with her a lifetime of experience in doing exactly this," said Candler's dean, Jan Love. "Candler students, faculty, and staff alike will benefit enormously from her presence with and work among us."

Having served earlier in her career as assistant minister to Duke University and interim dean of Duke Chapel, Kammerer is excited about returning to an active role of mentoring future church leaders. "I loved working with students and I deeply appreciate the seminary experience, which is a crucible of preparation for lifelong service in the church," she said. "It will be a privilege to be a spiritual companion, teacher, and mentor to a new generation of students."

Kammerer was elected to the episcopacy in 1996. Now in her fourth quadrennium on the Council of Bishops, Kammerer serves as president of the General Board of Discipleship. Within The United Methodist Church, she also has served as a director of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women and as a director of the General Board of Global Ministries, including acting as chairperson of the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Wesleyan College; Master of Christian Education and

Master of Divinity degrees from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary; a Doctor of Ministry degree from United Theological Seminary; and honorary Doctor of Divinity degrees from BethuneCookman College, Pfeiffer University, and Wesleyan College. She has received outstanding alumni awards from both Wesleyan College and Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.

Kammerer will be one of three United Methodist bishops-in-residence at Candler. She joins Bishop Woodie White and Bishop Bev Jones. "A bishop-in-residence is one of a number of significant, concrete links Candler maintains with The United Methodist Church," explained Love. "They allow us to draw on the expertise of church leaders for the education and formation of our students."

Love said that Candler will benefit greatly from having two bishops lend their considerable talent and accumulated wisdom to help guide students through their educational journey and into leadership positions in the church. "Both Bishops White and Kammerer bring their unique gifts as well as their combined wealth of experience to bear in teaching and mentoring students, as well as advising Candler's leadership on how it can best respond to the needs of the church," she said.

Kammerer's longtime interests in ministry include higher education, mission involvement, and the spirituality of administration. At Candler, she hopes to provide opportunities for every student to develop a disciplined spiritual life. "Tending to our relationship with God takes time, focus, and devotion. This is necessary soul-work to sustain a lifetime of service in ministry," she said. "To be a spiritual leader in the life of the church, one must have a centered spiritual life."

Candler School of Theology,



Bishop Charlene Kammerer preaching at the 2005 Florida Annual Conference.

Emory University, is an intellectually vital, internationally distinguished, and intentionally diverse university-based school of theology. Its mission is to educate faithful and creative leaders for the church's ministries in the world. Candler is dedicated to expanding knowledge of religion and theology, deepening spiritual life, strengthening the public witness of the churches, and building upon the breadth of Christian traditions, particularly the Wesleyan heritage, for the positive transformation of church and world. It is one of 13 United Methodist Church seminaries, with an enrollment of 500 students representing 50 denominations and more than 7,000 alumni worldwide.

Emory University is known for its demanding academics, outstanding undergraduate experience, highly ranked professional schools and state-of-the-art research facilities. Perennially ranked as one of the country's top 20 national universities by *U.S. News & World Report*, Emory encompasses nine academic divisions as well as the Carlos Museum, The Carter Center, the Yerkes National Primate Research Center and Emory Healthcare, Georgia's largest and most comprehensive health care system. □

— Laurel Hanna, Candler School of Theology

HAITI: Still reeling from the aftermath of the earthquake, two Virginia Conference mission teams

Petersburg team continues school rebuilding project

by Jack Martin

The Petersburg District United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) team prepared for months for its January 2010 departure to Jeremie, Haiti, to complete the final phase of the Torbeck elementary school, a project that the district had been working on for several years in partnership with the Haitian Methodist Church. The team was excited to be part of bringing the school to completion and to participate in the projected service of dedication, but due to the catastrophic Jan. 12, 2010, earthquake, this was not to be.

The scope of the disaster, which claimed upwards of 300,000 lives, was beyond anything that had been seen in this island nation, which has had its share of suffering from hurricanes and other well-known deprivations resulting from poverty and lack of opportunity.

The international airport had been badly damaged and all flights cancelled, except for military aircraft and relief flights coming from around the world. Clearly, we would not be going to Haiti for the foreseeable future, even though it grieved us not to be able to do anything at that moment. Thankfully, there were those who could go, including many first responders.

Eventually, UMVIM jurisdictional coordinators traveled to Haiti to do their own assessment and determine how best to provide relief. This effort included working with church leaders in Haiti to find the best ways to channel the generous contributions being sent and how best to deploy teams in coming months for the deconstruction and eventual rebuilding of church properties.

The Petersburg District, along with



The mission team representing the Petersburg District pose in their yellow shirts with some of the local Haitians in front of the school that was finally completed after being interrupted by the January 2010 earthquake.

its partner churches in Annandale and Greensboro, N.C., had put its team on hold. However, when the district superintendent in Jeremie, the Rev. Jean Lesly Dorcelly, heard that we were postponing the trip, he immediately sent an e-mail asking us to reconsider, due to the fact that many refugees from Port-au-Prince had moved to Jeremie and surrounding environs. The school had already doubled in size and was growing. The two new classrooms were desperately needed for the fall enrollment, which was projected to be 200 students.

Plans began to be remade to at least get the walls in place and the roof installed to meet the September school start date. A team of 13 from the Petersburg District and other parts of Virginia, including five United Methodist pastors, responded to the invitation.

This was the fourth team from Virginia to work in Torbeck, so we were not strangers upon arrival. We received a warm village welcome and met the Haitian skilled workers who worked alongside us, making sure our work was up to their standards. Several of our team members were well-skilled in masonry work, while others were just learning. We managed to get some good laughs from the Haitians

when our course of blocks was not quite true or when we would put in a window block backwards. They were wonderfully patient with us and good-natured no matter what happened. Children were constantly around the work site, when not in their classrooms. Often we could hear the singing of Christian songs as part of their school day.

In the most simple, direct way I can think to say it, Haiti is in

deep trouble. The news cameras have gone to new stories and overall interest may be waning. As a church, we need to keep our eyes and attention focused on the children and young people of Haiti for the foreseeable future. They need our UMVIM teams, our ongoing gifts to United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and other helping agencies, and our willingness to pray for them.

Haitians are pretty good at understanding suffering, since it has been such a constant element in their lives for decades. Perhaps the best thing we can do is to learn from their indomitable spirit and deep faith, even as we do our part to help restore the lives of our near-neighbors just an hour-and-a-half flight from our American shores. □

— The Rev. Jack Martin is superintendent of the Petersburg District.

The mission team led by Sam Ne-Smith helped local Haitians (such as these two men, right) work on the stone security wall built around the school/church compound in the small community of Banique.



The devastating January 2010 earthquake, teams continue to offer hope for the future

Mission team makes a difference in small rural community

by Jeff Cannon

Charles Dickens wrote “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times” as an introduction to his novel *A Tale of Two Cities* as a way to describe the contrasts in life during the French Revolution. It’s appropriate for this narrative concerning our recent Virginia Conference United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) trip to Haiti.

From the moment we landed in Port-au-Prince at Toussaint Louverture International Airport on March 6, it was obvious that we were “not in Kansas” anymore. We had left the 35-degree cold at Dulles International Airport and its creature comforts for an airport that was barely functional in the 1950s. It had been heavily damaged by earthquakes and time, no air conditioning in the customs receiving area, crowded and strained by the number of people, cargo beyond its designed capacity, and all this in a sweltering climate and temperature of 99 degrees.

With the help of our veteran team leader, the Rev. Sam NeSmith (on his 89th mission trip worldwide), we negotiated the airport, found our contact for the United Methodist Guest House and loaded our bags. We saw for the first time, for many of us, the magnitude of the destruction that the earthquake had wrought on this island, as we observed destroyed buildings, tent cities, port-a-potties and United Nations peacekeepers at every turn. In contrast, we also saw an industrious people determined to rebuild their city, coping with incredible stresses and doing so with dignity and ingenuity.

We were given an informative overview of the situation that included the history, political intricacies, and cultural information that we might need as we began our mission. We also received information on the cholera epidemic that has ravaged Haiti since the earthquake and how to avoid it ourselves.

As a part of our training, we got detailed information on the “Haiti Response Plan.” This is a three-year program funded in part by the \$43 million that has been given by United Methodists to Haiti relief. While the plan is designed to aid those that have been affected by the earthquake, it is much broader in scope. Over the next three years, hundreds (if not thousands) of UMVIM teams will be working with diverse projects throughout Haiti, in schools, churches and communities.

All of Haiti has been affected by the earthquake and is reeling from its aftermath. Thus, the “Haiti Response Plan” is designed to make a difference in all of Haiti, to bring Christ’s love and concern to a nation in upheaval and pain. Thousands have been relocated to other cities and towns, creating new stresses for those already living on the edge. United Methodist teams will be aiding in these towns and cities and more.

We were assigned to Banique, a small rural community about three hours north of Port-au-Prince. Banique is a poor and largely neglected area. Our project was to assist local masons and workers as they built a stone security wall around the school/church compound. This was hard, muscle-numbing work with no electricity or running water. Everything had to be done by hand. We carried large stones and buckets of mortar alongside our hard-working Haitian friends as we built the wall. During this process we communicated through our interpreters, Joseph and Fritz, in Creole (a French dialect and

national language of Haiti) as well as through crude hand signals and acting out our words, much to the amusement of our co-workers. We slept in the unfinished school building on army cots (under the stars, as the roof had not been completed), where we also ate our meals and worshiped together every morning and evening. We participated in worship on Sunday morning with the community. We sang, made friendships and hugged some of the most beautiful children we had ever seen!

The school at Banique has more than 250 students that receive an excellent education by dedicated teachers and staff. The students join together in uniform (how do they keep them so clean and pressed?) every morning as the Haitian flag is raised and they sing the national anthem. Despite being cramped into small classrooms with limited supplies, no lighting and poor ventilation, they smile, learn and interact beautifully with their teachers.

By the time we left Banique, we had completed a third of the wall, nearly completed putting a roof on the school building, and had thoroughly fallen in love with the people there.

Haiti faces significant struggles in the future to pull itself out of not only the damage of the earthquake, but also years of economic and political missteps. This may be Haiti’s last-best hope, with a coalition of nations and faith-based groups joining together to resurrect Haiti. We all must do one or two things: Pray ... or pray and go! □

— The Rev. Jeff Cannon is pastor at St. Mark’s UMC, Hampton.



Jeff Cannon (far left) and team leader, Sam NeSmith, (far right) stand with members of the team from various churches in Virginia and other states.



Va. UM Foundation distributes endowment funds

More than \$255,000 has been made available for distribution this month to Virginia United Methodist-related causes from some 90 permanent endowment funds being administered by the Virginia United Methodist Foundation.

Some of these funds go to local churches, while some are directed for ministerial scholarships and training, mission, education, evangelism, community service agencies, Virginia United Methodist Homes, UMFS (United Methodist Family Services), United Methodist Women's programs, world hunger, the United Methodist Committee on Relief, Retired Clergy Housing Corp., Wesley Service Center, camping programs, cemetery funds and other causes.

These permanent endowment funds were established by local churches or by individual United Methodists and placed with the Virginia United Methodist Foundation for investment and administration. Each year, the earned income, or a prescribed percentage of the market value of the endowment, is distributed to a designated cause or causes in accordance with the guidelines for a particular endowment.

Persons interested in establishing a permanent endowment fund to benefit a local church or some United Methodist-related cause may contact the Foundation office by calling (804) 521-1120, or 1-800-768-6040, ext. 112, or e-mail <Foundation@vaumc.org>. Local churches which have permanent endowment funds may place them with the Foundation for investment and administration.

For more information, call Jim Bergdoll, Foundation director, at (804) 521-1120 or 1-800-768-6040, ext. 120. □

School of Christian Mission set for July 22-24, July 25-28

The annual School of Christian Mission has been called "the best kept secret of the Virginia Conference." Organizers are hoping that statement will not hold true this summer.

The event is one of only two or three "co-op" schools – organized through the combined efforts of the conference office of Mission and Global Justice and the United Methodist Women (UMW) – in the denomination.

This year's theme is "All Things Made New." The event includes the option of taking the weekend school, which will begin with lunch on Friday, July 22, and end with lunch on Sunday, July 24, at the Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center in Blackstone. The weekday school will begin on Monday, July 25, with lunch and end on Thursday, July 28, with lunch.

Besides class time, there is worship and time to visit with missionaries and

view DVDs related to the subjects.

The topics for this year are: *Coming out on the Side of Grace: Forgiveness and Reconciliation* led on the weekend by the Rev. Steve Hundley and on the weekday session by the Rev. Pat Watkins. (All participants will be able to take this study.)

Haiti: Challenges and Hope led by Darlene Amon, the Rev. Frank Holley, the Rev. Dennis Lipke, the Rev. Jack Martin, the Rev. Sam NeSmith and Darlene Runaldue. (All leaders have been to Haiti in the past year.)

Joy to the World: Mission and Evangelism offered again by the Rev. Jennifer Moore (weekend only) and Linda Porter (weekend and week).

This year's children's study is *Krik, Krak: The Story of Haiti*, taught by Becky Parsons. The youth study is *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, led by Gina Kristjanson.

Registration forms are in all district offices and with all district United Methodist Women (UMW) presidents. You also will find information on the conference's ClergyNet and LaityNet, as well as the conference UMW Web site. Because of the cost involved, there will not be online registration this year.

For more information, contact Louise Miller at (540) 343-7529 or <rolmiller@cox.net>. □





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Virginia clergy to make pilgrimage for spiritual renewal to South Korea

This fall a group of Virginia United Methodist Conference clergy will travel to Bupyeong Methodist Church in Incheon, South Korea, under the co-leadership of the Rev. M.J. Kim, director of Asian Ministries for the conference, and Arlington District Superintendent the Rev. Young Jin Cho.

Dates of the trip are Oct. 26-Nov. 3. This pilgrimage is prayer-based ministry intended for spiritual renewal by visiting and learning about the fruits of the seeds American missionaries planted a century ago and experiencing contextual hands-on mission and ministry.

The group is limited to 35 clergy.

Room and board will be provided by the Bupyeong Methodist Church during this trip; participants are responsible only for the round-trip air fare. (As of late March, the cost of a direct flight was \$1,425 without a group discount by Korean Airline).

Two C.E.U. credits are available. Deadline to register is June 20.

For an application form, medical release form, and itinerancy schedule, contact the Rev. Won Un at <revun@verizon.net>, or (804) 929-0690. Additional information may be found on the Web at <<http://afishz.blogspot.com/>>. □



Jim Green, president of Virginia Conference United Methodist Men (right) receives a Bible from Lee Donley, president of the North Central Jurisdiction United Methodist Men, during the meeting of the National Association of Conference Presidents in Nashville.

Conference is tops for increasing men's groups

Gil Hanke, top staff executive of the General Commission on United Methodist Men, recently expressed gratitude to annual conferences that increased the number of chartered men's organizations over the past year.

Virginia Conference was recognized for increasing the number of chartered groups by 16, the highest in the nation. Hanke honored Jim Green, president of Virginia Conference United Methodist Men.

"In the midst of all the news centering on the decline in The United Methodist Church," said Hanke, "we are seeing real growth in men's ministry and in Scouting ministry."

Hanke also presented Bibles to presidents of conferences that increased the number of EMS members (Every Man Shares – individual contributors) and presidents that increased the number of chartered groups over the past year.

Hanke gave certificates of appreciation to presidents of United Methodist Men in 17 annual conferences that paid 100 percent of their general church apportionments. The presidents will present the bishops with the certificates during annual conference sessions.

Virginia had 16 new charters, followed by Mississippi with 14 and Alabama-West Florida with 12.

– Rich Peck, United Methodist Men

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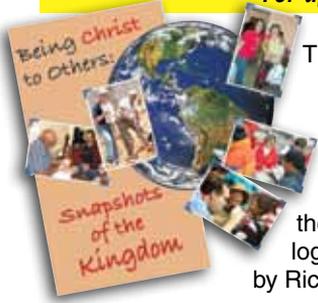


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2011 Annual Conference Info – June 15-19, Roanoke Civic Center

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.

• 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 three following projects:

1. 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."

2. 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.

3. 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>.

• **KITS FOR CONFERENCE** – This year's kit collection will replenish the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) supply. All types of kits are needed. 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, Birthing Kits.** Details are in the April issue of the *Advocate* and on the Web.

• **COMPUTER-ASSISTED NOTE-TAKING VOLUNTEERS NEEDED** –

Volunteers are needed to help with computer-assisted note taking for the hearing impaired during this year's session of Annual Conference. Assistance is needed to type text of reports, worship and music using Microsoft Word, at times as the speaker is presenting. Good typing speed and accuracy is a must. Individuals are needed for all sessions for shifts of one hour or longer. For more information, contact the conference office of Leadership and Inclusivity at 1-800-768-6040 or (804) 521-1100, ext. 154; or e-mail <MarthaStokes@vaumc.org>.

• **PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS** – Large print or Braille editions of the *Book of Reports* and other accommodations for persons with special needs can be requested through the office of Leadership and Inclusivity (see contact info above).

• **PACKET MATERIALS** – Details on the Web. **Deadline is May 6.**

• **DISPLAY SPACE** – Details on the Web. **Deadline is May 15.**

• **HOUSING** – Details on the Web.

• **BANQUETS** – Details on the Web.

• **PRAYER ROOM** – Details on the Web.

Upcoming Events – for all ages!

JUNE

'Sojourn to Sacredness: A Theological Ecological Pilgrimage for Young Adults,' June 6-10, Young adults will hike the Appalachian Trail, canoe on the Shenandoah River and renew relationships with God, each other and the earth. Participants will learn low-impact and earth-friendly outdoor living skills, experience the beauty of God's creation, learn about some of the problems creation is facing, and discuss ways the church can be part of the solution. Conversations on the pilgrimage will include scientists, environmentalists and theologians. Fee of \$125 includes canoes, food, transportation to and from the trail and river plus camping fees. For more information and to register online, visit the "Events" section at <www.vaumc.org>.

JULY

Helping Hands: A Virginia Conference Children's Mission Event, Four dates and locations during the summer: **July 7-8, Main Street UMC**, Waynesboro area; **July 21-July 22, Woodlake UMC**, Richmond area; **July 25-26, Williamsburg UMC**, Williamsburg area; **July 29-30, The Stand UMC**, Petersburg area. This event offers rising 4th- 6th-graders a hands-on opportunity to do mission work as kids from all over the conference join together as one "United" Methodist church making a difference in the community. Woodlake will offer an optional early start time to include on additional mission opportunity. Come and learn about mission opportunities and the importance of

being a caring Christian. The cost is only \$36 per person. This will include a T-shirt, meals and snacks, and overnight stay. Registration will be available beginning May 1. You will be able to register online through the conference Web site at that time. Questions regarding the event should be directed to Beth Christian at <bchristian@woodlakeumc.org> or call (804) 739-4535, ext. 28.

Familiarization Trip to Russia, July 10-25. Sponsored by the Russia Initiative groups of the Baltimore-Washington and Virginia conferences. For more information, contact Laura Whittle at <whittle.la@gmail.com> or (540) 742-8148.



2011 Conference UMVIM Team Leader Training Event

Saturday, May 14 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Floris United Methodist Church Herndon, Va.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: Noon, Monday, May 9

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 of \$40 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

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REGISTRATION FEE: \$40, payable when you send in your registration. If paying online, have credit card ready; if sending in registration, mail check along with registration form.

Use mapquest.com for directions to Floris UMC, 13000 Frying Pan Rd., Herndon, VA 20171; phone: 703-793-0026

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



Nation & World

United Methodist officials in Cote d'Ivoire minister to people after fighting ends

Promoting reconciliation and ministering to a nation emerging from conflict are priorities for The United Methodist Church in Côte d'Ivoire, now that the battle for the presidency appears over.

"Too much to do, too much to do," said Bishop Benjamin Boni, describing the work that lies ahead for the church.

Word that leader Laurent Gbagbo had been arrested April 11 seemed to signal an end to the conflict. Gbagbo, who had ruled the West African country for a decade, had refused to concede defeat after a Nov. 28 election in which Alassane Ouattara emerged as the internationally recognized victor.

The sounds of gunfire and explosions that had become commonplace in Abidjan, the country's largest city, have stopped. "I can say the situation is calm," said Bishop Boni.

"I pray that the people of Côte d'Ivoire may soon find peace," said the Rev. Cynthia Fierro Harvey, head of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). "We are ready to help in whatever way we can."

The church will focus on promoting reconciliation and meeting people's needs, from providing aid to holding funeral services.

Boni said the church will "continue to do what we have always done" by engaging with other religious groups in dialogue.

The United Methodist compound where he lives is close to the presidential residence, which was bombed repeatedly. At one point, the U.S. Embassy called Boni to check on his safety after receiving a request from the General Board of Church and Society.

Ivory Coast's new government met for the first time on April 19, cementing its authority a week after the ouster of Gbagbo. Prime Minister Guillaume Soro chaired the gathering of around 10 ministers at his office in Abidjan.

For residents of Abidjan, daily life for the past weeks has centered around staying safe from the battle and ven-



(Above): An apartment building in the Cocody Riviera area shows damage from a rocket on April 9. (Left): The Voice of Hope radio station is near some of the heavy fighting in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. (Below): Bishop Benjamin Boni speaks at a 2008 worship service. He and other United Methodist leaders moved to a safe location as fighting spread in Abidjan. (UMNS photos)

turing out at the right times to find food.

Meanwhile, four United Methodist churches in other parts of the city have been helping people in need during the conflict. Two emergency grants from UMCOR have enabled the Côte d'Ivoire Conference to provide aid to displaced people and to feed kindergarten-age children.

Donations to support UMCOR's response can be designated for Côte d'Ivoire Crisis, UMCOR Advance #982450, and placed in church offering plates or given online. One hundred percent of the

donation will support ministries for the people of Côte d'Ivoire. □

— Tim Tanton,
United Methodist Communications

Japan's churches to help house earthquake, tsunami survivors

Hundreds of thousands left homeless by Japan's earthquake and tsunami or evacuated because of the continuing nuclear threat are struggling to regain the routines of daily life.

To assist them, churches in Japan are working to find temporary accommodations for some of the survivors.

The effort is being coordinated through the National Christian Council in Japan, which is working with Church World Service (CWS) to find housing for 1,000 individuals. CWS estimates that some 300,000 people are living in more than 2,300 evacuation sites across Japan and another 200,000 are receiving relief supplies from those locations.

The Rev. Claudia Genung-Yamamoto, a United Methodist missionary who serves as a council liaison, said she expected that most of the placements would be in Tokyo and the west Tokyo area "but there are people who have houses or cottages elsewhere and if the evacuees are willing to go, we can help send them."

On its own, she said, Kobe Union Church has found church families willing to temporarily house evacuees coming through that city. The Wesley Center in Tokyo also has assisted Filipino refugees.

The chaos caused by a 9.0-magnitude earthquake that struck northeastern Japan on March 11 has hardly abated as people in the affected areas struggle to survive. As of March 29, Japan's National Police

Agency had confirmed 11,004 deaths and said another 17,339 people were unaccounted for in six prefectures, including 7,588 in Miyagi, 5,093 in Fukushima and 4,654 in Iwate.

The National Christian Council in Japan is one of the organizations given an initial \$10,000 grant from the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), which had received just over \$1 million in donations for the Japan disaster by March 28.

The United Church of Christ in Japan and GlobalMedic also have received grants, and a grant to CWS is in the works, said Melissa Crutchfield, UMCOR's executive for international disaster response.

UMCOR expects to support relief and recovery efforts by the Korean Christian Church in Japan, Asian Rural Institute, the Wesley Center in Tokyo and Second Harvest Japan, she added. UMCOR also is working with regional partners to address needs related to those displaced outside of Japan, such as Filipino migrant workers forced to return home after the earthquake.

Takeshi Komino, head of emergencies for the Church World Service Asia/Pacific office, expanded the relief agency's appeal for Japan after coordination meetings with other organizations,



A child is rescued from the rubble of the devastating earthquake and tsunami that struck northeastern Japan on March 11.

winter weather, he pointed out in a March 27 letter.

"Victims that I interviewed echo the same point that relief efforts reported in the media are not reaching them, which tells us (there is) huge variation on where needs are somewhat being met, and not being met at all," Komino said.

The National Christian Council in Japan is coordinating its work with the newly-established Christian Coalition in Sendai, operating out of the Emmaus Center. The United Christian Church of Japan established the Tohoku Disaster Relief Center at Emmaus to respond to the crisis.

People from all regions of Japan have sent supplies to the relief center and some volunteers have come from Tokyo to sort and deliver goods and work in the shelters. Deliveries are made by bicycle and by car to churches and shelters in the earthquake area.

Ishinomaki, a city of nearly 165,000 known for its fish market, was devastated by the disaster. Ten thousand were missing after a wave estimated at 20 to 30 feet high swept into the port.

"The scars left from the tsunami are deep, and we hear that water lines are still out," wrote Shinichiro Asayama in the disaster center's blog. "Gas and kerosene are still of short supply, and people are happy to receive any supplies if delivered. Next, they will need volunteers to help carry water and to clean up houses that were flooded by water." □

— Linda Bloom,
United Methodist News Service

(More on Japan on next two pages.)



One of countless homeless survivors of the tsunami who will need the help of Japan's churches.

field visits and extensive interviews about the needs of disaster survivors.

Even a country as well-prepared as Japan cannot cope without outside assistance when dealing with the compounding disasters of earthquake, tsunami, nuclear threat and freezing

The nuclear plant in Fukushima, damaged by the earthquake.

E-mails from Japan

Pastor now serving Arlington congregation was once a missionary in hardest hit area

by Michael Southall-Vess

My wife, Marable, and I served as General Board of Global Ministries missionaries in Japan. Most of our time was in Fukushima-ken, the prefecture that the troubled nuclear reactors are in and an area which suffered great damage from the earthquake and tsunami. We served in the Aizu Chiku (subdistrict), which included 10 churches in the central part of Fukushima about 65 miles from Iwaki, which is on the coast.

I woke up at 7 a.m. on March 11, opened my iPad to read the news and e-mails and saw the terrible news that at 2:50 p.m. Japanese time an earthquake had occurred followed by a tsunami that had destroyed a large part of the coastal area of northeastern Honshu. I was filled with disbelief and fear as I wondered about our friends and the people that had been affected. I immediately sent e-mails to about 25 of our friends living throughout Japan hoping to find them safe.

The first reply was from Christian friends in Aizu, Fukushima, Shuji and Wakako Matsumoto. They indicated they were OK but that as the quake continued for such a long time they didn't know if their small home would survive:

"We really worried about collapse our house, but it endured. ... We worried about Jun. His office is at the small peninsula of east end of Hokkaido. We could not contact him so long time. Finally, we could catch him. He was at the tip of the cape. He noticed huge earthquake. He ran away from tsunami by his car. He drove

about 10 kilometers and reached the city office on the hill. We could use our cell phone only few minutes after earthquake. But, soon, it became unable. And until just now we could not use our cell phone, including text message."

Strangely most cell phone service in Japan was knocked out. The Japanese people are very dependent upon their cell phones and one would think they would work and that the surface line phones would go down, but the opposite happened.



Mike and Marable at the Takada Church Youchin (preschool).

CNN had not conveyed how great the devastation was, but kept showing the same tsunami clip over and over and speaking of hundreds dying. Japan's Shuji News told us that 84 villages on the coast had disappeared, Rikuzen-Takada city in Miyagi prefecture with a population of 23,000 was gone, and almost a third of Sendai was destroyed. That was the second time in 100 years that Sendai had been destroyed, first by American firebombing during World War II, and now this. It was so sad to think of the rebuilt city with tree-lined boulevards and modern buildings experiencing such destruction. Sendai was a city where the Tohoku District meeting

was held each year like the Virginia Annual Conference. It was also a city of 1 million that had a very good hospital where I spent time as a patient on two occasions.

I spoke to one of our friends in Tokyo who happened to be on the 42nd floor of a building. It was a very modern building which swayed with the quake. Most of the workers spent the night in the offices since the subways and trains were not operating. A metro area of 30 million had come to a complete standstill. Bottled water, rice balls, bread and ready-to-eat food disappeared immediately from the convenience store shelves. There were fires in some buildings in Tokyo which was quite far from the epicenter.

The third day we were able to reach Mary Helen Saito, who lives in Kitakata. She first went to Japan as a two-year intern in the 1950s from the Methodist Mission Board, fell in love with the people and stayed. She shared that she was at a Bible study at the

Kitakata church when the earthquake struck. The members simply held on, and after the quake stopped they finished the Bible study with no idea of the severity of the disaster!

The person we most wanted to talk to was Toshihiko Watanabe Sensei. He was our next-door neighbor and pastor in Takada village. We were very close to him and his wife, Kimiko. He had moved to serve a church in Iwaki before we left Japan. We had seen him this past November when we visited. No one had heard from him since the March disaster. One of the Ritsu no kai (a Christian farmers' group), Jinichi Saito, indicated that he had not been able to reach him





(Left) Wakako Matsumoto is checked for radiation as she and her husband leave Fukushima going to Tokyo. (Above) A shopper has a hard time finding food in a store located in Moriama.

either. Finally we spoke to Rea, who had stayed with us two years ago. They were OK, but everything in their home was destroyed. Rea gave us Sensei's cell number and we were able to call seven days after the quake.

Masakichi Endoh Sensei, a retired high school physics teacher who led the English group we worked with, shared that many of the refugees were being settled in Aizu. Everyone had to go through radiation testing before they were settled in public facilities such as schools and gyms.

One of the first people that we

lived in Aizu.) He works with university students through the Emmaus ministry in Sendai and shared that 15 students spent the night after the earthquake in his home and that they were all right. Mensendiek reported in an update that "foreigners are nowhere to be seen and perhaps 50 percent of the people of this city have left."

Things are very difficult in most of Japan. People are homeless, and many who are not homeless still had to evacuate their homes because of the radiation danger. Rice, "nattou" (fer-

heard from in Sendai was the Rev. Jeffrey Mensendiek, a UCC missionary in charge of our housing. (The UCC owned the house where we

mented soy beans), paper products, gas and kerosene are still difficult to obtain. Mary Helen Saito indicated that 10 days after the quake the stores had empty shelves and there was still no gas in Kitakata, which is far from the quake and tsunami damage. Tokyo and other parts of the nation have rolling blackouts. Yet the spirit of the Japanese people is good. The Japanese have a saying, "Shigata ga nai," which means "it cannot be helped." It implies a sense of enduring what is happening and making the best of it.

People want to send items to Japan, but at this point money will help the most. The United Methodist Committee on Relief has already been sending bottled water, and GBGM has sent funds to be used for disaster relief. Our gifts do make a difference and are needed. Please pray for the people of Japan. □

— The Rev. Michael Southall-Vess serves Arlington Forest UMC. He and his wife, Marable, were missionaries in Japan from 2001-2005.

Hunger relief organization, Stop Hunger Now, contributes grant to help with Japan's recovery

In response to the earthquakes and tsunami that recently hit Japan, international hunger relief organization Stop Hunger Now is working with its in-country partners to help the ongoing recovery efforts in the region.

Stop Hunger Now will send a \$5,000 grant to Feed the Hungry, its partner working directly in the northern Ibaragi and southern Fukushima prefectures. These areas were not only hit by the quake and tsunami but also are home to most of the population facing radiation risks. The grant will provide clothes and food to those affected by the disaster.

"Stop Hunger Now is an organization that has the right attitude from top to bottom," says Feed the Hungry's Executive Director Stefan Redelich. "Its support and counsel has allowed us to get far more done, in far less time, to the benefit of far more suffering people in northeastern Japan."

Crisis-response updates from Stop Hunger Now's in-country partners are posted regularly at <www.stophungernow.org>. For information about online donations and checks, visit <www.stophungernow.org/japan>.

Stop Hunger Now delivers food aid and disaster relief supplies in the form of food, medicines, medical supplies, medical equipment, clothing and blankets to thousands of disaster victims and other hungry and vulnerable people in 76 countries.

Individuals or groups who want to get involved should contact Stop Hunger Now at 1-888-501-8440 or <info@stophungernow.org>. □



(Above) Young women serve food provided by hunger relief organization Stop Hunger Now to persons such as this Japanese woman (left) affected by the earthquake/tsunami crisis.



2012 General Conference petition submission process now open



Petitions for consideration by the 2012 General Conference may be submitted to the Petitions Secretary through Sept. 27.

According to church law, “Any organization, clergy member, or lay member of The United Methodist Church may petition the General Conference ...”

Detailed instructions for submitting a petition are available on the General Conference Web site at <gc2012.umc.org>. Petitions must be typed and may be submitted via e-mail to <petitions@umpublishing.org>, through the Web site, postal mail, or fax. Petitions submitted without digital media through mail or by fax need to be submitted by July 1, 2011, to allow time for transcription and translation.

The mailing addresses for petitions (hard copy accompanied if possible by digital version on diskette, CD or USB drive) are: Gary Graves, Petitions Secretary, United Methodist General Conference, P.O. Box 140, Rockfield, KY 42274, or for delivery by FedEx, UPS, etc., 2511 Richpond-Rockfield Rd., Bowling Green, KY 42101.

There were approximately 2,500 submissions in 2008, many of which were duplicates. Eligible petitions are given numbers and assigned to one of 13 legislative committees or the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters. The committees will debate the proposals and determine whether to approve, amend, combine or reject them for recommendation to the full body of General Conference.

When submitting a petition, you must indicate whether a petition has “general church budget implications,” meaning a petition that causes the need for funding (i.e., creation of a new program, staff position, support requirements, etc.) through the general church apportionments. Such petitions require review by the General Council on Finance and Administration to verify if the funding is already included under the recommended quadrennial budget.

Submitters also must indicate whether a petition has “global implica-

tions,” meaning it is a constitutional amendment, has a direct effect on the global work of general agencies, places requirements or expectations on all annual conferences, districts, or churches, or speaks to societal concerns regardless of the particular form of secular government.

Questions about the petition submission process may be e-mailed to <petitionsquestions@umpublishing.org>.

General Conference is the top policy-

making body of The United Methodist Church. The 1,000-member assembly meets once every four years to consider revisions to church law, as well as adopt resolutions on current moral, social, public policy and economic issues. It also approves plans and budgets for churchwide programs for the next four years. The 2012 meeting will take place April 24-May 4 at the Tampa Convention Center. □

— *United Methodist Communications*

Ministry study plan provides peer review process

Concern in the church about protecting women and racial-ethnic clergy has prompted the Study of Ministry Commission to modify language on security of appointment for clergy so that if an elder in full connection does not receive an appointment for reasons other than ineffectiveness, a process will be in place for that elder to seek a peer review from the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM).

Many of the comments the commission has received from United Methodist lay and clergy centered around open itinerancy — protecting the rights of women and racial-ethnic clergy to continue to be appointed if security of appointment is eliminated.

The Rev. Ken Carter, a commission member who is also the chair of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry’s (GBHEM) Division of Ordained Ministry, said that responses from the church about this issue led to changes to the proposal which the commission is preparing to submit to General Conference 2012. The changes mean a modification of the continuing appointment process.

Commission members, meeting in Nashville recently, fine-tuned proposals and set a tight schedule for completing their report. In addition to modifying the security of employment for clergy, the commission proposes legislation that will further streamline the candidacy process. Changes include a proposed vocational discernment coordinator who will work through the BOM and in consultation with the district superintendent to recruit and train people as leaders for candidacy group mentoring which will expedite the mentoring process and foster peer reflection and learning. Group mentoring will also allow particularly gifted mentors to work with more candidates.

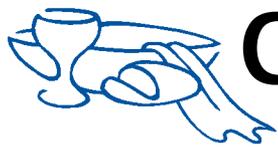
A redesign of licensing school will offer a Ministry Preparation Orientation for all candidates for the purpose of building collegiality and understanding among local pastors, deacons and elders, as well as preparation for licensing in these ministries.

In addition, the proposed legislation allows ordination and provisional membership to occur earlier in the process, following certification, completion of theological educational requirements, and other requirements. The practice of commissioning would be eliminated and following a minimum two-year provisional membership period, the ordained clergyperson would be eligible for full conference membership.

The group also drafted a new section on transitional leave of absence that would guide annual conferences in working with clergy who are not appointed to a church or extension ministry post because of missional reasons or because there were not enough jobs for clergy in the conference.

Commission sub-groups will continue working on the report and figuring out how the proposals fit with other reports that will be before General Conference. □

— *Vicki Brown, GBHEM*



Clergy & Diaconal

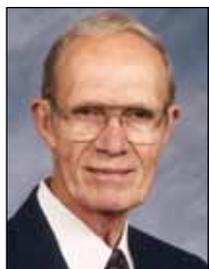
Deaths

The **Rev. Robert E. Taylor**, 91, retired elder, died March 16, 2011. He began his ministerial career in 1961 at South Amherst. He went on to serve Bethlehem in Roseland, the Gloucester-Mathews Charge, and Henderson. He retired in 1985.



Taylor

Survivors include a daughter, Elizabeth Taylor Morris; two granddaughters; three great-grandchildren; and a niece and nephew. He was predeceased by wives, Geraldine Vandegriff Taylor, Arlene Whisnant Taylor and Mae Dodson Taylor.



Luther

The **Rev. Jay E. Luther**, 82, retired elder, died March 26, 2011. He began his ministerial career in 1971. His appointments included Antioch and Grace Churches in the Fredericksburg

area, associate at Fredericksburg, then pastor at Locust Grove (Roanoke District), and Fishersville. He retired in 1994. During his retirement, he served Zion (Spotsylvania). Jay most recently was Minister of Visitation at Fredericksburg UMC, and has served as a chaplain to the police of Salem, at Carriage Hill Rehabilitation and Nursing Home, and to the clergy of the Ashland District.

Survivors include his wife, Ruth Searle Luther; three children, Janice, David and Timothy; and eight grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents, A. Ted Luther and Violet Smith Luther of Johnstown, Pa., and his son, Dennis Luther.

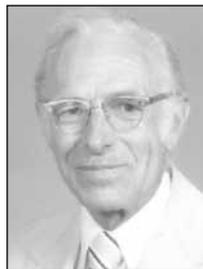
The **Rev. Hugh C. Paschall**, 85, retired elder, died March 31, 2011. He began his ministerial career in 1957 as associate pastor at King William. He went on to serve Mount Pisgah, Shady Grove in Henrico, Watson Memorial, Trinity in Smithfield, Epworth in Falls Church, Farmville, Franconia, and Central in Arlington. He retired in 1991.



Paschall

Survivors include his wife, Jayne; two daughters, Gloria Runyon and Jayne H. Caudle; six grandchildren, and one great-grandson.

The **Rev. William E. Basom**, 96, retired elder, died April 10, 2011. He began his ministerial career with the Central Pennsylvania Conference in the 1930s. He then served churches in the Baltimore Conference. He transferred to the Virginia Conference and was the founding pastor of what is now Beverley Hills Community United Methodist Church in Alexandria, where he served for 42 years until his retirement in 1980.



Basom

Survivors include his wife, Ruth Basom; four children and their families.

Frances Lee Whiteside Schroeder, widow of Herman Gustav Schroeder, died March 8, 2011.

Madge Gordon Weaver Haga, widow of the Rev. Ralph Leonard Haga Sr., died April 3, 2011.

Mary Parker Arthur, widow of the Rev. C. Ralph Arthur, died April 11, 2011.

Louise C. Snipes, formerly married to the Rev. Wm. E. Barber (deceased), died Jan. 5, 2011.

John Wesley Hildrup Spencer, died March 31, 2011. He was the father-in-law of the Rev. Jean R. Spencer who died in 2006 and was the favorite uncle of the Rev. Tracy Wines, pastor of Vale UMC in the Arlington District. His grandfather was the late Rev. John Wesley Hildrup, also of the Virginia Conference.

John "Jack" Crawford Jr., father of the Rev. John Crawford III, died April 7, 2011. John III is a retired elder currently serving Mount Pisgah UMC in Verona.

Katherine Miller Blevins, mother of the Rev. Laura Blevins Douglass, died March 19, 2011. Laura is a deacon in full connection serving as Minister of Music at Asbury UMC in Harrisonburg.

Dorothy Howe Abbott, mother of Judith Tongue and mother-in-law of the Rev. James M. "Jim" Tongue, died March 29, 2011. Jim is superintendent of the Farmville District.

Kathleen H. Weakley, mother of the Rev. J. Barton Weakley, died March 29, 2011. Barton is pastor of Northview UMC in Roanoke.

Lynda Flatford, mother of Joan Close and mother-in-law of the Rev. George H. Close Jr., died March 30, 2011. George is a retired elder living in Salem, and Joan is the guest services director at United Methodist-related Camp Alta Mons in Shawsville.

Patricia Bird Ough Chadsey, mother of the Rev. John Chadsey, died March 31, 2011. John is pastor at Warrenton UMC in the Winchester District.

(Clergy & Diaconal News continued on pg. 30)



Local Church



▲ In December, **Duncan Memorial UMC**, Ashland District, contributed \$765 (enough to buy 76 bed nets) to Nothing But Nets, the global movement involved in malaria prevention through advocacy, procurement and distribution of free nets. As a follow-up in March, young people had a sale table with homemade “pipe cleaner” mosquitoes (pictured). These crafts are a reminder to pray for those areas of the world where malaria still decimates families and communities and to seek ways we can continue to make a difference. The United Methodist Church (through its Imagine No Malaria campaign) has a goal of ending malaria in sub-Saharan Africa by 2015. The young people who have made the mosquitoes are members of the Hanover County home-schooler group Roots and Shoots, a Jane Goodall Institute’s environmental and humanitarian program for young people. Its mission is to foster respect and compassion for all living things, to promote understanding of all cultures and beliefs and to inspire each individual to take action to make the world a better place for the environment, animals and the human community.

The History and Records Committee and Senior Adult Ministry at **Grace UMC**, Manassas, will provide a seminar on John Wesley May 19, 20 and 26 from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. each day. Lunch will be provided. The founder of Methodism will be brought to life by the Rev. Gary A. Ziegler. You can RSVP by May 15 to <office@umcgrace.org> or (703) 361-7800.

Children and their leaders at **Trinity UMC**, Danville District, have been concentrating on mission outreach this year. To raise money for mission, they decided to rake yards plus have a bake sale and craft sale. Enough money has been raised to fill 14 shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child, purchase baby chicks through Samaritan’s Purse, and donate toys and clothes to two needy families.



▲ **St. Mark’s UMC** in Hampton, Peninsula District, held its annual blood drive in late February. Pictured: church member Martha Rowe prepares to donate blood. By committing about an hour of your time, you can donate a gift more precious than time or money: the gift of life through blood. One donation of blood can help save up to three patients’ lives.



◀ The “Taste of **Mount Zion**” UMC in Hamilton is one of several events leading up to the 130th anniversary of the church in August. Pictured are the “Best in Category” winners (from left) Maxine Phillips, Teresa Jackson and Charles Henderson.



▲ **Arlington Forest UMC** continues in the tradition of John Wesley in being “unorthodox” in ways of reaching the unchurched. On Ash Wednesday, the Rev. Michael Southall-Vess stood in the parking lot and invited others to join the Lenten journey through the imposition of ashes. At a Worship Committee meeting a member suggested doing “drive-by” ashes. Everyone laughed, but over time the pastor and others decided it might be a way to reach parents who drop off their children for preschool and others who did not have time for a “church service.” The church prepared a hand-out about Ash Wednesday and Lent plus invited participants to join the congregation in community service during Lent. Twelve people received the ashes in the sign of the cross, one more than the number who came to the indoor service. The church has been open to new and novel ways of sharing the good news including U2 Eucharist services, animal blessings, and the use of Twitter and Facebook.

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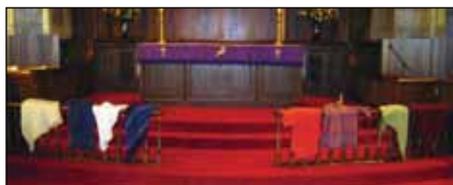
Millie Cooper, retired conference youth director, will be 90 years old in July. There will be a celebration on July 9 in Newport News. For more information go to <www.milliecooper.info> or call (540) 269-2014.

► United Methodist Men from **Cunningham UMC**, Charlottesville District, recently repaired the sign for the Wesley Foundation at the University of Virginia. The men took the sign apart in sections, repaired or replaced elements, and then put it back together. "It's looking fantastic!" said Campus Minister Deborah Lewis.



▲ Children at **Fairmount UMC**, Ashland District, pose with their pastor, Gibby Elder, holding a banner which was shared with the congregation during a recent worship service. The banner contains panels done by the children illustrating the story of Jacob and Esau.

► After 136 years in its present location in Chase City, **Centenary UMC** has a plaque to commemorate its heritage. Centenary was first deeded in another location in 1840. The plaque will put Centenary in the historic database and the church also will be designated as an official historical building. Centenary also will be included in the local "Historical Walking Tour." Pictured are: Church Council secretary Faye Edwards, the Rev. Jeffery Clemens and Council chair Carlton Gurley.



▲ **Trinity UMC** in Alexandria has started a Prayer Shawl ministry. It started as a group of crafters who came together twice a month, with their skills and their yarn, to create comforting shawls for those who need them. Recently eight shawls lay across the rail at the front of the sanctuary. During the "Time With Young Christians," children from the congregation sat on the steps at the front of the sanctuary and reached out with curiosity to touch the colorful shawls, while learning about them. Then, the lay leader asked the children to lay their hands on the prayer shawls and join the pastors in blessing them and those who will receive them.

Classifieds

POSITION AVAILABLE

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRIES—P-T for Centenary UMC in Portsmouth. Youth director will provide leadership, supervision, and guidance for youth in grades 7-12. Responsibilities include coordinating and leading the Sunday evening youth meetings as well as other fellowship events, mission opportunities, fundraisers and retreats. We are seeking applicants who have education or experience related to youth programs, with vision and enthusiasm. Good organizational skills and flexibility are essential. E-mail your resume to <centenaryumc@verizon.net>, or mail to Centenary UMC, 3312 Cedar Lane, Portsmouth, VA 23703. For questions, call (757) 484-5051.

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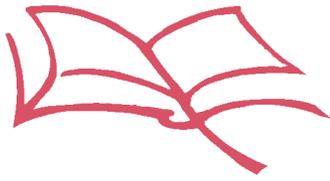


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Living the Word



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:
The Rev. Cynthia Johnson-Oliver is Associate Pastor of Adult Discipleship at Annandale UMC. She is an ordained elder in the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church "on loan" to the Virginia Conference since 2008. She received the A.B. degree magna cum laude in Comparative Religion from Harvard College, a Master of Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School, and a Juris Doctorate (pending) from Yale Law School. She has served as National Director of Youth Ministry for the CME Church, co-pastor of the Black Church at Yale, a student congregation, and Coordinator of Faith-Based Outreach for a presidential campaign. Cynthia is the first woman in her family's five generations of Methodist clergy and the granddaughter of the late Bishop Joseph A. Johnson Jr. She lives in Arlington with her husband and daughter.

May 8, 2011
Ceaseless worship
Revelation 4:1-2, 6-11

The Book of Revelation is notoriously difficult. It is rich with symbolism, imagery and metaphor far beyond other New Testament writings. In contrast to these writings, Revelation belongs to the genre of apocalyptic literature. The Greek word "apocalypse" means revelation or disclosure, and consists of visions and dreams in which the divine world is revealed to the recipient. Daniel is another example of apocalyptic literature. Despite its complexities, Revelation is rich with meaning not only for early Christian readers, but also for contemporary readers. In *Breaking the Code*, Bruce Metzger recommends that readers utilize a "disciplined imagination" to view the imagery as contributing to an overall impression not as isolated and limited to literalist interpretations.

Such a disciplined imagination is helpful when reading today's text. In this chapter, John, the self-identified author, turns to the subject of heavenly worship. John, while "in the spirit," has a vision of God on the heavenly throne surrounded by 24 elders. Four living creatures are present, and day and night without ceasing they sing, "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come." (4:8)

Amidst the beautiful imagery, what captures my attention most is the ceaseless worship of the living creatures. Metzger writes that their ceaseless worship does not imply that worship is their sole activity, but that it is their constant disposition.

This made me wonder: what would our churches be like if we worshiped without ceasing? What if worship were seen, not as a weekly event, but as a continuous state of being and living? Ceaseless worship is an abiding awareness and acknowledgement of God's holy presence in our daily lives. We would then bring

worshipful dispositions to our services, not as mere recipients of sacraments, sermons and songs, but as participants in ongoing cosmic praise.

Alice Walker, in *The Color Purple*, wrote, "Any God I ever felt in church I brought in with me. And I think all the other folks did, too. They come to church to share God, not find God." Walker's observation changes the relevant question from "What did I get out of church?" to "What did I bring to church?" When we bring to church a disposition of ceaseless worship cultivated throughout the week, we truly can join God's people on earth and all the company of heaven in praising God's name and singing that unending hymn. □

May 15, 2011
Restorative worship
Revelation 7:9-17

In the summer after I completed Divinity School, I gathered with young adults from throughout the world at Epworth by the Sea for the International Christian Youth Conference (ICYC). We shared together in study, fellowship, recreation and awesome worship. Participants shared their worship traditions through song, dance, music, drums, prayers and sermons. The highlight of the week was the service of Holy Communion, when the phrases, "the body of Christ" and "the blood of Christ" were repeated aloud in every language present. For the young people in attendance, there came a moment of unanimous recognition that God is bigger than our local church, nation or tribe. Our expressions of worship, though different, acknowledged the universality of God.

This memory came to mind when I read today's text. John describes the church triumphant as a great multitude "that no one could count, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne" worshipping God. (7:9)

REFERENCES:

- Scriptures are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.
- Bruce Metzger, *Breaking the Code: Understanding the Book of Revelation* (Abingdon Press, 1993).
- N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (HarperOne, 2008).

It is an awesome image of unity and diversity before the heavenly throne.

The image, however, is a stark contrast to the many insular communities of worship we find across our nation today. It almost has become cliché to note that Sunday morning contains the most segregated hours of the week. Laws have compelled diverse communities to work, travel and learn together. But when we exercise our religious freedom, we do so in our cultural comfort zones.

There is merit to the point that people should worship where they feel most comfortable. However, there is also merit to our calling to facilitate God's kingdom to come, God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

How do we begin to heal divisions among Christians? Perhaps we should look to the restorative power of worship. Perhaps we should seek opportunities, whether World Communion or Peace with Justice Sunday, to step out of our comfort zones and join with other communities in worship. Perhaps we should develop partnerships with churches in other communities to regularly engage. These may be small steps, but they are steps indeed.

This past October, I brought the ICYC Communion experience to my church for World Communion Sunday. We celebrated our ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity and rejoiced at our unity in Christ. We included images of our worldwide missions in Haiti, Brazil and Mozambique. We thanked God for the restorative power of worship and celebrated the kingdom of God. □

May 22, 2011

Resurrection and renewal

Revelation 21:1-8

Our living room was filled with 27 boxes. The large ones contained our clothing. The medium ones contained our dishes and cookware. The smaller ones were books, mostly from my father's library. We were keeping his books, although we already had given many of his possessions away. I was 14 years old, my father had just died, and we were preparing to move out of the church's parsonage near downtown San Francisco. The moving van carried away

the boxes, and we loaded our grief into cars and made the long drive back to our home in Nashville, Tenn.

The early Christian community to which John wrote also experienced death and grief. Their experience was caused by persecution from their Roman oppressors. John, however, envisions a time when this world, with its death and destruction, would pass away. In its place, a new Jerusalem is coming out of heaven. On the throne would not be a ruthless emperor, but a loving God who dwells in the Holy City with God's people, and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Grief is a universal experience. It makes no distinction based on age, appearance or status. What is also universal are our attempts to characterize what happens after death. In *Surprised by Hope*, N.T. Wright notes that today's passage presents a different picture of heaven from what is frequently assumed. In this chapter, the souls are not going to heaven; heaven is coming down to earth. The new Jerusalem descends from heaven. Moreover, heaven and earth are not separated, but are united and renewed. Now, "the home of God is among mortals," (21:4) and God's first order of business is to banish death and wipe away our tears. Moreover, God promises, "I am making all things new." (21:5)

I discovered at a young age that God's promise of renewal is not simply a distant hope. When we returned to our old home in Nashville, things seemed different. In fact, they seemed quite new. My old belongings were in boxes; therefore, I could decorate my room anew. I would have to choose a new school since I was now in high school. I would now be in the youth group at our old church. There would be new friends and new activities, all of which meant, to a teenager, new life. In the midst of death, God was already bringing new life. □

May 29, 2011

Healing of the nations

Revelation 22:1-9

In January 2002, I was diagnosed with a rare form of arthritis. Before the end of my 20s, diagnosis would turn to disability in a way that would redefine my life. I would have to slow my pace

and learn to rely on the loving assistance of family and friends. Moreover, I would rely on my faith in a God who promises to make all things new.

This vision of healing is the concluding imagery of Revelation. In fact, throughout John's apocalypse, there is a persistent thread of healing and justice. Chapter 7 promises not only unity, but also freedom from hunger and thirst. Chapter 21 guarantees an end to death, mourning, crying and pain. In today's text, John envisions the river of the water of life flowing through the Holy City. On either side of the river is the tree of life, "and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." (22:2)

John's vision undoubtedly addresses the social-historical issues of his time. However, these texts might also stimulate in our "disciplined imagination" a vision for the future kingdom of God that we can begin to usher into the present through the mission of the church.

This mission is that the church is intended to be a place of healing and justice. This may be a taller task than we have previously considered. This is a vision of ending hunger, mitigating grief and pain, wiping away tears and striving for the healing of the nations. As such, Revelation provides not only a vision of restorative worship, but also of restorative justice.

This combination of restorative worship and justice is what I found when I re-entered the workforce in 2007 at my current pastoral assignment. I found a place that not only welcomed my gifts, but also accommodated my disabilities. I found members who purchased stools so that I would not have to stand for too long, even when I preach! I found a community that looked past my disabilities and focused on my possibilities.

A vision for healing the nations might translate into world missions, disability ministry, ethnic outreach, anti-poverty efforts, addressing homelessness or advocacy for children and families in need. In all of these approaches, we must not only distribute fish, but also teach how to fish for lasting change. The blessing of Revelation is that we don't have to wait. The healing of the nations can begin through us today! □



Letters & Commentary

The rural backbone of American Methodism

Commentary by Linda Bloom

My sister, Laura, puts together the Sunday bulletin at Maple Grove United Methodist Church near Auburn, Ind., the rural church where she and her husband, Guy, belong. They also mow the lawn, shovel snow off the steps in the winter and generally keep an eye on the building, which is down the road from their house.

Theirs is the kind of hands-on dedication that's essential for a small congregation where the worship service draws 20 – including the pastor – as it did the day after Christmas, when I attended.

These days, mega-churches with elaborate multimedia presentations, praise bands and in-house coffee shops often grab the spotlight. But the rural backbone of American Methodism, born of a pioneer spirit and nurtured by the circuit riders of old, remains intact alongside cornfields and small-town main streets, even if it's weaker than it used to be.

Often, these rural churches are anchored by families whose membership dates back for generations. For example, in the northwest Ohio town of Gilboa, 92-year-old Thelma Gratz grew up in the Methodist Episcopal congregation started by her great-great-grandfather, Samuel Hall, around 1833.

That congregation merged in 1938 with the Methodist Protestant congregation where her future husband was a member, and it eventually became Gilboa United Methodist Church. "Methodist Protestant Church" is still spelled out in the stained glass above the main entrance.

Thelma continues to worship at Gilboa, where I met her one Sunday morning last September. Her sons are members, too.

Other long-timers include Dorthea Wilkinson, 78, and her brother, Wayne Hector, 70. "I used to sit up in the balcony and count ladies' hats," Dorthea told me. Now she helps run the Chapel Belles, which raised money for an elevator in the church by serving meals every Friday.

Some rural churches, especially those lacking younger members, are slowly dying. But Gilboa United Methodist Church isn't one of them.

Its members recognized that if they wanted strong pastoral leadership, fulfilling worship and better mission opportunities, a change had to be made. So when the denomination's West Ohio Conference offered them the chance to join the Leipsic Multi-Site Parish – now a network of five congregations – they agreed.

And most have found the arrangement to their liking,

especially the opportunity to enjoy the various preaching styles of the parish's four pastors. "I think it's great," Dorthea said. "In fact, I don't know if the church could survive if we weren't in a parish. It would be tough."

Unfortunately, as we've learned while gathering information for United Methodist News Service, "tough" describes the situation that a number of rural churches find themselves in. The United Methodist Church needs to offer resources and develop new models, like the multi-site parish concept, to assist them.

But the real key to survival, those involved in rural ministries tell us, lies within the congregations themselves and their ability to look outward rather than inward.

It's a matter of maintaining vitality, rural expert Bill Kemp told me. "As soon as the rural church fails to connect with its community, that church loses its vitality." □

— Linda Bloom has been a New York-based news writer for United Methodist News Service since 1988.

Bring back the altar calls

Igrew up in a country Methodist church where altar calls were held quite frequently. Today, altar calls seem to take a backseat to other activities in United Methodist churches. The reason offered is that we really don't understand the importance of coming forward to accept Jesus as our personal savior.

The United Methodist Church in my judgment is a lukewarm church, where you can meet with neighbors and friends for fellowship and comfort on Sunday morning. I am neither a preacher nor an evangelist, but a layman who has spent many hours studying God's Word. I believe that the chancel rail in the front of the church is a valuable piece of furniture that has three important functions:

1. It becomes a table when we sup with Jesus in remembrance of him.
2. It becomes a holy place when we come to accept Jesus as our personal savior. The public altar is a place where you forgive your neighbor (Matthew 6:14-15) and repent of your sins and accept Jesus as your personal savior.
3. It becomes a place to repent when we backslide. There is no one I know of that after being saved hasn't backslid. By coming back to the altar and repenting, you can clean the slate once again. Remember we are not coming this time to accept Jesus, because we did that in Step 2 above. See Matthew 18:21-22 for number of times we can repent.

I am very saddened when I hear a preacher make an altar call and say “come up with whatever is on your mind.” There shouldn’t be any question why we are going forward and that is to either accept Jesus or to repent of our sin.

The United Methodist *Book of Discipline* does not address altar calls. I would like to see this added into the *Discipline* so preachers are consistent how and why we have altar calls. We will then become like the Church of Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7) and be more spiritual, instead of just a gathering place on Sunday morning. □

– Kenneth W. Cullers, member of Page UMC in Luray

Members of Luray UMC also partner with local school

After reading the February *Advocate* (on Church & School Partnerships), I would like you to know that our church is also involved with school children.

Seven years ago, Win Jennings and Sue Raeburn began the “I Can Club,” a ministry of Luray United Methodist Church. Its purpose continues to be helping underachieving children in kindergarten and first grade who are recommended by the teachers at Luray Elementary School. These children are brought to the church by bus on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Volunteers work with them from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. They are provided a snack and a Bible story is read, followed by a craft that is usually related to the story. (For example, the child is given a star to decorate after the story of the Three Wise Men.)

Activities deal with the areas where progress is needed. Games are used for letter and word recognition, as well as movement and physical activity, while keeping the focus on learning and having fun. □

– Lena W. Bish, Luray

Retired pastor points out advantages of living in a retirement community

In a brief period of time, the Virginia Annual Conference will authorize retirement of approximately 40 pastors. Many will continue to live in self-owned houses with appointment-provided rental funds instead of a church-owned parsonage. Others will move to houses bought earlier. Still others will buy or rent houses near retirement time.

Worthy of serious consideration as an alternative is one of the communities of Virginia United Methodist Homes, Inc., where comfortable housing and caring services are provided on a monthly lease plan.

All of the communities except Cedarfield and WindsorMead have offered monthly lease plans for five years. This means no entrance fees. This major financial change is yet to be known by a majority of our United Methodist laity and pastors.

At present, the Roanoke United Methodist Home has studio apartments and one- and two-bedroom apartments for assisted living. Newly remodeled two-bedroom apartments for independent living are also available. All may be occupied on monthly leases.

These facilities are available before or following Annual Conference. Your Roanoke home is just two miles from the Annual Conference site, at 460 Melrose Ave. Come and visit us.

For more information, contact Helen Burnett, director of Marketing, 1009 Old Country Club Road, Roanoke, VA 24017. You can phone her at (540) 767-6815 or e-mail <hburnett@vumh.org>. □

– The Rev. Warner C. (retired) and Martha Crumb, Roanoke

Not all retired bishops agree on ordination of gays issue

This is my response to (United Methodist News Service reporter) Heather Hahn’s article in the March *Virginia Advocate* [“Retired bishops call for lifting ban against ordination of gays,” p.18].

Please note that there are over 80 retired bishops and only 36 signed the statement. Isn’t it good that God does not expect all of us to agree on what God thinks? I do not agree that the church should remove Paragraph 304.3 from *The Book of Discipline*. This paragraph deals with “avowed practicing” homosexuality by clergy, not how we treat those with homosexual tendencies. There are many non-practicing homosexual clergy in our church, and I do not want to downplay their commitments and sacrifices that they make in order to be loyal to Christ and His Church.

The *Advocate* is doing a great job and we certainly enjoy keeping up with Virginia Methodism. God bless! □

– Bishop Tom Stockton, former episcopal leader of the Virginia Conference, currently serves in retirement as Bishop in Residence at High Point University in North Carolina

A note of thanks and clarification from Judy Bennett

Thanks for running the recent photo and article about the Lifetime Achievement Award given to me by The Resource Center at its annual banquet [Feb. 2011 *Virginia Advocate*, pg. 30]. One small correction: The award was not for service to The Resource Center, it was for lifetime achievement in Christian education. In a time when the economy too often forces congregations to make difficult choices, but also a time when we are realizing anew the critical role of Christian education/formation and the need for lifelong learning, I think it’s worth noting when Christian education is honored. □

– The Rev. Judy Bennett, executive director of The Resource Center, an ecumenical agency providing educational resources for local churches and faith communities, including those in the Virginia Conference.

Clergy & Diaconal

(Continued from pg. 23)

Linda Cooper Shewey, mother of Kasey White and mother-in-law of the Rev. Christian S. White Jr., died April 5, 2011. Christian is a deacon in full connection currently on transitional leave living in Alexandria.

CORRECTIONS

• Information regarding the family of the **Rev. Joseph T. Carson Jr.**, who died March 15, was incorrectly stated and inadvertently omitted in the death notice sent out via UrgentNet, ClergyNet and the Richmond District Prayer Chain, and thus also in the April issue of the *Virginia United Methodist Advocate* monthly news-magazine.

Please note the following corrections and additions:

The Rev. Joseph Thomas Carson Jr. is survived by his wife, Bernice Smith Carson; his son, the Rev. Joe Carson III; his daughter, Bernice Ann C. Jones; four grandchildren; and a brother, the Rev. Louis E. Carson.

Joe Carson Sr. died in 1960 and was a lifelong member of, then, Mount Olivet Methodist Church in Campbell County, Va. He was not a clergy member of the Virginia Annual Conference as has been reported.

• **Thelma H. Goodpasture**, who died March 9, 2011, was not only the mother and mother-in-law of two Virginia Conference pastors (pg. 30, April 2011 *Virginia Advocate*), but she also was the widow of the Rev. M.G. Goodpasture Jr.

Births

Robert Matthew Segovia-Valentine was born March 18, 2011. Robert is the son of Lori and the Rev. Gustavo Segovia. Gustavo is pastor of Hispanos Unidos and Wesley Memorial UMC in Christiansburg.

Pastor co-authors book on prayer

The Rev. Kathleene Card has co-authored a new book on prayer.

Pray. Act. Pray Again. A 40-Day Walk with God presents personalized versions of familiar prayers from Scriptures, with commentary on the actions these prayers can instigate in the life of the person doing the praying.

The book contains 40 prayers found in Psalms, the Gospels and the Epistles, all changed to first person voice. They will help the believer respond personally to God's call to prayer. The 40 prayers can be used Monday through Saturday, and there is a special Sabbath prayer based on the 23rd Psalm to be used on Sundays. Each prayer has a brief commentary to provide context for the prayer, as well as for the actions that might result from the prayer.

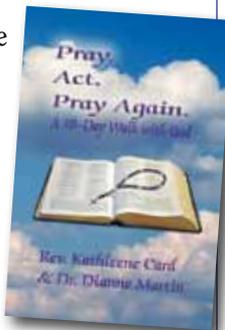
The authors' approach is the "power of personalized prayer" with an emphasis on building a daily cycle of connecting to Christ. They point to C.S. Lewis' understanding that prayer is also an action requiring an intentional response. There are morning prayers adapted from Scripture followed by brief reflective messages, and space for personal reflection. They invite the reader to respond again as a follow-up to the day's reading and prayer.

Pray. Act. Pray Again. is designed to be a private devotional book but can be used for a group prayer study.

Card is an elder serving Chesterbrook UMC in McLean.

Co-author Dr. Dianne Martin is a computer science professor and associate vice president at George Washington University.

For details on the book, visit <www.strategicpublishinggroup.com/title/PrayActPrayAgain.html>. □



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Bishop shares spiritual mentor's insights on effective leadership



Charlene Payne Kammerer
Bishop of the
Virginia Conference

Having read Edwin Friedman's book *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*, I would like to offer some of his assertions for our consideration.

We can learn from Friedman, a rabbi and a therapist. His work has helped countless United Methodist congregations as they seek to be more whole as communities of faith.

"Significant change in any organization (i.e. congregation, conference) is best accomplished by a well-differentiated leader." That means someone who is charting your own way by your own internal and spiritual guidance system, rather than perpetually eyeing the field to see where others are.

"Someone who can be separate while still remaining connected, and can maintain a modifying, non-anxious and sometimes challenging presence." That means someone who can manage their own response to the reactivity of others, and be able to take stands at the risk of displeasing.

"People in places of responsibility should exert more energy in changing oneself than in fixing others." That means a leader's job is self-understanding rather than understanding data and improving technique.

Finally, Friedman encourages all leaders to "develop a support system outside of the work system; stay focused on long-term goals; practice deep breathing, prayer, or meditation; listen to your body; and keep the system loose through humor."

I have much to learn and am grateful for insights supplied over time by this amazing teacher and mentor for so many generations of spiritual leaders.

Blessings on you as you seek to be a more effective leader, a more disciplined follower of Christ, ready to transform the world!

Grace and Peace,

Charlene Kammerer

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The *Virginia Advocate* is published once a month. The deadline to submit news and ad copy for the June 2011 issue is May 2. 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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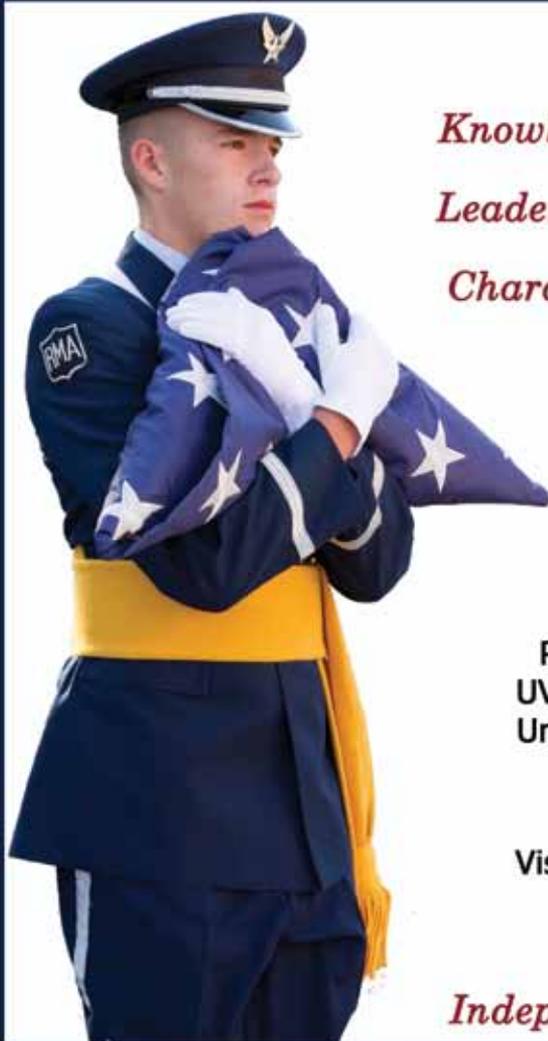
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