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Advocate



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VirginiaAdvocate

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the Virginia Conference of
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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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PILLOW TALK



Madeline Pillow
Editor

Good left to be done

Some months I feel that I have a lot to say. Other months not so much. What's on my heart this month is something short but a meaningful reminder for our lives.

As I write this, it's been just about a week since Hurricane Harvey began the terrible events we've seen and witnessed from Texas. In the midst of the horrifying damage and the long journey ahead toward recovery for the state and people of Texas, I'm reminded of the good.

We've seen and heard stories of humans being extraordinary in their goodness. From churches to individuals far and wide.

It's a reminder to us that while any number of bad things can happen, there is no limit to the amount of good we can do. Our smallest ounce of goodness can have far-reaching effects.

Check the conference website for continued updates for how you can help survivors in Hurricane Harvey. Currently what's needed is UMCOR donations to "United States Disaster Response Advance #901670" or "Material Resources Advance #901440" or the creation of cleaning buckets.

There's nothing stopping us from performing an exponential amount of good acts into the world in spite of the bad that arise.

After all, as United Methodists, it's sort of part of our faith description. ☺

Madeline C. Pillow



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On the cover: A hand-tinted photo, circa 1929 of the Crutchfield house, now called the "Reveille House." Today the house is on the Register of National Historic Places and preserved by the United Methodist Church. Johnston, Frances Benjamin, photographer. ["Reveille," Elmer Mulford Crutchfield house, 4200 Cary Street, Richmond, Virginia. Pathway to house]. Richmond Virginia, 1929. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2007686342/>.

Above: Washington Street Methodist Church, Washington & Adams Street, Petersburg, VA., 1933. Documentation Compiled After. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress.



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COMMENTARY

Writing charge conference reports with historians in mind

By Dan Garrett

When I began my ministry in the Virginia Conference in 1971, the Rev. Dr. Raymond F. Wrenn suggested in an orientation for new pastors that we write Charge Conference reports with the thought that some future historian might pull them out of the files. Would those reports provide an accurate picture of life in the church at the time they were written? Dr. Wrenn's challenge lent a certain personal excitement to what otherwise might have become a perfunctory annual chore in submitting reports to the Charge Conference.

Previous pastors in some of the churches I served seemed to have also sensed the importance of such reporting. For example, in 1899, the Rev. J. K. Gilbert reported to Regester Chapel: "... we are glad to say, there appears at some points a melting down of prejudices, which is accepted as a sign of good things to come."

In 1883, the Rev. Collins Denny reported to the Fincastle Charge: "The general state of the Church is by no means satisfactory to the preacher

in charge. The congregations in all of the appointments are not decreasing, rather the reverse, but after beholding their natural face in the gloss of God's Word, they, to all appearances go away, and straightway forget what manner of man they are... Our love is waxing cold and our state is Laodician."

On the more positive note that year, Mr. Denny had also noted "One thing further ought to be said: the preacher and his family have met with nothing from the members of the church and from the community at large but the most unbounded kindness and for this we devoutly thank God and the people."

In 1889, the Rev. T. W. Brown reported on the state of the church in Fincastle:

"The spiritual condition of this Charge may be set down as not altogether satisfactory, but as fairly good. There is development and growth. A very large majority of the members are undoubtedly Christians. . . We have some green logs ... too green to burn ... too crooked to split. They don't perfect the patience of the pastor, but try it severely."

The reports from my book were written for the churches I served in my active ministry, as well as an accounting of my teaching appointment in three seminaries. In retirement I

continue to submit reports of my ministry each year to the Charge Conference to which I am attached. The reports submitted in the retirement years reflect a narrower personal accounting rather than a reflection on the state of the church. Together the reports provide an historical journal of my years in ordained ministry through The United Methodist Church.

Any observer of history brings certain biases and perspectives to the task. These annual reports are certainly representative of



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COMMENTARY

an “interested view” of life in the churches I served. I was biased by my love for each and for the work we were attempting to accomplish together as pastor and congregation. Upon retirement, I had a chance to reread each of the accounts of my active ministry during a five-week monastic retreat at Holy Cross Abbey in Berryville, Virginia. Each day on the five-week retreat I reviewed a specific year of my 35 years of active ministry. The reports of those years brought back the excitement and satisfaction of serving churches. We accomplished much, always

looking ahead to what the future would bring.

Early one morning at the monastery, I read one of these reports, taking no small pride in what we had done that year. I laughed, however, when I recalled that someone once asked Winston Churchill how he thought history would deal with him. In reply he responded, “I think fairly well, for I intend to write it myself.” I hope these reports reflect an accurate accounting of my ministry, notwithstanding any failures in disinterested reporting.

The years in ministry

were a privilege for me. The work was challenging and difficult, but made especially rewarding by the gifts and graces of the members of the churches I served, as well as the unique abilities of the students, faculty and staff of the three seminaries where I taught United Methodist studies. We were partners in accomplishment, and colleagues in Gospel hope. I thank God for these years of service. 🇺🇸

– This is a portion of the Rev. Dr. Daniel L. Garrett’s foreword from his book *Charges to Keep: Pastoral Reports to various churches*. It was republished with his permission.



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COMMENTARY

Standing with Charlottesville

On Saturday, August 12, tensions in Charlottesville during an “alt-right” rally filled with white supremacists and neo-Nazis reached a fatal pitch when a counter protester, Heather Heyer, was killed and 19 counter protesters were injured by a car.

The violence of actions and creeds that day had an effect across the world, especially as it took place so near to home (for the Virginia Conference.)

Following the weekend events, churches around the Virginia Conference held healing services includ-

ing Thalia UMC in Virginia Beach, Peakland UMC in Lynchburg, Chester UMC in Chester and Aldersgate UMC in Charlottesville.

Interviewed by *The News & Advance* in Lynchburg, the Rev. John Vest, senior pastor at Peakland, shared that they held the gathering because they needed to be together as a community.

“Evil in the world must be confronted. Sometimes the church needs to gather and light a candle amidst the darkness,” said Vest.

The Rev. Erin Geoffrion, Mineral-Mount Pleasant, Charlottesville District, held a prayer walk on the UVA campus the following Thursday and was joined by the Rev. Sarah Payne, Bethlehem-Jollivue, Staunton District. Over the course of two hours, they walked and prayed, praying for the students, staff and faculty amongst others.

“I felt called to organize a prayer walk: to retrace the steps the torch-bearers had taken and to cover the space with prayer. Only two clergy made it in person. But with over 1,000 praying from around the country, I figure we each wielded 250 prayers per shoe!” said Geoffrion. “We prayed for the UVA community, but also for the torch-bearers. We prayed that all may come to know the light of Christ. They came in the night with torches and terror. We came in the light

with prayer and presence. I was glad to be able to represent the church and to bear witness in this way.”

Response from Bishop Lewis

Bishop Sharma D. Lewis, resident bishop to the Richmond episcopal area, shared that Christians and United Methodists were called to act. “Hatred of any kind, including racism, is intolerable. As faithful people, we are commanded to address it by being witnesses and advocates for the marginalized,” Lewis said.

She shared that she has found in her ministry that “racism is rooted in ignorance” and that the Virginia Conference will hold the Convocation on Race and Reconciliation on April 14, 2018, through which the conference could start to address racism and be intentional about getting to know our brothers and sisters to combat ignorance. Her full reflection can be read by following the link: <http://www.vaumc.org/ncfilerpository/BishopLewis/ReflectiononCharlottesville.pdf>.

Response from the Jurisdiction

The Southeastern Jurisdiction College of Bishops shared in a statement their resolve to “name, resist



COMMENTARY

and dismantle racism in our churches, in our communities and in the world." The group will be sharing anti-racist work for the next year from each of the conferences to demonstrate the work the denomination is doing to confront racism.

Response from Virginia Pastors

Pastors from around the connection shared their prayers, fears and firm truths following the Charlottesville events. To read their full responses, visit the conference website.

The Rev. Derrick Parson, Providence UMC, Richmond District, shared an incident from his childhood and the advice he received from his Grandma Thelma:

"Many of us today are troubled by what happened with the rioting and unrest in Charlottesville. I implore you, as Grandma Thelma beseeched me, to see that there are times when humanity can be misguided. This past week was one of those times as hate and anger was unleashed in the atmosphere in far-flung, inappropriate ways. Grandma Thelma would say, 'Forgive the offense!' And as the body of Christ everything should be brought to God through supplication and prayer."

The Rev. Keary Kincannon, Rising Hope Mission Church, Alexandria District, shared the differing responses to the events in Charlottesville from President Trump to Senator Lindsay Graham and Franklin Graham.

"In the church our baptismal vows included a promise to renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of our sin and to accept the freedom and power God gives to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.

"What more are we waiting for before we will stand up and live into our baptismal vows? A battalion of Nazis, KKK, white supremacists were walking down our streets! Many were in paramilitary uniforms carrying loaded weapons, including assault rifles and chanting 'Jews will not replace us,' 'blood and soil' and 'Sieg Heil' as they passed by a synagogue.

Nazi flags, Confederate flags and other symbols of white supremacy were carried everywhere. The groups organizing this rally to protest removing Robert E. Lee's statue were very public about their white supremacist agenda. Many interviewed made it clear that they want a 'white nation'



cleared of minorities and people of color. This is pure evil.

"The president of the United States has the gall to say the violence that may have come from the resistance to this evil is equally to blame. Then he only steps into it deeper, when he says there were many good people on both sides. No, Mr. President. There may be good people who oppose the removal of the statue but any good people who may have turned out for that cause would have left in a heartbeat as soon as they saw the grotesque gathering of Nazis, KKK and white supremacists.

There are times when our belief in Christ calls us to take a risk, step up and step out, identifying ourselves as opposing and resisting evil. If you are not outraged, you are not paying attention."

(Con't. on next page.)

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Counter-protesters come to First United Methodist in Charlottesville for respite. Photo from: <http://pres-outlook.org/2017/08/photo-album-calls-love-not-hate-charlottesville/>.

Staunton District Superintendent the Rev. Dave Rochford shared a perspective on Virginia history especially in the Shenandoah Valley in a response written to his district.

“The day of the violence in Charlottesville, our president said we needed to study what happened there, and I agree with him in this: we as a nation do need sincerely to reflect on matters of privilege, power and the template of race. The conversations we need to have; we need to have at all levels.

“But as Christians, some of us have a special obligation to observe something else: the power of human sin and the subtle way it seeks to rule over us.

“I am a Virginian by birth and upbringing. As a child I listened to fabled echoes at The Sunken Road, and stood with reverent awe at Bloody

Angle. I learned that Robert E. Lee, the gentleman-soldier who freed his slaves and loved Virginia like no other, was as much a saint as we’d ever produced. *That* we could agree on — and so statues of the general, keeping watch over our land, made perfect sense to me. As did his gray-eyed gaze, somber but benevolent, as we walked into the chapel where I went to seminary.

“But an honest reckoning is needed, in fact is demanded by our task of holy living. The stories we live have consequences not only for ourselves, but for others. And by the wisdom of the Gospel, we can say with painful certainty that the heritage many of us hold dear is more complex and much darker than we were told. That white supremacists would protest the removal of Lee’s statue from the public square

makes perfect sense not because Lee is an important part of our history, but because he espoused the idea that whites were innately superior to blacks for his entire life. He freed his wife’s slaves, yes, but only after being sued to do so, to honor the terms of his father-in-law’s will. Lee owned slaves most of his adult life, and had them tortured, severely, even by his day’s standards, when they tried to escape their imprisonment. This, too, is our heritage. But it is not the story I learned to tell about who I am.

“The Church enables us to see: we are all in the grip of the stories we learned at our elders’ knees, which helped us to understand who we are. The story Jesus is telling can and will free us from the partial falsehoods of these competing stories. But it is going to hurt.

“I do not believe that to follow Jesus means becoming a liberal or a conservative, a Republican or a Democrat. But it does mean becoming a citizen of a new kingdom, and walking the danger-filled road that leads to the cross. Through self-reflection, risky conversation, and continual gestures of sincere and shared repentance, we do not have to be what we always have been.

“We can become His.” 

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

Podcast looks to create a new space of conversation

By Madeline Pillow

There's something a little bit different that will hit the airwaves in the Virginia Conference starting in October. The Rev. Monica Rubino Reynolds, associate pastor at Warrenton UMC, and the Rev. Michelle Matthews, pastor and church planter at Kingstowne Communion, will be starting a podcast entitled "Collared Chicks." A podcast is a digital audio file that is available online for download on a computer or mobile device.

The podcast according to both hosts will "celebrate the wit, wisdom and whimsy of women and ministry."

Speaking with both Reynolds and Matthews about their upcoming debut, Matthews emphasized the "and" part of that statement.

"It's women and ministry not just women in ministry, so it's a little more expansive," Matthews said.

But both women, who are pastors in the Northern Virginia area, said that topics of the podcast will also share difficulties and realities they have faced as women in ministry.

"I don't experience leading in a church the same way that male colleagues do. There are other things that go along with being a female that we bring with us," Reynolds said.

In each 30-35-minute podcast, listeners can expect to also find a space that encourages women to share their stories and hear from women in leadership positions whether in the church or public sphere.

"We both want it to be real and relevant," Reynolds said of the podcast. "We want to talk about what it means to be a woman in all of these venues and situations but not from a place of anger or by shaming our male colleagues."

Both emphasized that it will be a space for learning, sharing experiences and encouraging one another.

"Women leaders possess a lot of the same characteristics and traits that make male leaders successful," Reynolds said. "But when women have them, I think the world gets confused on what to do with it even though it's the same characteristics—it's just the body and the package that's different."

Starting something new

The idea for the podcast solidified after Annual Conference 2017 when the pair wanted to address voices that they felt were not being heard yet in this medium.

Both are friends with the Rev. Jason Micheli, Aldersgate UMC, Alexandria District, who is part of the Crackers & Grape Juice (C&GJ) podcast.

The pair acknowledge how helpful the team behind C&GJ have been to forming their own podcast; they were on a live episode of C &GJ on Aug. 29.

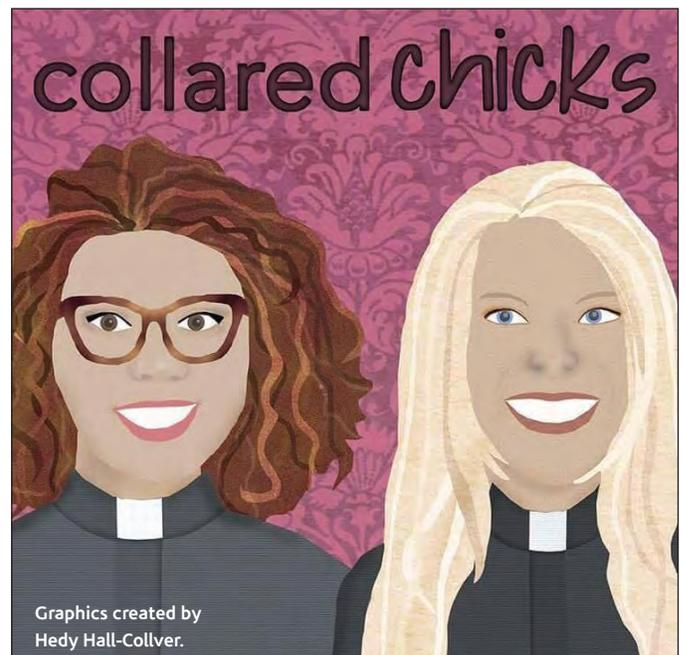
Matthews shared that they don't want to be viewed as a counter podcast to C &GJ but rather the creation of a new space for other voices.

"They have what they offer and we do as well. And one might appeal and meet the needs of an individual better than the other. We can kind of fill the space together," Matthews said.

Matthews and Reynolds both listen to a variety of podcasts and knew that this was the medium they wanted to use to create a new space for conversation.

"I think people's attention spans are forever shrinking and moving. With the amount of information for each person to digest, I'm seeing how podcasts streamline and help people hear the voices they are interested in and can take with them. It's all about people's choice and them creating their sphere of influence," Reynolds said.

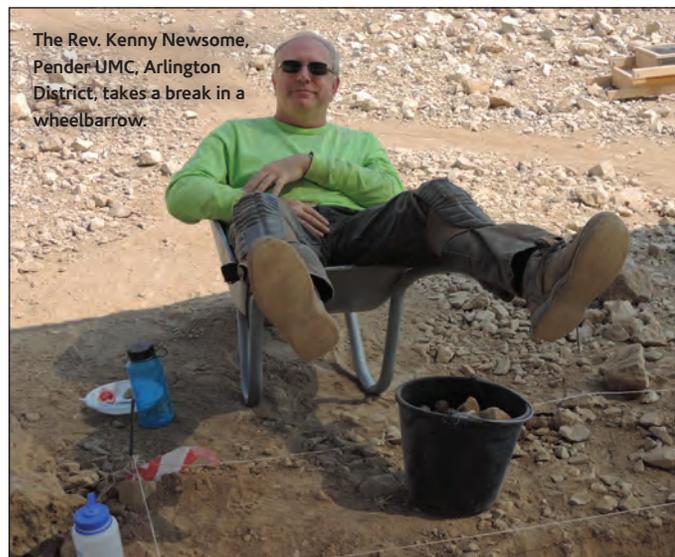
(Con't. on pg 15: "CHICKS.")



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Expedition finds evidence of early Israelites



The Rev. Kenny Newsome, Pender UMC, Arlington District, takes a break in a wheelbarrow.

By Ralph K. Hawkins

In June, my friend and colleague David Ben-Shlomo and I led an expedition to excavate a mysterious site in the Jordan Valley. We had a group of about 15 students and volunteers from America, Canada, Israel, China and Australia who lived in east Jerusalem for the entire month.

Our volunteers included the Rev. Kenny Newsome, pastor of Pender UMC, Arlington District. Each weekday, our team of intrepid adventurers would get up at 4 a.m. and make the 45-minute drive down into the Jordan Valley, where we would then take a “highway in the desert” about two miles off road in order to reach Khirbet el-Mastarah. The name means the “hidden” site, and it certainly was hidden. The site was built on a knoll in the fork of a dried out river bed, with hills surrounding it on three sides.

Our quest was to find evidence of the early Israelites. The Book of Joshua claims that they came from the east, outside the ancient land of Canaan, and that they entered it by crossing the Jordan River “opposite Jericho” (Joshua 3:16). If this is true, we would expect to find early Israelite sites in the region of the Jordan Valley.

Until very recently, the Jordan Valley has been almost unknown archaeologically. However, over the last several years, explorers have found 54 sites in this region that date to the beginning of the period of the early Israelite settlement (about 1200 B.C.). These sites clearly represent the presence of a new population group in the region, and we think their design indicates that they were nomads. The newly-discovered sites are primarily made up of one or more large enclosures, rings of stones typically measuring between 20 and 40 meters wide. We think these enclosures were probably used for corralling animals, and that the people themselves lived in tents around these enclosures.

This fits the biblical description well. Before their settlement in Canaan, the Bible describes the Israelites as wandering the desert with their flocks and herds (e.g., Deut 32:14). And, throughout the Old Testament, there is a rich vocabulary related to their cattle complex. If these newly-discovered sites were associated with the early Israelites, it makes sense that they would be designed as “herding stations.”

One of the interesting things about these sites, though, is that they tend to be located behind

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

ridges, in valleys, and other out-of-the-way locations. If the Israelites did enter the region around 1200 B.C., why did they establish these sites in these kinds of locations?

One of the reasons is that this was “the land of the Perizzites and giants” (Joshua 17:15 KJV) and, while the Lord had promised to give them the land (see Deuteronomy 11:22-25; Joshua 1:3), they still had to contend with its native inhabitants. The Canaanites had a fort at Jericho, just about six miles from our site. While the Book of Joshua reports that an Israelite brigade disabled the Jericho fort, the Book of Judges makes it clear that it was later retaken by hostile forces (see Judges 3:12-13). If some Israelite families lived at Khirbet el-Mastarah and other small sites like it, they probably wanted to stay under the Canaanite radar. Since Jericho is visible from the hillside beside our site, the residents of el-Mastarah could have kept an eye on who was coming and going from its fort.

One of the most amazing things we discovered was a large fortified town on a high hilltop about two miles from el-Mastarah, in the general direction of Jericho. This site, which the locals call Auja el-Foqa, is literally a “fort” town with many houses, tow-



ers and a defensive wall. There are indications that the site was Israelite, and it appears to have been founded sometime in the period of the early Israelite monarchy. In establishing this site, the early Israelites would have had prominence in the immediate region.

By the end of our expedition, a fascinating picture had emerged that corresponded with the biblical account of Joshua through 1 Samuel, which describes the Israelites as gradually rising to prominence from a pastoral-nomadic society of nomads to a state-level society with fortified towns.

We plan to continue excavating in the region in order to further uncover this heretofore unknown

early history of Israel.

If you'd like to join our mailing list, please contact me at rhawkins@averett.edu. You can also “like” our Facebook page, which you'll find at: <https://www.facebook.com/jordanvalleyexcationproject/>. We would also gratefully welcome your financial sponsorship. Checks can be made out to “Averett University,” with JVEP in the Memo Line, and mailed to: Dr. Ralph Hawkins/Religion Department/Averett University/420 West Main St./Danville, VA/24541. All gifts are tax deductible. 

– Dr. Ralph Hawkins is an associate professor and director of the program in Religion at Averett University, where he is under appointment as an extension minister. He is the author of *How Israel Became a People* (Abingdon Press, 2013).

Above: The expedition group takes a break for a group photo.
Below: The van on the “highway in the desert.”



DISCIPLES HELPING TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD



▲ Ethel Lewis celebrated her 100th birthday in style – with her two 102-year-old friends. Her cousin, Edna Turner, and friend Bella Lynskey joined her at the birthday party, which was held in May at **Wesley UMC in Martinsville**.

All three are United Methodists, Lewis said. Lynskey attends **First UMC**, and Turner attends **Stanleytown UMC**.

The credit for Lewis' long life has to "go back to the Lord, because he's blessed me with good health and good friends," Lewis said. "I don't know how anybody could not believe there's a God. I thank God every day for all the blessings I've been given."

She counts her friends among her strongest blessings.

"People have been wonderful, and I've never lacked for friends and a good church, too," she said.

In 1936, she got her first job in public work at Woolworth, which she helped open. It was located in the building which later was home to the McCollum-Ferrell Shoes.

She started attending Wesley United Methodist Church, then, too, when it just had been built. In the early

days of their nearly lifelong friendship, Belle Lynskey picked her up and took her to church.

The idea for Praise Prom, hosted by **St. Mark's UMC, Midlothian**, began as an inspiration from a Bible School video and the Jesus Prom movement, an extravagant party given in the spirit of the love and teachings of Jesus to celebrate those who might not otherwise have had such an event. Laurie Pendleton of St. Mark's said a core group of Sunday schoolers brainstormed, then took action to make the event possible. Heart Havens and Richmond Area ARC helped create an agency guest list. Money was collected at church on Sundays for the event; a church member donated his DJ services; another member made the cake; and another group made boutonnieres and corsages for all the guests.

There were so many things to do – decorate the hall and the arch so guests could enter the venue in style, arrange for photographs, make sure there were ample refreshments, etc.

Guests entered the hall on a red carpet and posed for prom photos.

There were over 100 people in attendance with guests, chaperones, organizers and other volunteers including youth from St. Mark's. While guests danced and socialized, one of the youth dashed to the 1-Hour Photo shop to have pictures developed so guests could take them home.

The organizers and volunteers who produced Praise Prom said they felt blessed that they were able to put on the event and that it was so enjoyed by participants. ▼



The congregation of the **Historic Jackson Street UMC in Lynchburg**, was abuzz with excitement on August 13, 2017, about the celebration the 130-year Legacy of the Virginia Teachers Association (VTA) with the unveiling of an official marker from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. This marker designation and celebration was initiated by the Virginia Education Association (VEA) in commemoration of the 50th year of the merger between the VTA and VEA.



EVENTS



▲ The VTA was called the “Virginia Teachers Reading Circle” when it was founded at Jackson Street Methodist Episcopal Church on August 13, 1887, at the conclusion of their second hosting of the Peabody Normal Institute. The institutes were designed to give teachers a chance for general professional improvement.

From 1887 to 1948 the association, like the times, evolved and so did the name. In 1948 it became the Virginia Teachers Association. This association remained solely for African-American teachers until 1967 when it merged with the white association and became a part of the Virginia Education Association.

This historic designation speaks volumes about the character of the valiant men and women who had laid the foundation of Jackson Street Methodist Episcopal Church only 21

(Con't. on page 15: “TEACHERS.”)

OCTOBER

Connecting...to God and Each Other and the Community

- ❖ September 26, Mint Spring UMC in Staunton
- ❖ October 14, Wesley Grace UMC in Norfolk
- ❖ November 4, Chestnut Hill UMC in Lynchburg

The Small Congregation Leadership Team invites small church clergy and laity to a day of learning, conversation and discussion with the Rev. David Canada. This event will take place in three locations across the conference. Each of these three dates will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. with lunch provided and the course worth 0.5 CEU. Register at <https://www.eiseverywhere.com/ereg/index.php?eventid=254985&>.

Please be sure to specify your location and date when you register. Contact the Center for Congregational Excellence for more information at (804) 521-1100 or email ellenheatwole@vaumc.org or pathickman@vaumc.org.

The Goodson Academy of Preaching Oct. 3, Aldersgate UMC, Charlottesville

Registration is open for “Stir up the gift: Fan into flame the gift of God,” a one-day preaching enrichment experience, Tuesday, October 3, 2017, at Aldersgate UMC, Charlottesville from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. This event is worth .5 CEU. Dr. Teresa Fry Brown, guest presenter, will give two talks on effective sermon preparation and delivery and preach the closing worship service. Register on the conference website by going to Calendar and then to the

October 3 date. Email questions to Goodson@vaumc.org.

5 Talent Academy

Oct. 19, 10 locations around Virginia

Registration is now open for the 5 Talent Oct. 19 event, “How to Structure your Church for Evangelism” with Jacob Armstrong. Armstrong will lead the event in exploring key principles for evangelism in local church including crafting a vision that fits your mission field, rethinking worship and leadership development and structure. The event will be streamed to nine locations across the conference from the live site at Woodlake UMC in Chesterfield. Gather a team from your church to take part. Team discounts are available. Visit www.vaumc.org/5talent for more information and to register.

November

Heritage Preservation Workshop

Nov. 17-18, Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center, Lake Junaluska, N.C.

The SEJ Commission on Archives and History will present its biannual Heritage Preservation Workshop on November 17-18 at Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center. *Bringing Life to History* will explore the creation of an oral history program, development of a living history presentation and best practices for the creation of a written church history. Registration is limited to 50 persons. For more information contact Nancy Watkins at nwatkins@lakejunaluska.com or (828) 454-6781.

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



EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY

Write and share your church's history of living in faith

By Jim McAnally

A truly great way for members to get to know their church is through studying its history. Depending upon the age of your church, many people may not know how it came to be, what it has accomplished and how it got to where it is today. If your church is relatively new, you'll want to begin documenting your story for future generations. If your church has a long history, it's important to put that history into an informative, organized and entertaining story that congregants and others will want to read.

In the past, only large churches had the resources to organize and publish this information. Today, with the advent of digital printing, online do-it-yourself book publishing and eBooks, you don't need a huge budget to attain this goal. Broaden your thinking when it comes to organizing and sharing your church's history. One possibility is to create an infographic for use in handouts, presentation slides and bulletin board displays and on your church website.

Whether you publish

a physical book or an eBook, consider using your church's history as a tool in practicing hospitality by making it available to new and potential members. Send interested visitors a link to your eBook as part of your welcoming package. Help visitors grow closer to your church by learning about the paths your church took to become the church it is today.

Writing your church's history can be a daunting task, which is why it is important to break it down into defined, manageable stages. In his book, *How to Write a Local Church History*, author Frederick E. Maser divides the process into manageable segments.

Assemble a team and delegate responsibilities

Writing a local church history is not and should not be a one-person job. In stage one, gather people with the talents and skills that fit this endeavor such as writers, editors, reporters, graphic designers, longtime and former members and church staff.

Collect content from multiple sources

Of all the stages Maser lists, one of the most difficult is gathering the material. Unless you are fortunate to be part of a

church that has a professional curator or the most meticulous administrative assistant imaginable, it is unlikely you will find all the source materials you need neatly filed together. You are more likely to have to approach church staff and longtime members, even to know what to look for.

Be prepared to comb through dusty file cabinets and closets, interview eyewitnesses of events and visit your local newspaper and library to locate third-party accounts. You may need to investigate events and details, pursue leads and identify the threads of the past that lead to today. However, most information you need exists, and you probably will find everything you need within your congregation. Third-party sources are good because they show your church's roots with the community.

Will Steinsiek, archivist for the New Mexico Annual Conference, is using a "memory booth" as a way of capturing oral histories from church leaders and individual members.

"Oral history is the oldest form of transmitting what has happened in the past and up to the future. When we don't collect that history, it is often lost," said Steinsiek. "Some people will never commit to write their story, but are very willing to tell their story."



During the past two annual conferences, he has curtained off a small area to create some privacy and invited people in one at a time to tell stories in their own way, through a one-sided, open-ended, uninterrupted conversation. To get people started, he asks them to talk about everything from favorite pastors to memorable personal milestones (weddings, baptisms, the loss of loved ones). One of his main goals is to have them talk about the impact the church has made in their lives.

"Tell me about someone you remember," he often asks.

Incorporate audio and video

Selecting recordings from choir services and sermons can be a great way to bring history to life. With video recording becoming so commonplace in the '80s and today's smartphones, some of your best historical records may not even be written down. Rather they may exist on old VHS cassettes somewhere in your church or in members' private video collections.

Tell your congregation that you are looking for audio and video related to the church such as mission trips, special worship services, groundbreaking

ceremonies and so forth. Designate someone such as an intern to record video of current activities, including anything from community projects to choir practice to youth group social activities. Often, youth interns can bolster your marketing efforts because they have technical skills and interests that make them ideal for recording video, editing and packaging videos into excellent vignettes of local church life.

Recognize that your local church's story is a part of the larger history of your community

By writing your history, you offer your congregation the opportunity to grow more emotionally and spiritually connected with the church. You also invite visitors and others to learn more about how your church plays an important role in the community. 📌

– *United Methodist Communications*

("CHICKS," cont. from page 9.)

Remaining pastors first

Both Reynolds and Matthews have busy schedules especially in their roles as pastors. Part of their goal in starting to do this podcast is ensuring that their churches and congregations come first.

"We're both pastors and we want to value that we are pastors first," Matthews said. "Caring for people first and not putting the podcast above our care of our people. We won't do that because we value our people."

Overall both women are excited about the new opportunity to create a new space for other voices as well as a new venture in their ministries.

"I think it's exciting that I do see women leading and leading powerfully and more prophetically even in this next season that the church is going through. I'm all about making it positive," Reynolds said. "It's not about men vs. women –there's so many divisions out there. Using all the tools available to us, this can be a new space to lead others in their fullest potential and to grow into those gifts."

For more information about the podcast, visit the team on Facebook at www.facebook.com/collaredchicks/, email them at

collaredchick@gmail.com

and find them on Twitter and Instagram by using the handle @collaredchicks. 📌

– *Madeline Pillow is editor of the Advocate.*

("TEACHERS," cont. from page 13.)

years earlier in 1866. They could not see the far reaching effect of their efforts but they had great faith in God's ability to accomplish a great work through them. Perhaps they had heard the quote from their founding father John Wesley that says: "It cannot be that people should grow in grace unless they give themselves to reading. A reading people will always be a knowing people."

Approximately 150 people joined in this two-part celebration. Guest speaker for the morning was Princess Moss, treasurer of the NEA and former president of the VEA (2005-2008). In attendance were also two other African-American women who had been elected president of the VEA since the merger: Mary Hatwood Futrell (1976-78) and Cheri James (1996-2000). 📌

*Account of the State when Mr. Wright first came to the town of ...
to hear ...
preach the last sermon at ...*

Preserving church



Photo found at: <http://mapio.net/s/22290148/>

*I found that was he that stood by him & found great Love in my heart
to him after that he first opened to me that I went to hear Mr John Wesley
and the conference soon told me that it was the true Gospel of Christ that he
preached and how I had spent my life having lived
almost Sixty years in the world & found that I was ignorant of God & his*



History is made with every passing minute and day. The steps of Jesus' ministry echo to us all these many years later just as every mile of John Wesley's ministry on horseback influence and guide us in United Methodism.

It is the sum of a many multitude of ministries that affect our denomination as well as Christianity and the world around us. This includes local churches. We build upon the history behind us and, whether we know it or not, it guides us. After all, we are guided as a people of God by a book detailing the ministries of people like Moses and David, Esther and Deborah that we still read today.

In this feature, learn how local churches in the Virginia Conference are preserving their history for generations to come.

thought my self as good as my neighbours and a great deal better then some of them that did curs and swear and get drunk I always had a good name amongst my acquaintances which was pleasing to flesh and blood but the Lord soon shew'd me that I was a deivel and had only deceiv'd my self and all that knew me when I went to church I seldom found any thing there that

There are many reasons why a congregation would want to preserve its church's history. These reasons can include allowing members to understand their church better. Two churches in the Virginia Conference share ways they have preserved their church histories.



Then and now: The sanctuary of Washington Street UMC in Petersburg, Va. Photos found at www.thechurchesofvirginia.org. Photography by John G. DeMajo.

Washington Street UMC

Washington Street UMC (WSUMC) in Petersburg has a history going back to the introduction of Methodism to Southside and Central Virginia around 1773. The church's current building was built in 1842 and houses museums for the current congregation and two churches that closed over 30 years ago: High Street and Memorial.

Tom Lester, pastor of the congregation, plans to produce a video with scripted narration of the museums, sanctuary (past and present) Old Zion Ship room (Fellowship Hall) and other significant rooms and artifacts, including marble plaques.

Lester shared that WSUMC was instrumental in the formation of the Methodist Episcopal South, serving as the worship center for the 1st General Conference held at nearby Union St. MES in 1846. Several local churches formed out of WSMC early and possibly about 1844 when some have start-up dates.

Lester said that he believes the preservation of history is important in learning where one comes from.

"We understand tradition in the history. We understand the evolution of worship and interaction with culture through history. Several books relate how WSUMC was the mother church for many in the area. We are closer to the split of 1844 because WSUMC served as the worship center for the first general conference of the MES Church, and we have our relationship to Asbury's presence."

In the process of preserving history, Lester acknowledged that the past reminds congregations today of past days of flourishing churches.

"WSUMC used to be a center of religious activity such as the annual Messiah concert in the tri-city area. It stands as a memorial to another time and as an inspiration of possibilities. Our space can serve several community needs while remaining a center of worship in the area."

Preserving your church's history

When planning to preserve your own church's local history, Lester shared that his church's preservation tactics are a little different due to the fact that the church has to conform to standards established by the local historical review board being a National Historical Landmark. But he added to remember to also preserve and display liturgical items such as chalices, hymnals, membership rolls, photographs and associated books.



Cokesbury College historical marker



Methodist Sunday School Pin Methodist Publishing House

Fredericksburg UMC

Established in 1802, Fredericksburg UMC has the oldest parsonage in Virginia. During the Civil War, the buildings sustained severe damage and in 1963 the congregation was the first congregation in Virginia to be racially integrated.

For Margaret L. Mock, co-chair of the Heritage Committee for the church, a renewed effort to preserve this history started in 2011 as the committee recognized the long history of the church and the need to be vigilant about recording and preserving that heritage.

This renewed effort has included compiling historic documents and more in one location in the church, sharing it with the congregation and the community at large and bringing their records into the digital age. The collection is titled The John J. Johnson Archives Center, named after the now-deceased author of the church history book and chair of the History Committee for many years.

Preserving your church's history

Mock shared that for churches interested in starting this work of preservation the essential first step is finding a group of volunteers who are passionate about the church's history. The next step is sharing the efforts with the entire congregation.

"This group, however small, must communicate their passion to the entire congregation through one-on-one conversations, through Sunday school classes and through church committees. The congregation will provide the needed moral and financial support," said Mock.



Mock shared that the Heritage Committee's early support included the securing from the Board of Trustees a 250-square-foot room that was previously used for storage. The space was renovated by painting, installing lighting and hanging light-filtering shades, carpeting, shelving, a computer, a printer and a flatbed scanner.

Mock said that the next step for continued work, including the development of a financial plan as well as support from the Finance Committee, is crucial. Since 2013 the committee has received support from the Finance Committee as well as donations from the congregation.

"Fortunately our Finance Committee saw a need for preservation of church history and they liked what we had achieved," Mock said.

The congregation remained part of this process when, in the fall of 2011, an open house was held after each service to introduce the congregation to the newly-renovated space. Those assembled offered suggestions as well as contributions of items for display in the two glass display cases located strategically in the church building.

The church encourages these opportunities for the congregation to engage with their own history. The church newsletter is utilized to alert church members about opportunities to participate in such activities as oral history interviews.

This work has also allowed for larger community visibility as the church has led community tours of the church for different events as well as offering an internship through a local college, Mary Washington University.

Over the years, the church has been able to continue to provide internships for History and Historic Preservation students at the college. This year during the fall, an intern will work with the committee to assist with cataloging the collection using PastPerfect software.

Since 2011, the committee has had many accomplishments in their work. Some of these include: creating an Archives room complete with protective window coverings and work tables, filing hundreds of documents into 150 archival document cases, conducting 17 oral history interviews and transcribing the tapes for a written record and creating history displays for public viewing and changing them several times a year. 🍷

Left: Fredericksburg UMC's dedicated historians in the John J. Johnson Archives Center. Seated, left to right: Margaret Mock, Marianne Brokaw, Carolyn Parsons, Lynn Gambell. Standing, left to right: Bill Mock, Kelly Blosser, Lynda MacDonald, Doug MacDonald, Janet Davis, Bill Rhodes, Bob LaChance.

Coming after him whose shoes I thought he was not worthy to untie
I found that was he that stood by him & found great Love in my heart
to him after that the first opportunity I had I went to hear Mr John W. ...
and my confidence soon told me that it was the true Gospel of Christ that he
preached & likewise began to think how I had spent my life having lived

Bringing our past to light at Reveille UMC

By Anne Vaden Hodges

The past of Reveille UMC in Richmond is deep, both historically and spiritually. The power of our calling to be rooted in the light of Christ Jesus our Lord is what constantly sustains us as we also seek to be rooted in those who came before us to do God's work and make Reveille what it is today.

If you went back in Reveille's history to 1720, the land was quiet and filled with God's natural beauty as it became part of an expansive Royal Land Patent to the Kennon family.

Today in 2017, seven acres of this original Land Patent

are still filled with God's beauty, and now, the footprints of those doing God's work at the church. Almost 300 years of history encompass the grounds and life of the church.

Within the "layers" of our church history is, first, 18th-century Reveille House and its historic gardens and dependencies, an outgrowth of the Land Patent. The next two "layers" brought the house and grounds into Methodism, when Union Station Methodist Church (est. 1843) and Monument Methodist Church (est. 1911) joined to purchase Reveille House and its "seven acres set apart." This purchase created our fourth, and most recent "layer" of history, Reveille United Methodist Church, formed in 1951. With this uniting of God's people into one church, their legacies are embodied in Reveille's history.

Over the years, many persons connected with our church worked to save and organize our collective history and undertake the restoration of Reveille House and its grounds. The house, now on the National Register of Historic Places,



A photo, circa 1936 of the Crutchfield house, now called the "Reveille House." Today the house is on the Register of National Historic Places and preserved by the United Methodist Church. Johnston, Frances Benjamin, photographer. Reveille House, 4200 Cary Street, Richmond, Henrico County, Virginia. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress.

...in my forty years in this world of mine I thought my self as good as my neighbours and a great deal better than some of them that die curs and swear and get drunk I always had a good name amongst my acquaintance which was pleasing to flesh and blood but the Lord soon shew'd me that I was a devil and had only deceiv'd my self and all that...

"It is said that one of the responsibilities of any pastor is to exegete the history of the congregation one is appointed to serve."

Rev. Douglas Forrester

is "home" to the offices of our ministers and staff and a constant location for meetings, classes, Bible studies and receptions.

Over time, Reveille's keepers of church life had to manage a growing collection amidst limited space and resources. This collection grew into a number of closets and offices, creating a great need to bring this rich and sacred collection into greater care and a larger, singular space.

The creation of a Reveille Archives Center has now been realized with the support of our ministers, staff, Church Council, Board of Trustees, committees and congregants. Cooperative work with our Memorial Library is ongoing.

As charged by *The Book of Discipline*, a re-established Records and History Committee, dedicated to Reveille and historical research, is composed of church members. Additionally, ex-officio members who serve include the chair of the Memorial Library Committee and members of the Reveille House Guild.

Working with all manner of recently ordered archival storage and conservation materials, this committee will begin to consolidate, reorganize and catalog Reveille's large collection for the purposes of conserving, preserving, researching and exhibiting our history. The committee is working on a mission statement, and a list of responsibilities has been written as a guide for our work.

The process will first involve categorizing the collection into the four major "layers of history": 1) Reveille House, Gardens and Grounds; 2) Union Station Methodist Church; 3) Monument Methodist Church; 4) Reveille.

As that work moves forward, a further delineation will proceed by refining those areas into Bibles and church-related books, all other books, archival material, photographs and artifacts. These classifications, with subtopics, were observed during a visit to historic St. John's Church where we were encouraged to adapt them to our needs. In addition to this process, we will look to everyone serving in any capacity of church life to assist in the gathering of pertinent records. Software systems are currently being researched for

future use.

With the establishment of the Archives Center, renewed interest in Reveille's history has been evident. Charter members and families have shared memories of Union Station and Monument churches, also showing interest in old documents of family involvement. Members who previously worked on our congregational history are re-engaged. Questions arise as to how to preserve particular elements of early church life no longer in use, such as the old reel-to-reel steeple chimes. Congregants seek historical information and are contributing personal Reveille papers and objects. As well, people apart from Reveille's membership visit to seek records of ancestral involvement. It is a solace to hear about the importance of spiritual life within genealogical research.

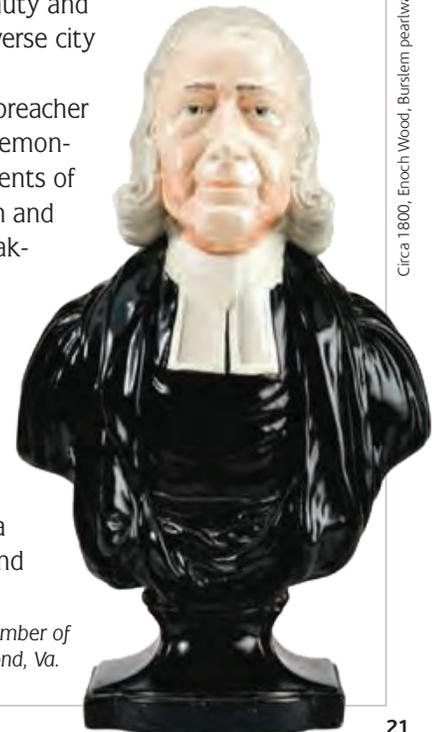
The Rev. Douglas Forrester, lead pastor of the church, said he sees the effort of preserving the church's history as vital, especially for the pastoral leadership.

"It is said that one of the responsibilities of any pastor is to exegete the history of the congregation one is appointed to serve. That is, to interpret the church's history in light of the Gospel, to explain the points of intersection between the story of God's salvation of the world and how that story is lived out within a specific congregation of God's people," Forrester said. "Doing so allows the pastor to speak God's truth in a language that repeats the refrains of a church's specific narrative."

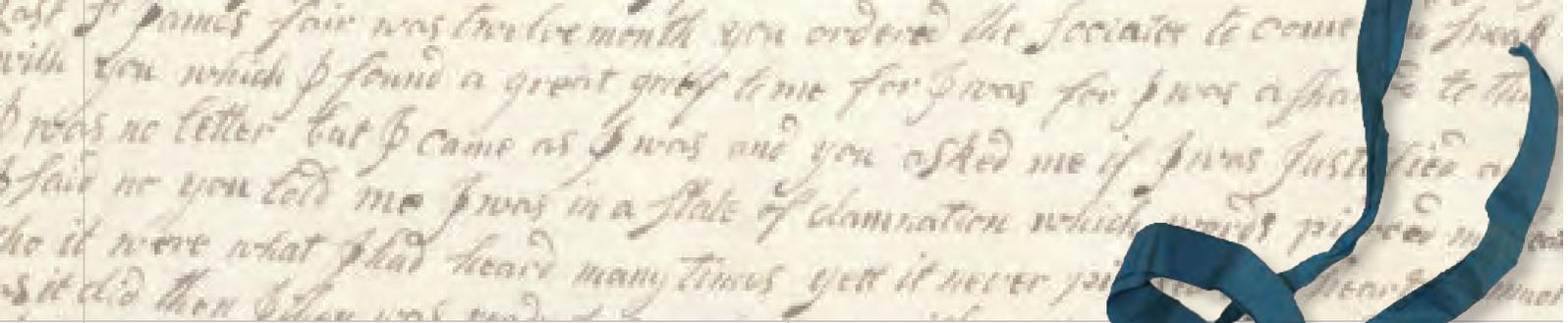
For Forrester, the story of Reveille is about the people and congregations coming together, radical generosity and creating beauty and order in the midst of the diverse city of Richmond.

"One of the roles of the preacher at Reveille, therefore, is to demonstrate how those core elements of our narrative can still inform and inspire our task today, of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," Forrester said. "Solid church history can enable us to remember our core values, our 'DNA' as we minister to our community and beyond in a way that is both effective and authentic." 

—Anne Vaden Hodges is a member of Reveille UMC in Richmond, Va.



Circa 1800, Enoch Wood, Burslem pearlware figure depicting a bust of Reverend John Wesley lions.



Archive program seeks to remember church history

By Louis B. Cei



Church archives and historical materials play a pivotal role in the life of the church. As we approach the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, it is important to keep in mind the historical developments and issues which shaped the church. Issues such as justification, indulgences, the authority of the Bible, and more recently abortion and the death penalty, as well as church attendance trends are a matter of church record.

Each church's task is to preserve significant documents and artifacts which reveal where The United Methodist Church stands on today's debates and impacts the lives of its members. The preservation process is largely subjective, but ideally it should incorporate the church's Charge Conference reports, monthly newsletters and statements of

letters from the pastor.

For those just starting on this journey of history preservation, you should first dedicate a secure room for records and artifacts, appoint a person to be responsible for the archives and be sure that documents such as Charge Conference reports, monthly newsletters, pastor correspondence and annual reports are kept.

At Trinity UMC in the west end of Henrico County, the Archive program ranks as an important component of the church's message of "making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." Trinity's archives have a secure, dedicated room. For each recent year, an individual box contains reports, monthly bulletins, pictures and newspaper clippings concerning Trinity. Previous decades have either boxes, binders or files for safekeeping.

Most importantly, each year the Church Historian produces an Archive Report summarizing the year's events at Trinity including church membership, attendance, finances and programs. This report is a reminder to the staff and congregation of the year's accomplishments in meeting its goals of proclaiming Christ's vision for the region, the state, the nation and the world.

Founded in 1790, Trinity is one of the oldest churches in Virginia. A book containing profiles of the 121 pastors who have served Trinity will be published in the near future, and placed in the Archives. In addition, Trinity Archives contain valuable artifacts such as a silver Communion service dating to 1890, and saddle bags used by the Rev. Wilkinson Linwood Ware, a 19th-century Methodist circuit rider, both of which are on display near the church's Welcome Center.

The church also sponsors forums on church history; this year a special forum will be held to mark the anniversary of the Protestant Reformation.

For Trinity pastor Larry Lenow the Archive program allows the history of the church to remain alive and relevant. The Rev. Judy Oguich, minister of Adult Ministries, said the past informs the future.

"Our Archive program helps us remember and celebrate our past, while providing the framework for our present ministry initiatives," said Oguich. 

— Louis B. Cei, Ph.D., is the Trinity Archivist and church historian.



Centenary of Wesleyan Methodism 1839 & 1863 Other | Now part of the DCJonas Collection

... which I found a great grief to me for I was for I was ashamed to think
I had no letter but I came as I was and you asked me if I was justified and
I said no you told me I was in a state of damnation which words pierced my heart
... it did then when was ready to cry out my punishment is more than I can bear
I fear my ...

There are a multitude of reasons to remember church history



The Rev. Bob Weeks, senior pastor at Verona UMC in Harrisonburg, is a lover of church history, and at his church the congregation has connected the past to the present.

One of the ways they have done this is by making practical and symbolic use of an old railroad lantern used to light the 1870s community washhouse

where the church first met 140 years ago.

Last year the church transformed an old grocery store into the new Verona Community Center and planted a new worship community named Aisle 7 Fellowship. At the dedication of the community center in March 2016, the now electrically-wired lantern was hung in the center of the entryway. The lantern is left permanently on as a sign of the light the church hopes the center will be for the community.

Weeks answers some questions below about the church and their connection with their history.

Why do you think it's important to preserve church history?

There are a multitude of reasons. The foremost is that our church's story is not simply about our present reality and the hope of what is to come. The Scripture grounds all that we are and will be in the stories of our past. We are woefully ill-equipped to move through the present and into the future unless we have learned not only the biblical stories of our faith, but also the stories that connect us to our more recent past.

Preserving church history can also help us overcome an unfortunate malady of the church in 21st century America. We are a generation that increasingly longs to eliminate all risk, to move only when and where there is absolute certainty. But in our congregation's history there is story

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



Old railroad lantern finds new life at Verona UMC.

...when I was ready to cry out in punishment is more than I can bear
 ...I sought from the presence of God & then began to think the way of
 ...grace was past & began to think how I was brought up when I was a child to know
 ...the Lord and what a love I had for Christ when I was a child - but after I was grown
 ...I lost sight of the Lord in doing that I knew I ought not to do and the Lord
 ...shall not always strive with man I could find no comfort for me



Verona United Methodist Church first met at Wilkerson Wash House from 1878 to 1881. Photo courtesy of Bob Weeks.



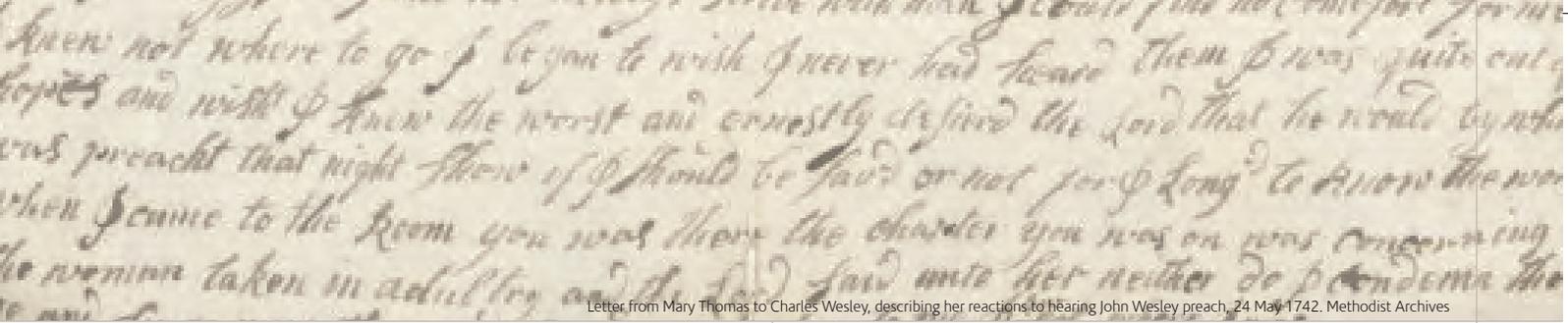
("LANTERN," cont. from previous page.)

after story of people of faith taking risks for the sake of the Gospel. In 140 years we have met in five different locations. We have planted churches. We have been part of multi-point charges and found our way to status as a station church. We have been United Brethren, Evangelical United Brethren and now United Methodist. The community around us has changed so much that the majority of buildings and businesses that were here a half century ago no longer exist. Through wars and depressions and cultural revolutions, the church of Jesus Christ in Verona has pressed on with a message of hope in the midst of change.

Preserving the stories of our church and community provide us with context, inspiration and strength for what lies ahead.

How does your congregation at Verona interact with their church's history?

Our annual homecoming in the fall, usually held around All Saints Day, is a time of reflecting on our history and remembering the saints who God worked through to create a vibrant community of faith. Throughout the year we have historical displays in the church that tell our story as an integral part of God's story. And as senior pastor, I have tried to set an example of interpreting our future mission as flowing forward from the faith and sacrifices of the past.



Letter from Mary Thomas to Charles Wesley, describing her reactions to hearing John Wesley preach, 24 May 1742. Methodist Archives

I love the story you shared about the lantern. How was this idea formed within the church? Are there persons specifically tasked to preserving history at the church?

When I arrived at Verona UMC six years ago, the old railroad lantern was sitting in my office. It was several months before I thought to ask around about its history. As someone who grew up in an area of northern Virginia that often rushed into the future without preserving or even considering the past, I was fascinated by the connection of the lantern to our church's birth in a community washhouse along the railroad tracks. I began to bring it into the sanctuary each year on Homecoming Sundays and tell its story. When we built the Verona Community Center across the highway last year, it seemed only right that the lantern's light should shine again where everyone in Verona could see it.

Among the people in our church who have done a great deal to preserve our history is a man by the name of Harry Lockridge. Along with the historical collections of the late Paul Alexander, Harry and others have steadfastly worked to preserve photos, artifacts and records stretching back almost a century and a half. Over the years, he and Paul and others have made sure nothing is lost.

What have been some of the steps at Verona in preserving their history? Any tips you would provide to churches starting to do the same?

Don't simply store your history away in a closet. Scan old photos and take new photos and tell your story on a website. Find ways to securely integrate artifacts and photos into your church's display areas. And find creative ways, including skits, dramas, music and multimedia, to communicate "the old, old story" of your church in new and exciting ways. Local newspapers and historians outside the congregation may also be valuable resources.

Also don't forget the excitement of inviting your church members to become treasure hunters. I loved the discovery at our church of an old cracked and chipped wooden offering plate that dates at least to the early 20th century. On its bottom were scratched sets of tic-tac-toe lines! Can you envision the young acolytes hidden behind the pulpit, pen knives in hand; breaking their boredom in the only way they knew how before smartphones and tablets?

Another recent historically significant discovery was

made in a local consignment store where we found a beautiful framed piece of German folk art emblazoned with a cross and crown and, in German, the words "No Other Cross." Since our church's roots are in the German-speaking settlers of the Shenandoah Valley, the artwork and its subject seemed relevant to our heritage. As we did further research, we came to the realization that the artwork's message was deeply significant as a protest by German Christians to the adoption and repurposing of the cross of Christ by the German government, especially under Adolf Hitler, who used versions of the Christian cross in a variety of ways, especially on military and civilian medals. The artwork was purchased and now hangs prominently (with an interpretation of its meaning hanging over the artwork) in a room just off one of our main entryways.

Any other thoughts?

Don't overlook the history of "auxillary" units of the church. During the early 1950s the women's fellowship of our church supported families in Germany, our nation's former enemy, through the C.A.R.E. program. These families, many of whom had lost homes and family members during World War II, needed the support of citizens of the United States to meet their most basic needs. We recently had the original thank you letters from these German families (stored in a box for over half a century) translated into English by a neighbor in Verona. The collection of letters and pictures was then presented to our United Methodist Women during a worship service. 🍷



Methodist Love-Feast Mug, Staffordshire pottery, c.1840, Victoria and Albert Museum, c.1-2002. Image from V&A Search the Collections.

LIVING THE WORD*



The Rev. Tom Joyce currently serves as Assistant to the Bishop. He also served as the Roanoke District Superintendent; pastor of First UMC, Roanoke District; Heritage UMC, Lynchburg District; Chamberlayne Heights UMC, formerly Ashland District; Warsaw UMC, formerly Rappahannock District; and as associate pastor of Trinity UMC, Richmond District. A native of Henry County, Va., Joyce received his undergraduate degree in Religion and Philosophy from Emory & Henry College and his M.Div. from Duke Divinity School. He was ordained an elder in 1973. He retired in 2013 after 44 years of active service in the conference. The last eight of those years, he served as Assistant to the Bishop full-time. Joyce is married to Eleanor Barrow Joyce and they have three children and two grandchildren.

October 1, 2017

Malachi 1-4

Key verse: Malachi 3:13-18

God's steadfast love

One of my favorite childhood toys was a boomerang. I loved throwing it into the air and watching it make its way home again. I never understood how it was able to accomplish such an amazing feat – and frankly, I still don't. Even so, to my never-ending amazement, my boomerang always returned. And whenever it did, I always felt gratified that somehow things had once again worked out as they should.

Unlike my childhood experience with a boomerang, the people of Malachi's day were not at all feeling as though things had worked out as they should. In fact, to their minds, things had gotten so off track, so difficult and discouraging that the people said: "It is vain to serve God. What do we profit by keeping his command or by going about as mourners before the Lord of hosts?" (Malachi 3:14b) They had thrown their boomerangs of faith in into the air and had gotten nothing in return. Was there any benefit or positive consequence at all to placing one's faith in God? This was their question. If so, they couldn't see it.

Haven't we all felt this way at one time or another; felt that regardless of our commitment to loving and serving God, God has turned a blind eye to our sufferings and a deaf ear to our prayers? In his hour of need, didn't even Jesus feel abandoned by God, as evidenced by his dispirited cry from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46b)

There is a word from the Lord for such discouraging times, says Malachi; and it is that regardless of our situation, God will not abandon God's own. "They (the faithful) shall be mine, says the Lord of Hosts, my special possession on the day when I act, and I will spare them as parents spare their children who serve them. Then once more you shall see the differences between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him." (Malachi 3:17-18)

Malachi's message is an important one: Whatever difficulties and challenges we may encounter, we must hold fast to God's steadfast love. We must faithfully cling to our faith in God and in God's everlasting promise to be with us always. The good news, and it's repeated over and over again in the pages of both our Old and New Testaments, is: No matter how intensely we may feel God has turned away from us and no longer cares, the truth is God loves us and will never let us go.

October 8, 2017

Matthew 15-17

Key verse: Matthew 15:29-31

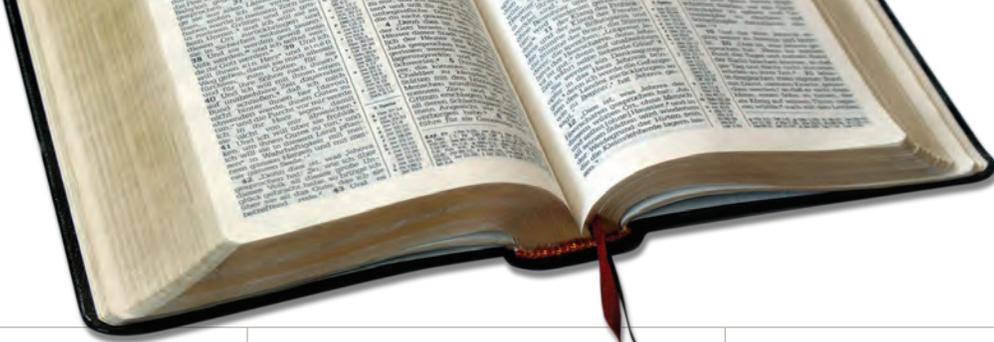
Believing your eyes

"After Jesus had left that place, he passed along the Sea of Galilee, and he went up the mountain, where he sat down. Great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many others. They put them at his feet, and he cured them, so that the crowd was amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel." (Matthew 15:29-31)

"Who are you going to believe, me or your own eyes?" This line, first spoken by Groucho Marx in the Marx Brothers' 1933 movie *Duck Soup*, describes the situation of those in Jesus' Gentile audience as they watched him heal all manner of human affliction: "... the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many others." (Matthew 15:30)

How could they resist moving toward God when the amazing, life-transforming love of God was being so transparently revealed in Jesus before their very eyes? After all, seeing was believing. Matthew's message here is that God's love and compassion was so persuasively and compellingly present in Jesus that even those who were not of the household of Israel's faith, the Gentiles, were moved to praise Israel's God.

These Scripture verses raise for us followers of Jesus an important question: Are others able to see in us, as people saw in Jesus, something that pulls them towards God? Or, do they see in



us only things that push them away from God? As we go about our daily lives, at work, at school, at play, in our social gatherings, etc., do others see in us things that would cause them to want to love and serve the God they see in us? Or do they see in us only things that cause them to want to have nothing to do with this God?

Obviously, we are not Jesus. We do not possess the power Jesus possessed. We cannot heal as Jesus healed. We cannot perform the miracles Jesus performed. But like Jesus, we do possess the ability, by the lives we live, to influence people toward our God, or to cause people to want to have nothing to do with the God.

People listened to what Jesus said, and they watched what Jesus did. They experienced in him God's love, grace, mercy and forgiveness for them and for all people. There was something in and about Jesus that was so irresistibly persuasive for God that even those outside the household of Israel's faith were moved to embrace the God they "saw" in Jesus. May it be so with us as well.

October 15, 2017

Mark 1-3

Key Verse: Mark 1:16-20

Following Jesus

The sign on the back of the truck read, "Work vehicle. Do not follow." There would be no argument from me. Only a few weeks before a huge chunk of concrete had fallen from beneath a boat trailer in front of me on I-95, sending a cloud of concrete and gravel all over the windshield and hood of my car. It will take nothing less than a replaced windshield and new coat of paint to remedy the damage. Sometimes following is a bad idea.

At other times, however, following is an extraordinarily good idea, as when Jesus said to Simon and his brother Andrew: "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." (Mark 1:17)

"And immediately they left their nets and followed him." (Mark 1:18)

For years this verse puzzled me greatly. It was the word immediately that gave me trouble. I could not imagine any two fishermen immediately leaving their boats, nets, whatever fish they had caught, etc. and setting out to follow someone they had never met before, nor possibly ever heard of. I just couldn't get my mind around that.

But then I began to read biblical commentators who suggested that in all likelihood Simon and Andrew had known Jesus for quite some time before this encounter. They had heard Jesus' preaching and teaching. They had observed him performing miracles. They had had conversations with him. In other words, when Jesus called Simon and Andrew to follow him, this was not an invitation that came "out of the blue." It was not an invitation coming from someone they had never seen before and did not know. Rather, it was an invitation that came as the culminating event of an intentional discipling process that Jesus had been engaged in with Simon and Andrew for some period of time. And when they said yes to Jesus, this was not a snap decision on their part, but the resolution to an inward struggle they had been engaged in for quite some time.

Is this the way Simon's and Andrew's call really happened? I have no idea. But however it happened, it's clear their saying yes to Jesus was the most important decision of their lives, for they would never be the same

again. From that moment forward, their lives would take on an importance and a significance they would have never thought possible - and it all began when they said yes to Jesus.

The same is true for us. Thankfully, Jesus' invitation to "follow me" is not a call reserved for Simon and Andrew. It's a call extended to you and me as well. Jesus calls us, as he called them, to leave our boats and nets and fish and to follow him. And unlike the bad idea of following a work vehicle on the highway, following Jesus is an extraordinarily good idea. As a matter of fact, the closer we follow Jesus the better. For it's in following Jesus that we find hope. We find joy. We find peace; and a life so rich and full that it can only be described as abundant.

October 22, 2017

Mark 15-16

Key Verse: Mark 16:1-8

Seeing Jesus

Several years ago, a former district superintendent told me about a meeting he conducted in one of the churches in the conference. The meeting had been called with the hope of bringing resolution to a conflict within the congregation. Some church members liked the pastor and thought he was the perfect leader for their church; others believed this pastor was too rough around the edges, used poor grammar and was an extremely poor fit for their rather sophisticated congregation.

As the conversation of the evening progressed, some expressing support

(Con't. on next page: "LIVING WORD.")

***Abingdon Press announced that they are discontinuing the publication of the New International Lesson Series Annual. These passages are in accordance with Bishop Lewis' Bible Reading Challenge calendar. See October calendar on pg. 31.**

CLERGY & DIACONAL



DEATHS



The Rev. David S. Willis Jr., retired clergy on the Staunton District, died July 23, 2017.

He received his B.S. Degree from Duke University. Soon after, he received his Masters of Divinity from Yale University. He began his ministry in Fall River Mills, CA and built a church from the ground up. After five years, he and his family moved back east to the Virginia Conference. Over the next 50 years, he had ministered various churches and congregations throughout the state.

Willis loved doing God's work on earth. He deeply loved his family and the outdoors whether he was fishing, hunting or tending his well-kept vegetable gardens. Family will be remember him for his easy smile and contagious laughter. He loved people but equally enjoyed his quiet meditation and Bible study time. He will be missed by his family and friends, however; they know he is right where he wants to be with his Lord and Savior for eternity.

In addition to his loving parents, he was preceded in death by his older sister, Carolyn Cunningham; his younger brother, Thomas Willis; and his oldest son, Jonathan Willis. David was the last surviving member of his immediate family.

He is survived by his beloved wife and Christian life partner of 71 years, Elinor (Fall) Willis; daughter, Beth G. Daisey; two sons, Chuck Willis and wife, Carolyn and David S. Willis III and wife, Sharon; nine grandchildren; as well as 11 great grandchildren. Funeral services were held July 30 at Calvary UMC, Stuarts Draft.



The Rev. Edward H. Wright died Aug. 14, 2017. A Service of Death & Resurrection was held on August 19 at Aldersgate UMC.

He began his ministerial career in 1950 at the Bethel Circuit, Hoadly and he retired in 1994.

The Rev. Frank Joseph "Joe" Mitchell, retired elder, died July 25, 2017, at Duke Hospital in North Carolina. He is survived by his wife, Norma Mitchell. A memorial service will be held at Epworth UMC in Durham, N.C., on Oct. 7, 2017.

Mitchell began his ministerial service in the Virginia Conference in 1953 at Chamberlayne Heights. He went on to serve Tabernacle in Pungo; as professor at Union College in Kentucky; then as a professor at Central Methodist College, MO; and Troy State University, AL. He served Covenant Church in the former Portsmouth District and then retired in 1992.

The Rev. Alva Daniel (A.D.) Tice, 91, died on July 14, 2017, in Harrisonburg, Va. He served as an ordained minister for 58 years in Mennonite, United Methodist and Brethren churches. He served Mountain Valley UMC in the Harrisonburg District during his retirement.

In addition to being renowned for his eloquent words, his thought-provoking sermons and his compassionate pastoral care, Tice was a lifelong learner (a student of philosophy, politics and classical music among many other things), an eager traveler and a lively historian, regaling all who would listen to his entertaining, poignant and sometimes humorous

ancestral stories reaching back to the early 1800s. He was an active member in Lions Clubs, serving as past chapter president at Massanutten, where he resided at his beloved Bergenheim for the last 22 years of his life prior to an eight-month stay at Avante Nursing Home.

Throughout his life and ministry, Tice was constantly supported, and is survived, by his loving wife of 73 years, Rebecca. He will be greatly missed by their four children: A. Daniel Tice (Paula); H. Kent Tice (JoAnne); Patrima Tice; and Rebecca Tice. He is survived by seven grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren. In addition, he is survived by his younger sister, Evelyn Jost of Harrisonburg, and numerous nieces and nephews and their children, with whom he maintained many cherished relationships.

Mathilde L. Sheffield, 95, died Aug. 12, 2017. She was the surviving spouse of the **Rev. Wesley Sheffield**. She was residing in Sarasota, Fla., at the time of her passing.

There was a Memorial Service for **Lois Tucker**, wife of **the Rev. Howard Ray Tucker**, on July 30, 2017, at Epworth UMC, Selma. Tucker serves Mountain Valley UMC.

Bettie Albert White, widow of the late **Rev. Roscoe Marvin White Jr.**, died July 30, 2017, in Virginia Beach, Va. In 1971, Mrs. White was part of a team that established a pilot project called the Alcohol Safety Action Project, in Northern Virginia. In 1973, she helped establish the Peninsula Alcohol Safety Action Project as the first Assistant Director. She worked in this capacity until her retirement in 1990. In 1948, Bettie married the Rev.

Roscoe Marvin White Jr. Together they served churches throughout Virginia. She was an accomplished pianist and sang in the choir. White is survived by three children, Roy White (Deborah White), Lisa Alconcel (Douglas Alconcel), Kimberli White; grandchildren, Andrew White (Laura), Aylin White; foster grandson, Cecil Coleman; grandchildren, Quinn, Celia and Leyton; sisters, Joyce Richardson, Lois Huddle (Jack Huddle); over 11 nieces and nephews; and over 12 great nieces and nephews.

The Rev. Larry Buxton, retired elder, shared the passing of his mother-in-law (Beverly's mother), **Louise Holappa**, on June 17 in Florida. Memorial service were held in Naples on June 21 and a memorial service at First UMC, Huntington, WV, in mid-August.

Loris Hensley, mother of **Julie Layman** and mother-in-law to **The Rev. C. Alan Layman**, died on June 15, 2017 in her home under hospice care. The Rev. Layman is pastor at Grace UMC, Eastern Shore District.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Eunice Park, 11, won the third place for the Junior Division in the 22nd U.S. National Harp Competition hosted by the American Harp Society between June 25- June 28 in St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota. After two and half years lesson experience, she made it in her first competition. She is now working with Ms. Barbara Chapman, a harp principal of the Virginia Symphony Orchestra. Park is the daughter of **The Rev. J.W. (Jae Woo) Park**, St. Andrew's UMC, Elizabeth River District.

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for the pastor and others expressing disapproval, one older gentleman in the back of the room asked if he might make a comment.

"Yes, of course," replied the super-intendent.

"Well," he said, "I had lots rather have a preacher who says 'I seen' when he saw something than one who says 'I saw' when he didn't see anything."

The broader point here is a vitally important one, and it applies to clergy and laity alike: As followers of Jesus, the most important thing is that we really "see" Jesus. That is to say, the critical thing is that our faith is based upon a living and personal relationship with Jesus himself and not merely upon secondhand or passed-on knowledge about Jesus that one has received from someone else.

The truth of Jesus' resurrection is that Jesus is alive again. He is here, now, in the present and with us; and he is eagerly awaiting to enter into a dynamic, living and personal relationship with each of us. Jesus is not merely some personality from the past, albeit an important and influential one. Rather Jesus is a present reality, a living person to be encountered, engaged and lived in relationship with every day and in every circumstance of our lives.

Simply stated: The Christian life is not the life of one who merely knows about Jesus, but the life of one who knows Jesus himself.

The gentleman who spoke from the back of the room was 100 percent correct: When it comes to matters of faith and being a disciple of Jesus Christ, saying "I seen" when we really saw something is far better than saying "I saw" when we really didn't see anything. For seeing Jesus is what it's all about. Really seeing him. Know-

ing him. Entering into a personal, life-giving relationship with him. Then walking hand-in-hand with him every day.

October 29, 2017

Luke 12-13

Key Verse: Luke 13:18-21

Hold on to hope

World class sprinter Usain Bolt recently announced he would retire at the conclusion of this year's World Championship competition. Because of his remarkable achievements as a sprinter, one might think that Usain's body is a finely-tuned speed machine; it is not. Because of a condition known as scoliosis, his right leg is 1/2" shorter than his left, causing his left foot to strike the track with 13 percent less force than his right. This produces an uneven gate that should slow his speed considerably. Also he is 6'5", much too tall for a competitive runner.

Usain Bolt could have easily become discouraged and given up. With his many shortcomings, he could have concluded there was no hope that he could ever become the world class sprinter he so desperately wanted to be. But instead of focusing on his deficiencies, he focused on his great potential. And, in time, he rightfully earned the title, "The Fastest Man in the World."

In many ways, these are difficult days for us followers of Jesus and believers in the kingdom of God. There is much today for us to be concerned about, even to cause us to become discouraged and to let go of hope. We know God's kingdom is at hand; Jesus told us so. But evidence of this kingdom's presence is sometimes difficult to find. Things do not appear to be getting better and better. Evil appears

to be consistently winning over good. And sometimes we wonder if we are on the winning side.

Although the picture may often appear bleak, says Jesus, we must not become discouraged, nor give in to negative thinking. God's side will win in the end. Yes, every day there are bad things happening all around us. There is much we should be concerned about. But, as with Usain Bolt, our way forward is not to focus on the negatives but on the potential.

The good news, says Jesus, is that the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed and yeast. The mustard seed will grow into a tree with the birds of the air nesting in its branches. (Luke 13:19) The leaven will do its work until the entire lump is leavened. (Luke 13:21)

So people of God: Hold on to hope. God is at work in the world. And someday, in God's own appointed time, God's kingdom will come into its own. God and God's people will prevail. We are, indeed, on the winning side. 🍀

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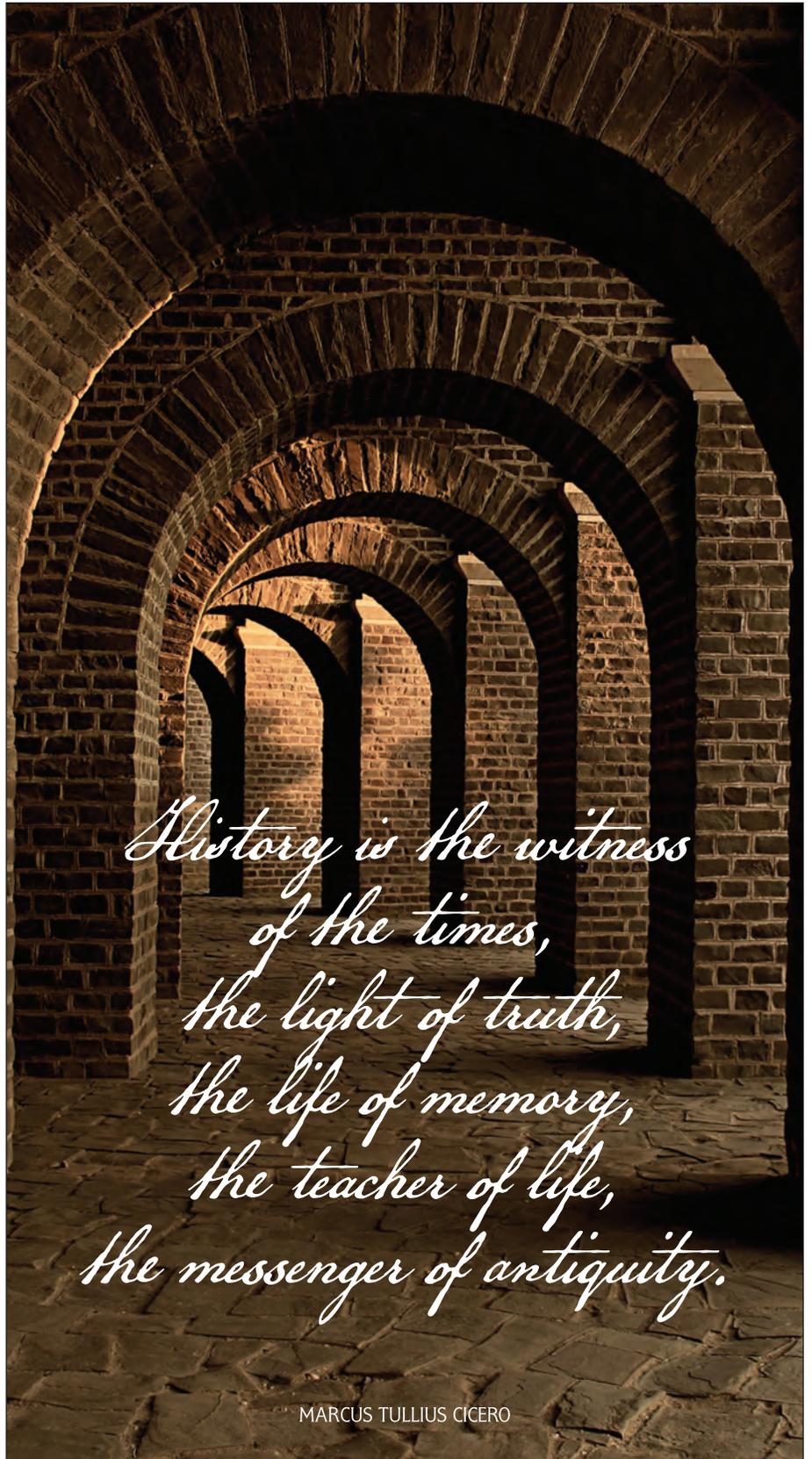
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ONE LAST WORD

Bishop's Bible Challenge readings for October

October 1	Malachi 1-4
October 2	Matthew 1-4
October 3	Matthew 5-6
October 4	Matthew 7-8
October 5	Matthew 9-10
October 6	Matthew 11-12
October 7	Matthew 13-14
October 8	Matthew 15-17
October 9	Matthew 18-19
October 10	Matthew 20-21
October 11	Matthew 22-23
October 12	Matthew 24-25
October 13	Matthew 26
October 14	Matthew 27-28
October 15	Mark 1-3
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October 17	Mark 6-7
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October 19	Mark 10-11
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October 27	Luke 8-9
October 28	Luke 10-11
October 29	Luke 12-13
October 30	Luke 14-16
October 31	Luke 17-18

– See more at: <http://backtothebible.org/reading-guide/15/7#sthash.Cl2yx6KJ.dpuf>



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