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The Virginia United Methodist

November 2012

Advocate

*Behold,
I am doing a
NEW
thing;
now it
springs
forth.*

ISAIAH 43:19

Introducing five new initiatives in the Virginia Conference

FROM THE EDITOR



Neill Caldwell
Editor

New
every
morning?
Fresh
ways to
serve
God



My church has a brochure container in one corner

where we keep information on ministries pertaining to the Virginia Conference. I noticed the other day that we still have some of the original “All Things New” brochures there, which is appropriate because “All Things New” continues to be our key conference strategy for all that we do.

Still, the brochures are a bit wrinkled. It seems like “New” has been around a while. “All Things New” was officially adopted at the 2008 Annual Conference, but was developing even before that, as it came out of the “250 Task Force” report that was approved in 2007, which in turn stemmed from a motion approved at 2006 Annual Conference asking for the task force be created. So while “All Things New” no longer has that new car smell, it’s reminding us that all that God supports can be “a new thing.”

This issue contains articles about things that are new to the conference, either in development stage, just getting off the ground, or maybe even whatever comes before that. There’s a new partnership that the conference Wellness Ministries team will make available starting Jan. 1. ... A prison ministry that has shown great success and is now expanding to other annual conferences. ... An anti-poverty initiative that seeks to help people from the group up rather than the top down. ... And a clergy-led effort to create more space for listening to God (and less for telling God what to do). (Not to mention a NEW bishop, who contributes his first article this month!)

In addition, we are including the “All Things New” report as presented during 2012 Annual Conference, as requested in a motion from the floor.

Spotlighting new things that we will be hearing about in coming months seems to be a good thing to do as we wind down one year and get ready for a new one. But it’s also good to have a refresher on “All Things New,” which positions us to be fruitful by both starting new faith communities and revitalizing established congregations.

Transforming the culture of our conference into a culture of fruitfulness is no small task. In four years, the conference has been able to start more than two dozen new faith communities, which is a wonderful thing. At the same time, the conference has worked to provide resources to existing churches that seek to become renewed settings for ministry, to provide leadership training – especially for young leaders in the church, to provide support for congregations to reach their Vital Congregations goals, and to help our boards and agencies align their mission and structure to work toward the goal of having a cohesive, unified mission, rather than a lot of multiple visions.

Our Connectional Ministry staff prays daily for the churches of our conference and for our mission together with this prayer that can be found in our United Methodist Hymnal: “New every morning is your love, great God of light, and all day long you are working for good in the world. Stir up in us desire to serve you, to live peacefully with our neighbors, and to devote this day to your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.”

Each day is a new day, a gift full of new opportunities to serve the Lord. Let’s make the most of them. 🌱

Neill Caldwell

Connecting with the



VirginiaAdvocate

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Advertising/Tributes

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Local Church News

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

Letters

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

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What is a Minister?

The people called United Methodists are among the most caring of people throughout this planet Earth.

Yet, the more one reads its literature, the more one learns of new programs and new efforts trying to serve both Christians and unbelievers. We clergy continue to identify ourselves with Christ, to discover our pastoral ministry in leading local churches entrusted to us.

My wife, Martha, grew up in a faithful family in a local Presbyterian Church. Its *Book of Church Order* spells out clearly who the "Min-

ister of the Word" is and does:

"Scripture gives different titles for (the minister's) various duties:

As he [or she] has oversight of the flock of Christ, he is termed bishop.

As he feeds them with spiritual food, he is termed pastor.

As he serves Christ in the Church, he is termed minister.

As he is to be a prudent example to the flock, and govern well in the house of Christ's kingdom, he is termed elder.

As he is sent to declare the will of God to sinners, and to

beseech them to be reconciled to God through Christ, he is termed ambassador.

As he bears the glad tidings of salvation, he is termed evangelist.

As he stands to proclaim the gospel, he is termed preacher.

As he expounds the Word by sound doctrine, he is termed teacher.

As he dispenses the manifold grace of God, and the ordinances instituted by Christ, he is termed Steward of the mysteries of God.

All these titles describe one and the same officer."

-C. Warner Crumb,
Retired elder, Roanoke

Metrics should be a tool for learning, not judging

The current "Vital Congregations" focus on setting numerical goals for ministry and reporting on the results is not new, though it is now greatly expanded. In the past, virtually all the goals churches set had to do with money. The most obvious example is the annual budget. A budget is a goal that the church works all year to achieve, monitors the results closely, and reports regularly on progress in achieving the goal. Usually no one in the congregation gives more attention to monitoring and achieving those goals than the pastor. The same attention now is being given to some people categories, but the concept is essentially the same.

This expansion of goals, monitoring, and reporting, however, could easily miss the point as we have often done with finances. Any time the conversations turn to setting goals, many people think of such efforts as a way to set a standard on which they must eventually report and by which they will be judged. That may happen, but it should not be the primary use for such metrics. The most important benefit of defining numerical goals is that the goals become the opportunity to shape planning that your church already needs. Such goal setting works even better if you do not try to do everything at the same time, but rather select those areas around which there is both need and passion.

Progress comes when we have a goal toward which we are moving. Pixar storyboard artist Emma Coats recently shared "The 22 Rules of Storytelling, according to Pixar." One of the rules is to "come up with the ending before you figure out the middle." It does not help to begin talking about "what we should do" until we have a clear definition of what we want our activities to accomplish. Our focus on setting targets and planning to reach them does not suggest that our goals will capture all we hope to accomplish. The Spirit works in amazing ways to accomplish more than any statistics can ever reflect, but usually the Spirit accomplishes those unexpected signs and wonders when we are generating our own holy energy through prayer and hard work.

Do reporting and do it honestly, but never think reporting is the true purpose of your efforts. The numbers you report may show you reached or exceeded your goals. They are just as likely to show that you missed your goals. Remember that most churches do not achieve 100 percent of their budget goals each year; but that does not keep them from setting new budget goals for the next year, working




Commentary by
LOVETT H.
WEEMS JR.

hard to achieve the goals, monitoring the results diligently, and reporting the results.

The real benefit of the results you report comes from what you learned from the results. Perhaps you set a goal to reach 60 children in Sunday School, and you fell short. But if you learned that the teachers need more training, that worship and Sunday School need to be coordinated better, that you need teams of teachers, and that your age groupings are too broad, your "failure" may be the beginning of fruitfulness that will benefit children for years to come.

"But won't the pastor and congregation of such a church be judged negatively for coming up short on the goal?" you may be asking. If you can identify what you have learned (which shows you are paying attention), name the changes made from those learnings (which shows you intend to improve), and illustrate that progress has been made despite falling short of the original goal (which shows you are acting on the right learnings), I cannot imagine anyone would judge your church negatively. Whenever there are conversations to review numbers, whether within the congregation or with denominational leaders, always insist that prior to the conversation everyone have both the numbers and a narrative of the learnings thus far, changes made or planned where necessary, and progress from any of those changes.

Success is not a biblical concept; fruitfulness is. Fruitfulness always holds within it the important passion for faithfulness, for no genuine and lasting fruitfulness is possible without such faithfulness. But fruitfulness also captures a comparable passion for repeated biblical mandates to bear fruit.

Fruitfulness is vastly different from success. Goals help fruitfulness, but fruitfulness does not require attainment of all our goals. Fruitfulness is not about personal or congregational glory but the advancement of God's reign. Church leaders care about results because results are ways to go beyond merely doing good ministry to active participation in God's hope for all to experience the abundant life revealed in Jesus Christ. 

-The Rev. Dr. Lovett Weems Jr. is director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C.



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The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

Large crowd celebrates, welcomes Bishop Cho

Hundreds of United Methodists and friends celebrated the start of Bishop Young Jin Cho's leadership of the Virginia Conference in a special service at Reveille United Methodist Church in Richmond Sept. 22.

The service was a true celebration of Bishop Cho, who was elected out of the conference and returned to Virginia in an unusual assignment. There was lots of music, as the choirs from Reveille and Korean UMC of Greater Washington, the McLean church Cho served before he was appointed to the Cabinet, each sang an anthem, and came together at the end of the service for Handel's "Hallelujah" chorus. The Rev. Hung Il Moon, pastor of Urbanna UMC, sang a solo, and Rafael Scarfullery played a classical piece on the guitar.

The Rev. Jonathan Barton, General Minister of the Virginia Council of Churches, extended greetings from the ecumenical community.

Most of Bishop Cho's family was present, including a brother and sister-in-law who had flown in from Korea for the occasion.

Representatives from across the conference presented Cho with the traditional symbols of episcopal ministry, from a shepherd's staff to a copy of *The Book of Discipline*.

The most moving moment of the service came when

Bishop Cho knelt to wash the feet of Lucy Thompson, a fifth-grade student from Reveille.

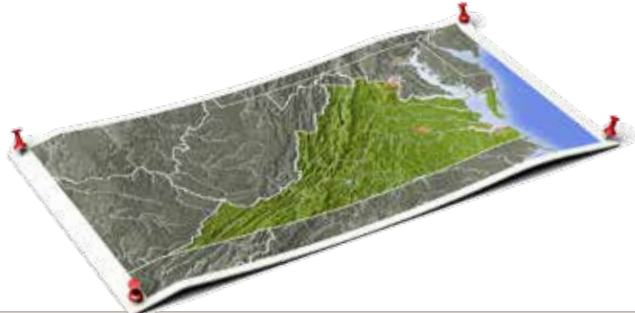
In his response to the "Charge to the Bishop," delivered by retired Bishop Hasbrouck Hughes, the man who said he wanted to be known as the "Praying Bishop" spoke a lot about prayer, saying that we must, from time to time, "call 'time-out' to consult with God."

"We should begin (each day) on our knees in prayer," Cho said. "In prayer we are changed, transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Our prayer movement is spreading online, and many churches are taking part. That is a good sign. But this prayer movement must last more than one hundred days. We must pray for our churches, and for the future revival of The United Methodist Church."

Cho had asked, at the time of his election, all lay and clergy members of the Virginia Conference to fast and to pray an hour each day in the first 100 days from the start of his active service, which began Sept. 1.

He suggested that some had complained that an hour of prayer each day might be too much for the average person to do.

"How much time do we spend in front of our computers or TV screens?," Cho asked. "Can we not devote one hour each day in fellowship with God? If we love the Lord, then we should have no problem spending an hour each day with God. When I was dating (my wife) Kiok, one hour a day with her was never enough. Jesus does not ask Peter 'do you believe in me?' but 'do you love me?' If we love God, one hour will be a joy, not a burden."



'If we love God, one hour will be a joy, not a burden.'

Bishop Cho washes the feet of Lucy Thompson, a fifth-grade student who is a member at Reveille UMC, as part of the service.



All God's Children Campers let their lights shine

During an amazing camp experience at Camp Highroad, Occohannock on the Bay, and Westview on the James, 125 campers, all with an incarcerated mother or father, began to realize that God loves them and that they are truly children of God.

One hundred mentors surrounded the campers with love and cared for their daily needs while walking out their faith. More than 30 staff members led Bible study, crafts, Harmony (conflict resolution and anti-bullying), music, boating, fishing, horseback riding, water trampoline, archery and other activities.

A caregiver of two campers recently wrote: "I would just like to personally thank you, The United Methodist Church, and all staff, volunteers and camp organizers. Both girls expressed what a great experience the camp was. When I asked them to tell me about their experience, they said we 'prayed a lot, prayed before doing everything, it was a good way to learn about God and appreciate others; we learned about nature and had lots of fun activities and learned about

nature.' They really enjoyed the swimming! What I found most profound was my camper's response when I asked what she thought the benefit of the camp was; her response was 'to never doubt myself.' Just know I've always felt that it truly takes a village to raise a child, but in today's society several villages are required and we are so grateful that All God's Children Camp was a part of their villages!!!"

This week of refuge is made possible by each volunteer and generous donations.

On the last evening of Camp Occohannock, each person was given a cupcake with a candle to remind them to let God's light shine through them as they go into this world. Remember each of these campers throughout the year that their light may shine with the love of God wherever they may go.

Check our web page (www.vaumc.org/agcc) and "like" our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/allgodschil-drencamp) for updates on how you can participate in this ministry next summer.

-Casey Torrence is the Director of AGC Camp

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

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The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Students at Virginia Conference colleges pack 180,000 meals for Stop Hunger Now



did not!

In May, students at Randolph-Macon Academy led the effort, packaging more than 20,000 meals. Students and staff at Shenandoah came through in August with another 20,000. But Ferrum College, by packaging 109,500 meals on Sept. 2, put us over the mark of the 142,360 meals needed to fill a single smaller container.

An event scheduled in October at Randolph Macon College will add to the total, as they are scheduled to package 30,000 meals in partnership with Duncan Memorial UMC.

Next year we hope to bring Randolph College and Virginia Wesleyan College to the effort. Our goal is to have everyone packaging on the same day, with live stream video in each location, to ramp up the spirit of competition. And packaging a large container of 285,120 meals would be even better!

This "container challenge" model is being used successfully in both of the Georgia annual conferences, and we want to see this spread as we tap into that competitive spirit on campuses across the country.

For more information about the University Program of Stop Hunger Now, contact me at jrivero@stophungernow.org.

-The Rev. Jan Rivero is director of University Relations for Stop Hunger Now.



By Jan Rivero

College students love a challenge. For many, competition is part of the university experience. Whether it's on the athletic field or in the classroom, students are eager to "raise the bar" for one another. So it was a natural fit for Stop Hunger Now to consider a "container challenge," an opportunity for the Virginia United Methodist-related schools to challenge one another in service.

In a conversation with Tracy Fitzsimmons, the president of Shenandoah University, I pitched the idea of a "container challenge," where each of the schools would take a share of a truck load of meals to package, then those meals would all be combined into one shipment to be sent to one of our partner organizations that serves school feeding programs.

The idea resonated with the leaders at the other schools, but resources were stretched, and the notion of schools competing in service lost momentum. But the commitment to feeding the hungry

Ferrum College students and community members are learning the meaning of the college's motto "Not Self, But Others" by working together to package 108,000 meals for the hungry in a campus Stop Hunger Now event.

Calling 21 program helps focus student's call to ministry

By Emily Ehr Gott

My Calling 21 experience has led me on a journey that I never would have imagined possible a year ago. I have felt called to be a music therapist since I was a junior in high school, but it's been very recently that I have thought about the order of Deacon in The United Methodist Church.

I found the Calling 21 program through Shenandoah University and was placed at Williamsburg UMC. When I started the program, all I knew was that I would like working in a church and it would be fun to go somewhere else for the summer. I didn't realize how transformative the whole experience would be and how much being thrown into that environment would teach me how much I loved to be a leader in the church ... and that I could forge my own path.

At the beginning of the Calling 21 internship, I had the chance to build relationships with other college students who would also be embarking on the same kind of local church experience. For four days we explored communication, were challenged to take a risk, and learned about practical skills such as preaching and preparing for Bible studies. These four days allowed me to develop friendships with others who would be having similar experiences and provide me with a support group of Christian peers.

We also gathered together mid-way through the summer to check in with each other and reflect on our experiences.



Pictured above: Rev. Justin White, Pleasant Valley UMC (Arlington); Emily Ehr Gott, served at Williamsburg UMC (York River); Maggie Nave, served at Spirit and Life UMC (Alexandria); Nathan Anderson, served at St. John's UMC (Eastern Shore); Laura Fanizza, served at St. Luke's UMC (York River); Joanna Johnson, served at Basic UMC (Staunton); Kyle Markwalter, served at Braddock Street UMC (Winchester); Emma Johnson; Joshua Hagstrom served at St. Luke's UMC (York River).

Throughout my time in Williamsburg, I had the opportunity to participate in many different aspects of worship and church life. I taught the music for Vacation Bible School, helped with music camp, preached, taught Sunday school, wrote liturgy, went on retreat, went to meetings and simply talked with people. However, I think my most rewarding experience was doing music sessions for the Respite Care center at the church. I was able to use my music therapy training in a church environment, which inspired me to reflect on my call to ministry.

I was so glad that I was able to experience many different kinds of ministry because at the beginning of my experience, I was not sure where I was called to work in the church. I now know that I am not called to work with older children or youth; I enjoy working with older adults much more than I thought I would; and I still love working with young children. Also, I learned that I absolutely love working on and organizing local

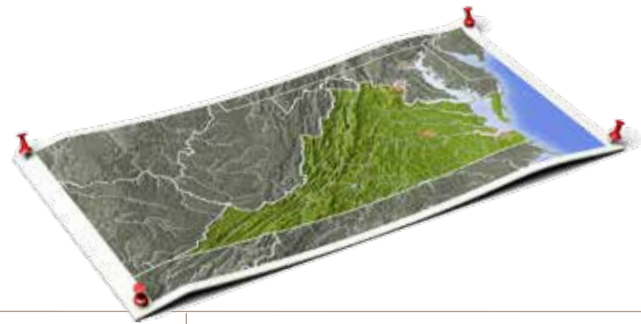
outreach projects, which I would not have had the chance to do in a local church setting unless I had been an intern this summer.

In addition to experiencing a whole new church environment, I also stayed with a host family during my stay in Williamsburg. It was encouraging to be able to interact with a new family and have them show me around town and to see how hospitable the church was to all its neighbors. My host family truly adopted me as part of their family for the summer. We went on mini-vacations together, went to the beach, and supported each other when needed. I'm so glad that a host family is a part of the Calling 21 process because it teaches humility, patience, and support through the process.

After my summer serving as a Calling 21 intern, I have felt my call as a music therapist strengthened and I have made the official decision to seek ordination as a Deacon.

-Emily Ehr Gott is a junior at Shenandoah University.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Church brings cyclists together



By Bill Lohman

We sat in the cool of the evening – or what passes for it these days – and chatted outside Willis United Methodist Church in Varina.

I drove a half-hour across town to be here; Evin Thompson and Volkher Schlegel pedaled their bicycles approximately 4,000 miles. I let them have the seats at the picnic table.

Thompson, 52, a retired Navy SEAL, was on the verge of completing the Astoria, Ore.-to-Yorktown TransAmerica Trail, while Schlegel, 69, visiting from Germany, had already finished his cross-country journey and was riding toward Washington to catch a flight home. Before this evening, they had never met.

But that's how it goes at Willis. You never know whom you're going to see at the historic church that once served as a field hospital during the Civil War – the Seven Days Battle raged around it – and now welcomes healthy but justifiably weary cyclists.

The church, which sits peacefully amid fields and woods and just down the road from Glendale National Cemetery, is on Willis Church Road – on the route of the TransAmerica Trail. A day's ride from Yorktown, the church

is a popular stopover for cyclists just starting their journey or about to finish it.

The church has opened its doors to cyclists for years, offering a roof and a cool (or warm, depending on the season) place to unroll their sleeping bags. Bikers can sleep in Sunday school rooms or the fellowship hall, cook in the kitchen and enjoy the solitude of the sanctuary. When a couple of large groups passed through this spring, church members prepared a spaghetti dinner for the visitors and listened to stories from the road.

"It's been a really interesting part of our ministry," said the Rev. Mark Rooks, the Willis pastor. "We are blessed to be able to serve people, and churches do that in all kinds of ways. We serve these people by offering them hospitality. As a person of faith, you receive a certain amount of blessing from being able to do that."

"It's not about raising money or trying to get new people to join our church because we'll never see most of these people again. But that's what makes it such a good ministry because it's not about any of that. It's just about sharing the love of Christ – just being welcoming and open."

Scores of cyclists stop at Willis every year: young and old, big groups

and riders traveling solo. This year, the first rider came through in April, heading west; the final cyclist of 2011, traveling east, arrived in December. The only thing the church asks is that the cyclists sign the guestbook, which is filled with names from faraway places and lots of gratitude.

"Thanks so much for your Christian hospitality," wrote Joe Culpepper, a retired Disciples of Christ minister from Illinois, on May 16, having stopped at the end of his first day of his ride west. I caught up with him weeks later by email – he was pedaling through Wyoming over the weekend – and he raved about the churches and hostels that had offered shelter.

"All of these places ... provide such a warm welcome, sense of community pride and genuine caring that boosts our morale on this arduous trek," he said.

Thompson arrived at Willis after a day of pedaling more than 80 miles through heat, humidity and rain. He was glad not to have to pitch a tent, as he had most nights on his 10-week journey. Along the way, he also spent three nights at volunteer fire departments, a couple in motels (including one in Wyoming during a snowstorm) and perhaps eight in churches – including one in Kentucky where the pastor and his wife invited him to dinner on the evening before he turned 52 and sang "Happy Birthday."

"How can you beat that?" said Thompson, an Iowa native who served 34 years in the Navy and has dreamed of making the trip since the trail was established in 1976. "It's been an amazing experience. The people of America are just so honest, friendly, good, caring. It's very refreshing."

Thompson and Schlegel, who has ridden long bicycle tours around the world each of the last 15 years, showed up at Willis on the same week of vacation Bible school, so as

(Continued on pg. 27, "Cyclists")

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

5 Talent Academy encourages people to be "doers of the Word"



Dr. Alan Rice

The Rev. Dr. Alan Rice, whose call to serve the impoverished among us is just as strong as his call to serve God as a pastor, made an impassioned plea for congregations in the Virginia Conference to be "doers of the Word" when it comes to helping the poor Oct. 2 at the 5 Talent Academy.

Rice is the executive director of Rural Faith Development, an agency in the Western North Carolina Conference focused on faith-based community development. He also is pastor at Crossfire UMC, a church that primarily serves bikers in and around Wilkesboro, N.C.. Rice wore jeans and a leather vest for his 5 Talent presentation. "I drive a white Fatboy (motorcycle) to church," he said, "which is good, because I am a white fat boy."

The event was notable for being the first teaching session of the second cycle of the 5 Talent Academy, an element of the "All Things New" Virginia Conference strategy that focuses on planting new faith communities and lifting up congregations that are already established. About 75 churches are signed up so far for round two; more than 110 completed the first cycle of six teaching sessions.

The event was also notable because the content was "cybercast" to multiple locations around the conference, another new element. Dr. Rice and Bishop Young Jin Cho spoke at Floris UMC in Herndon, but participants listened and watched at sites in Roanoke, Richmond, Tidewater, the Eastern Shore and the Shenandoah

Valley. At lunch time, participants heard about local church's mission efforts with the poor, then broke up into peer groups to process what they'd heard.

Bishop Young Jin Cho preached for the opening worship, reminding listeners that he had grown up in poverty and had dropped out of high school because of not having enough money to pay for his education.

"We are helped and changed by our ministry with the poor," said Cho, who added that because we are faith-based, we must do more than an agency like the Red Cross. "In Christ we have a reason that we do this ministry. We have a story to tell to the nations. If we share only bread, and not the bread of life, our efforts will not be sufficient."

Bishop Cho described a feeding ministry in South Korea that provides food to thousands of people each

day. It was started 24 years ago when a single person made contact with a homeless man lying on the cold floor of the local train station and took the starving man to get something to eat. A group of about two dozen Virginia Conference pastors volunteered at the ministry one day last year while on a trip to Korea.

Cho reminded the audience that Jesus was homeless. In his presentation, Rice talked about Jesus' strong connection with the poor. "The Bible says again and again that Jesus went to Bethany, a small town close to Jerusalem," Rice said. "Bethany means 'House of the Poor.' It was literally the 'poor house' for the great city of Jerusalem. Jesus goes there to spend time with people who are living in poverty."

Rice said that John Wesley, too, had an almost complete focus on helping the poor, who made up about 80 percent of the population of England in Wesley's time. "It was Wesley's passion," Rice said. "He spent at least two days of every week just being with them. He preached to them in the

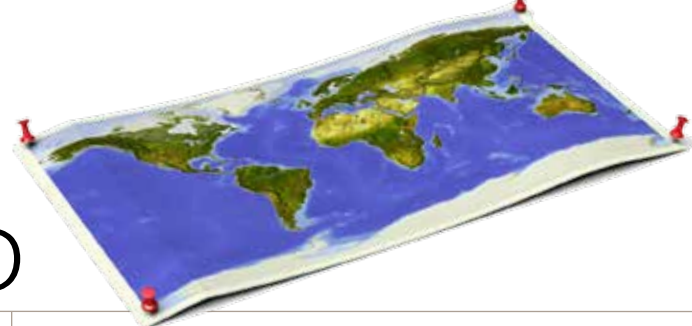
(Continued on pg. 31, "5 Talent")



Members of the praise band at Flores UMC



Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD



N.Y. Giants defensive standout puts God first

By Barbara Dunlap-Berg

It's hard to understand what success is if you've never seen it," said New York Giants defensive tackle Chris Canty. "It's hard to understand what accountability is if you've never seen it. It's hard to understand what responsibility is if you've never seen it."

His mom, the Rev. Shirley Canty, a United Methodist pastor in the Western North Carolina Conference, has more reason to be proud of her son than his big win.

Chris Canty grew up United Methodist. His mother remembers leaving for a clergy convocation when her son was about 6. Chris was thrilled the bishop would be there. "Could you ask the bishop if I could be your junior pastor?" he asked. That commitment to the church stuck.

While a professional football career means he cannot make it to church every Sunday, he shares his love for Jesus Christ in other ways.

Four years ago, he created a football camp for youth at his alma mater, Charlotte Latin School in North Carolina. That venture — which has involved 1,000 youths since its inception — was the seed that blossomed into the Chris Canty Foundation.

Mentors are an essential facet of the foundation as they model success, accountability and responsibility.

"We try to put people in their lives that can demon-

strate those attributes and then, in turn, get kids to implement those characteristics in their own lives, where they take up the mantle and (become) responsible, accountable, productive citizens," he said. "That's something I definitely want to pass down to the next generation of youth."

Reaching out is high on Canty's agenda.

"God has blessed me with a tremendous platform to be able to influence young minds," he said. "I have a passion for working with kids. I just try to utilize the platform of athletics positively to influence their lives in any way I can."

"We've been able to broaden our network and stretch into some other programs, both in the Charlotte area as well as New York and New Jersey metropolitan areas," Canty said. The foundation works with city police and fire departments as well as an after-school enrichment program.

"We stretch our arms in a lot of different directions," Canty noted. "But our focus is influencing kids and steering them in a positive direction." He forged a partnership with a Charlotte university and area schools to recruit children and youths for a community-cleanup project. "It's very exciting to be a part of that initiative," he said.

Canty didn't participate in sports until his junior year in high school. But those teen years on the basketball court and the football field helped him lead his team to a state championship in 1999. After a successful gridiron experience at the University of Virginia, where he majored in African-American studies, he was drafted by the Dallas Cowboys in 2005. Four years later, he joined the Giants.

His faith has sustained him every step of the way, Canty said.

"It's sustained me throughout the ebbs and flows, the ups and downs of, not only my professional career, but (also) my personal life. That's the one constant that has allowed me to continue to press forward throughout all the adversity I've faced and all the challenges life has thrown my way."

He strives to give back to the church that has nurtured him. "I'm excited about the football camp I'm going to host as a part of a youth retreat for The United Methodist Church this summer," he said.

A supportive family — his parents and two older brothers — is a blessing as well.

"My dad never misses a game," Canty said. "I'm thankful to have him there. On Saturday evenings, we always do dinner. It's a time for us to spend some father-son time and catch up on the week's events." His father, Joseph Canty, owns a construction business.

Both parents have been involved in community ministries throughout their careers.

"I have a passion for working with kids. I just try to utilize the platform of athletics positively to influence their lives in any way I can."

Canty also is grateful for his mother's support. "I always tell her (that) her job is much more important than my job," he said. "So I don't mind her not being able to come to football games because she's doing something more important. She's saving souls." And when her schedule permits her to go to a game, he said, "It's always special to have her in the stands."

Shirley and Joseph Canty, who met at United Methodist-related Claflin University in Orangeburg, S.C., were their son's loudest cheerleaders at the Super Bowl.

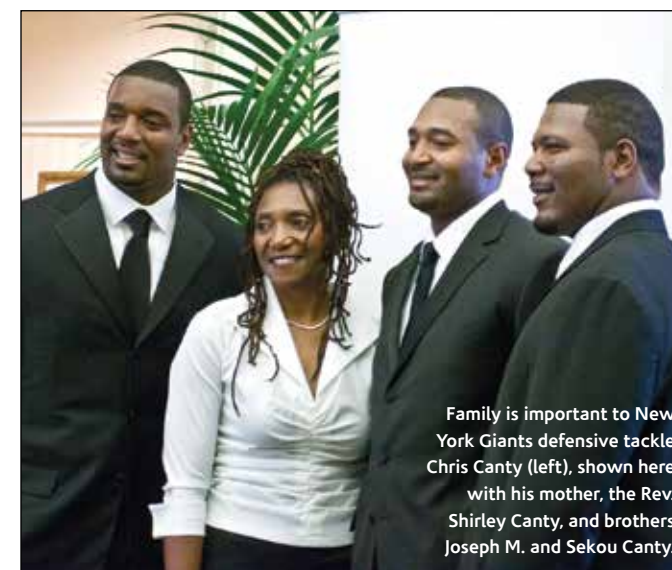
The game "was awesome from beginning to end," an enthusiastic Shirley said. "The team just came together — and I got to see that!"

And number 99 is still euphoric about the Giants' victory. "I'm just enjoying every moment of it, embracing it," Canty said. "I'm just trying to enjoy it and soak it all in."

How does Canty envision life after football?

"Obviously football is always going to remain a special part of my life," he said, "even though I might not be able to continue to play. I plan to stay close to the game, whether it (is) coaching younger kids, commentating or being an analyst. But my passion is to work with kids, so I think I will continue to do that and be more involved in philanthropic efforts of that nature."

—Barbara Dunlap-Berg, United Methodist Communications



Family is important to New York Giants defensive tackle Chris Canty (left), shown here with his mother, the Rev. Shirley Canty, and brothers Joseph M. and Sekou Canty.

EVENTS



NOVEMBER

Meeting Your Vital Congregation Goals training

Nov. 11: Cave Spring UMC, Roanoke District

The Cabinet and Virginia Conference staff continue the Vital Congregations events, which are separate from the regular district training days. Nearly 600 people participated in the five training events held in April and May. Workshops will be offered in key areas of vitality including worship, mission, small groups and invitation.

New Church Leadership Institute

Nov. 13-15: United Methodist Center, Glen Allen

The training event will help clergy and laity discern whether church planting is a part of their call. This event is being sponsored by the conference Center for Congregational Excellence and will be led by Jim Griffith. You can register online at www.vaumc.org/NCLIRegistration.

Lake Junaluska Multicultural Conference

Nov. 29-Dec. 1: Lake Junaluska, N.C.

The 2012 Multicultural Conference will explore the changing racial, ethnic and cultural demographics of our country that are moving towards a population that is majority racial-ethnic. In light of this fast-approaching demographic change, how do we create a church in which all people feel welcome? This conference will provide thought-provoking cultural competency training for clergy and laity, enhancing their ability to serve as leaders within diverse churches and changing communities. Leadership includes Bishop Melvin Talbert, Bishop Linda Lee and Bill Cruse. For more information and to register, visit www.lakejunaluska.com/multicultural.

DECEMBER

Winter Camp

Dec. 7-9: Camp Westview on the James

For 7- to 15-year-olds. Join Westview counselors for a weekend of cold weather fun. With a variety of camp activities, both camp favorites as well as winter-themed activities, this weekend gives campers a getaway and gives parents the chance to catch up on holiday chores. We will play, celebrate and worship with a focus on the Advent season and what it means to wait for Jesus' birth. Visit www.westviewonthejames.org for more information or to register, or call (804) 457-4210.

(Continued on pg. 15, "Events")



Canty celebrates after a sack in the Super Bowl.

LOCAL CHURCH NEWS



▲ Children at the United Methodist Agricultural School in Angol, Chile, are pleased with the new mattresses that were delivered to them recently. The “Jump on the Mattress” project was led by Robert Baker and members of **Main Street UMC in Suffolk**. After months of planning and collecting contributions, mattresses have arrived at their destination. Main Street UMC has a covenant relationship with missionary John Elmore. Several mission teams from the church have gone to Chile to work.



▲ This “house band” is a crowd pleaser! The Lydia Roper Home, part of the Virginia United Methodist Homes, is unique among assisted living communities in that it has its very own band. For more than three years, the Roper Home Band has been playing monthly for the residents. Volunteer

musicians from **Messiah UMC in Chesapeake** and other local churches bring their acoustic and electric guitars, electric bass, ukulele, drums and voices on the third Saturday of each month, entertaining the senior citizens for two hours with song sets of popular sing-along standards as well as traditional country songs, rhythm and blues hits and favorite hymns. Spontaneous dancing, toe-tapping and smiles abound as the Roper Home Band makes a joyful noise and shares the gift of music.



▲ **Farmville UMC's MOPS** (Mothers of Preschoolers) recently took on a service project called “Plunge!” The MOPS group took this “Plunge” into service by packing 50 family-sized Thanksgiving food bags and 50 individual-sized lunch bags for local people who go hungry each day.



▲ **Centenary UMC** recently held a dedication

service for a new outdoor basketball court in memory of church member Laura Gayle Snoddy Davis. Farmville District Superintendent the Rev. Robert Parks and his wife, Susan, joined the church family on this special occasion. Pictured, back row (from left): Rev. Parks, the Rev. Brant Hays, Wayne Snoddy, Sam Davis, John Schlichting; front: Susan Parks, Barbara Hays, Sharon Black-Snoddy, Nancy Schlichting; background: Jessica Schlichting.

For the second year in a row the local United Methodist community eagerly participated in the Lousia County Fair. Booths, organized by **Louisa UMC**, offered rest, fans, water and information for all and games for the little ones. It was again a great success. There were plenty of smiling helpers from all area United Methodist churches.



▲ **United Methodists in the Roanoke Valley** and beyond were blessed as they worshiped together at a Roanoke District youth-sponsored event, “SoZo – Worship in the Park.” “SoZo” is the Greek word for rescued. The celebration took place in the down-

town Elmwood Park and featured a band called The Museum. Beyond the fellowship and music was the backdrop of worship and hospitality shared with anyone who happened to stop by. Admission was free, but those who were able were asked to bring a new pillow to be donated to the Roanoke Rescue Mission. More than 300 pillows were collected.



▲ **Memorial UMC in Appomattox** recently hosted a community Open House in celebration of the opening of the church's new multi-purpose building, Legacy Hall. Friday evening featured homemade ice cream and John Sines in concert. Saturday there was a volleyball tournament, children's activities, a soup competition/supper and concerts by Witness and Norman Ramsey. Sunday featured a special worship service and luncheon, a basketball tournament and dodge ball for the youths. In September, a new program called “20/20 Vision” was started for young adults.

The September mission project at **Epworth UMC in Aylett** was to raise funds for Nothing But Nets. The

majority of the funds raised were thanks to a lot of picking and shelling done by church members Pat and Barbara Reed, who raised butterbeans for the project, picked them, shelled them and bagged them for sale. Their labor of love “netted” more than \$400 to help Nothing But Nets, a United Methodist-supported ministry that provides inexpensive bed nets to help protect children around the world from mosquitoes and malaria.



▲ Members and guests at **St. Matthias UMC, Fredericksburg District**, were blessed to have breads representing various nations on display on the altar for World Communion Sunday.



▲ On Sept. 23, children of **Sandbridge Community Chapel UMC** took advantage of a promise made by their pastor, the Rev. Dr. Clyde DeLoach, who promised that if they raised \$500 for mission through

his “Treasure Chest,” he would allow them to shave his head. The kids had a lot of fun making good on the promise. All the money is earmarked for missions; part has already been used to help people in Honduras.

Greenwood UMC, on Greenwood Road in Glen Allen, started a new idea during the month of October: a drive-through for prayer. The ministry is offered each Monday morning from 6 to 8, with volunteers on hand to listen and pray with those who stop by.

(“Events,” continued from pg. 13)

Be the Gift!
Dec. 26-Jan.5: Nassau, Bahamas

The Virginia Conference Council on Young Adults is sponsoring a mission trip to Nassau, where the group will serve two different orphanages and an AIDS camp. The event is open to all young adults across the conference. For more information, contact Rev. Jessie Squires at pastorjessiesquires@gmail.com.

JANUARY

Ministers' Convocation
Jan. 15-17: Blackstone Conference Center

The Theme for 2013 Ministers' Convocation is “Finding Hope... Bearing Hope.” The keynote speaker will be author Phyllis Tickle. The preacher for convocation will be the Rev. Carl Arrington. Bishop Young Jin Cho will preach at the opening service of Communion. There will be workshops including “Pastoral Care in Changing Times” by the Rev. Judy Hall and “Bringing Hope in the Midst of Crisis” by the Rev. David Canada. Continuing education units will be offered.

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Several 'new' efforts are getting up to speed in the Virginia Conference. Here's a look at a few of them:

Circles program aims to break the cycle of poverty

Those seeking a way out of the poverty cycle are the heart of the Circles campaign. As Circle leaders, they are the hub of the wheel, the place from which new connections and directions can radiate.

Graduating group of Circles participants in Anson County, N.C.



At age 32, Sonia Holycross has "been there, done that" – lived in a broken home and joined a gang. But through the Circles campaign, Holycross, a single parent of five and now an AmeriCorps volunteer, has patched her life together, becoming stronger in the broken places. "Circles is like mending a broken foundation with fresh cement," Holycross says.

Holycross's family forms one of 13 Circles in Troy, Ohio, participating in a Circles Campaign through Partners of Hope, an outgrowth of the Troy Council of Churches. Two of the 16 churches of the council are United Methodist: First UMC and Richards Chapel.

The United Methodist Church recently launched a pilot ministry to target poverty in three North Carolina counties: Anson, Wilkes and Yadkin. The General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM), partnering with the Western North Carolina Conference, has set a goal to help 75 families climb out of the cycles of poverty that have affect-

ed them for two or more generations. Using the Circles poverty-elimination model and training developed by Move the Mountain leadership center in Iowa, GBGM is launching the first of five global models of ministry that seek to eliminate poverty.

The hope is to soon extend this trial into Virginia. The Rev. Sherry Daniels has been working on a pilot program at Norfolk United Methodist Church, and there has been interest expressed from two other potential sites.

"Circles is a partnership that, from what I've seen, absolutely can eradicate poverty," says Jerald McKie, a GBGM associate general secretary working with community and institutional ministries. "It isn't a sweeping program – it goes family by family. A family in poverty that lacks the means to change becomes a Circle leader. Three to four Circle allies support the family. The process calls for allies to give of themselves – sometimes through material giving but more often through sharing the access to resources that the middle and upper classes take for granted but that poorer people lack. These three sites (in Western North Carolina) may become training centers for United Methodist community ministries in the rest of the United States."

The sites were a good choice for the pilot program because United Methodist community networks already operate in the conference. Global Ministries became involved in the campaign through one of its former directors, the Rev. Dr. Alan Rice, director of Rural Ministry and Community Development and the RFD Community Development Corporation for the Western North Carolina Conference.

The Circles campaign is set to

become an integral part of United Methodism's churchwide antipoverty focus.

Holycross is a survivor of generational poverty, a kind of entrenched poverty that might take years to alleviate. Another kind, situational poverty, happens as a result of job loss or a medical emergency and can usually be alleviated in a year, according to Circles research. The strategy behind Circles is to empower and connect people living in poverty through the currency of social capital.

The term "social capital" refers to social relationships as a means through which individuals and groups can access resources from other classes or social networks. Anthropologists have studied the existence of social capital within cultures around the world.

"If we can learn to stay connected to others, especially when problems come up that we were taught to solve by ourselves (like problems with money), then we can solve the problems more efficiently, while keeping our sense of humor intact," says Scott Miller, co-founder of Move the Mountain Leadership Center.

Those seeking a way out of the poverty cycle are the heart of the Circles campaign. As Circle leaders, they are the hub of the wheel, the place from which new connections and directions can radiate. Circle leaders do research, identify roadblocks, and direct their family's movement away from the grasp of poverty.

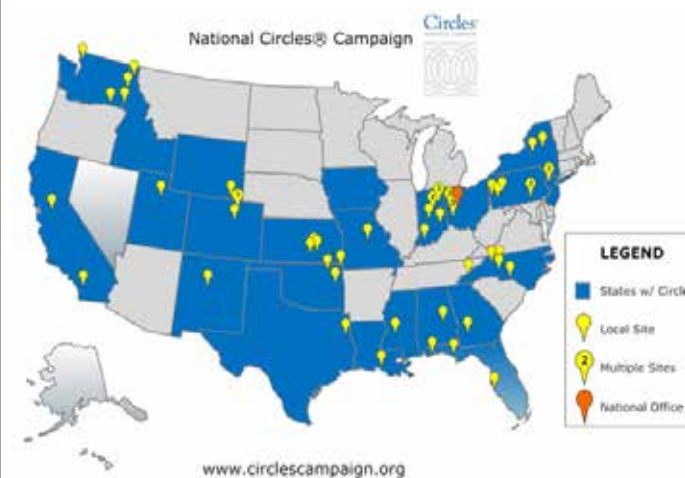
"Allies" volunteer to provide support, opportunities for networking, references, and other forms of assistance to Circle leaders. Circle leaders participate in a 13-week training course, for which they receive a stipend; they learn how to assess their needs, develop goals, and acquire resources. Circle leaders then meet weekly with allies and community members. Through support from allies, attendance at training events, and weekly meetings, leaders are empowered to make changes and transform their own lives. Successful Circle leaders then become allies in other circles.

Having to face any problem alone compounds its mis-



ery. The Circles campaign encourages community members to empathize with one another, alleviating the isolation that can cause and perpetuate poverty.

Circle allies contribute to their Circle leaders' lives by "journeying with" them, not "doing for" them. Those who live within middle- or upper-class communities have resources and social capital to spare and share.



Mary Beth Robertson was one of Holycross's four Circle allies. "When we went through the Bridges Out of Poverty training," Robertson said, "we allies were often told, 'You are not supposed to take on the role of authority or parent.' Even though I was told that, I thought, 'Surely they're mistaken.' But they were right. Sonia became my friend."

"Sonia and I are at opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of socioeconomic perspectives," Robertson added. "Yet we have so many similarities. Our dreams, our sense of humor, even many of our life experiences are similar."

Holycross agreed. "We grew close," she said. "Her life has not always been easy. She's been, at times, a single mother. She and my daughter are very close." One of the Holycross children has chronic health problems. Robertson is helping the teenager manage pain by teaching her yoga techniques. Circle allies often work in surprising ways.

Churches often contribute space for weekly Circle meetings, and initial training often takes place in churches. In addition, church members can serve as Circle allies.

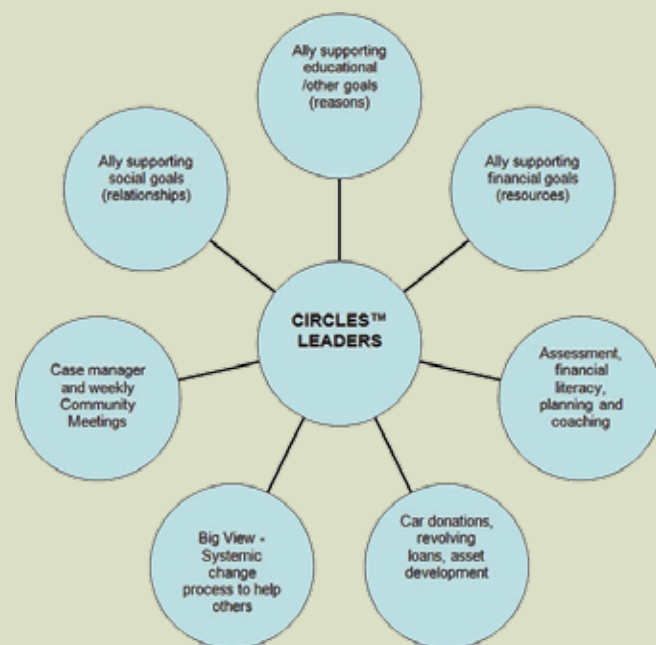
"The systems we have – governmental systems and even mercy ministries – don't eliminate poverty," McKie explained. "My hope would be to have a thousand families lifted out of poverty through the Circles Campaign and to have that accomplishment make some headlines – make a splash! I'm really impressed with the potential for transformation."

For more information, visit www.circlescampaign.org, www.movethemountain.org, or e-mail the Rev. Alan Rice at alan@rfdcdc.org.

-Mary Beth Coudal for the General Board of Global Ministries

(Continued on next page, "Circles")

("Circles," continued from previous page)



Circles is a strategy to help those in poverty transform their lives to be more stable and self-sufficient. Circles partners volunteers and community leaders with families wanting to make the journey out of poverty. Operating in communities around the country, each Circles initiative consists of families working to get out of poverty and several middle and upper income Allies who befriend them and lend support. The family is the Circle Leader, setting direction for activities. With the help and friendship of their allies, each family sets and achieves goals unique to their own needs. Rather than targeting a surface need of at-risk communities such as housing or food provision, Circles seeks to expand social capital by fostering relationships across racial and economic lines. It engages the community as a whole and encourages growth from people of all financial classes. Circles is designed to assist families in creating their own personal paths out of poverty while at the same time expanding opportunities, connections and eliminating barriers in the community that make it difficult for families to thrive.



Dr. Alan Rice talked about the Circles campaign as one of the best ways to lift people out of poverty.

New health care option provides additional services at no cost

By Charlie Reynolds

"You spoke, we listened."

With these words, former chair of the Virginia United Methodist Pensions' board (VUMPI) and acting Executive Director Betty Forbes introduced VUMPI's newest partnership to the Virginia Conference. "Through a comprehensive and detailed survey process, countless interviews, and personal discussions, our participants told us there were 14 things they needed to help them be well. Our new wellness partner, Health Advocate, Inc., manages to provide all 14. Of the nine plus years I have been associated with VUMPI, this is clearly our most exciting program to date!"

Forbes reported that effective July 1, all active clergy, lay employees and spouses enrolled in health plans sponsored by VUMPI would automatically be enrolled with Health Advocate, Inc. – a wellness firm based in Plymouth Meeting, Penn.

Health Advocate (HA) is neither an insurance company nor a health plan. HA is just what its name implies – a partner and wellness advocate providing a wide variety of services at no cost to plan participants. In addition to spouses, HA provides many of these same services to participants' children, parents and in-laws – at no additional cost. HA believes that wellness doesn't begin and end with the nuclear family. To help our participants and their families be well, we have expanded the circle.

The impressive menu of services provided by HA includes personalized wellness coaching, a benefit frequently requested by clergy. Participants simply call and request a coach, with whom they design a communication plan, work out a convenient contact schedule, and develop an individualized strategy designed to help them achieve their personal wellness goals. And, unlike some programs that restrict or limit contacts, HA's plan provides participants with unlimited access to their coaches.

In addition to coaching, HA offers assistance locating personal physicians, making appointments, optimizing health plan benefits and resolving billing issues.

Jeff Harlow, an expert in health plan design who has worked closely with VUMPI for more than 10 years, feels this is a critically important piece of the health and wellness puzzle.

"Almost 25 percent of our clergy move in any given year," he says. "Health Advocate can quickly provide our clergy and their spouses with a list of doctors in their new communities, and will even schedule appointments. This helps ensure clergy and their families don't go for extended periods of time without a personal physician and the regular routine procedures and medical care they need to be well."

In the case of parents and in-laws, HA provides assistance navigating the complex Medicare system, and making seniors (and their adult children) aware of available federal, state and faith-based programs in their local communities. During the Virginia Conference Health and Wellness Assessment, 42 percent of spouses of active clergy reported that caring for aging parents and in-laws was a source of stress to their family or their ministry. Our partnership with HA provides a great resource for seniors, and should prove exceptionally helpful to our clergy, lay employees, and their spouses as they help to care for those they love.

Beginning in January, a confidential, password-protected Personal Health Dashboard will provide every participant instant, comprehensive online access to their personal health information. The website also will deliver alerts about identified health risks and required preventive care. Also in January, HA will begin Personalized Health Messaging, designed to help families deal with and manage chronic conditions, and track regular diagnostic and preventive screenings – things like annual physicals, mammograms, and routine blood tests. Through the dashboard, coaches will be able to access a participant's health information, helping them to monitor an individual's progress and to adjust their personal wellness plan.

VUMPI's Board is so confident in this new wellness partnership they approved an incentivized personal premium schedule. This is an entirely new concept for our participants. It's important that we are offering a level playing field (where) we are rewarding behaviors, not outcomes.

While HA personal premium schedule is currently available only to active plan participants, VUMPI plans to make these services available to retired clergy, clergy on medical leave and surviving spouses.

For more information on Virginia Conference Wellness Ministries, visit www.vcwministries.org. Eligible plan participants may also contact Health Advocate at **1-866-799-2731**.

-The Rev. Charlie Reynolds is executive director of Virginia Conference Wellness Ministries.



New program can help lower personal health contributions

Beginning Jan. 1, active clergy, lay employees and their spouses enrolled in health plans sponsored by the conference's pensions and health benefits office will have the opportunity to significantly reduce their personal health contributions while improving their health and wellness, earning continuing education credits, and – perhaps most importantly – attending to their spiritual health.

This new plan, called "Wellness 100," has been developed by Virginia Conference Wellness Ministries (VCWM).

Bishop Young Jin Cho has encouraged clergy and laity to devote at least one hour per day to prayer as part of the daily practice of "spiritual discipline" – things John Wesley defined as the means of grace, including "works of piety," "searching the Scriptures," fasting, meditation, participation in Christian community and receiving the Lord's Supper.

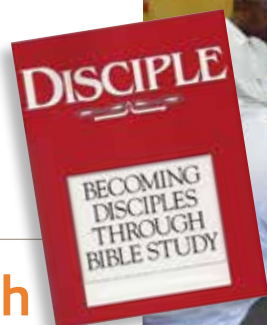
Lynn Rhein, conference Wellness Ministries' program director, believes spiritual health is a vitally important component of "Wellness 100." "From the beginning of this ministry," she notes, "Wellness Ministries has emphasized the centrality of spiritual health to wellness." Rhein said she is excited that Wellness 100 will allow participants to earn points pertaining to physical, emotional and spiritual health.

"Wellness 100" will require participants to accumulate 100 points, from January through October, to qualify for reduced personal premiums during the calendar year 2014. Half of those points will be earned by completing an annual physical – with an accompanying blood test – and completion of an online Health Risk Assessment. To earn the remaining points, participants, (active clergy, spouses, and lay employees) will choose from more than 20 activities and self-paced online workshops. Online workshops, through Health Advocate, will also count as continuing education equivalencies for active clergy.

The Rev. Janine Howard, Danville District Superintendent and a member of the VCWM Board of Directors, sees this as a "win-win" proposition. "Our clergy, lay employees and their spouses can improve their health, lower their premiums, earn CEU equivalency (clergy), and partner with Bishop Cho in nurturing their spiritual health," Howard said. "And all of this can be accomplished at no expense to our participants."

Postal mailings and e-mails containing detailed information on Wellness 100 will be sent to health plan participants in November. You can also visit the website www.vcwministries.org.

For more information, contact Rhein at LynnRhein@VCWMinistries.org or (540) 946-6885.



Bible study in a prison barbershop.

Disciple Bible Outreach prison ministry continues expansion into Virginia

Cheryl Nehnevajsa never imagined herself behind barbed wire fences and locked doors, but once she set foot inside Forsyth Correctional Center in Winston-Salem, N.C., she knew she belonged there.

The soft-spoken homemaker and mother of two had committed no crime. Her time served in the all-male minimum-security prison was not a sentence – it was a calling. She was following in Christ's footsteps – offering spiritual freedom to those held captive.

"Cheryl is a real dynamo for the Lord," said former Forsyth inmate Nathan Martin. "God has given that lady a tremendous ability to love people regardless of who they are or the mistakes they've made. She's been the one person I've ever known who can actually love others unconditionally."

The program for taking the highly successful Disciple Bible study series into prisons continues in Virginia, with the help of the founding organization next door in North Carolina plus the General Commission on United Methodist Men.

This three-legged stool of support is holding training events to certify volunteers to go into correctional facilities and act as Bible study leaders. (All volunteers must complete the training.) Disciple Bible Outreach Ministries (DBOM) of Virginia, Inc., is the affiliate ministry of the now national organization which recruits, trains and equips local church volunteers for ministry within prisons, jails and youth development centers.

"DBOM of Virginia is on the move," wrote Gene Mims, chair of DBOM-VA, in a letter to the ministry's board.

In addition to being an Advance Special for 2012 and an approved 501©3 organization, DBOM-VA has started

teaching *Disciple* Bible study this year in these facilities: Beaumont Juvenile Correctional Center, Deep Meadow Correctional Center, Dillwyn Correctional Center, three units at Greenville Correctional Center, the Virginia Correctional Center for Women and Sussex II Correctional Center.

"In one of the units at Greenville Correctional Center the *Disciple I* study was so successful that they are now getting ready to start *Disciple II*," Mims said.

Mims added that about 75 volunteers have been trained so far, including all of the Department of Corrections' chaplains.

In late 2010, officials from the Virginia and Holston conferences, along with Chaplain Service Prison Ministry of Virginia, worked with Executive Director Mark Hicks of Disciple Bible Outreach Ministry to develop a working agreement for expanding prison ministry within the correctional system in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

About that same time the denomination's General Commission United Methodist Men began looking at how the ministry might grow from a one-state, two-conference partnership to something that could happen across the connection.

"I was involved in a prison ministry weekend at a maximum security prison in Texas," said Gil Hanke, top staff executive of the commission and a Virginia native. "That experience changed my whole perspective and perception of prisons and the need for our engagement in this vital ministry."

The solution was to "establish affiliate organizations in their own areas," according to Hicks, "since prison systems are somewhat different in each state, and people like to support ministries in their own area."

DBOM began in 1999 as a joint ministry of the North Carolina and Western North Carolina conferences to promote the popular Bible study series in prison settings and

Gene Mims (seated) from the Virginia Conference, signs an agreement to establish a new prison ministry across the Commonwealth of Virginia with Disciple Bible Outreach Ministries. Standing, from left are: Mike Smith, president of UMMen in the Holston Conference; the Rev. Paul Beighley, chaplain at Greenville Correctional Center; the Rev. Randy Myers, vice president of Chaplain Service Prison Ministry of Virginia; the Rev. Mark Hicks, executive director of Disciple Bible Outreach Ministries; the Rev. Glenn Rowley, director of Justice and Mission Excellence for the Virginia Conference; and Virginia Conference UMMen president Jim Green.

local churches. More than a dozen years later, the ministry is active in more than 70 correctional centers across North Carolina, touching the lives of 8,000 inmates – men, women and teenage offenders.

DBOM is actively expanding into Tennessee, Kansas, Louisiana, Illinois, Pennsylvania and Georgia in addition to Virginia.

Hicks considers the program "transformational" for both volunteers and prison participants.

"I was always excited by the possibility of transformation among the inmates," Hicks said, "but I'm equally excited by the transformation occurring in our volunteers, and as a result, our churches. When volunteers see the consequences of poverty and injustice...when they encounter people on the margins of life and come in contact with others so different than themselves, their eyes are opened to mission possibilities in their own backyard."

Former inmate Martin was a participant in Nehnevajsa's very first *Disciple* group in 1997. By the time he left prison three years ago, he had taken all four *Disciple* classes, and now is a member of Nehnevajsa's local church.

"I had no concept or sense of family until I got into *Disciple* and met people like Cheryl," he said. "It was the first time in my life I had someone in my corner who wanted to see me succeed and the first time I had ever received something that had always been a stranger to me: love. ... I had always been told I was good for nothing. *Disciple* volunteers made me aware that each of us has value and that we are inherently good. They loved me because God loves me and that's what brought them into the prison."

"I had never been to a prison or known anyone in prison, so I had no idea what I could possibly have to offer," Nehnevajsa said. "The day I first had lunch with some of the inmates who had spoken during our prison ministry training session, I was surprised that I wasn't afraid to be with them or talk with them. Their concerns, fears and joys sounded much like my own and those of my family."

DBOM has also created a program for juvenile offenders, "RINGS of Fellowship," that is currently being used in every Youth Development Center in North Carolina. "RINGS" follows the *Disciple* format and is designed to reach teens in a way that promotes spiritual growth and positive peer dynamics. "RINGS" stands for Responsibility, Invitation, Neighbors, God and Service, and is also suitable for use in a number of settings including local church youth groups, youth Sunday School classes, institutional settings or as a community outreach. It is available through Cokesbury bookstores or online.

For more information on DBOM programs, you can e-mail Mims at: gene.mims@comcast.net; Hanke at gkumm.org; or Hicks at MHicks@northstate.net; or visit <http://disciplebibleoutreach.org>.

The Kindred Project: Creating space to listen to God

By David Canada

The Kindred Project is a new initiative within the Virginia Conference that seeks to encourage Wesleyan contemplative practice, living and ministry. While not officially a conference program, it has come into being through conversation with our conference leadership, and seeks to help the conference at all levels.

The Kindred Project is a group of clergy and laity from across the conference. Currently there are 65 of us on our contact list. This number includes clergy from every order in The United Methodist Church, and it also includes laity. We even have some non-United Methodists in our group.

The word "contemplation" may confuse some people. Though contemplation is a part of ancient and modern Christian practice, it has not received a lot of attention in our church in recent years.

Contemplation is the act of looking at something deeply... pondering it. Contemplative prayer is not so much talking to God, but rather looking at God in a loving and thoughtful way. It involves letting go of our "do list" for God, and simply being attentive to God so that we may experience the divine presence.

In his book, *Dark Night of the Soul*, the 16th century mystic John of the Cross says "Contemplation is nothing other than a secret, peaceful, inflow of God. If given room, it will fire the soul in the spirit of love..."

A friend of mine attended a United Methodist worship service and noted that "sometimes we say and do so much in worship that there really isn't any room to hear God." I understood what she was talking about. Jesus asked us not to go on and on using a lot of words in our prayer, yet we do it anyway.

John Wesley said that the Methodist movement was built upon his spirituality. Sadly, we have gotten so busy "doing" things, that simply "being" with and "being" attentive to God is something we don't focus on in our churches and personal devotions.

-The Rev. David Canada is a retired elder living in Chesterfield.





“All Things New: Equipping Vital Congregations”

2012 Annual Conference Presentation

Editor’s Note: During 2012 Annual Conference, the Rev. Thomas R. Barnard moved that the entire report on “All Things New—Vital Congregations” be published in the Virginia United Methodist Advocate. Bishop Kammerer accepted the motion and pledged that the report would be published, as it is here:

Martha Stokes: The United Methodist Church is a strong chord made up of strands from various traditions, many cultures and more than 47 nations. We have vital and vibrant congregations throughout the world. Together, we are being called to a sustained effort to direct the flow of prayers, attention, energy, and resources toward increasing the number of vital congregations in the denomination.

Clergy and laity leaders at all levels of the United Methodist Connection are called to work together – across generations and differences – to bear hope and engage in vital witness and mission. Now is the time to cast vision, set directive goals for our congregations, and equip and resource our church leaders to receive the fruits of God’s harvest.

In 2008, the focus of the Virginia Conference was established through the approval of “All Things New: Fruitful and Multiplying.” This strategic vision for our conference was the result of the work of the group called together to respond to a recommendation adopted by the 2007 Annual Conference to establish 250 new faith communities over 30 years. Darlene Amon was a member of the original 250 Task Force.

Darlene Amon: The primary focus of the 250 Task Force was the establishment of new faith communities, but this is not the sole basis of “All Things New.” If the seeds of 250 new faith communities are to be sown, the present reality of many churches of the Virginia Conference must be strengthened. Existing congregations must be committed to grow where they have been sown as part of the body of Christ. It is our belief that seeds of the future are in the fruit of the present. It is our understanding that fruitful and multiplying Christian communities of faith are evidence of the activity of God’s Holy Spirit at work in the world. “All Things New” offers two invitations:

First, an invitation to plant, which has resulted in the launching of 19 new faith communities across the Virginia Conference since 2008. These new faith communities represent a spectrum of possibilities for new church beginnings:

- ❖ Eight of the new faith communities are primarily ethnic churches: three Korean, four African American, and one Latino.

- ❖ Seven were started with the support of an anchor church.
- ❖ Three are legacy new church starts where a congregation has passed on its physical structure for use by a new faith community.
- ❖ Three of the new faith communities were initiated and financed totally on the local church level with no district or conference funding.

These new church starts also represent new forms of partnership as we work together to make disciples: partnerships between the Board of Higher Education Ministries and the Church Development Team, and between the Virginia and the Baltimore-Washington conferences.

The second invitation – an invitation to harvest – calls us to renewed and revitalized ministry in our existing churches. This invitation has resulted in a movement from conference programming to congregational resourcing through leadership development. The foundational understanding of “All Things New” is that we will invest first in leadership: equipping clergy and laity through leadership training and support so that we may see the fruits of our work in making disciples. As we live into the vision of leadership development as emphasized in “All Things New” it is clear that resourcing of leadership is essential to the mission and ministry of our congregations.

“All Things New” began a transformational change in the Virginia Conference by setting forth a new and bold vision for our annual conference and local churches: a vision that calls us to move from maintenance to multiplication. That strategic vision continues to drive our ministry together. The Vital Congregations initiative now offers us an opportunity to reinvent the culture of the entire denomination. It builds upon the foundation laid by “All Things New,” helping us to identify specific needs for our churches as we review and gather statistics and data and set goals for each congregation. In 2011, the Vital Congregations initiative developed as the Council of Bishops declared congregational vitality to be a priority.

“All Things New” prepared the soil. The Vital Congregations initiative offers us more opportunities to plant seeds. The Vital Congregations movement has grown out of the “Call to Action” report. From research on data from United Methodist churches across the United States, the report identified some common factors that work together to influence congregational vitality. That means what works to make those churches energetic and growing can likely work for other churches, too.

An essential finding of the research was that it’s the combination of factors that contributes to vitality, rather than one or two. This initiative was not connected to the restructuring proposals for General Church agencies and administration, but focuses solely on the health of our local congregations.

What were some of the factors?

- ❖ Lively churches offer inviting and inspiring worship in a variety of styles and settings.
- ❖ Vital churches offer a variety of small groups that include special interests, children, youth, and adults. These groups engage disciples in growing in their faith and offer opportunities to connect with and nurture new people.
- ❖ The goal of all church ministries in vital congregation is built upon the Great Commission – to make new disciples of all people. That means supporting disciples as they continue to grow in their relationships to God through Jesus Christ and in reaching new believers.
- ❖ Robust churches engage disciples in local, national and international mission and outreach activities and in mission giving, including support for all United Methodist and non--United Methodist organizations active in work such as advocacy, education, health, justice, mercy, outreach, and welfare anywhere in the world.
- ❖ The most vital congregations spend time and energy on developing gifted, equipped, and empowered leadership – clergy and lay.

Together, “All Things New” and the Vital Congregations initiative can yield a greater harvest.

Martha Stokes: The Vital Congregations initiative gives our entire denomination the opportunity to speak the truth about the reality in which we find ourselves, to celebrate where we are and seize the opportunity to move forward as we listen for God’s voice. This discernment did not start because of the Vital Congregations initiative. It started with the invitations through “All Things New” to change the culture of the Virginia Conference in order to move toward greater fruitfulness and multiplication.

Mike Davis: Hi! I am the church planter and pastor of Journey UMC, a missional faith community. And this is Josh Bowman, one of the great youth at Journey church.

Journey is one of those new churches that you just heard about. Next week, Journey will celebrate being one year old, still just a baby, and in a few weeks we will celebrate 6 months of meeting weekly for worship.

Journey UMC is in Amelia County, in the Farmville District, and we are very much the newest church in our district since the previous new church was started over 75 years ago. We are alive and growing thanks to all of you who have supported “All Things New” with your prayers and gifts. Without your support Josh and many others just like him across the conference who have begun a journey with Jesus Christ would not have a story to tell.

And that is why we are here, so that you can hear Josh’s story. Just to give you a little background. For our first several months, the Journey launch team began visiting other United Methodist churches in our district to gain their support and visiting other Church Plants across the conference to learn from their experiences. We began holding weekly Oasis meetings, which is a place where people could come for rest and refreshment, every Wednesday night. This was a time for us to gather more people together as we planning our first worship service in December. Thanks to some great advice from church planting coaches, we were told since we were in a rural setting we should move our Oasis meetings to Sunday morning. Yes, we are very rural. There are only two stoplights in Amelia, and one of those was just added in the past couple of years. When we moved the Oasis meetings to Sunday morning, that is when Josh, his mom and sisters starting attending. Nearly everything that we were doing was leading us to our first worship service, on Dec. 23. We were trying to get The Garage ready. Yes, we meet in what used to be an auto repair shop. Getting the band right, the sound system installed, the projectors and screens in place, and through all of that something even greater happened. God spoke to Josh Bowman.

Josh Bowman: When I came to the church the first time it was because of my Grandpa. He invited me to go with him when we were visiting other churches – trying to figure out what we wanted our church to be. Then I came to the Oasis meeting and it was unlike any other church I had been to. It was welcoming, warm and felt like home. There were many faces I recognized, and some I didn’t know. We are like a family – an ever growing family. The church had found a way to connect me to God in a way I had never experienced before. Journey has become a home away from home, when I walk into Journey on Sunday morning I feel I am where I belong.

I had talked with my Mom about being baptized a least a year before coming to Journey, but it wasn’t the right time or place. I didn’t fully understand the commitment. Journey really helped me to understand what it meant. It made me want to be part of this, I wanted to feel this way all of the time. I asked to be baptized at our first service, and that’s how God and I started a journey together.

Mike: For church statistics, at the very first meeting of Journey UMC, there was a Profession of Faith! But really what hap-

(Continued on next page: “Special Report”)



"SPECIAL REPORT", continued from previous page)

pened there was that God led a group of people to do something new, unlike anything in the area.

And in doing something new and different, God led them to make some fertile ground, some soil just ready to be seeded, so that God could plant some souls where their faith could take root and be nurtured with love. I found it interesting that leaders from other churches have asked me "How to get a Profession of Faith?" I have told them that "getting" the Profession of Faith is God's work. Our work is to make fertile ground where God can plant the seeds. Let's all work on making some fertile ground for God!

Martha Stokes: Before the Vital Congregations initiative, the Virginia Conference had already started our journey in planting and harvesting through "All Things New." The 5 Talent Academy had begun providing resources that our churches need to move toward greater fruitfulness. Pete Moon will provide an update on the 5 Talent Academy and offer a new invitation for us.

Pete Moon: Good afternoon from the 5 Talent Academy! We are excited to be with you once again as we jump right into a second three year term for the academy. As you might remember, this adventure started four years ago with a vision of the familiar parable about the talents. We began with the conviction that the risen Christ has handed all of us, as church leaders, talents, or in this case, a church and our Lord has asked us what we are going to do with it. Will we keep it as it is, or will we invest our congregations in dynamic mission and ministry that will multiply the church instead of simply managing it as it is.

For the last three years, more than 110 churches from across Virginia have signed up and participated in an aggressive program of learning and peer groups to be a part of the Spirit's work of taking our congregations to the next level.

And now, we are going to start again. But we have also learned a lot over these years, and we are going to make some exciting changes.

First, we recognize that time is a premier issue to all of us. Long drive times for events challenge us. As a result, starting this fall, we are going to be offering the work of the academy through live streaming to six different sites spread throughout the conference. You should not have to drive more than an hour to participate in a day of great training, challenge and encouragement. We are currently in the process of developing sites in Northern Virginia, the Valley, Roanoke, Richmond, Tidewater and the Eastern Shore. Our prayer is that through the use of technology, we can continue to bring great events and programming to you in a way that enables you to spend more of your time in your local congregation, and less time driving up and down the road.

In addition, we have changed our goals. One of the pieces of feedback we have heard is that the goals are a bit challenging. We have made them a bit more usable, and we have also worked to shape them so that they generally coincide with the goals that all of us have been working on around the area of Vital Congregations.

The 5 Talent Academy has been blessed with outstanding leaders throughout these years and as this quadrennium comes to an end, we offer a word of thanks to the hard work that all of them have offered for these four years to serve us. We welcome a new team of leaders and churches to head up the academy and continue to thank God for the incredible people we have to lead this Academy and this great work of the Spirit within Virginia. I would also like to thank and welcome Tom Berlin and Mark Miller, who will be coming on board as the new co-chairs of this (5Talent) Academy leadership team.

A few months ago, all of you received a letter from our bishop, along with a DVD that described the work of the academy and an encouragement to sign up for the coming three years. Those who have been a part in the past are encouraged to sign up for another three, and those who have not participated, are invited to come aboard for the first time. We enroll by signing a covenant which we have asked you to bring with you. In a few minutes, we will have the opportunity for a general response to many opportunities for you, and there will be ushers gathered throughout the coliseum. We would invite you to place your covenant in the basket so that we can gather them, bring them forward, and commit them to the work of Christ in these coming three years. If you have not had a chance to sign up yet, please know that there is still time! You are welcome to send your covenant in before the registration deadline for the fall event to enable your congregation's participation in our first event on the semester of ministry with the poor.

I speak on behalf of our entire leadership team when I say thank you for your great support, and thank you to Bishop Kammerer for help and support throughout these early and formative years with the 5 Talent Academy. May God's Spirit continue to pour out generously upon this work.

Martha Stokes: There are other conference initiatives that can assist you as you work toward your Vital Congregations goals, and even more importantly, your efforts under our Virginia Conference Invitation to Harvest. Before "All Things New" was adopted in 2008, an initiative had already begun to focus on unique needs of the large church. Under the invitation to greater fruitfulness, initiatives focused on the needs of our mid-size and small membership churches have been undertaken. Continuing leadership teams are now in place to provide leadership training and networking opportunities specifically for churches in same size categories.

Last October, a team of Cabinet members and Connectional Ministries staff was called together to talk about resources and support for both the Small Church Leadership Initiative and Vital Congregations goal setting. A plan emerged for a training event for our smaller membership churches which would be offered on each district. Individual workshops would support both the 5 areas for Vital Congregations goals and the findings of the Small Church Leadership Initiative task force. To date, five events have been held with approximately 600 people attending. There will be additional workshops this fall.

Larry Davies, Superintendent for the Lynchburg District, has been leading a Steering Committee appointed by Bishop Kammerer, to address our conference-wide response to Vital Congregations.

Larry Davies: Matthew 22:36-40: "Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?" Jesus replied, "'you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."

Vital congregations are churches small, medium and large filled with disciples who...

- ❖ Worship regularly.
- ❖ Help to make new disciples
- ❖ Are engaged in growing their faith
- ❖ Are engaged in mission
- ❖ Share by giving in mission

By April of this year, 1,171 of our Virginia Conference 1,184 churches, along with thousands of other churches across our United Methodist church submitted their Vital Congregations goals.

"Now What?" It's one thing to submit goals but what do we next? How do we avoid either ignoring the numbers or becoming too heavily involved in the numbers? How do we use the information provided by Vital Congregations to guide us as we seek to follow God's commandment to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, all our souls and all our minds?

- ❖ How can Vital Congregations be more than just "one more thing to do" but rather become a tool to enable any church small, medium or large to become more "vital?"
- ❖ How can Vital Congregations become a source for continual improvement and growth as disciples of Jesus Christ?

Bishop Kammerer formed a team of conference leaders and challenged us to use the opportunity provided by Vital

Congregations to help our churches across the conference in significant ways.

- ❖ How can we pray for each other? How can we seek God's guidance and blessing?
- ❖ How can we use the information and data to help us reduce and simplify our report making so that our churches can concentrate on the real work of becoming Vital Congregations?
- ❖ How can we better use our many conference and denominational resources?
- ❖ How can we use and share the information in a way that will encourage and stimulate a culture of continuous improvement?

Teams are being formed across the conference designed to help us answer those questions and more as we seek to become "Vital Congregations" filled with disciples of Jesus Christ. If you would like to be a part of the answer, please let your district superintendent know? We would welcome your input and your help.

Martha Stokes: The "All Things New" Invitation to Harvest has borne other fruit through conference-level initiatives. As we have sharpened our focus on leadership development by reducing the number of Conference-funded program ministries from 83 in 2008 when "All Things New" was adopted, to 20 in 2012, we have continued to address the challenges of equipping the second largest annual conference in The United Methodist Church. Let me give you a few examples.

- ❖ Our Board of Ordained Ministry, Young Adult Council and Board of Laity have become involved with Vocation CARE, a practice to help congregations provide nurturing environments for young people discerning God's call upon their lives.
- ❖ One of the objectives of the Young Adult Leadership Initiative is to gather information about internships available to young adults in areas of ministry across the Conference and the denomination. Calling 21 is one of those opportunities.
- ❖ Rethink Church provides ideas, resources, and support in finding new ways to show kindness, acceptance, and hospitality to guests and members alike.
- ❖ Mission Mentors are interpreters of mission who are available upon request to assist local congregations, and opportunities abound for hands-on mission involvement in United Methodist Volunteer in Mission (UMVIM) teams.

(Continued on next page: "Special Report")



"SPECIAL REPORT", continued from previous page)

- ❖ The Lay Servant Academy provides training for Local and Certified Lay Speakers, but in recent years has expanded to assist the Board of Laity in creating a culture of call. The Virginia Conference led the way in expanding greater participation in training opportunities when we began using the term "Lay Servant," a title that was just recently adopted by the General Conference for use across the denomination.
- ❖ Later this fall, our Conference Board of Discipleship will begin offering churches additional support in discerning God's call their congregations through regional congregational assessment coaches and resource leaders.

Lisa McGehee: You have heard stories from local churches about how they are changing the culture and focusing on greater fruitfulness. We have shared examples of resources available to every church in the Virginia Conference to support your efforts to listen for God's voice, to focus on discipleship, and to move into even greater mission involvement so that we might truly transform the world. Now, we are going to ask that you make a commitment to be a vital part of the harvest.

For those who are members of the Annual Conference, you received a lime green-colored card in your conference packet. I ask that you find it. It looks like the one pictured on the screen.

Today, we are called to be a forward-leaning church that addresses the challenges of our day and to grow vitality in our congregations so that we make more disciples and engage them in the transformation of the world. But that takes commitment. It takes initiative to seek out opportunities for in-

volvement, to participate in new learning experiences, and to seek support through the many people – clergy and laity – and resources of our conference. If we are to be focused on a future which is different from the past, each of us has to make a commitment to do something. Each of us has to go back to our congregations and build greater commitment to take the next step.

On the commitment card, you will find three responses to the resources you have heard about during this presentation:

- ❖ Our church is already participating in....
- ❖ Our church plans to participate in....
- ❖ Please send us more information about....

Take a moment and complete your card.

Some of you have also brought to this Annual Conference covenants from your church to participate in the 5 Talent Academy.

In a moment, we will collect the commitment cards and covenants. There will be teams of conference leaders from the Common Table for Church

Vitality, boards, councils, commissions and staff near each section. Jim (Bennett) will lead us in song as they gather the cards and covenants and bring them to the table for dedication. Let us join in prayer as we make our commitments:

One: For the decisions before us, Lord.

All: Make plain your way.

One: For the actions our decisions require,

All: Grant us courage and resolve.

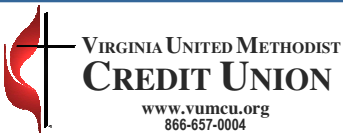
One: For those touched by the decisions we make,

All: Fill us with compassion and guide us with your wisdom.


One: In the name of Jesus Christ, in whom we live, lead, and pray.


All: Amen


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Devotions from International Lesson Series LIVING THE WORD

Nov. 4, 2012
"Paul Before King Agrippa"
Acts 26:19-32

Have you ever been called crazy? Happens to me all the time, but for most people it's a rare occurrence. Now you might have a crazy idea from time to time... (Bishop Bev Joes told stories about his cousin, whose famous last words were "Watch this!") But to be accused of being literally crazy is a serious charge. As Paul works his way up the political ladder defending the gospel of Jesus Christ, Festus – a new Roman appointee as governor of the province of Judea – calls Paul crazy for talking about resurrection and eternal life.

Contrast Festus with Agrippa the King, whose heart is more open to Paul's words. Agrippa suggests not only is he hearing Paul's arguments, but is persuaded to believe as well. Festus is just another Roman politician, but Agrippa, great-grandson of Herod the Great, understands the Jewish law and culture.

We never know how our message will be accepted by others. Perhaps our message is simply the way we handle ourselves before others. People watch us and form opinions. Festus is pretty hard-hearted simply because of who he is and where he's from. But Paul stands firm; his message of truth is the same no matter how his audience may receive it.

Nov. 11, 2012
"Paul Sails for Rome"
Acts 27: 1-2, 33-44

Luke's very detailed shipwreck story in Acts 27 is interesting to read, isn't it? In this moment of crisis, Paul seems to be the only person who is acting calmly. Bible scholars give different numbers of people on the ship – 276 or 76 – but it's still a lot of lives at stake. But the shipwreck is going to be one of those memorable life experiences for Paul and all those on board. "You remember that time when our ship ran aground in Malta?"

Paul could have taken the opportunity to escape in the confusion. He could have sat back and left them all to fend for themselves. But Paul is now filled with the power of the Christ ... he has to take charge and lead people to safety. Crisis moments can bring out the worst or best in us, and here, for Paul, it's the best. Why? It's simple. Paul says he has "faith in God."

Nov. 18, 2012
"Paul Ministers in Malta"
Acts 28: 1-10

"Bloom where you are planted." You've heard that expression. Now that Paul and the others on board the ship are safe and sound on the island of Malta, Paul goes to ministering to those around him. The inhabitants are gracious and wel-

coming. After surviving a bite from a poisonous snake, Paul gains a little bit of celebrity status on the island. He later heals the father of the "chief" of the island peoples.

The focus here is not so much on Paul, but on the hosts who provide welcome. There is an immediate sense of relationship here, and when Paul and his fellow travelers are finally able to move on, the Maltese provide all that they need. Both visitors and hosts seem to be open to learning from one another. Only in that culture of openness and exchange can we fully experience the love of Christ.

Nov. 25, 2012
"Paul Evangelizes in Rome"
Acts 28:23-31

Paul is not imprisoned once he gets to Rome, but lives in an apartment there for two years. As Paul is able to move about freely he preaches the word of God. The audience here is the Jewish community in Rome, and some hear and understand, while others hear and refuse to understand. Still, Paul is persistent. He has a message that he is called to share, even when others do not listen.

By this point it's all about knocking down the walls that separate us from God through Christ. Because we know that "nothing can separate us from the love of God." 🍷

-Neill Caldwell

("Cyclists," continued from pg. 10)

we talked we heard insects singing and kids playing red light, green light.

Three miles from the church, the TransAmerica Trail turns onto state Route 5 and ties into the Virginia Capital Trail, the in-the-works, 52-mile paved recreational trail between Richmond and Williamsburg. The church's hospitality "leaves such a good impression of our area" with cyclists, said Beth Weisbrod, executive director of the Virginia Capital Trail Foundation.

"I just think it helps us promote the positive impact of (the Virginia Capital Trail) and gets people thinking about the

trail in a different way," she said.

Because the cyclists often show up late in the day and are gone at dawn or soon after, not many members of Willis Church get to meet the visitors. So, from time to time, Rooks will print some of the appreciative comments from cyclists in the church bulletin for all to see.

"Just to say, 'You should hear what people say about your church!'" Rooks said. 🍷

-Bill Lohman writes for the Richmond Times-Dispatch where this article first appeared



CLERGY & DIACONAL

Deaths



The Rev. George G. Henley, 88, retired clergy member of the Virginia Conference, died Sept. 25, 2012. He began serving churches in 1951 at Culmore UMC and went on to serve as the associate at Washington Street, pastor of Wallace Memorial, Bethany in Reedville, White Stone, Fieldale, Saint Matthias, Saint Mark's in Waynesboro, Saint Peter's in Montpelier, and Kenwood in the former Petersburg District. He retired in 1988. A service was held at Farmville UMC.

Joyce H Luck, 84, of Henrico, died Sept. 25, 2012. She was preceded in death by her husband of 50 years, the Rev. James W. Luck Sr. In retirement, she served as director of Educational Ministries at Trinity in Newport News. She was a member of Corinth UMC, where her funeral was held.

Frances Best Anderson, 95, of Buena Vista, died Sept. 24, 2012. She was mother-in-law to **the Rev. Doug Hill** and mother to **Janet Hill**.

The mother-in-law of District Superintendent **Ken Jackson** died Sept. 27, 2012. **Gail Jackson's mother, Evelyn Bell**, was 98.

Sarah Estelle Cheek Driggs, 86, of Green Bay, mother of **Bonnie Jamison**, died Oct. 7, 2012. She was a member of Laurel Hill UMC. Jamison is the wife of **the Rev. Don Jamison**, pastor of Grace UMC in Parksley.

The Rev. **Keiko Foster's father, Keiji Tani**, died Sept. 11, 2012, in Japan. Foster is associate pastor of Good Shepherd UMC in Woodbridge.

Madeline Malone Roberts, mother-in-law of **the Rev. Larry House**, pastor at Ocran UMC, died Sept. 13, 2012.

Weddings

The Rev. **Phillips King Foote**, retired, wed **Faye Branch Smithwick** on Aug. 18, 2012.

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Firt UMC Fox Hill is seeking a full-time **Music Director** to take over a vibrant graded music program at a medium-sized church. Experience is required. Responsibilities include rehearsals and working with the pastor to plan and lead the music for Sunday worship and special services during the year. Must have ability to create and execute innovative musical worship events. Open to traditional and non-traditional styles. Good communication skills are necessary; supervisory and administrative skills are important. E-mail resume to **dteach4@cox.net** or mail resume to First United Methodist Church Fox Hill, 1 Salt Pond Road, Hampton, Virginia 23664.

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The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

Share your stories on our Spiritual Renewal Covenant Blog

Bishop Young Jin Cho and the Virginia delegation to Jurisdictional Conference made a covenant to devote at least an hour each day to prayer and other spiritual disciplines – a central tenet of Bishop Cho's plan for the clergy under his episcopal leadership. The delegation has shared the covenant with the entire conference in hopes that clergy and laity will prayerfully consider committing themselves to this act of intentional spiritual renewal. The Virginia Confe-

rence Communications office has now set up a blog to allow those who are participating in the practice of spiritual disciplines to share their experiences. And to allow those who have not yet made the covenant to hear what is happening among other Virginia Conference United Methodists.

Are you or your church participating in this spiritual renewal? What have you experienced? What would you like to share? Have you witnessed transformation? Do you have ques-

tions?

To add your story, comments or questions to this blog, go to **<http://www.vaumc.org/CovenantBlog>**.

You can read a message from Bishop Young Jin Cho, and then add your own comments.

'Alternative giving' at Christmas can be a truly selfless act

Christmas can be a time when wants seem as important as needs. And yet, more and more people are turning away from the consumerism of Christmas, and focusing on the true reason we celebrate this holy season.

"Alternative giving" is a focused way to give selflessly. The Society of St. Andrew, a domestic hunger-relief organization headquartered in Virginia, offers a way to do just that. Each year, a unique artwork is designed and donated to Society of St. Andrew (SoSA) for an Alternative Christmas Card program. This year's card is a meaningful way to honor friends and family while providing healthful food to those in need.

Your \$12 donation to the Alternative Christmas Card program provides about 600 servings of healthful good food that improves diets while reducing waste. SoSA will address and mail the cards for you, or send you the cards to personalize. To get started, go to **www.Endhunger.org/Card**, or e-mail **Card@endhunger.org**, or call **1-800-333-4597**.

The minimum gift donation for each card is \$12. All gifts are tax deductible as allowed by law.

SoSA also has available an order flier and church bulletin insert masters in color and black and white. To receive these digital files, **contact Megan Gross at 1-800-333-4597 or megan@endhunger.org**.

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FROM THE BISHOP



Restoring praying knees

Two months have passed since I began to serve the Virginia Conference as your bishop. They have really been exciting months. I cannot thank you enough for welcoming and helping Kiok and me experience a smooth transition. Many churches, clergy and laity sent us welcoming cards and messages, but we could not reply to all of you personally. I am sorry about that. Your love and care will be remembered in our hearts.

One of the most exciting things so far is a prayer movement. As I said in the service of celebration of my assignment, this movement was started by the delegates to General/Jurisdictional conferences. At the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference, I told the delegates that if I was elected, my first call would be challenging the clergy and laity to dedicate at

least one hour daily for their spiritual disciplines. Before I was elected, the Virginia Conference delegates gathered together and decided to respond to this challenge. They covenanted that they would dedicate one hour daily for their spiritual disciplines for 100 days following the assignment of the new bishop to Virginia.

I sense that it was a movement of the Holy Spirit and thank God for moving the hearts and minds of the delegates. I think the issue we, The United Methodist Church, face today is more than restructuring of general boards and agencies. The issue is a spiritual issue. It is a faith issue. Without restoring spiritual vitality, we cannot turn around the decline of our churches. This is the lesson we find in the early church in the book of Acts and in Wesley's renewal movement. My ministry experience has also confirmed this lesson.

During my journey as an episcopal candidate, I repeatedly said, "No spiritual vitality, no vital congregations." I also shared the words of E.M. Bounds from his book, "Power through Prayer":

"We are continually striving to create new methods, plans, and organizations to advance the church... The church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better persons... What the church needs today is not more or better machinery, not new organizations or novel methods. The church needs persons whom the Holy Spirit can use – persons of prayer, persons mighty in prayer... The Holy Spirit does not flow through methods, but through persons. The Spirit does not anoint plan, but persons – persons of prayer" (edited for the use of inclusive language).

As a bishop, my ministry will focus on strengthening the spiritual foundation of our mission and ministries, and its first step will begin with rediscovering our praying knees. I thank God

and many of you who responded to my challenge and joined this movement. If we pray together, we will experience God's presence and the difference God will make in our lives. Our God is the living God. I strongly believe that we will have a new future if we humbly open ourselves to God and seek God's wisdom and guidance.

Some people asked, "How can we pray for an hour daily?" My intention is not in one hour of prayer (if you can do it, that will be great), but in one hour of spiritual disciplines. We can use this hour in many ways like scripture reading, writing in journals, prayer, meditation, hymn singing, worship, covenant group meeting, etc. The most important thing will be scripture reading and prayer. During this hour I want all of us to pray for the renewal and revival of The United Methodist Church, especially the Virginia Conference and our churches.

We cannot turn around declining churches with our own wisdom and power. We cannot save our churches. We are not Messiahs. We need to humbly ask God to help us because our risen Lord is the owner of our churches. Because Jesus Christ is the head of his body, the church. If we do not listen to the will of the head, the body will be in trouble. The time has come for us to hold our hands up to the Lord and surrender ourselves to God.

The hope is not in us, but in our risen Lord. Only our risen Christ is the solid rock on which we can build a new future. All other ground is sinking sand. Let us return to the Lord. If we love Jesus, it will not be a problem to have fellowship with our Lord for an hour daily. The Lord deserves our best attention and love daily. I am excited about our future that God will open for us. Thank you for your prayers.

Young A. Cho

ONE LAST WORD



Tweets heard 'round the conference

- Morgan Guyton @MAGuyton** #JesusIsMyCandidate because He loved the rich lady who dumped perfume on His head and the poor lady who washed His feet with ointment.
- Jason C. Stanley @jasoncstanley** Our ministries r not ours but Christs. -Bishop Cho #vaumc
- Alan Combs @thricemantis** @jasoncstanley bringing the noise and bringing the funk talking about youth and young adult ministry at our District Clergy meeting
- Pastor Jason Elmore @PastorJasonE** Hoping this tweet gets me more followers if @NeillCaldwell puts it in next month's Advocate magazine in "tweets heard around the conference"
- Patti Money @pattimoney** Wow...how true that so many of us are willing to write the check but not willing to get our hands dirty. #5talent
- Alex Joyner @alejojoyner** Eastern Shore is well-represented for #5talent. I think I'm seeing the future of conference events and I like it
- Lewis Center at WTS @LewisLeadership** Ways to show appreciation for pastors: Pray for them. Respect them. Respect boundaries. Be positive. 🍷



On Oct. 4, Dr. Stephen Mansfield, president of the Virginia Conference Historical Society, presented Patti B. Russell a certificate declaring her an Honorary Member of the Southeastern Jurisdiction Historical Society in appreciation for exceptional contributions in advancing United Methodist heritage. Russell was unable to attend this past summer's meeting in Nashville at which the certificate was awarded. Russell was archivist of the Virginia Conference for more than 30 years, editor of Virginia United Methodist Heritage magazine for 18 years, and long-time Trustee of the conference Historical Society.

("5 TALENT", continued from pg. 11)

fields and the streets."

Wesley did more than talk, however. At his Foundry Church, Wesley organized classes where people learned to read and write, held give-aways of coal and food, Rice described. "Wesley – who as a boy was plucked from a parsonage fire by neighbors who had a ladder handy – was providing ladders of opportunity to raise people up."

Rice talked about programs that are helping to do the same, including "Circles," where middle class "allies" help persons in poverty by befriending them, building a relationship with them, rather than by providing resources.

"We have the fancy red fire trucks," Rice said, "but we've forgotten the ladders and the hoses."

"Wesley said that ministry with the poor is not a one-way deal. As Bishop Cho pointed out, you must be involved with the poor. John Wesley understood that. He knew that the people in the churches were also being transformed, not just those being served."

"It's not about doing for the poor, it's about the church being in relationship with the poor," Rice concluded. "It's about our transformation, not (the poor's). ... They've taught me far more than I have taught them."

Rice, who was a delegate to Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference this past summer, called Cho "the Lazarus Bishop" for rising up from a low of 15 votes to being elected a bishop of the church. "Is there any bishop more qualified to lead this transformative ministry? If I go down and get (North Carolina) Bishop Hope (Morgan-Ward) and her folks, and (Western North Carolina) Bishop Larry (Goodpaster) and his folks, and Virginia's, that's more than 800,000 United Methodists in just these three conferences! Is that enough to start something?" 🍷

-Neill Caldwell is editor of the Virginia United Methodist Advocate

Advocate

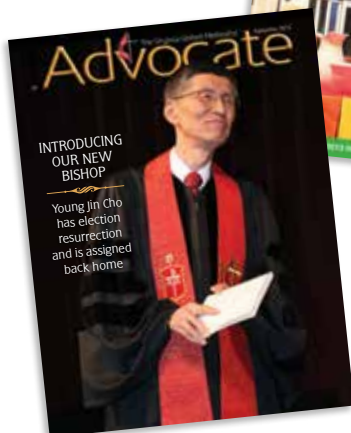
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