

# Advocate





# FROM THE EDITOR



Neill Caldwell  
Editor

Take time to  
be holy



**We forget that John Wesley inherited the Holy Club** and the idea of regular class meetings.

This idea actually started while Wesley was finishing his two-year stint leading the Wroote Church, which was one of the parishes on his father Samuel's multi-point charge in Epworth, England. You see, John was much more comfortable in what we would today call the "academic setting." He loved learning and books, and loved Oxford. He spent 15 years at the college, not because he had difficulty getting out, but because he kept finding new courses that he wanted to take.

Wesley was brilliant, able to speak eight languages and to write and do grammar in five. He blossomed in the educational setting of one of the finest universities in the world. But he was also an ordained priest in the Church of England, and his father insisted that he spend some time as a parish preacher.

So John went to Wroote, and it was not a happy experiment. Wesley decided he was not cut out for the parish life. In fact, he wrote that he "had almost lost my soul" the experience was so bad. So when his father later had a stroke and wrote to "Johnny" to come and take over his Epworth ministry, John responded with his "26 reasons why I should not come" letter.

The point is that Wesley came back to Oxford, to Lincoln College to be specific, hungry for spiritual renewal. The Holy Club, started by brother Charles and others, provided rich food for his soul. The group met daily for conversation, Bible study and discussion, and most of all to hold one another accountable in their daily walk with God. Their strict daily regimen – their "method" of living – was the subject of taunts from other students; it's where the label "Methodist" comes from. But it was right down John Wesley's alley. He had amazing personal discipline for such things. It wasn't long after John's return that the others asked him to take charge of the Holy Club.

Later, when Wesley began his "field preaching" and traveling to towns across the lands to preach, he encouraged his listeners to organize their own class meetings – small groups or "Societies" – patterned after the Holy Club. Those early class meetings were, above all, a means of grace, as grace is the engine of authentic Christian discipleship. And the network of these groups that was formed was the root of today's 100 worldwide Methodist and Wesleyan denominations.

Our United Methodist Church's Mission Statement talks about our aim of "making disciples" – which is very important – but goes on to include "for the transformation of the world." How do we transform the world if we ourselves are not transformed? And how do we do that? We ought to be bound together with other like-minded Christians and watch over one another in love. And we should remember the General Rule of Discipleship: "To witness to Jesus Christ in the world and to follow his teachings through acts of compassion, justice, worship and devotion under the guidance of the Holy Spirit."

Neill Caldwell

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### Letters

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

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On the cover: John Wesley stands on a chair while preaching to the public gallery. Engraving from Selections from the Journal of John Wesley, 1891



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## Passionate about Mission Evangelism

I was commissioned a mission evangelist at the Order of the Flame Conference at St. Simons Island, Ga., in April. *The Order of the Flame* is a training ministry of World Methodist Evangelism, based at Hermitage UMC, just outside Nashville. World Methodist Evangelism is a part of the World Methodist Council, with its international office at Lake Junaluska, N.C.

The training I attended was an intensive with 14-hour days beginning with communion at the chapel at 7:15 a.m. and concluding with preaching and worship at 9 p.m. And I must say I enjoyed every minute of it. After having attended so many events where the subject of decline was the focus, it was refreshing and encouraging to hear of the rapid growth of Methodism around the world. According to World Methodist Evangelism, Methodism has increased by one million for 15 consecutive years outside the USA. We heard

testimony after testimony of John Wesley era-like growth.

My questions are: how is this growth happening and is it possible for the same type of growth to occur in my congregation and in the Virginia Conference?

Bishop Mike Watson, of the North Georgia Conference and president of World Methodist Evangelism, came and sat with me during five of the meals served in the cafeteria. He shared with me that World Methodist Evangelism teaches committed disciples of Jesus how to actively share their faith. As a result of disciples sharing their faith, one million new disciples are being made around the world each year. I asked Bishop Watson what he expected of the pastors who are commissioned as mission evangelists. He said he expected them to be mission evangelists and teach their congregations how to share their faith.

While a high view of scripture was presented at this conference, they

are not fundamentalist. Although the gifts of the Spirit were taught as a normal part of the disciple's life, they are not denominationally Pentecostal in that speaking in tongues is not the initial sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but rather being born again is when the baptism of the Holy Spirit happens. Sharing the faith happens through intentionally building relationships, not through aggressive scare tactics or putting pressure on people.

Ultimately I conclude that all six of the Wesley/Methodist movement groups present – African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal, Church of the Nazarene, Free Methodist, United Methodist and Wesleyan – lined up well with our Articles of Religion.

I am thankful to Bishop Cho for nominating me to attend the Order of the Flame Institute and will take seriously my commission as a mission evangelist. I am willing and able to serve as the Bishop and Cabinet direct.

To learn more about World Methodist Evangelism, visit [www.worldmethodist.org/wmcmmain.htm](http://www.worldmethodist.org/wmcmmain.htm).

-The Rev. Dr. Stan Thompson is pastor at Crenshaw UMC, Blackstone.

## Beautiful work on Sierra Leone pages

I want to extend my compliments for your design work in the April *Advocate* – particularly the “Sierra Leone Scrapbook” spreads. I think that was a great collection of design solutions for displaying an eclectic mix of content in limited space.

-Emily Elgin, Creative Director at Christ Church, Alexandria District

## Thank you for highlighting mission

As a former missionary who spent 11 years working primarily with the Aymara Indians in the Andes mountains of Bolivia, I want to thank you for the

excellent April issue of the *Advocate*!

The reports of the mission teams reaching out to serve in other countries, the story of the Wesley Center's continuing mission in Portsmouth, the informative letter of Kip and Nancy Robinson from Sierra Leone, the notes about some of our other missionaries from Virginia, the amazing report from Marg Kutz about her trip to south Sudan (it didn't sound like she really retired last June!) were all a great inspiration. What a joy to see that all across our conference young and old responding to God's call and reaching out to share the good news of our risen Lord!

Bishop Cho's message is to be considered by all of our churches. He is indeed leading us to a spiritual renewal that will make the “Great Commission” the mission of every church.

Thank you for keeping us informed and inspired.

-The Rev. Bob McAden, Roanoke

## I was inspired to step up for Lent

I am writing to let you know how your article in the March *Advocate* inspired me.

I read your list about ways we can step up during Lent rather than give up.

International mission trips seem to be the best way for me to “step up” for

others and to experience spiritual renewal. This year because of life circumstances, I am not able to do an UMWIM trip. So I began looking for ways I could do mission at home.

As I read your list of ways to add rather than give up for Lent, I was intrigued by the words “personal service project.” My first thought was what project can I do. I had doubts, but to my surprise and delight, God has provided ways for me to do a different project each week.

-The Rev. Kaye Seay is the pastor at Claremont UMC, James River District

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

The Rev. Dr. Stan Thompson, second from left, at a dinner during the Order of the Flame Conference at St. Simons Island, Ga. Bishop Mike Watson is third from right.



## To all moms,

Thanks for being champions in your children's lives!

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# COMMENTARY



May 4 is  
Native  
American  
Ministries  
Sunday

Medical staff returning from a  
house call on the  
Mattaponi Reservation.



## Virginia holds Great Spirit's lost children

By Angela Daniel

"Why can't we be Indian?"  
– John Black Feather, 2009

How many American Indians do you think there are today in Virginia? 100? 300? Guess again. Recent census count totaled more than 20,000 American Indians registered as living in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Many think of Native people of Virginia as being the "other people," not ourselves. But it may be that there are Native people in your own congregation and possibly you, yourself, have Native ancestry. My position is that anyone who has Native ancestry has the right to claim their Native heritage and his/her identity today.

For too long, American Indians in the east have

had to hide their identity. Virginia Indians could not by law claim Indian identity. Underneath most of the Native life stories, narratives, and recalled memories, is the statement, "We could not be Indians; we could not be who we are." They were denied their Indian identity.

These sentiments are not solely in the past; they exist in the present, here and now. They exist in all types of persons with varying degrees of acceptance regarding their Native ancestry.

Today there are 11 state-recognized tribes in Virginia. There are two reservations: the Mattaponi and the Pamunkey. These are two of the oldest reservations in the nation, dating back to 1600s. To date, the federal government does not recognize the existence of any Native people in Virginia. Unlike many western tribes, Virginia Indians have no federal benefits and receive no federal health care.

Established in 1998, the Mattaponi Healing Eagle Clinic was the dream of the late Mattaponi Chief Webster "Little Eagle" Custalow, who died at the age of 90 in 2003. His son, Emeritus Chief Carl "Lone Eagle," is dedicated to the preservation of this health clinic. Everyone involved – doctors, nurses, staff – are volunteers. The clinic opened with one patient, and today the roster represents more than 500

patients with an estimated 16 tribes represented. For many, the clinic is their only medical resource.

Some United Methodist church members, such as Dot "Sparkling Water" Daniel, have been by our side for years. Dot gives informative public talks on behalf of the clinic to churches and groups. Again and again, United Methodist church members have stepped forward to fill our needs with donated supplies, equipment, helping hands and staff lunches. Without the support of United Methodist churches over the years, the clinic likely would not have survived. Thank you for your partnership in healing Native people.

During the segregation era, the state of Virginia maintained a school for both the Pamunkey and Mattaponi children on the Mattaponi Reservation. Renovation of the historic Mattaponi-Pamunkey Indian Reservation School has been an ongoing project for almost eight years. The building is currently used as the tribal community center, as well as the site for the Mattaponi Healing Eagle Clinic. The final stage of work today targets the completion of the schoolroom wing. Replacing exterior siding, which was heavily damaged in a hurricane two years ago, is the next major project. Volunteers directed by the Building

Goodness Foundation are doing the repair work.

I am president of a nonprofit, The Foundation for American Heritage Voices (AHV). Our mission is to promote Native identity, culture, and improve the well being of this nation's most underserved people. AHV supports the expression of Native history and culture, individual medical assistance through its Healing Spirit Fund at West Point Pharmacy, educational needs, and various Native requests.

For example, AHV was able to provide five scholarships to Native youth this semester. In

supporting these types of projects, you are preserving Native culture. You are taking an active role in healing the trauma of a denied Native identity.

Having an American Indian Sunday, inviting Native speakers, is part of the process of recognition and the restoration of denied identity. One day, that restoration of Native identity may impact all of the Great Spirit's children and help them find their way home to their Native heritage. 🍀

-Angela "Silver Star" Daniel is a member of Wellspring UMC. Learn more about AHV at [www.americanheritagevoices.com](http://www.americanheritagevoices.com).

# COMMENTARY

**It's an uphill battle, but we have help.**

With your generosity, the mortgage owed on the Pennel and Activity Buildings at the **Henry Fork Service Center** is under \$100,000. If every United Methodist Church in the Virginia Conference gives \$100, we'll pay off the mortgage on the new buildings in 2014.

Please send your contribution to:  
P.O. Box 888  
Rocky Mount, VA 24151  
with "Pay off the Mortgage" on the memo line.

**Thank you for giving us a foothold.**

Artwork by Edgar Pichardo, a 4th grader at the HFSC Afterschool program

[www.bethpagecamp.com](http://www.bethpagecamp.com)

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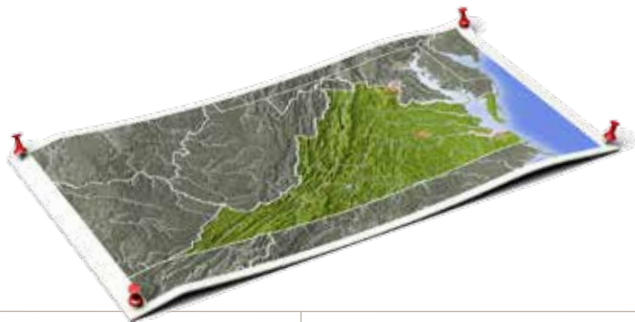
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# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



## Mural restoration at FUMC Charlottesville brings vibrant colors alive

By Neill Caldwell

The restored mural in the sanctuary of First UMC is a reproduction of *The Transfiguration* by Raphael.

Members and guests are enjoying a new and exciting view

of Anna Payne Quarles' 1930 oil-on-canvas reproduction of Raphael's *Transfiguration*, which adorns the chancel wall of First United Methodist Church's 85-year-old sanctuary in downtown Charlottesville. That's thanks to a three-month restoration project by art restorer Stephanie Newman of Lapham

and Newman Art Restoration completed a couple of months ago. The giant (16-foot tall) image depicts Jesus on a mountaintop being "transfigured" with Moses and Elijah. According to Scripture, Peter wanted to build three booths and remain there to worship his Lord. At the bottom of the painting another biblical story is recalled, that of a young boy in need of healing. Instead of remaining on the mountain, Jesus leads his disciples down to the place where the boy is waiting, and ultimately where he is healed by Jesus.

Senior pastor, the Rev. Al Horton, says the reproduction serves as a tribute to the 16th century masterpiece by Raphael, which is now part of the art collection at the Vatican, but also serves as a statement about the congregation's vision for current and future ministry.

"The meaning is clear enough," Horton says. "Jesus is worthy of adoration, but worship must be accompanied by compassion for the world, a guiding principle of First's 180-year-old congregation. That's why the church serves weekly lunches to the homeless and feeds thousands of families every week through the 'Loaves and Fishes' food pantry it began a number of years ago. That's why the church helps provide shelter through the Charlottesville area's PACEM (People and Congregations Engaged in



Stephanie Newman of Lapham and Newman Art restoration.

Ministry) interfaith shelter ministry, and why every year mission teams are sent to such far-off places as Haiti, Lithuania and Appalachia to help build an orphanage, lead children's programs, repair homes and build relationships.

"Every time people enter the sanctuary of First United Methodist Church," Horton adds, "their gaze is directed upward in worship toward the Christ who in turn leads them down the hill into ministry with their neighbors in need."

Newman said the first challenge in restoring the mural was to determine the scope of the project. "Was it a cleaning job?" she said, "which would have meant that I would get in and out in a month. Or did I need to look toward the 1970s restoration of the original painting, which would triple my time at the church."

Normally Newman approaches a job by first removing the varnish from a painting. So the first discovery was a surprise: there

was no varnish on the mural. In fact, there was nothing there to protect the mural from decades of dust and light.

So that meant Newman would go with option two – repainting Quarles' mural with a much more vibrant color palette, "but in her style as best I could," Newman said. "It was a little like someone had given me a sketch and I was putting on the color."

Did she worry that church members might react negatively to the bright colors so different from what they were used to?

"At first I was nervous, especially because I started at top with the sky and it was so much bluer than before. But no one said 'that looks terrible,' so I kept going. In fact they sounded very happy."

It was said that Quarles worked from a print that was the size of a postcard, or a small print you might purchase in a gift shop. The original Raphael masterpiece is not large, only the typical size that would rest on an easel. To transfer this to a 30-foot mural must have been extraordinarily difficult.

"There are places near the top where she had 'mis-read' the image, my husband noticed," said Newman, who was diagnosed with breast cancer during the restoration and turned the last 10 percent of the work over to her husband, local artist William Lapham.

The choice of paint was

also a surprise. Apparently Quarles used regular house paint, which makes sense in a way. "Charlottesville in 1929/1930 was not exactly crawling with art supply stores," said Newman.

"Whatever it was, it was not (artist) oils. The reds had gone to pink. Oil paint tends to darken."

It is said that Quarles created the painting in memory of her father and a brother who had been killed in action in France during World War I.

Newman said she learned a little about the artist in carefully going over those original brush strokes. "She clearly had a rhythm to the way she did things," Newman said. "She must have been a vivacious person to even think 'I'm going to paint a Raphael in my garage and put it up on the most prominent wall of my church.'"

And Newman said the best part of the project was getting to know the community at First UMC during her three months of working on the mural

The mural was not the only thing to be re-done at the church. The \$1 million project included new paint and refinished hardwood floors, flat screen TVs in the classrooms, projection screens and a new sound system.

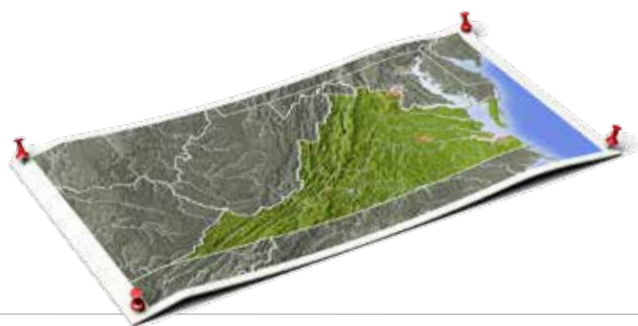
-Neill Caldwell is editor of the Advocate

The mural restoration at First UMC Charlottesville in progress.





# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



## Virginia teams continue to help Sandy victims in New York


By Neill Caldwell

**B**ROOKLYN, N.Y. – Stanton Road. As “roads” go, it’s little more than an alley, and a narrow one at that. And because it’s four feet below the surrounding street level, it acted as a bowl to catch 10 feet of water when Superstorm Sandy pushed the Atlantic Ocean – just a block away – up into the neighborhood. That meant that the storm surge flooded the houses on Stanton Road to a level just above the front doors, a disaster that left the unlucky residents here with total losses of everything they had. Neighbors on the

surrounding, higher streets got out with flooded basements. Hurricane Sandy was responsible for 117 deaths in the U.S., including 53 in New York. Sandy made landfall here – on the coastline of the New York City borough of Brooklyn, specifically the Sheepshead Bay neighborhood, a short distance from Coney Island – Oct. 29, 2012. A year and a half later, work teams are still coming into the area to rebuild homes. Many of them are from Virginia. “After Sandy, one of the first teams that came to Brooklyn to help us in our hour of need was from Virginia, Galilee UMC, and they worked from the time they got here to the time

they left!” says Gillian Price, the Brooklyn site coordinator for the New York Annual Conference’s Sandy Recovery Team. “After that, most of the volunteers teams that came were from, and still are from, Virginia.” “The Virginia teams bring with them a willingness to work,” adds Price. “They bring their time, talents and resources to help us. There is no project too big or too little for them. Their skill level is amazing, from the young to the old, clergy to laity. ... I stand in marvelous wonder at them.” On this day a United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) team from churches in the York River District is wrapping up a week of work on two houses that are across the street from each other. Both houses were a total loss and were taken “back to the studs” for what’s basically a do-over: new walls, floors, doors and windows, drywall, electrical lines, everything. There was also work done during the week at two other homes. One was the home of an elderly couple, ages 90 and 87. “Rev. Susanne (Gibson) and I demolished the bathroom,” said Nancy Yarborough. “We tore out walls, floors and concrete. They were quite surprised that two women could do all of that.” The fourth home was nearby, on Coney Island. “This was one of the

greatest weeks of my life knowing we were helping four different families in various areas of Brooklyn,” said Yarborough, who is from First UMC Newport News. “We were blessed to meet the ones we were helping, and that was icing on the cake.” The week before, more than 40 students from the Wesley Foundation at Virginia Tech were here working on the same houses. “That team had done a tremendous job in rebuilding the back sections of the two homes,” said York River District team leader the Rev. David Magruder, pastor of the West Matthews Charge. “We were then able to complete the roofing, including shingles, to close in the back areas of the homes. We were also able to put in the exterior doors and erect the interior walls for the kitchen and bathroom areas of both homes.” The home owner, a New York City cop and Vietnam War vet, is beyond appreciative. They’ve brought food with a definite New York flair: bagels, pasta, cheese-cake. Sheepshead Bay is a 30-minute ride on the B or Q subway lines from the skyscrapers and bright lights of Manhattan, very much a blue collar neighborhood. Most of the Virginia teams have stayed at The Bethany House, part of Brooklyn UMC’s outreach ministry. “Our host church, St. Mark’s UMC, also provided a guide, a host and a wonder-

ful Christian to be a lay servant for us during our stay,” said Magruder. “Regardless of how hard we tried to learn of his complete name, he repeatedly told us his name is simply ‘Bruno.’ What a blessing it was to be with him, and we feel he became a part of our team.” “At the end of the week, it was difficult for us to leave,” Magruder added. “While we were happy with the work that was accomplished with God’s help and guidance, we felt that there is still so much more that needs to be done. We have faith, however, that God will lead other volunteers to this community to complete the work that remains. From our experience and visit there we recognize that there is a great deal of work to follow.” “As one of our team members summed it up, ‘We worked hard, played hard, laughed a lot and Praised God!’” “Don’t let anyone ever tell you that nine dedicated, die-hard people can’t make a difference in a week because they can and did,” added Yarborough. “The need is very real and more teams are needed. Just do it; God will bless you.” You can also help UMCOR with its continuing ministry to Hurricane Sandy victims from right where you are by giving to U.S. Disaster Response, UMCOR Advance #901670. 

-Neill Caldwell is editor of the Advocate.

# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Above, the Rev. David Magruder gathers lumber for home repair in Brooklyn. Teams from Virginia continue to make the trip to do Sandy relief work. Bottom, Nancy Yarborough and the Rev. Mike Harrington.



Superstorm Sandy’s storm surge was 10 feet high on Stanton Road, meaning these houses were flooded to the top of their front doors. Photos by Neill Caldwell





# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



## Youths from three districts come together for retreat

By Jason Stanley

Nestled among the snow-capped mountains of Lynchburg, 364 youths and adults from Farmville, Danville and Lynchburg districts came together for a unique youth retreat experience, "Fusion 14," at Eagle Eyrie retreat center.

Under the leadership of some amazing students from all three district youth councils, the participants not only worshipped together, but also served together. They heard from representatives from three keynote mission organizations from each district – FACES (Farmville), Henry Fork (Danville), and Park View Community Mission (Lynchburg). Youth groups brought with them to the retreat new

Youth and adult leaders examine one of the prayer stations set up for the retreat.



Amy Valdez Barker, executive secretary of the denomination's Common Table, speaks to the youth.

and gently used stuffed animals. These animals were each tagged with a note communicating the unconditional love of Jesus Christ. These animals, being donated to Gleaning for the World's Teddy Bear Brigade, will go to children in natural disasters, reminding them of God's love for them.

Through various fundraisers throughout the weekend, \$1507.68 was raised and donated to the above mentioned mission organizations.

In addition, youths and adults, through generous grants from the Farmville, Danville and Lynchburg districts, participated in a *Stop Hunger Now* meal-packing event. Decked out in hairnets and food service gloves, participants funneled dehydrated rice/soy meal, fortified with 21 essential vitamins, into bags that are sealed shut. These nutritiously sound meals will be distributed to

developing countries where one in three people suffer from vitamin and mineral deficiencies. In a span of a few hours, 21,700 meals were packaged.

Youths and adults also participated in prayer stations. The stations, inspired by Bishop Cho's initiative on prayer, were designed and set up by student leaders. Retreat participants had the opportunity to be in prayer for mission work, peace, healing, reconciliation and social justice issues.

Through these combined experiences of worship, small groups, prayer stations and mission activities, youths and adults encountered the Christ who calls us to let our little lights shine by being God's light and making a positive impact in our own districts and around the world.

-The Rev. Jason Stanley is an ordained deacon serving as minister of Youth and Education at Peakland UMC



# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

## Virginia Tech Wesley students host Roanoke District mission weekend

In late March, 93 youths and 34 adult leader mission teams from the Roanoke District traveled to Wesley Campus Ministries at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg. Though weekend rain threatened to dampen projects, everything turned out great. Sites included the Giles County Mission, Christiansburg, the YMCA, homes and churches. The numerous service projects helped mission workers apply what serving "with" others meant, as well as the Virginia Tech Wesley motto of "Love Out Loud."

On two nights, services at Tech's campus ministries facility were uplifting promises of what it means "to love your neighbor as yourself."

Thanks to the generos-

ity of Fieldstone UMC in Christiansburg, the mission teams were able to camp out in the plentiful space at the church for the weekend and attend both worship services there on Sunday.

The biggest thank you goes out to the 70 Virginia Tech students who, with their terrific leader, the Rev. Bret Gresham, organized and led this mission weekend. We also offer love out loud to 30,000 students on the Virginia Tech campus.

A recent addition to the campus ministry is a food pantry at the Wesley building, located at 209 W. Roanoke St., for struggling students who don't have enough food. Donations of canned goods and money are always welcome.



Thanks also to Roanoke District Youth Director Tim Craft, of Bonsack UMC, for his hard work to get this mission accomplished and to all of the youth leaders and adults who donated a weekend of their lives to attend with their church youths in this endeavor. Mission teams came from Botetourt County, Montgomery County, Christiansburg, Roanoke County, Salem, Vinton and Roanoke City.

For more information about Wesley Campus Ministries, visit [www.wesley.org.vt.edu/wp](http://www.wesley.org.vt.edu/wp) or e-mail [wesfound@vt.edu](mailto:wesfound@vt.edu).

-Julia Ewen is a youth member at Fincastle UMC

## Charlottesville District youths focus on mission activities at retreat

The annual Charlottesville District Youth Retreat was held at Westview on the James. The guest speaker was Tim Dayton from REACH in Roanoke. The Youth Praise Band from Aldersgate UMC and the UVA Wesley Foundation Troupe provided the music. Steve Jennings from Teens Opposing Poverty (TOP) joined us on Saturday and provided an update on that ministry.

We collected several boxes of children's books for REACH, 1,740 Campbell Soup labels for the Henry Fork Service Center in Rocky Mount and numerous bags of assorted toiletries for TOP. In addition, we packaged 18,022 meals for *Stop Hunger Now* – the most meals we've ever packaged! Those meals have been shipped to *Stop Hunger Now's* in-country partner, *Alliance*

for Children Everywhere, in Zambia.

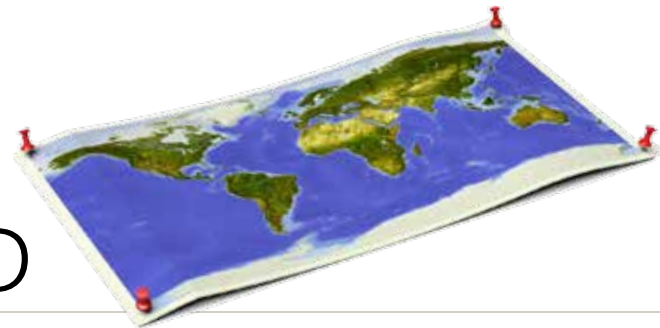
We also hosted a new outreach project: *Project Linus*, a non-profit organization which provides homemade blankets to children in need. We completed 60 blankets and colored enough squares for 10 more.

In addition to all of these activities, there was good food, fellowship, games, worship and small

group discussions. Charlottesville District Superintendent Danny Kesner and his wife, Barbara, joined us Saturday afternoon to help package *Stop Hunger Now* meals and stayed for dinner and worship where he led Communion.

- Rebecca Wagner, Charlottesville District Youth coordinator





## Change the World event reaches five-year milestone

United Methodists from across the country and around the world will pull together this month for an event to help Change the World in both large and small ways. For the fifth year, local churches will take on service projects that improve the circumstances of others and spark public interest in volunteer activities.

On Change the World weekend, May 17-18, hundreds of United Methodist churches and thousands of church and community volunteers will deploy to parks, homeless shelters, food pantries, schools, health centers and more, to do what they can to help others. Since 2010, when the global service project began, countless volunteers from the U.S. and countries in Africa and the Philippines have completed more than 14,000 projects.

Churches look forward to Change the World weekend and end up developing projects that are sustainable by incorporating them

into the life of their church and community. First United Methodist Church in Allen, Texas, is coming back for another year and hoping to do 72 projects around their community with 2,000 volunteers.

"Thinking about last year still gives me goose bumps. Working with the Change the World committee strengthened my bond with some wonderful people ... each one of them made incredible contributions!" said David Wuensch, Mission Chair. "As we approach this year's Change the World Weekend, our goal is to develop each of our projects into ongoing projects throughout the year."

"Over the past five years, hundreds of thousands of United Methodists have rolled up their sleeves to take action to help local communities or those around the world," said the Rev. Larry Hollon, chief executive at United Methodist Communications. "Change the World is an occasion to join hands and serve."

Five years ago, the Rev.

Mike Slaughter, United Methodist pastor and author, challenged church leaders to stop worrying about getting people into their church and start finding new ways to move people who are already there into God's service.

With that invitation, United Methodist Communications began an effort to get congregations to move outside the four walls of sanctuaries and Sunday school classrooms to help others on a common weekend. So began the annual Change the World event.

Register your project now at [umcom.org/changetheworld](http://umcom.org/changetheworld). Churches who register their project(s) now can receive a free promotional kit while supplies last. The kit includes sermon starters, a lawn banner, and a Rethink Church t-shirt. After registering for the event, you can submit new details or edit your event anytime at [changetheworld@umcom.org](mailto:changetheworld@umcom.org).

Change the World is part of United Methodist Communications' initiative to Rethink Church, which uses outreach events to encourage churches to make a positive difference in the world beyond church doors and provide opportunities for others to serve as well. 🍌

-United Methodist Communications

If you have not participated in Change the World before, here are some ideas to get you thinking about what you could do:

- Assemble relief-supply kits for the United Methodist Committee on Relief.
- Collect books for an elementary school or a homeless shelter.
- Collect disposable diapers and baby wipes for foster parents.
- Get involved in a prison ministry.
- Have a brownie bake-off, a chili cook-off, a garage sale or a car wash to raise funds.
- Join an ecumenical CROP Walk or Habitat for Humanity build.
- Package meals for Stop Hunger Now.
- Prepare and deliver sandwiches for homeless people.
- Raise awareness of issues such as HIV/AIDS and human trafficking.
- Repair cars for people needing transportation to work.
- Repair homes.
- Sort and bag produce for the Society of St. Andrew.
- Sponsor an American Red Cross blood drive.
- Write letters to members who cannot attend church because of mobility issues.

## Society of St. Andrew sponsors Hunger Ministry Weekend to Change the World

Will your church participate in the United Methodist Change the World weekend? Here is a way to make a difference in your community while deepening your congregation's understanding of need and service.

The Society of St. Andrew offers your church all the guidance and materials it needs to hold a Hunger Ministry Weekend, bringing

fresh fruits and vegetables to worship on Sunday and distributing nutritious food to those agencies in your community that provide food to those most in need, while putting this event in the context of Christian love and service. You may even develop a new ministry for your congregation.

To learn more, visit [www.endhunger.org](http://www.endhunger.org).



Girl Scout at Mt. Olympus Farm in Ruther Glen, Virginia during the 2012 Commonwealth Day of Gleaning

## Alban Institute is closing

By Sarah Pulliam Bailey

As mainline Protestant denominations continue decades of decline, one of the main institutions helping educate its leaders announced in late March that it will shut its doors.

Since it was founded four decades ago, the Virginia-based Alban Institute has guided mostly mainline congregations through consulting and publishing. Its founder and former president, the Rev. Loren Mead, became well-known for his speaking and writing about the future of U.S. denominations and was one of the first to predict denominational decline.

"When I started as a parish pastor, I found there wasn't much help or continuing education," said Mead, a retired Episcopal

priest. "I am glad I have been able to contribute to the church, but I have not been able to solve its turnaround."

Many mainline churches looked to Alban to provide literature and consultants for maintaining their institutional life, on everything from finding a new pastor to strategies for growth and financial health.

But as more publishers and consultants got into the business that Alban paved the way for, the institution found it difficult to continue its niche. Like other nonprofits during the recent recession, it also lost revenue.

"The Alban Institute went through the great recession just like everyone else," said Jim Wind, who retired as president

of Alban earlier this year. "The market got tougher to thrive in."

Alban is in talks with Duke Divinity School to assume assets of an estimated \$300,000 to \$500,000, with the possible creation of an "Alban Endowment Fund." Duke will also acquire Alban's intellectual property and mailing lists.

A letter from the chairman of Alban's board, Case Hoogendoorn, said the changes will allow Alban's mission to continue, "albeit in a different form."

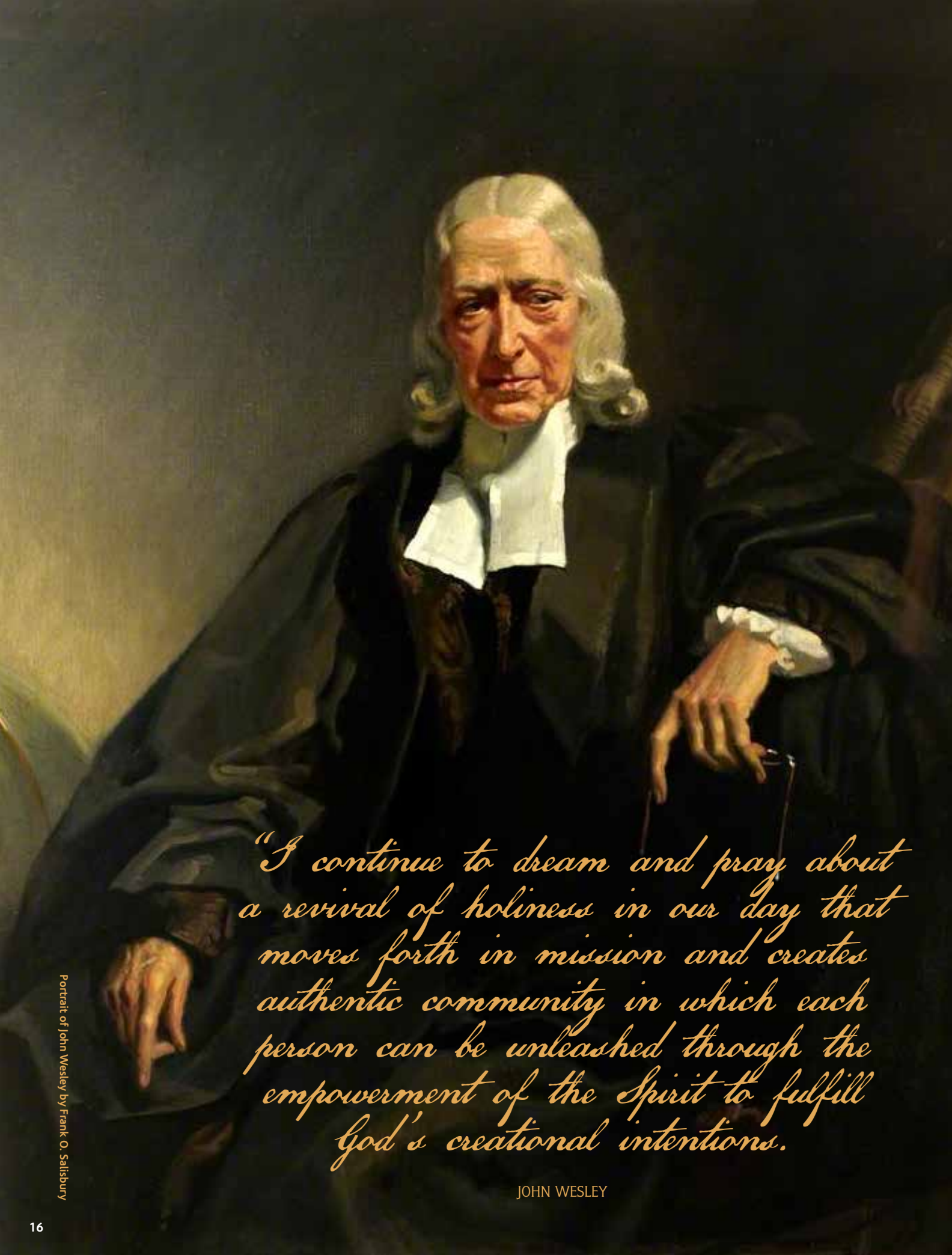
Wind earned more than \$300,000 in 2011, according to Alban's financial filings with the Internal Revenue Service. Some critics have questioned Wind's hefty compensation package.

Alban was sustained largely by money from the Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment. 🍌

-Sarah Pulliam Bailey is a reporter for Religion News Service

# CHANGE THE WORLD





Portrait of John Wesley by Frank O. Salisbury

*"I continue to dream and pray about a revival of holiness in our day that moves forth in mission and creates authentic community in which each person can be unleashed through the empowerment of the Spirit to fulfill God's creational intentions."*

JOHN WESLEY

## THE LIFE OF

# John Wesley

[From Fox's Book of Martyrs]

John Wesley was born on 17 June, 1703, in Epworth rectory, England, the fifteenth of nineteen children of Samuel and Susanna Wesley. The father of Wesley was a preacher, and Wesley's mother was a remarkable woman in wisdom and intelligence. She was a woman of deep piety and brought her little ones into close contact with the Bible stories, telling them from the tiles about the nursery fireplace. She also used to dress the children in their best on the days when they were to have the privilege of learning their alphabet as an introduction to the reading of the Holy Scriptures.

Young Wesley was a gay and manly youth, fond of games and particularly of dancing. At Oxford he was a leader, and during the latter part of his course there, was one of the founders of the "Holy Club," an organization of serious-minded students. His religious nature deepened through study and experience, but it was not until several years after he left the university and came under the influence of Martin Luther's writings that he felt that he had entered into the full riches of the Gospel.

He and his brother, Charles, were sent by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to Georgia, where both of them developed their powers as preachers. Upon their passage they fell into the company of several Moravian brethren, members of the association recently renewed by the labors of Count Zinzendorf. It was noted by John Wesley in his diary that, in a great tempest, when the English people on board lost all self-possession, these Germans impressed him by their composure and entire resignation to God. He also marked their humility under shameful treatment.

It was on his return to England that he entered into those deeper experiences and developed those marvelous powers as a popular preacher which made him a national leader. He was associated at this time also with George Whitefield, the tradition of whose marvelous eloquence has never died.

What he accomplished borders upon the incredible. Upon entering his 85th year he thanked God that he was still almost as vigorous as ever. He ascribed it, under God, to the fact that he had always slept soundly, had risen for 60 years at four o'clock in the morning, and for 50 years had preached every morning at five. Seldom in all his life did he feel any pain, care or anxiety. He preached twice each day, and often thrice or four times. It has been estimated that he traveled every year 4,500 miles, mostly on horseback.

The successes won by Methodist preaching had to be gained through a long series of years, and amid the most bitter persecutions. In nearly every part of England it was met at the first by the mob with stonings and peltings, with attempts at wounding and slaying. Only at times was

there any interference on the part of the civil power. The two Wesleys faced all these dangers with amazing courage, and with a calmness equally astonishing. What was more irritating was the heaping up of slander and abuse by the writers of the day. These books are now all forgotten.

Wesley had been in his youth a high churchman and was always deeply devoted to the Established Communion. When he found it necessary to ordain preachers, the separation of his followers from the established body became inevitable. The name "Methodist" soon attached to them, because of the particular organizing power of their leader and the ingenious methods that he applied.

The Wesley fellowship, which after his death grew into the great Methodist Church, was characterized by an almost military perfection of organization.

The entire management of his ever-growing denomination rested upon Wesley himself. The annual conference, established in 1744, acquired a governing power only after the death of Wesley. Charles Wesley rendered the society a service incalculably great by his hymns. They introduced a new era in the hymnology of the English Church.

Wesley apportioned his days to his work in leading the Church, to studying (for he was an incessant reader), to traveling, and to preaching. He was untiring in his efforts to disseminate useful knowledge throughout his denomination. He planned for the mental culture of his traveling preachers and local exhorters, and for schools of instruction for the future teachers of the Church. He himself prepared books for popular use upon universal history, church history, and natural history. In this Wesley was an apostle of the modern union of mental culture with Christian living. He published also the best matured of his sermons and various theological works. These, both by their depth and their penetration of thought, and by their purity and precision of style, excite our admiration.

Wesley was of short stature, and yet of noble presence. His features were very handsome even in old age. He had an open brow, an eagle nose, a clear eye, and a fresh complexion. His manners were fine, and in choice company with Christian people he enjoyed relaxation. Persistent, laborious love for men's souls, steadfastness and tranquillity of spirit were his most prominent traits of character. Even in doctrinal controversies he exhibited the greatest calmness. He was kind and very liberal. His industry has been named already. In the last 52 years of his life, it is estimated that he preached more than 40,000 sermons.

He died in 1791 after a long life of tireless labor and unselfish service. His fervent spirit and hearty brotherhood still survives in the body that cherishes his name. 🍷

Edited by William Byron Forbush. The original version of "The Book of Martyrs" (1563) by John Fox (1516-1587) was expanded after Fox's death to include John Wesley and others.





## Methodist class meeting can be model for 21st century

By Kevin Watson

The class meeting was started in 1742 when a group of Methodists were trying to figure out how to pay off a building debt in Bristol. Captain Foy suggested that the Bristol Society be divided up into groups of 12 people. One person in each group would be designated the leader and would be responsible for visiting each person in their group every week in order to collect one penny from them. By this means, Foy believed the building debt could be retired.

Someone raised a concern that this would prevent the poorest Methodists from being involved. Captain Foy responded by volunteering to take the 11 poorest members of the Bristol Society into his group. He said that he would visit them each week and ask them if they could contribute. If they were unable, he would pay their penny on their behalf. Then, he challenged the other people at the meeting to do the same thing.

As this plan was put into practice, it became apparent that many Methodists were not keeping the "General Rules," which were: do no harm, do good, and practice the means of grace (i.e., prayer, searching the Scriptures, receiving Communion, etc.). Almost immediately, Wesley realized that the class leaders (who were the ones that had originally committed to make the weekly collection) were ideally suited to address the lack of discipline in keeping

the General Rules amongst Methodists.

**In the "General Rules" Wesley described the duty of the class leader:**

*That it may the more easily be discerned whether they are indeed working out their own salvation, each society is divided into smaller companies, called classes, according to their respective places of abode. There are about twelve persons in a class, one of whom is styled the leader. It is his duty:*

*To see each person in his class once a week at least, in order: (1) to inquire how their souls prosper; (2) to advise, reprove, comfort or exhort, as occasion may require; (3) to receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the preachers, church, and poor.*

*To meet the ministers and the stewards of the society once a week, in order: (1) to inform the minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly and will not be re-proved; (2) to pay the stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding.*

Initially, the class leader met each person at his or her own house. However, it was quickly decided that it would be more practical for the entire class to meet together once a week. Wesley reported in *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists* that at the class meeting, "Advice or reproof was given as need required, quarrels made up, misunderstandings removed: And after an hour or two spent in this labor of love, they concluded with prayer and thanksgiving." (II.6)\*

Wesley further reported on what he believed were the fruits of the class meeting:

*It can scarce be conceived what advantages have been*

*"In using all means, seek God alone. In and through every outward thing, look only to the power of His Spirit, and the merits of His Son. Beware you do not get stuck in the work itself; if you do, it is all lost labor. Nothing short of God can satisfy your soul. Therefore, fix on Him in all, through all, and above all..."*

reaped from this little prudential regulation. Many now happily experienced that Christian fellowship of which they had not so much as an idea before. They began to 'bear one another's burdens,' and naturally to 'care for each other.' As they had daily a more intimate acquaintance with, so they had a more endeared affection for, each other. And 'speaking the truth in love, they grew up into Him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplied, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, increased unto the edifying itself in love.' (Plain Account, II.7)

The class meeting, then, quickly developed into much more than a capital campaign. It became a crucial tool for enabling Methodists to "watch over one another in love," to support and encourage one another in their lives with God. In fact, John Wesley thought the oversight and support that the class meeting provided was so important that it became a requirement for membership in a Methodist society. To be a Methodist meant that you were involved in a weekly class meeting.

**So what happened in these weekly meetings?**

Classes were intended to have between 7 to 12 members in them. They had both women and men in the classes, and class leaders were both women and men. Classes were divided primarily by geographical location. In other words, you would have attended a class meeting with the Methodists in your neighborhood. From what we have seen above, the class meeting seems to have focused on three things. First, it held people accountable to keeping the "General Rules." Second, the class meeting was a place where every Methodist weekly answered the question, "How is it with your soul?" (Methodist historian Scott Kisker has recently rephrased this question as "How is your life in God?") Third, it was a place where Methodists were encouraged to give weekly to the relief of the poor.

The phrase that I believe best captures what the Methodists believed was so important about the class meeting was "watching over one another in love." Early Methodists were asked to invite others into their lives and to be willing to enter deeply into the lives of other people so that together they would grow in grace. They were committed to the idea that the Christian life is a journey of growth in grace, or sanctification. And they believed that they needed one another in order to persevere on this journey. 📖

- Kevin Watson is a professor of Historical Theology and Wesleyan Studies at Seattle Pacific University. He is an ordained elder in the Oklahoma Conference.

## A rule of life

In the Class Meetings, the Methodists "watched over one another in love." Their life together was guided by the *General Rules* given to the United Societies by John Wesley.

The *General Rules* are simply a Methodist rule of life. The *General Rules* guided the Methodists in their corporate life together and in their personal growth in faith and love.

This Methodist rule of life was general because it allowed for the diverse personalities, needs and spiritual maturity of the members of the class meeting. It was a rule because it was a guide to help the Methodists orient their corporate and individual lives toward Christ and his life in the world. It was like a compass that helps keep a traveler on course to his or her destination. For the Methodists, the destination was holiness of heart and life. They were on a journey together guided by their rule of life. Being accountable to and with one another, "watching over one another in love," helped them make progress along the way.

The *General Rules* are very simple:

- 1. Do no harm by avoiding evil of every kind; especially that which is most generally practiced...**
- 2. Do good as often as you can to as many as you can, to their bodies and to their souls ...**
- 3. Practice the means of grace: Private and family prayer; public worship; Bible reading and study; the Lord's Supper; fasting or abstinence.**

This is simple, basic Christianity. The *General Rules* help people grow in faith and love by following the teachings of Jesus Christ as he summarized them in Matthew 22:34-40 and John 13:34-35. They provide a model of balanced and varied discipleship. The rules help disciples keep a balance of what Wesley called "works of piety" (loving God) and "works of mercy" (loving your neighbor as yourself). 📖

-Steve Manskar



*"O that we may all receive of Christ's fullness, grace upon grace; grace to pardon our sins, and subdue our iniquities; to justify our persons and to sanctify our souls; and to complete that holy change, that renewal of our hearts, whereby we may be transformed into that blessed image wherein thou didst create us."*

## Covenant Discipleship groups ensure growth, development

By David Lowes Watson

Covenant Discipleship groups have been developed with the aim of helping established Christians grow in all areas of Christian discipleship through a process of mutual accountability.

Covenant Discipleship is not another course. Rather it is a way of being that ensures growth and development are ongoing processes in the discipleship journey. As such it provides valuable practices and challenges that fresh expressions, together with established churches, may well find helpful.

### What are they?

Covenant Discipleship groups are small groups of five to seven persons who meet for an hour a week with the intention of members supporting and watching over each other in their discipleship. The emphasis is on mutual accountability.

The groups are not another form of fresh expression or renamed cell groups. Nor are they prayer groups, Bible study groups or nurture groups. They do resemble the original Wesley Class Meetings.

At the heart of a Covenant Discipleship group is the 'General Rule of Discipleship': To witness to Jesus Christ in the world, and to follow his teachings, through the acts of compassion, justice, worship and devotion, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Acts of devotion and compassion are presented as the private and personal outworkings of discipleship, whilst acts of worship and justice are seen as the public and social outworkings.

The inclusion of acts of justice is particularly welcome as this is an area that is often overlooked or only given brief mention in many discipleship courses. The Introduction to Covenant Discipleship states that: 'we must not only minister to people in need, but also ask why they are in need.'

When a group comes together, its first task is to establish its own covenant. The covenant is designed so that all the members of the group can hold each other accountable for a series of commitments that they make, covering the four acts of discipleship. To help the formulation of the covenant, the introductory workbook gives sample lay-outs and clauses. Once agreed, the covenant becomes the agenda for the weekly meetings.

Meetings begin with prayer and then the group goes through the covenant clause by clause with each member in turn giving an account of his or her discipleship over the past week. The leader of the group is expected to be directive but the leadership changes each week, so that all share the experiences of leading and being led.

The covenant itself is reviewed periodically. In practice, groups are often too ambitious in their objectives and have to modify their targets.

Covenant Discipleship claims to provide a framework in which disciples practice mutual accountability, watching over each other in grace and love. It also says that using such a framework: 'prevents us from deceiving ourselves about what we are and are not doing for Christ.'

It is not clear how Covenant Discipleship groups fit within the accountability structure of a church. This issue is complicated by the rotating leadership model advocated. If such groups do develop, clear guidelines will be needed on accountability structures and communication channels.

Although the origins of Covenant Discipleship groups lie in the 18th century, there is something very contemporary about them. Post-modern culture is full of accountability networks linked together by texting, e-mails and mobile phone calls. Coffee shops have made a comeback, and they and pubs are full of people who meet weekly to watch over each other (although they might not use this phrase).

Covenant Discipleship groups could work very well with the post-modern generation and with younger people (including students) in particular. They would fit very well in a café church that could open for breakfast. An hour of prayers and reflection over bacon rolls and coffee would be a great way to start the day!

If a fresh expression did not want to adopt the full model, many valuable principles could be learned from Covenant Discipleship Groups to help build churches that are true discipleship-making and sustaining communities.

Covenant Discipleship groups are not where discipleship happens. It is where we make sure it happens. 🍷

*-Dr. David Lowes Watson is director of the Office of Pastoral Formation for the Nashville Episcopal Area.*



## Reclaiming Wesleyan evangelism

By Heather Hahn

For many United Methodists, "evangelism" is an uneasy word.

It conjures images of someone on a busy street corner handing out Bible tracts, or perhaps a missionary on

the doorstep interrupting an already-hecky Saturday morning.

Neither situation is necessarily Wesleyan, explains the Rev. Heather Heinzman Lear, the director of evangelism ministries for the General Board of Discipleship. Lear has made it her mission to give United Methodists a new vantage point on evangelism – as an essential part of Christian discipleship.

Evangelism should not just be about providing a form of fire insurance "to keep people out of hell," she says. "Jesus came to teach us how to live and to announce the Kingdom of God is at hand."

To truly share and live out that good news, Lear says, requires developing relationships with people. That often requires more than handing out Bible tracts.

Lear wants to help United Methodists reclaim the definition of evangelism as communicating the good news of Christ's life, death and resurrection – that in the words of the Gospel of John: "The Word became flesh and made his home among us."

She also wants United Methodists "to reclaim the centrality of evangelism in the life of our churches."

A Wesleyan approach to evangelism, she said, should combine three aspects:

- ❖ Apologetics, teaching people Christian beliefs
- ❖ Personal transformation, helping people grow in their relationship with Christ
- ❖ Mission, enabling people to share Christ's love with others

### How do churches go about integrating all three?

Lear drew on the book "Shift: Helping Congregations Back into the Game of Effective Ministry" by the Rev. Phil Maynard, a clergy coach who works with Path1, the General Board of Discipleship new church starts division.

She presented five changes the book recommends that

will help congregations more effectively share the gospel and help develop more Christian disciples.

"Are we friendly, or are we in the practice of making friends?" Lear asked. "There's a huge difference."

Many churches can seem to have assigned seating – with people insisting on sitting in the same place in the same pew every Sunday. But that tendency can also be an evangelism tool, Lear said.

She suggests telling congregants that their pews are their "mission field." "You need to know the people who sit all around that pew," she said. "You need to be aware who's there and who's not. When somebody new comes in, get their name."

One man at the workshop said that when he visited a church, it was his pew neighbors who helped get him and his wife connected with the church choir and find a Sunday school class. Because of them, he and his wife became members.

Lear challenged her listeners to think of how they can take their worship experience out into the world and help people "encounter the risen Lord" outside the church sanctuary.

On the General Board of Discipleship website, Lear also offers invitations to discipleship that churches can use each week to help worshipers reflect more on the week's Scripture reading and keep their focus on God during the week ahead.

Congregations with strong community outreach can struggle to help people make the connection between love of neighbor and the worship of God.

*(Continued on next page: "Evangelism")*

## Other Resources:

**Online course "Welcoming Ministry 100," offered by United Methodist Communications**

**Evangelism resources from the United Methodist Board of Discipleship**

*Vital: Churches Changing Communities and the World* **by Jorge Acevedo**

*Shift: Helping Congregations Back into the Game of Effective Ministry* **by Phil Maynard**

*Real Life: A Christianity Worth Living Out* **by James Choung**

*Should We Change Our Game Plan? From Traditional or Contemporary to Missional and Strategic* **by George G. Hunter III**

*Nudge: Awakening Each Other to the God Who's Already There* **by Leonard Sweet**

**From United Methodist Communications: How to become a certified welcoming congregation**



“Beware you are not a fiery, persecuting enthusiast. Do not imagine that God has called you (just contrary to the spirit of Him you style your Master) to destroy men’s lives, and not to save them. Never dream of forcing men into the ways of God. Think yourself, and let think. Use no constraint in matters of religion. Even those who are farthest out of the way never compel to come in by any other means than reason, truth, and love.”

-John Wesley, The Nature of Enthusiasm

“Evangelism,” continued from previous page)

“We have people who use our church gym every night who don’t know where the sanctuary is,” Carla Taylor, director of communications at St. Luke’s UMC in Memphis, said to those at the event.

Lear suggested one way to bridge that gap is to help everyone in the church know that the task of sharing the Christian faith isn’t just the job of the pastor or the evangelism chair but a calling on every Christian.

“I would argue that everything that goes on in church buildings and with our church’s name on it should be about sharing the love of God with others and growing in the love of God ourselves,” she said. “Everything that our church is about should have an evangelistic lens.”

Lear says she often receives calls from church leaders who say their church needs more people, otherwise the church can’t pay its bills.

“Money follows ministry,” Lear said. “People aren’t really excited about paying me or paying for the lights. But if we are doing significant ministry, it will make a difference.”

She suggested one way churches can publicly acknowledge the varied forms of generosity – and get away from the mentality of scarcity – is to get rid of that old bulletin standby of printing the total budget, year-to-date and the current deficit.

Instead, she said bulletins, church newsletters and even worship should include stories of how the church’s ministries are making differences in people’s lives. “If you tell the stories of people’s lives being changed, people want to be part of that.”

Membership focuses on what happens inside the church walls but discipleship transcends them and engages the world, Lear said. But many people struggle with sharing their faith story, especially if they grew up in the church. 📖

-Heather Hahn is a reporter for United Methodist News Service.

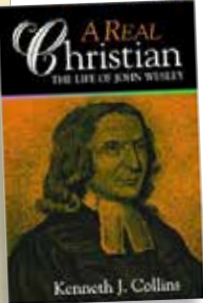
## Want to know more about John Wesley?

By Andrew C. Thompson

I received an e-mail from a pastor posing this question: A church member asked me to recommend a biography on John Wesley, and I didn’t know what to suggest. Wondering if you could suggest something?

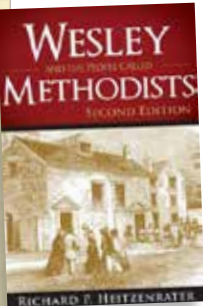
That’s not an infrequent request to get for a seminary professor who teaches Methodist history. When I get an e-mail or a phone call along those lines, there are always a few book titles I suggest. We are living in a time where there are a lot of top-notch Wesleyan historians and theologians working on different aspects of the Wesleyan tradition. So, fortunately, there are a number of good books you can pick up depending on the specific area of your interest.

Here are a few titles I’ve recommended in the past with some notes about how they can be used fruitfully:



### A Real Christian: The Life of John Wesley (Kenneth J. Collins)

Kenneth J. Collins’ book, *A Real Christian: The Life of John Wesley* (Abingdon, 2000), is a relatively brief treatment of John Wesley’s life. It is a true biography in that its subject matter is the person of John Wesley, from his birth to his death. If you are looking for a relatively short book and one that focuses solely on the figure of Wesley, then this is probably the way to go.



### Wesley and the People Called Methodists (Richard Heitzenrater)

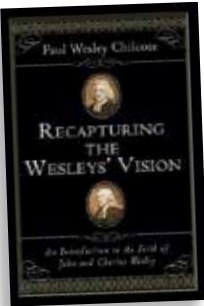
Richard Heitzenrater’s book, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (2nd ed., Abingdon, 2013), is a longer work that focuses on Wesley in the context of the rise and development of early Methodism. Heitzenrater includes background material in an opening chapter on the English Reformation and the development of the Church of England in the late 16th and the 17th centuries. He also includes some material on the early development of American Methodism in the late 18th century as well. So this book is a biography as well, but it is more like

a biography of early Methodism (with Wesley, of course, as the main character). Naturally, learning about the broader context of early Methodism is a very helpful way to understand Wesley himself better. For someone who wants to understand not just the man John Wesley but also the movement to which he committed himself for most of his adult life, this is the book to choose.

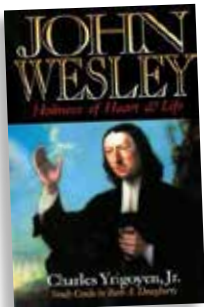
Sometimes I’ll also get requests from people who are less interested in a biography than they are in a book that explains Wesleyan theology in a way that can be really embraced by a congregational audience. For people who are interested in the distinctives of the Wesleyan approach to spirituality and discipleship, I often recommend these books:

### Recapturing the Wesleys’ Vision (Paul W. Chilcote)

Paul Chilcote has written one of the most compelling books on Wesleyan theology for a popular audience with *Recapturing the Wesleys’ Vision: An In-*



troduction to the Faith of John and Charles Wesley (Intervarsity, 2004). He divides his subject matter up into broad topics that arise from the Wesleyan approach to the Christian life: Message, Community, Discipline and Servanthood. If that sounds so broad that it’s hard to get your mind around what he’s talking about, I think you’ll find that the individual chapter titles explain where he’s going well enough. The section on “Message” includes chapters on the Wesleyan understanding of grace; “Community” has chapters on the importance of growing in discipleship within a fellowship of believers; etc. Chilcote has chosen an effective arrangement of his subject matter, which highlights the way in which the Wesleyan vision embraces the “both/and” rather than the “either/or” in various areas of the Christian life.



### John Wesley: Holiness of Heart and Life (Charles Yrigoyen, Jr.)

Charles Yrigoyen, Jr.’s, *John Wesley: Holiness of Heart and Life* (Abingdon, 1996) is a book that covers a number of themes in Wesleyan discipleship. Yrigoyen’s opening chapter offers a short biographical background on Wesley’s life before moving into a series of chapters that focus on the framework of Wesley’s theology (grace, salvation, etc.) and the practices known as the means of grace (which Yrigoyen identifies by the Wesleyan terms “works of piety” and “works of mercy”). He then adds

chapters on Methodism in the American context and on the possibility of Wesleyan renewal in the present. It is a book that has a little of everything, which makes it a good introduction for someone who doesn’t know much about Methodism. There is one caveat to mention, though, which is Yrigoyen has written the book from a self-consciously United Methodist perspective. Wesleyans from other denominational backgrounds might find all the references to the UMC a bit off-putting. A helpful feature of the book is that it includes a substantial study guide, prepared by Ruth Daugherty.



### A Blueprint for Discipleship (Kevin M. Watson)

Kevin M. Watson’s *A Blueprint for Discipleship: Wesley’s General Rules as a Guide for Christian Living* (Discipleship Resources, 2009) is the best book available on the General Rules of early Methodism. These three rules—which consisted of doing no harm, doing good, and attending upon the “ordinances of God”—were developed by John Wesley to guide the life of the early Methodist Societies. They served both as the pattern for how Methodists understood their engagement with the means of grace and as a disciplinary mechanism that defined what

was required to remain in the membership of a class meeting. There has been a great deal of interest in the General Rules in recent years because of their potential to help form mature Christian discipleship today, and Watson’s treatment of them is the best resource available. 📖

-Dr. Andrew C. Thompson is an ordained elder who teaches at Memphis Theological Seminary and serves as the appointed Wesley Scholar to the Arkansas Conference.

## Suggestions for additional reading

### The History of the Evangelical United Brethren Church

by J. Bruce Behney and Paul H. Eller. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1979.

### The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2012

Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012.

### Living Our Beliefs, The United Methodist Way

by Kenneth L. Carder. Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2009.

### The Story of American Methodism

by Frederick A. Norwood. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995.

### The United Methodist Way

by Branson L. Thurston. Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1998.

### A Year with John Wesley and Our Methodist Values

by Various Wesleyan Scholars. Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2008.

### Reclaiming the Wesleyan Tradition, John Wesley’s Sermons for Today

by Various Wesleyan Scholars. Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2007.

### A Perfect Love, Understanding John Wesley’s A Plain Account of Christian Perfection

by Steven W. Manskar, Theological Reflections by Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, Study Guide by Diana L. Hynson. Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2004.

### John Wesley for the 21st Century

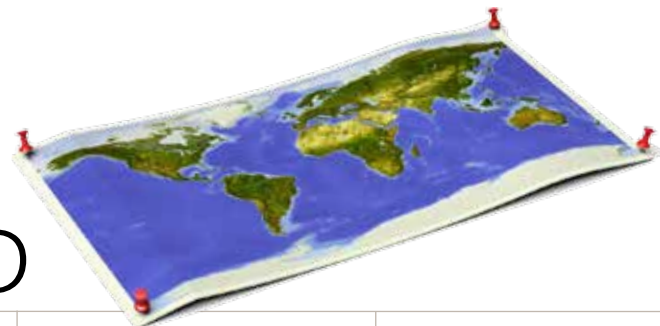
by John O. Gooch. Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2006.

### Mainline or Methodist? Rediscovering Our Evangelistic Mission

by Scott Kisker. Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2008.



# Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD



## The right rockin' Rev. Sherry Cothran

By Joey Butler

*Editor's Note: The Rev. Sherry Cothran will lead worship during the conference-sponsored Safe Sanctuaries training event June 18-19 before Annual Conference in Hampton.*

Rock musicians on tour are a notoriously rowdy bunch.

KISS guitarist Ace Frehley once superglued every piece of furniture in his hotel room to the ceiling. Ozzy Osbourne was arrested for relieving himself on The Alamo. The Evinrudes' lead singer Sherry Cothran, on the other hand, used to read an anthology of Thomas Merton's essays on the tour bus.

Perhaps this is why

The Evinrudes were never featured on VH1's *Behind the Music*.

She may be a little light in the "tossing TVs off the hotel balcony" column, but Cothran boasts some bonafide rock 'n roll street cred: a hit song, tours opening for the likes of Spin Doctors and the Goo Goo Dolls and a photo in Rolling Stone magazine.

"When I was a child, I was either going to be a missionary in Africa, in a rock band or on Broadway," she said. "The rock band won out."

After years of paying dues and traveling nonstop, the culmination of those rock-star dreams found Cothran and her fellow Evinrudes signing a contract with Mercury Records. But,

on those far-too-frequent occasions when art and commerce merge, art never wins out. The record label was acquired by a drink-manufacturing company. (Read that sentence again and ponder.) Nine months after signing their major-label deal, The Evinrudes and 250 of their labelmates were unceremoniously dropped.

"It was in the middle of a pretty major tour, so all of our funding was yanked. Like so many bands, we just went on a downward spiral from there," Cothran said.

The band wound up on another label in London and was set for a UK tour when their singer "just had an epiphany. I wanted to pursue what I felt was my calling. I left just before the tour, and left a lot of people holding the bag. It was not pretty."

That calling led her to seminary.

"I met a United Methodist minister who was out of seminary and waiting to be appointed to a church. I went through a lot of personal changes in my life and rebuilt my life from there after a couple years," she said.

She started at Vanderbilt University Divinity School in 2006, graduating in 2010. She also ended up marrying that pastor, and "the trajectory of my life took on a bit of a different twist."

Nowadays, the Rev. Sherry Cothran Woolsey rocks the pulpit as senior



pastor at West Nashville United Methodist Church, a small urban congregation across town from the music venues in which The Evinrudes made noise.

"I found that a lot of gifts that I had developed in the music industry transferred well into being a pastor, especially at a small church where you have to be somewhat entrepreneurial," said Cothran Woolsey. "You have to do all your own marketing, your own partnering ... you have to be out there telling people what you're doing all the time. I could just take my creativity and pour it into the church."

With the bad taste of the music industry still in her mouth, Cothran Woolsey immersed herself in her studies and put music aside. However, a few musician friends at Vanderbilt encouraged her to get back

to songwriting. Combining her musical gifts with an interest in Hebrew texts, she produced the album "Sunland."

"I'm really intrigued by the stories of women in the Old Testament, particularly ones who are kind of wild," Cothran Woolsey said. "I wanted to look into their stories and all the ways they had been branded: prostitute, witch, disposable daughter. I wanted to unhide some of these women."

"Sunland" brings to life the stories of women like Huldah the Prophetess, the Witch of Endor, Rahab of Jericho and the Wise Woman and Strange Woman of Proverbs.

A far cry from The Evinrudes' Southern sass, dreamy violin and percussion evoke "Sunland's" exotic Middle Eastern theme. Loud, crunchy

guitars cut through the mysticism, rocking out tracks like "Seen Through" and "The Stars Fought from Heaven." Cothran Woolsey uses her voice – fragile, sleepy, beautiful – to great effect. Frailty embodies the doomed daughter of Jephthah on "In My Lover's Arms," while on "Steady My Prey" a sultry rasp gives voice to Jael, one hand beckoning the equally doomed Sisera, the other behind her back, clutching the hammer.

"I was raised on Bible stories, but I didn't always accept the way they were taught to me. I always thought there was more to the story. I love the theological pursuit of digging into lots of different takes on different characters," she said.

While researching the material, she found parallels between ancient and modern society, particularly in the different ways women were treated. While Huldah and Deborah were heroes, many others were (and are) seen like the Strange Woman.

"If, at some point in your life, you go off the beaten path of what's expected of you, especially as women, then you get labeled: whore, temptress, jezebel. What I see in the song is that God has created all of these things. We have to accept the broken with the whole."

—Joey Butler is an editor for United Methodist Communications

The Rev. Sherry Cothran Woolsey performs onstage at a reunion of her rock band, The Evinrudes, playing songs from the '90s and new works about women in the Bible. UMNS photo by Kathleen Barry.



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# EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY



## It's time to unclutter your church

By Dottie Escobedo-Frank

**W**hat needs to die in your church? We begin the journey of restarting your church by allowing for, even encouraging, places of death. We choose to have a memorial service for what worked in the past, to honor the prior period of time, and to make a decision to move forward. We choose to let the past set us free to fly, instead of letting the past become a shackle that chains us to a certain way of doing things.

Look around you with fresh eyes, and you will see obvious signs of the past still trying to shackle life in your church.

The first thing I see in churches is clutter. Enormous amounts of clutter

and disorganization. Clutter that looks like hoarding.

In my current church, we spent my first year clearing out massive amounts of clutter. One day early in my tenure I walked into the nursery where the children are cared for during Sunday morning, and there was an aisle to walk through that led to a station with toys in the back of the room. The first thing I saw when I stepped into the room was a big sign that read "Do Not Come in Here without an adult!" I understood the sign because the area really was a danger zone. The "aisle" was actually a little path that cut through tall stacks of equipment, papers, toys, boxes, books and papers. There was so much stuff crammed into the room that it was massively depressing.

As we began cleaning out the nursery, we found old vacation Bible school papers from four decades prior. While they were fascinating to see in a memorabilia sort of way, they weren't doing any good stacked in boxes and cluttered piles in the nursery. As we began throwing this stuff away, there was a lot of pain around letting it go. The people worried that they might need that curriculum, since it was expensive to buy new VBS materials. They thought perhaps we

needed to store it somewhere, just in case it might be needed.

They groaned, grieved, held tight, and fought as we all pried our fingers off the stuff of our history.

Some churches may not have literal clutter but rather institutional or habitual clutter. "We've always done it this way" is a common statement about clutter. "I can't worship without my hymn ... my cross ... my pew" are declarations of a cluttered soul. The only One we worship is God. We don't worship our stuff, our memories, our dreams, our dashed hopes or our traditions. We worship our God.

There is hope for us. We may have surrounded ourselves with things that were once comforting and are now binding, but God still can choose us to lead the way forward. There's hope for clutterdwellers, hoarders and memory-storers. There's hope for the fearful ones who hold on with clenched hands. There's hope because God can make a way.

What is your church beautiful at? Does it sound beautiful when it sings? Is it beautiful in community? Is it a beautiful place for mission? What is your church's beauty, and how can you shout out the good, while changing the not-so-good? 🍀

*-The Rev. Dottie Escobedo-Frank is pastor of Crossroads UMC in Phoenix. This article is adapted from her latest book, ReStart Your Church (Abingdon Press, 2012)*

## MAY

### Cambodia Consultation May 1-5, Aldersgate UMC, Alexandria

The Virginia Conference will host the Cambodia Consultation, which brings together people interested in our Methodist Mission in Cambodia as it moves toward its goal of becoming an independent Methodist Church in 2016. There will be participants from Cambodia as well as from around the U.S. This is the event that will provide information and inspiration as The United Methodist Church re-commits its support for the ministry of this mission initiative. For more information contact Juanita Csontos at [juanita@csontos.net](mailto:juanita@csontos.net) or (703) 780-5851; or Ann Stingle at [astingle1@verizon.net](mailto:astingle1@verizon.net) or (571) 218- 5230.

### Large Church Lead Pastor Just-In-Time Training May 8-9, Roslyn Retreat Center, Richmond

This retreat is for pastors who are moving this year to churches with an average worship attendance of 350 or more, as recorded by the Cabinet. Registration is open only to those lead pastors who have received an invitation; contact Beth Downs at [BethDowns@vaumc.org](mailto:BethDowns@vaumc.org) if you have questions about your eligibility to register for this event.

### Local Pastors and Associate Members Fellowship May 8, River Road UMC, Richmond

The Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members will welcome Dr. Christine Parton-Burkett to their spring gathering. This continuing education event and time of fellowship will focus on preaching: reducing the fillers that can cloud sermons; improving public proclamation generally, including non-verbal messaging in the pulpit; and creating fresh ways to craft the ancient message. Parton-Burkett, a North

Carolina native, is a visiting professor of Speech at Duke Divinity School. The event will last from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and cost is \$30. Register on the conference website, [www.vaumc.org](http://www.vaumc.org) under "Events" and the date.

### Mid-Size Church Lead Pastor Just-In-Time Training May 15-16, Richmond Hill

This retreat is for pastors who are moving this year to churches with an average worship attendance of 150 to 350, as recorded by the Cabinet. Registration is open only to those lead pastors who have received an invitation; contact Beth Downs at [BethDowns@vaumc.org](mailto:BethDowns@vaumc.org) if you have questions about your eligibility to register for this event.

### 'Lord Teach Me to Pray' May 17, Timberlake UMC, Lynchburg Aug. 23, Williamsburg UMC, Williamsburg

Oct. 25, St. Thomas UMC, Manassas  
"Lord, Teach Me to Pray – Practical Applications for Prayer" will be offered three separate times at three different locations. Main speaker will be Dr. Wendy Miller, professor emeritus of Spiritual Formation at Eastern Mennonite Seminary and adjunct faculty at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill., and Perkins School of Theology in Dallas. Register on the conference website, [www.vaumc.org](http://www.vaumc.org) under "Events" and the date.

## JUNE

### Safe Sanctuaries Training June 18-19, Hampton Roads Convention Center

Pre-Annual Conference two-day event on Safe Sanctuaries with Dr. Joy Melton, author of the book *Safe Sanctuaries*. Cost is \$25 per person or \$80 for a team of four. For more information contact the Rev. Derrick Parson at [DerrickParson@vaumc.org](mailto:DerrickParson@vaumc.org) or call 1-800-768-6040, ext. 136, or (804) 521-1136.



# EVENTS

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# LOCAL CHURCH NEWS



▲ In 2007, Jeannie Easter and Janis Grizzard, church members in the **Amelia Charge**, almost simultaneously felt led to begin to make prayer shawls. So a group of needle crafters – “The Knit Wits” – began to meet monthly at the public library in Amelia. The group grew with women from other area churches. Prayer shawls, baby blankets and lap robes were made in many colors and styles and lovingly given to grieving and hurting people both at home and all over the world, including our military service personnel overseas. Prayers are said over the blankets in the context of services at **both Trinity and Tabernacle UMCs** and a small tag with a prayer on it is attached. Donations of yarn and money were made from those unable to knit, sew or crochet to help our efforts. The group, now numbering about 10 members, decided to meet at each other’s homes sharing patterns, prayers and camaraderie over coffee while making shawls, lap robes, baby blankets and other items. Recently, the United Methodist Women’s national office in NY made known a need for baby blankets to send all over the world, and the Knit Wits responded with 18 baby blankets that were shipped to New York.

Kaye Rich of **Remington UMC** reports: “When my son had his auto accident two years ago and was in the trauma center in Columbia, S.C., my hands were at odds with each other. I don’t know what made me think of crocheting, as it had been over 30 years since I crocheted. But I bought a skein of yarn and a hook and set about praying and stitching, praying and stitching, etc. The idea came as I prayed and stitched that there were so many people in the same situation and worse than I was with my son. Four months after his accident I delivered my first Prayer Shawl. It wasn’t perfect, but it was filled with prayer. The thankfulness of God’s healing hands over my son was something I had to share with others. So this is how I began a ministry that has become so needed that I can barely keep up with it. I have made and delivered 61 shawls in less than two years.” ▼



During Heart Havens month in February, the Lydia Circle of the United Methodist Women at **Miles Memorial UMC in Norfolk, Elizabeth River District**, visited Heart Havens’ Taylor House. A few residents from ▼



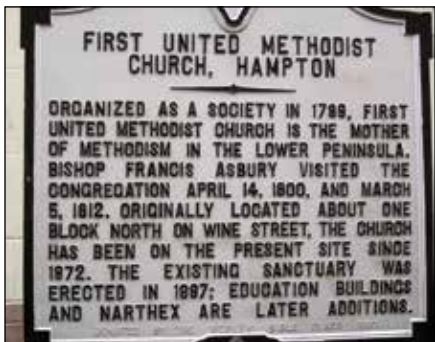
the McLeigh house in Virginia Beach also joined in as the visitors brought cookies for the residents to decorate, read stories and played several games of bingo.



▲ On March 16, **Kernstown UMC** held a groundbreaking ceremony for improvements to meet the needs of the congregation and community, including putting in an elevator, renovating bathrooms, relocating the nursery and replacing two air conditioning units. Renovations will also improve access to the Fellowship Hall and the Education wing. Participating were Pastor Clay Knick; a representative from Kee Construction; Jerry Chapman, chair of the Building Team; Anna Lee Sandy, one of the oldest living members of KUMC; and Carson Heflin, one of the youngest members.

**First UMC in Hampton, York River District**, is celebrating its 225th anniversary this year. The church was formally organized in 1789 and the history includes being visited by Francis Asbury, being burned down by Confederate troops, launching numerous men and women into the ministry and fostering the creation of the Korean United Methodist Church on the Peninsula, just to name a few. First UMC started the year off with a Watch Night Service on Dec.31, 2013. There are also four music concerts, a visit by a Civil War re-enactors group, Fifth Sunday covered dishes showcasing photos and other remembrances, and one Sunday devoted to those married at First Church (June 29). There will

be a “floating picnic” on a local tour boat, The Miss Hampton, in the summer, but the highlight of the celebration will be the Homecoming Service on May 18 at 11 a.m. Bishop Young Jin Cho will deliver the morning message, followed by a reception in the Fellowship Hall. The year-long celebration will conclude the way it began, in prayer at the Watch Night Service on Dec. 31. If you are a former member, please consider “coming home” on May 18 to be a part of First UMC’s celebration. For more information, call the church office at (757) 723-6577, or visit [www.firstumchampton.org](http://www.firstumchampton.org). ▼



▼ On March 22, members at **Hopewell UMC in Chesterfield County** observed a day of service, “March Out and About ... Serving as Jesus Served.” More than 45 people visited homebound members, nursing homes, hospitals, food pantries, clothes closets and a Richmond park.



They cleaned, trimmed bushes, raked leaves, played bingo, delivered hand-made cards, sorted clothes, helped the SPCA, picked up food for a food pantry and fed the homeless. The day ended with Holy Communion, prayer and a time of sharing.

▲ On Boy Scout Sunday, Feb. 9, five Scouts were presented with “God and Country” program awards at **Main Street UMC, Farmville District**. The scouts are members of Troop 497, which is sponsored by the church and is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year. Hunter Powell and Dru Thackston received the God and Church Award. David Bates, Seth Epperson and Jonathan Arnold received the God and Life Award. The Scouts worked one-on-one with trained counselors from the congregation: Phil

Hart, Doug Mackintosh, Ed Agricola, Meredith Bowman and Gene Perkins. Scouts and counselors worked together for five months, using material from Programs of Religious Activities with Youth (PRAY) in St. Louis. The units require both Bible study and service projects. The PRAY awards are the only religious awards recognized by the Boy Scouts of America and allowed to be worn on a Scout’s uniform.



▲ **Christ UMC, Alexandria District**, held its bi-annual Children’s Consignment Sale, a major church-wide endeavor with “all-hands-on-deck.” This year’s sale resulted in more than 1,700 people from the surrounding community coming through the doors of Christ UMC. Representatives from eight different organizations acquired a total of 5,219 donated items, and approximately \$26,000 was provided as a result of the sale to fund the church’s 2014 mission and ministry initiatives. ♥



Devotions from International Lesson Series

# LIVING THE WORD



To honor our older adults, members of the Virginia Conference Older Adult Council have written this month's Bible lessons. In April 2008, the General Conference of The United Methodist Church adopted legislation inviting congregations to celebrate Older Adult Recognition Day each year during the month of May. The Virginia Conference was well ahead of this legislation when in 2006 the first Sunday in May of each year was designated as Older Adult Recognition Sunday. This time of recognition invites United Methodists to show appreciation and support for older adults who continue to enrich and strengthen our faith communities. May is also recognized nationally as Older Americans Month. You can find materials for this year's theme, Safe Today, Healthy Tomorrow, at [www.acl.gov](http://www.acl.gov).

**May 4, 2014**  
**How do we deal with temptation?**  
**Deuteronomy 6:13-16, 8:3a; Matthew 4:1-11.**  
*Written by Joan Swack Tipton, Keysville UMC, Farmville District; Spiritual Formation, UMW president, Sunday school teacher, Lay Servant, liturgical dance instructor*

When I am tired, weary and have no strength left, Satan puts doubt in my heart. Satan wants me to focus on myself (pride) rather than God. Satan is telling me to trust in earthly power: fame, fortune, greed and lust of the flesh rather than trusting God for my daily needs. Deuteronomy 6:14-15a, says, "Do not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who are all around you, because the Lord your God, who is present with you is a jealous God." My lusts are the other gods. Sometimes I forget Jesus faced the same temptations that we do.

How did Jesus deal with temptation? Matthew 4:4 says Jesus answered using the Old Testament quote from Deuteronomy 8:3 – "It is written, one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." Jesus used God's spoken word, written word and incarnate word in dealing with temptations. We need not only physical food but also spiritual food to live a complete life. Jesus is telling us that the only way we can really deal with temptation is to study, contemplate and understand the scriptures. Jesus spent much of His life praying. In Luke 22:40, Jesus instructs that prayer is a great way to resist temptations, "Pray that you do not enter into temptation." He was telling this to His disciples, and we also are His disciples.

In Matthew 4:10, Jesus said to Satan, "Away with you Satan, for it is written, worship the Lord your God and serve Him only." If we follow Jesus' words and example, our hope is in Jesus. We know that the written Word helps us to keep our focus clearly on God. I enjoy being a part of a Bible study and prayer group. There are many forms of prayer: breath prayer, praying the Psalms or scripture and Lectio divina are some very helpful ways to stay connected to God.

I have danced my entire life, and liturgical dance – dancing before the Lord in times of joy and sorrow – has allowed me to be God-centered and inspired me to go out into the world to serve the Lord and deal with temptation.

**May 11, 2014**  
**"He Stood Up"**  
**Luke 4:14-21**  
*Written by the Rev. Bob Weeks, Senior Pastor at Verona UMC, Harrisonburg District.*

"He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him." (NIV, Luke 4:16b-17a)  
I'm not sure what was in the air in our worship services a few Sundays ago. The children gathered for our "children's time" on the steps of the chancel area. After sharing a story based on the morning's Scripture lesson, I asked the girls and boys to stand up and pray with me. Not one child stood up. I asked again, this time with a "please." Again, no one stood. I turned to the congregation and confessed, "I feel so powerless."

One of the duties of a United Methodist pastor is to serve as chairperson of the Lay Leadership Committee. I have a feeling that most pastors dread asking members of their congregation to take on leadership responsibilities for any number of reasons. There's the fear of rejection; or the sinking feeling that the entire process is more about "filling slots" than matching gifts with ministries. It can truly be an exercise in frustration. We long for someone to stand up and declare their determination to fulfill the Scriptures, in whatever way they are called by God. Not out of guilt or a grudging sense of duty, but with a sure and certain desire to follow where Jesus leads. We long for more "here I am, send me" moments and fewer, "I'll have to pass" excuses.

Before we can follow Jesus, we must first stand up for Jesus. In today's Scripture passage Jesus stands up to proclaim God's truth without regard to the consequences. He later calls upon his disciple Peter to stand up with him in the hour of his greatest trial – and Peter fails (John 18:2-27). But the good news is that God didn't abandon Peter, didn't give up on him, did not leave him sitting in the dust of his despair. "Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd (Acts 2:14a)." Emboldened and empowered by the power of the Holy Spirit, this same Peter who denied his Lord over and over will be chosen to stand up before thousands on the day of Pentecost and proclaim: "... God has made this Jesus, whom

you crucified, both Lord and Messiah (NIV, Acts 2:36b)." Because Peter stood up, a Church was raised up.  
Will we also stand up when Jesus calls?

**May 18, 2014**  
**"Jesus' Teaching on the Law"**  
**Matthew 15:1-11; 15-20**  
*Written by the Rev. David B. Lewis, retired clergy, James River District*

In today's lesson, Jesus draws a series of contrasts – one of his characteristic teaching techniques. He presents these contrasts in response to the religious authorities of the Jews who have criticized Jesus' disciples for failure to wash their hands ritually before eating. (Hand-washing in a pre-scientific era had more to do with religious symbolism, i.e. washing away sin, than with hygiene.)

Jesus contrasts the commandment of God with the tradition of the elders. Many of us who have been active church members are quite familiar with the importance of tradition. Seniors, especially, are prone to cling to tradition – "the way we've always done things" – even when others point out conflicts with God's will. However, as we observe May as Older Adult Month, we might remind ourselves that seniors can often point out the value of tradition and thus serve as a restraint on younger adults, who might be eager to cast aside unthinkingly anything "old." Traditions are important. What one of us would want to abandon the ways our families have observed Christmas?

But, we need to be aware that God's will may demand changing tradition in order to serve others in love. God's commandments must always take precedence over tradition, however familiar, however comfortable, and however comforting the latter may be. Jesus proceeds to amplify this truth with another contrast: obeying God's command-

ment to honor our parents versus the occasional practice of abandoning responsibility for our elders on the pretext of increasing our giving to God.  
In our contemporary time, many folk ignore the growing needs of their elderly parents and do not even pretend that their neglect is for the sake of generosity to church or any other worthy endeavor. Instead, they may shamelessly indulge their whims for nicer cars, personal vanity, or increased spending on entertainment. God's will is that their parents' needs should take precedence over personal indulgences – whether the parents need financial help, more contact with younger family members, or help with tasks now beyond their capabilities.

Finally, in a parable, Jesus draws a contrast which is vivid, memorable and to the point. Referring to the criticism of his disciples for their failure to wash their hands ritually before eating, Jesus points out sternly that we are corrupted far more by what comes out of our mouths than by what we put into our mouths. We know this to be true, for out of the mouth come curses, foul speech, lies, gossip, destruction of others reputations and other such evil – all contrary to the commandments of God.

**May 25, 2014**  
**"The First Commandment"**  
**Mark 12:28-34**  
*Written by Suzanne Spencer, former long-term care facility administrator and local pastor, Winchester District*

We say we worship God, that we trust God with everything and we accept the salvation and abundant life our Lord and Savior offers. But, do we live as Jesus has told us – do we actually trust him to give us the truth. As David Platt in Radical asks, "What if Jesus really meant what he said?"

Jesus tells us what is most important to the God we say we serve. We are to love God with everything in us and love our fellow human beings just as if they were ourselves. The question is do we hear and apply what Jesus tells us, and if we do actually trust him with everything, how do we accomplish this loving thing he has told us to do? What if his words in Mark 12 are a commandment, not a mere suggestion?

Many of us were raised with the concept that if we accepted Jesus as our Savior, tried to live by the Ten Commandments and were polite, we were doing what God required. We went to Sunday school and worship services and did a few service activities, but believed it was the pastor, maybe the Sunday school teachers, who were responsible for telling us if we were off track. Hey, we were living moral, ethical lives, so we were doing OK, right?

Jesus says living by the law is not enough to please God. The Pharisees were doing that. As Jesus' followers we are called to action. We are called to love. We are called to be servants, doing all he has told us to do, and he promises it's not going to be easy. This love thing means we have to put down our pride, die to self and live in humble service to God and other human beings. To love means moving out of our places of comfort.

Those who participate in short-term mission, or volunteer in community, report unexpected blessings. Serving God and our neighbors brings joy. For my husband and me, sharing God's love in prison ministry has given us many opportunities to serve. We give up precious Saturdays and many hours of team and personal preparation to be equipped for Kairos weekends. The weekends themselves require enormous energy and certainly stepping out of our comfort zones. At the conclusion of the week-

(Continued on pg. 33, "Living Word")





# CLERGY & DIACONAL

## Deaths



**The Rev. Patricia M. Bain**, 71, of Norfolk, died March 31, 2014. She was a graduate of Radford College, Hollins College and Wesley Theological

Seminary. Prior to becoming an elder she served several churches in the Tidewater area in program ministry. In 1992 she began her ministerial career at Mount Carmel-Trinity-Millwood Charge in the Winchester District; followed by Gladys in the Lynchburg District; and Cumberland and North Amelia in the Farmville District. She was placed on incapacity leave in 2003 and retired in 2008.

**The Rev. Ralph Edelle Monroe**, 85, died April 6, 2014. A Maryland native, Monroe served appointments in West Virginia and Harrisonburg, Lexington and Staunton in the Virginia Conference. The Rev. Monroe is survived by his wife, Louise, and a daughter in Chester.



**The Rev. Cheryl L. Simmons**, 58, died March 22, 2014, and was buried in Baton Rouge, La., in a service officiated by her former district

superintendent, the Rev. John Vest. A memorial service was also held at St. Luke's UMC, Yorktown, with the Rev. Clara Gestwick as host pastor and the Rev. Rob Vaughn doing the service. A graduate of Louisiana College and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Simmons began her ministerial career in 1997 as the associate at Arlington UMC. She went on to serve the Orange Circuit, as the associate

pastor at Community UMC, senior pastor at Central UMC in Hampton, First UMC (Fox Hill), and West End UMC in Portsmouth. She also chaired the Annual Conference Planning Committee for several years. She was placed on Clergy Medical Leave in 2012 when she was diagnosed with ALS.

**Ralph J. Wimmer Sr.**, 92, of Boones Mill, died March 25, 2014. A World War II veteran, he was a graduate of Roanoke College, Virginia Tech, Radford College, and completed the course of study for the United Methodist Church through Duke Divinity School. Wimmer taught in Roanoke City School System, was a Professor of American History at Ferrum College for 35 years. As a licensed local pastor in the Virginia Conference, he served Bent Mountain, Catawba, McDonald, Shiloh, New Hope and he served for 35 years at Boones Mill. He is survived by his wife of 65 years, Dorothy B. Wimmer, along with several children and grandchildren.

**Joseph Edward Bryan**, father of the **Rev. Kathleen Card**, died March 24, 2014, in Massachusetts. Rev. Card is currently on Leave of Absence.

**Ethel Wolfe Born**, 90, died March 26, 2014. Born was a leader in United Methodist Women. In her work with the Women's Division and as vice president of the United Methodist Committee On Relief (UMCOR), she visited our Church's mission work in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa and the Caribbean, and spoke about these experiences at many conferences and meetings. Born was an active member of First UMC in Salem and served several terms as a Trustee of Ferrum College.

**John Robert Bright**, 83, died March 13, 2014. He was the father of **Rev. John Bright**, who serves Jamieson Memorial UMC, Farmville District, and

was a member of Magnolia UMC in Suffolk.

**Charlotte Marie Croll** died April 11, 2014. She was the widow of **Donald Eugene Croll**, who died in 2004 after serving several churches in the Virginia Conference, and a member at Ginter Park UMC.

**Virginia M. Ludwig**, 92, died March 18, 2014. She was the mother of the **Rev. Kurt Ludwig**, pastor of St. Mark's UMC in Manassas. She was a resident of Missouri and buried in Independence.

**Linda Kay Spangler Sandifer**, 61, of Vinton, died March 17, 2014. She was wife of **the Rev. Ray Sandifer** and was a member of Thrasher Memorial UMC but attended and was involved with the churches of the Eagle Rock Charge. She was also with Southwest Virginia Emmaus Community.

**James Arlington "Jim" Sims**, 70, died on March 17, 2014. He is survived by his wife, **Rev. Betty Jo Sims**, who serves Mizpah UMC, Fredericksburg District, where Jim was the Lay Leader.

**Jessie Stanley** of Richmond, 100, the widow of **the Rev. Wilson Stanley**, died March 21, 2014. She was an active member of Westover Hills UMC for many years.

**Virginia White** died on March 23, 2014. She was the wife of **the Rev. James D. White**, retired clergy. A service was held in West Milford, W.Va.


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(*"Living Word"* continued from pg. 31)  
ends, there's not a member of the team who has any energy left, but the smiles on our faces go ear to ear. Prisoners, whether held behind bars or held captive by the world's values, can be set free to experience abundant life and joy, if we are willing to show God's love. If we love God with everything in us, our hearts, our souls, our minds and our strength, the Holy Spirit will guide and direct us to love as we are directed by our Lord and Savior. By acting as Jesus has called us to act, we grow ever closer in our relationship with God. 



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## CORRECTION

The article on pg. 26 of the April *Advocate* suggested that Steve Claris was still in ministry in Mississippi. He is actually back in the Virginia Conference, serving as pastor at Mayes Memorial UMC, Roanoke District.

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# FROM THE BISHOP



## Make May 25 ‘The Day of Prayer’

It is a beautiful season! Someone said that May is the “queen of the seasons.” I fully agree. Trees are getting greener, and we are experiencing the vitality of life. We cannot but give thanks and praises to God who has created this world and given us this beautiful gift.

The second *Bishop’s Convocation on Prayer* went very well. Almost 400 people gathered and learned about prayer and spiritual disciplines. Dr. Tom Albin, the keynote speaker, did a great job, and many participants expressed their appreciation for his leadership. I am also deeply grateful to all the workshop leaders and to the members of the planning team. All of them prayerfully prepared for this convocation and worked very hard.

When the planning team met to

prepare for this convocation, we also discussed regional follow-up events to continue to spread the culture of prayer to the churches. Already the conference Board of Discipleship has taken the baton and planned the following events with the same theme, “Lord, Teach Me to Pray”:

- ❖ May 17 at Timberlake UMC, Lynchburg District;
- ❖ Aug. 23 at Williamsburg UMC, York River District;
- ❖ Oct. 25 at St. Thomas UMC, Alexandria District.

I pray that through these gatherings our praying knees are strengthened, and the churches become more open to God’s presence and power.

Another discussion the planning team had was setting a conference-wide “Day of Prayer” for the renewal and revival of our churches. We chose May 25 as “The Day of Prayer,” remembering Aldersgate Day, May 24. We Methodists know what happened to John Wesley on May 24, 1738. His heart was strangely warmed, and John Wesley experienced the assurance of God’s grace. This experience became an important milestone for the Methodist movement.

Can we turn our churches around by our own strength, plan and wisdom? Probably to some degree we can bring changes. I value our earnest efforts to turn around our declining churches. But we need to ask fundamental questions before we answer. To whom does our church belong? Who is the owner and the Lord of our church? Who is the head of our church? If we do not listen to the Lord of our church, our efforts will be in vain.

This is the reason I say, “Let Jesus Christ be the Lord in our mission and ministries.” The first step for an authentic turn-around of our churches is that we begin listening to what the Lord wants us to do. This turn-around

should begin with catching not our vision, but Christ’s vision for us. This is the reason prayer is important for our new future. Prayer is more than asking for some favors. Prayer is opening ourselves to God and listening to the Lord. The Lord is waiting for us to open ourselves and follow Christ’s vision and guidance.

Today everyone agrees with the need for a renewal and revival of our churches. Everyone knows that we cannot renew our churches by our own wisdom and strategy. But most of us stop here and do not take the next step to move forward. We feel the need of a renewal and revival of our churches, but we do not open ourselves to God and humbly ask God to send us a renewal and a revival. I think the time has come for us to pray together for a new future of our churches.

We set the date of May 25 as “The Day of Prayer.” I want all churches in the Virginia Conference to pray for a renewal and revival of our churches during their worship services on May 25. Most of our churches have a time of prayer, remembering prayer requests and the people in need during their worship services. The planning team’s and my request is that you pray for a new future for our churches. My hope is that this prayer request will be remembered every Sunday until we see a renewal and revival of our churches. We need to knock on the door until the door is opened. More information on The Day of Prayer will follow.

Let me close by sharing what John Wesley said: “God does nothing apart from prayer.” Amen. 🍷

In our Lord,

*Young H. Cho*



By Dick Faris

Back in the day, Christians were often called the “People of the Book.” Methodist circuit riders carried in their saddle bags a Bible, a hymnal, and maybe a *Book of Discipline*. Today’s pastor more likely totes an i-phone and/or an i-pad (or their equivalents) which can contain five or more translations of scripture and numerous hymnals.

Whereas the source of information and wisdom was found in libraries and bookstores for previous seekers, today’s searchers look to the Internet and Google to discover a trove of data. These late Baby Boomers and generations since are indeed “People of the Screen.” They look primarily not to the page but to the screen – movie, TV, computer, hand-held mobile devices of various sizes.

The staid Metropolitan Opera recognizes this fact of life and is now live streaming 10 operas a season from its New York City opera house to venues around the world like the Paramount Theatre in Charlottesville. Patrons watch in high definition on a large screen and listen in Dolby sound works to Verdi, Mozart, etc., follow the action with subtitles and close-ups and enjoy interviews with the artists. A new generation can now appreciate opera in a way compatible to their taste.

My congregation is now involved in a building project. The church we

attend is more than 200 years old, presently housed in a beautiful stone chapel, circa 1920. We will have some renovation of the sanctuary during this construction and the question has arisen about whether or not to have a screen of some type included in the new configuration.

My point is that if we are indeed building for the future, we must include a screen. Though some of us older members may be uncomfortable or even offended by its presence, we must put aside our tastes to address the communication needs of present and future generations. Creative clergy and/or church teams can use great art or film clips, as well as project Scriptures and prayers, to enhance the worship experience. This is already happening in many churches with excellent results.

Red Auerbach, legendary coach of the Boston Celtics, once asked his players how best to pass a basketball. They showed him all kinds of neat maneuvers with the ball. He then told them, “The best way to pass a basketball is so it can be caught.” If younger generations of seekers cannot ‘catch’ the gospel when sent to them, our sermons, exhortations and lessons are in vain. The People of the Screen, like any missionary field, need to understand and experience good news in their own language. 🍷

- Rev. Dick Faris is a retired pastor and lives in Charlottesville.



## Tweets heard ‘round the conference

- McKennon Shea @McKennon**  
Conference presenter is wearing a three-piece suit and pocket watch. But no tie. Does that make him business casual?
- The Iron Chief @EVaudt**  
Retired from the #Navy 9 years ago. I stopped rising before the sun. This morning, my 18-month old granddaughter had other ideas.
- Lindsey Baynham @LMBaynham**  
Just had to group hug it out with SPRC chair and lead pastor.
- Daniel Wray @WrayDaniel**  
Why is the difference between lose and loose so hard for people?
- Hannah Lambert @hannahbanana004**  
I plan on marrying a man who will happily sleep on the edge of the bed with no covers because the puppy and I will be bed hogs.
- Patti Money @pattimoney**  
It’s a good thing that my DS has her own special ring tone. That way, I know when to race to the phone. #21stcenturyministry
- Emily Stallings @emyh0pe**  
My sister comes home tonight and she still doesn’t know we turned her room into a media center
- Neill Caldwell @NeillCaldwell**  
The new Kroger’s on Staples Mill Road is so big it has a Food Lion in it.
- Neill Caldwell @NeillCaldwell**  
I always looked up to Mickey Rooney.





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