

# Advocate



We are called

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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

**We are  
called**

**It's easy to forget that lay members' lives are supposed to be a ministry.** It may be that it's much easier to distinguish how a clergyperson's time, effort and talents translate to ministry versus a layperson's.

But we lay people have much to give as well. And our pastors need us to be active participants to bring our unique gifts and graces to our churches.

Integral to identifying our lives as a ministry is having those around us help us. You don't have to be someone's official mentor to help encourage and guide them toward their talents.

I remember an award assembly at my middle school when I won the "Light of Christ" award. Prior to accepting the award, my teacher shared that I had a quiet strength.

Now it may not seem like much, but to me it meant a lot. Number one: Middle school was a hard time for me socially and for many other people I know. Number two: I was a very shy person for most of my life and it felt nice to be seen especially in those tough growing years. Number three: My teacher articulated something about myself that I couldn't see, and it made me perceive myself in a different way.

It could be our teachers, our friends, our mentors or acquaintances that help us see and articulate something new about ourselves. This may just be the push we need to have a little more confidence or to believe we might just attain our specific dreams.

For me, my teacher's assessment helped me see outside of myself in a time when I especially wanted to know more about myself.

So clergy and lay members, remember to encourage those around you. You never know when someone might be searching their call or refining that call once they have found it.

Read our features this month to learn more about call.  Until our next issue,

*Madeline C. Pillow*



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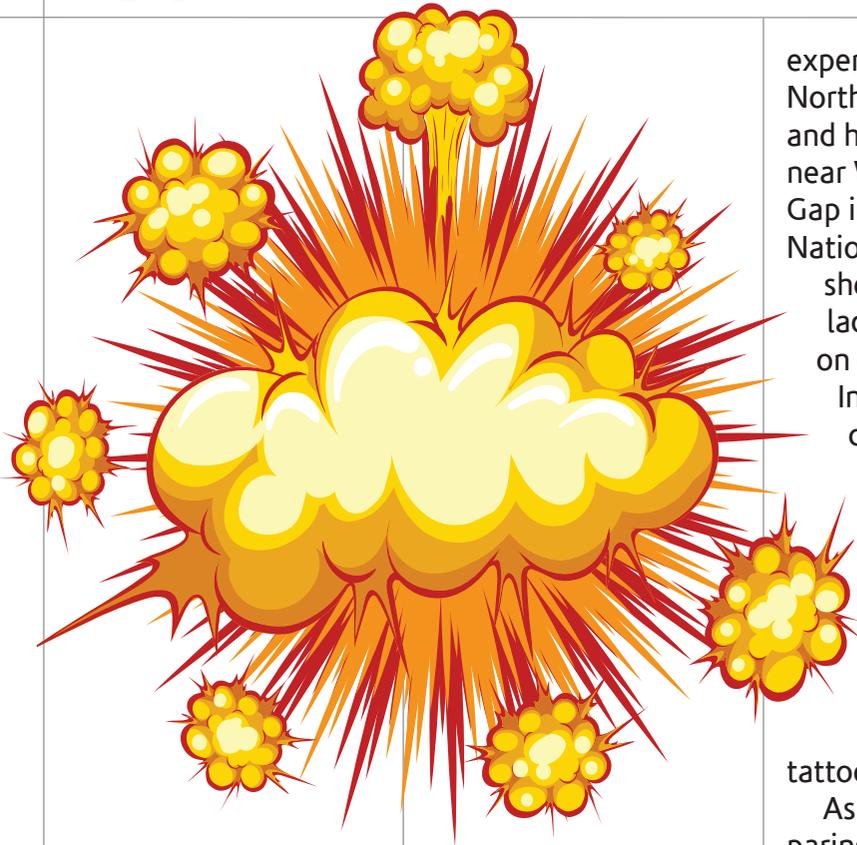


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## A 'kaboom' moment

By Bill Pike

**F**or the last six months, our church has been working with a consultant. We're trying to figure out the present and our future. Working with a consultant means meetings. I was part of a meeting with a small subgroup assigned to make recommendations regarding our facilities.

Near the end of that meeting, our leader shared a brief story from a recent hiking

experience in western North Carolina. She and her family were near Winding Stair Gap in the Nantahala National Forest when she noticed a young lady with a tattoo on one of her legs. Initially, all she could see was the top of the cross tattoo with the word "God." Curious, our leader wanted to know the remaining words from the tattoo.

As they were preparing to exit the shuttle bus, the cross tattoo came into clear view, and it stated: "God hates us all."

Our leader felt an immediate urge to ask the young lady about the tattoo, but respecting the young lady's privacy and freedom of speech, she didn't approach her.

Initially, our leader said she was a bit shocked, and then very sad as she wondered even more about the reasoning for this tattoo.

I, too, became curious about the statement. A few weeks

after our meeting, I googled "God hates us all."

The first link to come up was attributed to an American thrash metal band named Slayer. This was the title to their ninth studio album. In a Wikipedia article, I learned that the album themes focused on a variety of topics — "religion, murder, revenge and self-control." Even the album's cover — a Bible with nails driven through it and splattered in blood — created a stir. To top it off, the album was released on September 11, 2001.

Guitarist Kerry King, who wrote most of the lyrics on the album, shared in an interview with *Guitar World*, "I definitely wanted to put more realism in it, more depth. 'God Hates Us All' isn't an anti-Christian line as much as it's an idea I think a lot of people can relate to on a daily basis. One day you're living your life, and then you're hit by a car or your dog dies, so you feel like, 'God really hates me today.'"

I think I understand



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# COMMENTARY

what Mr. King is referencing in his comments about living life. Perhaps, like me, you have experienced something I call the “kaboom moment.” A kaboom moment is an unwanted and unexpected intrusion into my daily living experiences. A kaboom quickly changes everything, and without fail, I blame my pal, God.

In my mind, cancer might be one of the worst kaboom moment offenders.

Kaboom — in 1992, my mother died from cancer.

Kaboom — in September 2016, my cousin Alice’s three-year-old grandson was diagnosed with leukemia.

Kaboom — A friend who a few years ago lost one of her daughters in a tragic accident has just been diagnosed with breast cancer.

Kaboom — Another friend at church buried her husband in March after he lost his duel with cancer. Four months later, she is planning the funeral service for her son who also lost his

intense encounter with cancer.

No matter where I look, we all experience kabooms, and sadly kabooms aren’t always short-term disruptions.

And, I know myself well enough that deep inside my heart, in the most quiet, agitated whisper, I’m asking God — “What are you doing? Where are you in this? Why did you let this happen? How could you double-kaboom a person?”

Now, in fairness to God, He might be looking down, scratching His head, and asking similar questions about how I respond to the kabooms.

A few months ago, I read an article titled “21 books you don’t have to read” in *GQ* (*Gentlemen’s Quarterly* magazine).

I have a confession. Until several years ago, I was not a reader of the Bible. And, I might agree with a couple of the comments from the *GQ* editors, who placed The Bible on the list.

Is the future of the church socially and emotionally grounded in understanding “God

hates us all” and the Bible being on the *GQ* not required reading booklist?

Maybe churches need a kaboom moment — a dose of reality.

Hey church, wake up! The world has changed. Don’t get left behind, mired in your past.

Church, the past is important, but holding on to every piece of it probably will not nudge what remains of your congregation into the future.

Find the courage to take a look at your current status. Assess what’s working and what’s not working — do not be afraid to prune.

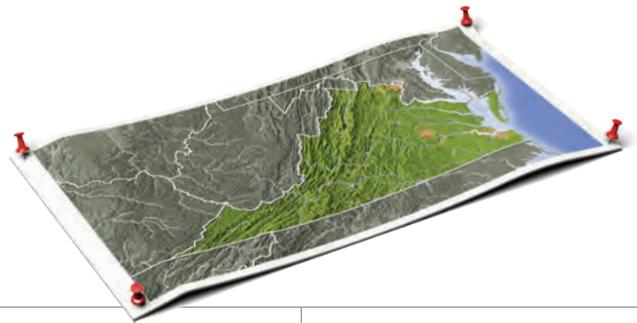
And church, maybe your future really comes down to this — can you, me, we “listen without judging?”

The voices inside and outside the walls of our churches need some quality listening time.

Could listening be the kaboom moment for the future of the church? 

— Bill Pike is the director of operations at Trinity UMC in Richmond.

# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



## Asking great questions at Mentor Palooza

By Madeline Pillow

The Center for Clergy Excellence tried something new this year by bringing together mentors of candidacy, licensed local pastors and provisional members for “Mentor Palooza” at Roslyn Retreat Center in Richmond from August 21-22.

In the past, accord-

ing to Ms. Kristen Seibert, administrative assistant for the Center for Clergy Excellence, the office has provided this training separately for each of the types of mentors.

At Mentor Palooza, 53 attendees learned more about the importance of mentoring, how to do it and specifically learning how to mentor can-

didates. The Rev. Joe Cailles and the Rev. Lynn Alley-Grant provided specifics to attendees on these topics.

Cailles shared with attendees that being a mentor is realizing you are just one part of a “God-blessed” system to help one another. Several of the reasons Cailles gave to mentor included to help those being mentored to interpret failure and to help provide wisdom.

“Your wisdom may or may not apply to what your person is going through,” Cailles said. “Help them discern how God’s wisdom is coming through in them and their ministry.”

Cailles referenced several examples of mentoring relationships such as Naomi and Ruth, Eli and Samuel as well as other references such as Yoda and Luke from the *Star Wars* saga and Charlotte and Wilbur from *Charlotte’s Web*.

In many of these examples, Cailles noted that a powerful question gave rise to

Attendees gather in small groups to talk about past mentors in their lives.



# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

a truth for those being mentored.

“Your job as a mentor is to ask great questions not to make great statements,” Cailles said.

Cailles asked the attendees to think of questions they could pose to those they mentor. Some of these questions included:

- ❖ What are you learning from your congregation?
- ❖ What does failure look like to you?
- ❖ Where is God silent in your life right now?
- ❖ What Biblical call resonates with your own call?

Alley-Grant shared that mentoring is not about the mentors themselves. She asked attendees to remember mentors from their past and to think about some key questions.

- ❖ How old were you when they mentored you?
- ❖ What did they do for you?
- ❖ Were they aware they mentored you?



The panel discussed experiences in mentoring.



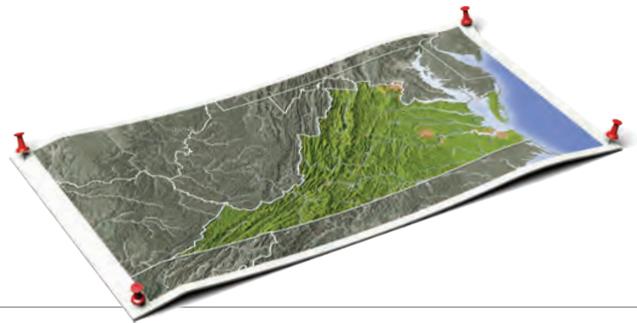
Attendees think about questions to offer those they mentor.

- ❖ What did they do and how did they do it?  
Alley-Grant also said that all practitioners are on a continuum on a perpetual track to betterment which is made up of will, intentionality and innovation.  
She also shared that mentorship is about encouragement and knowing when and how to challenge

those you mentor. The event also featured a panel composed of the Rev. Jason Snow, Burke UMC; the Rev. Claudia Stallings, Ramsey Memorial UMC; and the Rev. Bryson Smith, Good Shepherd UMC, moderated by the Rev. Lindsey Baynham, associate director for Call, Candidacy & Discernment, to discuss their experiences in

mentoring. Attendees then broke into their three separate groups to learn more about specific questions and paths for their groups.   
– Madeline Pillow is editor of the *Advocate*.

# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



## Virginia Conference hosts SEJ Historical Society meeting

By Jack Martin

Williamsburg proved to be the ideal setting for the annual meeting of the Southeastern Jurisdictional Historical Society, July 17-20, 2018, which was hosted by the Virginia Conference Historical Society (VCHS), with the theme, "Religious Liberty in the Historic Advance of Virginia Methodism." The event had a record attendance of 130 persons, from across the jurisdiction and around the Virginia Conference.

The program ad-

ressed as many facets of Virginia Methodism as time would allow, beginning in the colonial era with an address by David L. Holmes, PhD,



David, L. Holmes

Photo by Barbara Lewis.

professor of Religious Studies Emeritus from the College of William & Mary, on the theme, "Devereux

Jarratt, Evangelicalism in Virginia, and the Episcopal and Methodist Past."

"Mr." Holmes, as he prefers to be called, addressed three major subjects, under the general heading "Interstices of Methodism and the Episcopal Church," including 1) the "quarry from which American Methodism was hewn", i.e., the colonial Church of England – Anglicanism; 2) Devereux Jarratt, whom he described as a father of American Methodism and who remained Episcopalian; and 3) a large

Unless otherwise noted, all photos are courtesy of Jack Martin.



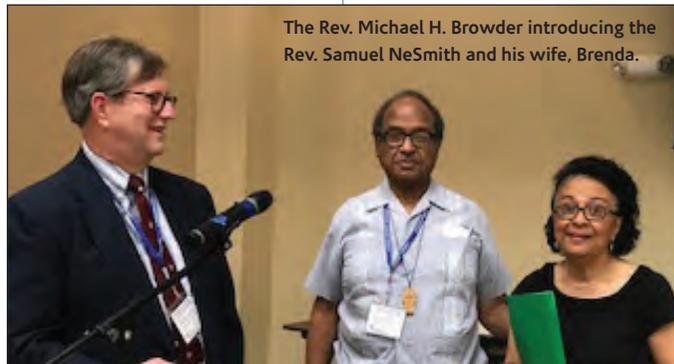
# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

group of “Low Church Episcopal clergy and laypeople who embraced some Methodist practices and who just as easily could have been United Methodists.”

The next major address was delivered by the Rev. Michael H. Browder, PhD, on “Origins of the Old Brun-

swick Circuit,” telling some of the exciting stories of early Methodist circuit riding pioneers of our faith in Virginia, including the Rev. Robert Williams, the Rev. Edward Dromgoole and Bishop Francis Asbury. The lecture made clear the importance of the Brunswick Circuit in the pioneering days of Methodism. It is noteworthy that much of the work of the Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation today is taking place within

the Virginia bounds of the Old Brunswick Circuit. A third lecture presented by Brenda NeSmith and husband, the Rev. Samuel NeSmith, entitled, “African Americans and Religious Liberty in Virginia Methodism,” told the troubling history of the racial



The Rev. Michael H. Browder introducing the Rev. Samuel NeSmith and his wife, Brenda.

separation of African Americans from white Americans, and yet a history of people who courageously took the hand they were dealt and managed to forge a vibrant and successful church, which continually sought to meet the needs of its people by developing skilled leaders, inspiring youth, resisting oppression and seeking justice, right up to the time of the Uniting Conference in 1968, when the Central Jurisdiction,

the Evangelical United Brethren and the Methodist churches came together to form The United Methodist Church. Interwoven among these stimulating lectures were morning tours of the churches of Colonial Williamsburg and Historic Jamestowne. During the CW tour, attendees visited Bruton Parish Church, where they were met by Charles Wesley in the person of interpreter Joe Dellinger, who shared some of Wesley's experiences in the new world.

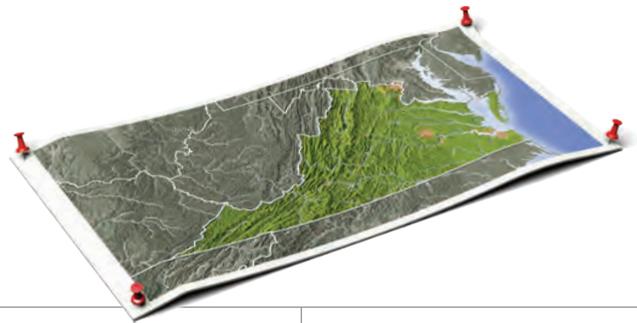
Charles Wesley, portrayed by Joe Dellinger, shares with attendees at the Bruton Parish Church.

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

Charles Wesley, portrayed by Joe Dellinger, shares with attendees at the Bruton Parish Church.



# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



*("HISTORY" con't from previous page)*

Later that day, everyone had the chance to ring the "Freedom Bell" at the First Baptist Church, the bell rung by President Barack and Mrs. Michelle Obama at the opening of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture in Washington, DC. The guides at both CW and the Jamestown Settlement were outstanding, sharing new archeological discoveries that continue to reshape understandings of our early history in America.

Other aspects of Virginia Methodism were addressed

through panel discussions. The first, "Chesapeake Methodism," began with an historical overview by Laurie Preston, associate professor, Head of Reference, Randolph-Macon College, followed by the Rev. C. Edward Pruitt, sharing his experience of growing up on Tangier Island and his call to ministry. One fascinating aspect of this presentation was learning of the work of the Rev. Joshua Thomas, the so-called "parson of the islands," and his effort, due to a foreboding dream, to dissuade the British stationed on Tangier Island during the War of 1812 from attacking Fort McHenry in Baltimore.

As history has shown, the British should have listened. The attack was a debacle for them, while a happy result for the Americans. It was Francis Scott Key's inspiration "at dawn's early light" to write the lyrics for what eventually became our national anthem in 1931!

The second panel,



Stephen Moore portrayed James Ireland, a persecuted Baptist preacher.

"The Evangelical United Brethren Church (EUB) in the Valley of Virginia," provided through panelists Mrs. JoEllen Fulk, the Rev. Dr. Barry Penn Hollar, and the Rev. Raymond Edmonds, rich insight to the EUB's contributions to the UMC, and the soul-wrenching struggle it was for many to engage in the merger, leaving some to fear that their church was being "swallowed up." The resulting question and answer period allowed

The Rev. Alfred Day, General Secretary, Archives and History, addresses attendees.



# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

poignant discussion of the difficulty of the decision to merge, while speaking positively of the future benefits that ultimately came for many former EUB clergy and congregations. The Rev. Michael Browder moderated both panels.

Deep appreciation is extended to the event's steering committee, which contributed in countless ways to the great success of this event and to Wil-

liamsburg Church and its staff for providing a wonderful, welcoming venue and delicious evening meals each day.

For over a year, a special steering committee of the VCHS worked in the planning of the event, arranging for speakers, panelists, accommodations and tours under the guidance of the Rev. Myrtle Frances Hatcher, chairperson. Sadly, on Feb. 8, 2018, Hatcher sudden-

ly passed away, leaving an awful void in the preparations being made. As a way of acknowledging Hatcher's leadership and giving voice to the deep sense of loss felt by all, it was determined that the entire event would be a memorial to her life and her loving commitment to serving others through the Christian ministry. 🇺🇸

– The Rev. Dr. John “Jack” T. Martin, Jr., is president of the Virginia Conference Historical Society.



Steering committee members included:

The Rev. Dr. Jack Martin, who assumed the role of chairperson

Marianne Martin

Myra Lindsey, editor of *Heritage*

Cathy Morgan, Archives Oversight Committee member

The Rev. John Price

William Olson

Linda and Bill Stead

Laurie Preston

Stephanie Davis, Virginia Conference archivist

Kathi Wise

Bishop H. Hasbrouck Hughes

The Rev. Robert Casey

The Rev. Carlton Casey

Margaret Mock

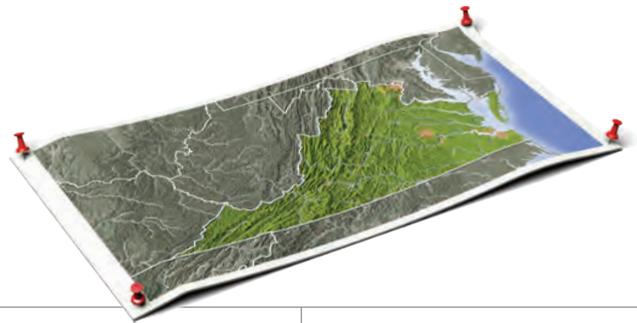
Dr. Betty and the Rev. Walter Whitehurst

Audrey Lewis



Honorary member, Thelma Crowder with her daughter and John Hatcher, husband of the late Rev. Myrtle Frances Hatcher.

# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



## Ministry seeks to help provide computers, education around the world

By Denny Baumann

Over the past 25 years Bethel Computers for Education (BCFE), a ministry at Bethel UMC in Warrenton, Va., has sent more than 4,000 computers to schools, clinics

and community centers around the world. These computers have gone to institutions supported by churches of every denomination and a number of secular organizations as well. BCFE is committed to improving the lives of the poor through education, and, while computers aren't the only ingredient to a "quality education," they are certainly important in the 21st century. While these donations have gone to countries such as Sierra Leone, Uganda, Cambodia, Honduras and even Nepal, more than half of them have gone to Haiti, as it has the unwanted dis-

tingtion of being the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

### Bringing education to Haiti

In Haiti, many schools are in remote locations where Internet is not available or, if it is, it's unaffordable. A way to overcome this problem is through a device called Internet in A Box (IIAB). This "server" is called Haiti Internet in A Box (HI-IAB) and is connected to the regular laptops through a wireless (Wi-Fi) router. It contains a large selection of educational resource materials such as Wikipedia, Kahn Academy (educational videos), more than 2,000 books in English, French, Creole and Spanish (Open Source reading materials) and a recently-acquired Scientific Encyclopedia written in Creole.

Another challenge in Haiti is that most Haitians speak Creole. Studies show greater gains in education, social pride and self-worth when children are taught in their native language. So find-

Denny Baumann shows Haitian children how to enter the correct answers on the TuxMath software. (Photos from the Bethel Computers for Education Facebook page.)



# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



ing educational materials written in Creole is very important.

This device gives students the ability to research subjects they never heard of before, and these computers are now being used by thousands of students and teachers every day. Schools in Haiti usually have from 300 to 800 students who now have access to a computer lab and an MIIAB.

More than 1,000 teachers have been trained on donated laptops and say they are overjoyed by the potential of this system.

Reaching our goal of helping large numbers of Haitian students is a huge task. But our efforts could

impact a good number of the schools that are known to us: 105 Methodist schools, 115 Baptist schools, 150 Episcopal schools and 2,300 Catholic schools.

We know we will never be able to meet the needs of all of these schools. However, that doesn't mean that we shouldn't try. To date, we have sent 30 MIIABs and more than 2,100 laptops to these schools.

## Computers for health education

Health education for poor Haitians in remote areas is another area in which we are making a difference. A second server, called Medical Internet in A Box (MIIAB), contains

a large amount of medical resource materials such as videos from Medical Aid Films and Global Health Media plus a wide selection of reading materials from the Hesperian Book Project (medical resource materials). It also contains portions of Wikipedia, Kahn Academy and the new Scientific Encyclopedia (in Creole).

The contents of MIIAB are intended for use by both clinic staff and patients. While a lot of the material in these computers is in French, a strong effort is being made to provide as much information as possible in Creole. This is especially important since French is not as widely spoken by the poorest of the poor. We can translate some films and record them in Creole at a very low cost, thanks to help from the Haitian UMC Mission located in Wabasso, FL. Volunteers from the congregation have not only translated four Medical Aid Films (MAFs) into Creole, but have also provided the voices

*(Con't. on pg. 34: "COMPUTERS")*

One teacher said "I will be more useful to my students, my family and my community. I have a broader knowledge of education after what I just discovered."

# We are called





God does  
not always  
call the  
**EQUIPPED.**  
But God  
always  
equips the  
**CALLED.**



**W**e are called.  
That is a fact.  
But is it to a  
life as a clergy person?  
A lay person?

It is important that  
in the quest as United  
Methodists to make  
disciples for Jesus Christ  
that persons of all ages  
understand their life  
is about ministry even  
if they are not clergy.  
Lay or clergy we are  
all called to a life of  
ministry.

Throughout this  
feature, we delve deeper  
into what call is, how  
one can explore call in  
the Virginia Conference  
and how call can be  
refined over time.

# All people are called: discerning your call



By Lindsey M. Baynham

**R**ock, paper, scissors...go!  
Rock, paper, scissors...go! \*Ugh!\*  
Rock, paper, scissors...go! YES!

There was a time in my life where this game guided every decision. Who would sit in the front seat, who went first in line,

and who would clean up after creating a mess. Fate mixed with some competition seemed like the best way to decide most things.

While I will jokingly throw out my “rock” to friends and colleagues now to make decisions, I’ve discovered that there is so much more to a decision. Moreover, in our lives of faith, it is more than picking between brands at a grocery store. No, our work is holy work and often goes by the name of discernment.

I have a ridiculous long title that includes the word discernment, but essentially means I have the honor of listening to people’s stories. At my best, I listen intently, nudge when necessary and connect folks with others who are in fields of their expressed interest. Sure there is paperwork and meetings, but at the core of it all, I have the honor to sojourn alongside folks who are in a place of discovery.

What is God revealing to me through an experience? A phrase? A song? A relationship?

Where do my gifts intersect with what God — three in One — is already doing?

Often times when folks are pointed in my direc-

tion, they assume that a path needs to already be figured out. That, their future needs to be a detailed outline. Or that they need to want to be a pastor to ask these types of questions.

While I’m not the expert, what I do know of discernment is this: All people are called, and all people need to be asking these questions. We believe that inherent in our baptism is a calling that stems from the overwhelming flood of God’s grace through the refreshing waters of baptism. It is at this moment when we die to self and rise in life with Christ. To put it plainly: whether dunked, sprinkled or poured — God has called you by name. And this calling is a springboard for what might be next. Cue the holy work of discernment.

Henri Nouwen says it best: “Christian discernment is not the same as decision making. Reaching a decision can be straightforward: we consider our goals and options ... and then we choose the action that meets our goal most effectively. Discernment, on the other hand, is about listening and responding to that place within us where our deepest desires align with God’s desire.”<sup>1</sup>

Beyond every day and mundane decisions, the Spirit draws us into seasons of making holy judgments, revelations that inform who we are in light of who Christ is and connections that fit rightly in our soul.

Like the first time you felt settled into a community, so too discernment is the active wrestling, questioning, sojourning, faithful, challenging and holy settling into God’s involvement in the world.

I hope and pray that my friends who have shared insight where they have done this work or help facilitate this work is a spring of living water for your soul. Keep listening and keep seeking after how God is calling you.

Grace upon grace, Lindsey 

— The Rev. Lindsey M. Baynham is Associate Director for Call, Candidacy & Discernment at the Center for Clergy Excellence at the conference office.

1 Henri Nouwen *Discernment: Reading the Signs of Daily Life* (HarperOne: 2013), 17:

Reference to Nouwen from Richard Rohr’s Article *Discernment versus Decision Making*, Center for Action and Contemplation May 31, 2018

# Christian vocation: The call to do good



By Justin Allen

Frederick Buechner has said that to find your Christian vocation (from Latin meaning “call” or “summons”) from God, you must search for two things: passion and need. “The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work

(a) that you need most to do and (b) that the world most needs to have done” (*Wishful Thinking*). He goes on to say a few sentences later, “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”

I am blessed. I am not shy about admitting that I have the best Christian vocation. However, I know we are not supposed to rank them. Too bad. Mine is the best. I have served in ministry at the college level for 13 years at two institutions, the University of Memphis (public) and Shenandoah University (a United Methodist school). In both cases, I have encountered students who have entered knowing exactly where they believed God was calling them, and I have encountered students who have had no clue. When these students graduated four years (or more) later, a majority of them were entering the world in a profession in which they never thought they would dare dabble or invest their energy. I have had students enter to study to be a physical therapist, an occupational therapist, a music therapist or a physician’s assistant and leave Shenandoah embarking upon the journey to ordained ministry or the journey to be a teacher or the journey to public service. These students were sure of one thing –

they felt called to help people. What they began to realize is that there was a still, small voice, what we might call the Holy Spirit, speaking to them in their passion for New Testament exegesis or the justice of inclusion and welcome that can be the foundation of God’s church in the world.

We call this rapid discernment process the “four and 40.” Students enter college and in four years must decide how God is calling them to service in the world for the next 40 years! While the discernment never ceases, it is daunting and an immense treasure at the same time to be present with students for these formative four years.

I cannot tell you how many times someone cried in my office because they had thought for 10 years that they wanted to do one thing, but they realized that they had no passion for it or they had passion for something else, like teaching or social work or counseling or mission work. They did not want to let their parents down, but the still, small voice of God was speaking to them through their passion. In four years, they realize that the most important thing is not money, but passion and need — answering the call of the one that created us!

At Shenandoah University and at other United Methodist colleges across the country, we know that one of our greatest missions is to help students explore, discern and answer their Christian vocation. Calling21 ([calling21.org](http://calling21.org)), a partnership between Wesley Theological Seminary, the Virginia Conference Center for Clergy Excellence, the Virginia Conference Bishop’s Cabinet and Shenandoah University, has seen 94 college student interns serve at 42 different Virginia Conference churches in 12 years. Approximately two-thirds of these interns are now serving local churches, in seminary or beginning the process to ordination in The United Methodist Church.

The other one-third of the interns are also answering their Christian vocation in many other fields like teaching, social work, music therapy and so much more. The goal of the program is not to push interns one way or another, but to let them discern.

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We try to help the interns discover their passion and become aware of the needs of God's world.

Randolph-Macon College and Shenandoah University were gifted with over \$1 million from the Lilly Endowment to help high school students explore Christian vocation. These grants end after the summer of 2020. While both programs focus on different themes, the purpose is the same – to help students explore the world through the lens of Christian vocation. Our professions, our families, silence, prayer, science, nature and more are a part of the exploration of call. In all of these venues, we can allow God to speak to us and we can listen, explore and discern our Christian vocation. These youth theology institutes that explore Christian vocation help students start discerning before they become adults.

There are so many elements to the discernment of Christian vocation, but the most important thing is that we listen to God and to the way God speaks to us through our gifts, through our passions and through the context of our environment. Every day, every adventure, every journey is a part of this great lifelong discernment. Even when we hit the ups and downs of life, we can encounter God as we discern.

Parker Palmer speaks so profoundly to our experiences when he says, "If you can't get out of it, get into it" and "Each time a door closes, the rest of the world opens up" (*Let Your Life Speak*). While many of us are told to get up, dust ourselves off, and move on, Palmer suggests sitting in discernment when a door closes or we get into something where we just can't get out. It is this kind of listening and stillness that Christian vocation requires instead of the busyness of the world. And again, Christianity and deep spirituality are counter-cultural. Do you hear that? 🍷

– The Rev. Justin Allen is assistant vice principal for Student Life and dean of Spiritual Life at Shenandoah University in Winchester, Va.

## Finding call at Convergence



By Kendra Grimes

In our culture, we tend to use the verb "call" to describe how pastors, teachers, missionaries, and sometimes those in medical fields came into their work. By not naturally using "call" to describe why someone pursues a career

in theater, computer programming or architecture, our language implies that we don't think God's spirit is part of the discernment process for everyone.

In creating Convergence: A Youth Theology Institute on Faith and Science at Randolph-Macon College, we intentionally designed a program that acknowledges our belief that God calls some to use their gifts as a deacon or elder in the church and others to use their gifts and unique talents in other ways, including in fields of science. Perhaps God is leading someone to explore our solar system in new ways, to advocate for stronger environmental policies or to perform research in a lab to create new medicines and drug therapies. Our campers are bright, gifted young people whom God is calling to vocations we may not even be able to imagine yet!

In many school settings, young people learn principles and facts about science, but often in an environment where faith cannot be brought into the conversation. In many churches, young people are nurtured in their faith but rarely from adults who have strong knowledge of science. Therefore, generations have grown to believe that faith and science are in conflict or have nothing to do with one another. We hope to show high school students that



there is a vast space where faith and science come together as they are discerning what is next in their education and vocation.

At Convergence we engage in projects with Shalom Farms, a local nonprofit driven by values based upon faith and science. We hear from speakers such as the Rev. Pat Watkins (Virginia Conference) and the Rev. Dottie Yunger (Baltimore-Washington Conference) whose ministry connects concrete actions of creation care with deep, sound theology. We work with non-faith-based organizations and reflect upon the importance of their missions (Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the James River Association among others). We hear from Randolph-Macon College and Union Presbyterian Seminary faculty sharing their knowledge in particular fields, whether those fields are nutrition, physics or the Bible. Then we reflect on the many ways faith and science come together in their work.

After each presentation, campers gather in small groups led by Randolph-Macon College students, to

reflect upon what they heard. We ask them, "What did I learn about God? What did I learn about science? and 'What did I learn about myself?'" These small groups are a format for fertile discussion about their own gifts and abilities, their own sense of what God is leading them to explore.

One entire day of Convergence is dedicated to vocational discernment. Students have the opportunity to network with Randolph-Macon College alumni who work or have worked in faith and science fields, to learn more about the wide array of career opportunities available to them. The students were also led in a workshop by two college alumni: Dr. Tom Hubbard, an area physician who helped create the Hanover Free Clinics, and the Rev. Lindsey Baynham, associate director for Call, Candidacy & Discernment for the Virginia Conference. Both presenters encouraged students to reflect upon how their unique gifts meet the world's needs.

"The overall experience of the program affirmed

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Photo courtesy of Randolph-Macon College.



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what I believed to be true about my faith in regards to science, helping me to explore more about who I am and how I would like to make the world a better place," said high school senior, Melanie Fleischer of Newport-Mt. Olivet United Methodist Church on the Roanoke District. "At the end of Convergence, I felt a strong desire to continue this path into ministry. My call is simple. I hope to show others how to be disciples of Christ. Without Convergence, I wouldn't have been able to realize how passionate I was about my call to be a minister."

On the final day of camp, the high school students created prayers and liturgies along with personal testimonies to lead worship at Duncan Memorial UMC on the campus of Randolph-Macon College. The resources created by the students can be found at [convergence.rmc.edu](http://convergence.rmc.edu).

Convergence is made possible by a generous grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc. and in 2019, students must only pay \$250 for the nine-day experience. Randolph-Macon College is already preparing for next year when the event will be held June 22-30, 2019. Applications are open and a sample schedule for next year is highlighted on the website [convergence.rmc.edu](http://convergence.rmc.edu). Please contact Laura Ruxton, program coordinator, at [convergence@rmc.edu](mailto:convergence@rmc.edu) for additional information. 

— The Rev. Kendra Grimes is chaplain at Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Va and co-director of Convergence.



## How to best facilitate someone's 'call'

By Alison Malloy



I've been thinking about who I was created to be for as long as I can remember. When I was young, I don't remember it being "call" or being asked to "discern." Instead, I was encouraged to try all the things and allowed to explore

different ways to contribute to the world. Whether it was saucing the chicken with a toilet brush at a chicken barbecue, singing in the choir, passing the offering plate (I actually don't remember spilling it) or participating in Sunday school, my parents and church family allowed and encouraged me to give everything a try.

We found out I was pretty good at saucing the barbeque chicken and Carl Gray Hoover was always certain to let me know if I met the standard or not. I sang (poorly) in the choir with folks of all generations and most enjoyed my regular conversations with Ann Grandle about how all that was required of me was to make a joyful noise unto the Lord.

My dad watched carefully while I passed the offering plate and would give me the hairy eyeball if I tipped it a little, getting too close to spilling it. My Sunday school teachers (Teenie, Peggy, Tracy and my mom) were so patient with my questions ("What does the QUICK and the dead even mean? What about the alive people who are not fast?").

Throughout adventure-filled years, those walking with me helped me identify the places I was best suited to contribute to the world AND those areas



where I could allow others to take point. These adventures and my community directly provided a space and opportunity for me to discover the call God had for me — what and who I was created to be.

Somewhere along the way, I realized those people really shaped who I became and how I approached life. I made a commitment to myself to be that advocate, conversation partner, mentor or accountability agent for those I serve. Even after swearing never to be a teacher, I became a college administrator. That included years of raising other people's children and guiding them through countless conversations about who they might be and how what they love most might intersect with the world's needs. One helpful tool has been Frederick Buechner's idea that "Your vocation in life is where your greatest joy meets the world's greatest need." Unpacking this idea with folks and finding this intersection sometimes requires an investment of time and energy but is certainly worth it.

I then realized my "tent-making" (read money making) job was aligning with my church-related volunteer roles. Facilitating small groups at church looked an awful lot like staff meeting with my team on campus. At work we were using college university standards to hold ourselves accountable and student development theories to examine how we contribute to the world. In our group at church we were using a study to hold ourselves accountable to following Jesus and learning ways to better live into Jesus' call for our lives.

It is clear it is our responsibility to walk with one another on this journey. For people who have not had natural opportunity to practice this, it can be daunting! What if I say the wrong thing? What if I don't have the answers? Never fear! This is one of those things we do together. The most important part is showing up and being present for those you walk alongside.

The question is, "how does one do this to the best of their ability?" Here are a few ideas:

Provide the opportunity for others to try all the things — a buffet of experiences

Allow folks to have a leadership role on projects — this becomes a 'Petri dish' where skills and abilities can grow (or not — which is equally important!)

Be the safety net for those in the discernment process and offer to jump in before major failure occurs (this is why you walk along with them to begin with).

Serve as a willing sounding board for ideas — not necessarily providing answers — likely asking more open-ended questions

Make yourself fully aware of resources and opportunities in your community

Be willing to be open about how you reached the place you are — sharing your adventures (which are never perfect, by the way) will prevent others from feeling alone

At the end of the day, showing up for folks and inviting the Holy Spirit to dance amongst this journey is the most important and life-giving role you have. The lesser role is you investing your time and energy while understanding and naming that we all continue to receive God's changing call in our lives each and every day. 🍷

*— Alison Malloy is Director of Operations at Mount Vernon Place UMC in Washington, D.C.*



## Finding your strengths



By Justin Hicks

The candidacy journey is one that can feel overwhelming when laid before us as it begins. The Candidacy Summit is a place for persons to come and explore ministry and really ask questions. Having helped to

lead the summit for a couple of years I wish I had something like it when I was starting my journey toward ordination.

Time is spent on the actual nuts and bolts of the process and on the call of each person. I have had the opportunity to share with the participants about Clifton StrengthsFinder. Each person is asked to take the StrengthsFinder assessment, which gives them a list of their top five themes out of 34. It has been interesting to watch those looking at their assessment and saying, "There is no way I can be in ministry with this set of strengths." We spend about two hours talking about strengths. We talk about what they are and how we can use them to become better leaders.

When I first got the list of my themes, I was a bit confused about what to do with them. After training and working with others also examining theirs, I realized it is only after I invest in my themes that they develop into a strength. It is up to me (and those I journey with) to take my themes and invest knowledge, skills, experiences and opportunity to use them in order to cultivate a strength. This does not happen overnight and requires me to invest in myself. Think of it this way:

### TALENT x INVESTMENT = STRENGTH

We ask each person to write their name with their dominant hand in the nicest handwriting as possible. Then we ask them to do the same with their other hand.

Unless you are part of the one percent of people who are ambidextrous, we all can see that it takes longer, we have to concentrate more and our handwriting could use a little work when it comes to writing with our non-dominant hand. We use this activity because we could all spend lots of time and money to "get better" (at handwriting and improving on our weak areas as leaders) or we could lead from our strengths and invite others to come along side us with different strengths.

We as clergy are asked to wear a lot of different hats in the midst of ministry – some we enjoy wearing and others we reluctantly place upon our heads as we serve. Playing to our strengths is not a cop-out on things we are not good at. It isn't about not wanting to do something. Rather it is an understanding that we all lead from our strengths.

There are four main domains that all 34 strengths fall under. They are: Relationship Building, Executing, Strategic thinking and Influencing.

When I first took the test I was very concerned that I do not have any strengths in the strategic-thinking category. Actually, concerned is an understatement. My first thought was that if I cannot see a future for where I am leading and where the church is called to go, the church I am leading and I are doomed.

I have come to realize that while I may not have very many strengths in the strategic-thinking domain, I have worked hard to find people who do and, when paired with my Activator theme, the church does not seem lost.

In the midst of ministry, we find ourselves working within a group. Any of us who have had the opportunity to be a part of a work group knows that we each bring our own strengths and leadership skills to the table.

We encourage people at the Summit to use



## A testimony on campus ministry

Campus ministry has been super meaningful to me for many reasons. I still reflect back on my time at the Virginia Tech Wesley Foundation as I continue on into my third year at Candler School of Theology. Wesley is where I finally said yes to the call of a life in full-time ordained ministry. I am deeply grateful for the ways I was able to participate in ministry in the fullest sense through campus ministry and came to find a stronger relationship with Christ and was able to say “yes” to where the Spirit was leading me.

I got connected with Wesley through a series of letters, emails and personal invitations from the student leadership team and the Rev. Bret Gresham, the campus minister.

The Rev. Meredith McNabb, my home church pastor at the time, had connected with Gresham and let him know that I had just graduated and would be going to Tech in the fall. Gresham took me out to lunch the first week of school and explained the direction that Wesley was hoping to take ministry in the following few years.

He said, “We need your new ideas and energy — we would love to have you on board!” Everyone at Wesley made me feel valued, appreciated, and wanted which eventually led to me choosing Wesley as my community during my four years in Blacksburg.

During my time in undergrad, campus ministry provided me with a space to be and to grow. I learned so much about the world, God, and com-

StrengthsFinder as a tool for your staff, leadership council or general church membership because, when we begin to understand our leadership and why we lead the way we do, others can see why we lead that way and we can really get to work. It is also helpful to know strengths of others within a group because we can see what motivates some and what can drive others crazy.

It is important to remember that we can use our strengths for both good and as a weapon. One of my partners in ministry lives into her Analytical theme fully. This means when I want to anticipate every single possible problem (and solutions), I call her to walk through the plan I’m setting forth for us.

This enables me to fix some things before I get myself in hot water. We both know that on the flip side, she can use her strength for major “balloon popping” which can ruin every single creative idea I develop. She works hard to balance providing good feedback and anticipating trouble without completely taking the life out of anything more creative.

If we are not aware of each other’s strengths there can be tension and stress in the relationship, unknowingly, just because we lead from different strengths.

I have really come to love StrengthsFinder and what it has done for me as a leader. If you want to know more about how you could use StrengthsFinder in your ministry context I would love to talk and you can always visit: [www.gallupstrengthscenter.com](http://www.gallupstrengthscenter.com). 📧

*—The Rev. Justin Hicks is the campus minister of the Wesley Foundation at Longwood University and Hampden-Sydney in Farmville, Va.*

(Con’t. on pg. 25: “CAMPUS MINISTRY”)

# Refining call: God's gifts are irrevocable

By Nancy Robinson



What a journey! Mom was right. Her comments to me in the later years of her life have proven true. First, from Romans 11:29, “The gifts and call of God are irrevocable” and second “Don’t try to do too

much; be yourself, the work will unfold.” This informed me as I answered a call to full-time ministry as a deacon. Looking back, I see God faithfully finishing the work started in me as a young child when I first became aware of the Spirit’s presence in my life. I am a part of something awesome and greater than ever imaginable, a wonderful journey of discovery and LIFE.

I was born and raised in Southern Rhodesia as a missionary kid, with all that entailed living in a country of apartheid, taken from the wonder of community mindedness of our close African family at a tender age of seven to go to an all-white boarding school and then eventually leaving what was my homeland when our family was deported during political crisis. Times were changing, and oppressive systems being challenged. Struggling to learn to live in the United States as a teen in the late 1960s was painful, emotions of loss buried deep. A return to Zimbabwe 25 years later on a short-term mission trip brought a catharsis of emotional healing and release of grief as well as the rebirth of my desire to serve. Called by grace and loving God, self and others, I have slowly discovered to lead from a lifetime of experience.

Working full time as a Christian Educator I heard the call to be a deacon in The United Methodist Church, connecting the community of God’s people with the needs of the world. After seminary and commissioning and two years of clinical pastoral education I longed to work in the local church again. However, answering a telephone call from the bishop in Sierra Leone eventually led me to accept full-time missionary work in West Africa, another source of refreshing my spirit as we lived there as I had as a young child; it was a homecoming and preparation for returning to the states. Now, home again, I am active in the Southeast Jurisdiction as a Global Ministries Mission Advocate, connecting the local church with God’s work in the world, supporting missionaries and nurturing relationship. I look forward to working again in the local church.

Participating in the Virginia Clergy Leadership Program (VLCP) this year has reaffirmed and deeply anchored my understanding of who I am in Christ, an integral part of God’s SACRED creation. Am I being true to my call heard many years past? YES! Yes, to God’s gifts of grace and mercy and healing in whatever context I find myself.

The five top strengths identified for me by the Clifton StrengthsFinder directly correlate with the work I am doing as a missionary: adaptability, connectedness, empathy, intellection and strategic.

Working from these strengths is energizing. I’m learning to listen very carefully to others and affirm differences with respect, transformed by the Holy Spirit at work in all our lives. We need each other. Community is God’s nature, being a God of relationship.

Change is essential at the core of living as all things are made new. I am thankful for this time to reflect again on Bowen’s Family Systems theory with support of the VLCP cohort; to do some storytelling and to be open and vulnerable — this has brought significant insight and freedom from the past and moves me forward in greater love. I look back and see even in difficult circumstances



the faithfulness of God. In painful places I learned to trust and listen to God's love for me. Now, discerning new direction I am confident it will be true to whom God created me to be with specific gifts for ministry and as a leader more aware than ever of the reality of sacred community.

Yes, Mom was right! God's gifts are irrevocable and ever present — gifts of grace and unconditional love. What wonderful hope we have in Christ. What an amazing gift to be called to lead God's people as we live together in community, wherever and however that happens. I am so thankful. 🍀

— The Rev. Nancy Robinson is a missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) and a mission advocate for the Southeastern Jurisdiction.

("CAMPUS MINISTRY," Con't. from pg. 23)

munity through the programming and intentional time spent together at Wesley. I was given opportunities to participate in leadership roles such as facilitating outreach events on campus, planning youth retreats, coordinating conferences, designing worship services, and discerning leadership/ministry structures.

As I have stepped into a more prominent role in local church leadership during my time in Atlanta, I constantly find myself being thankful for these opportunities I had to learn and practice while I was a student in campus ministry. Campus ministry will always hold a special place in my heart and I am glad to be a part of a conference that supports and affirms the great ministry that is being done at our colleges and universities! 🍀

— Michelle Hettman, MDiv student at Candler School of Theology

## Lay Servant Academy

Lay Servant Academy is held each year and most districts offer training on an annual or semi-annual basis. It is also possible to arrange for individual courses to be taught in your local church at anytime during the year.

The more than 30 Lay Servant courses offered by the Board of Discipleship are available to anyone desiring to grow in their discipleship with Jesus Christ or to increase their effectiveness in leadership within our churches. Classes are available to all Lay Servants and not just to those who desire to become a certified Lay Servant, Lay Speaker or Lay Minister. We do believe that once you share in the fellowship of Lay Servant Ministries and experience the joy that comes with joining a group of passionate disciples seeking to better serve their Lord and Savior you will want to become more active in the ministries offered as you grow as a disciple. We also believe that you will want to encourage others to join you.

If you are unsure who your district director is contact your district office, visit the Virginia Conference website or contact David Bailey; [dw.bailey@comcast.net](mailto:dw.bailey@comcast.net), or Richard Speirs, [richard.speirs@yahoo.com](mailto:richard.speirs@yahoo.com), conference directors of Lay Servant Ministries.

The first step in "making disciples" is growing as a disciple. To quote Gil Hanke, General Secretary of United Methodist Men, "You can't sell what you ain't bought." If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior you are a disciple of Jesus Christ. Jesus has also taught us that as his disciples we are called to serve others. Let Lay Servant Ministries help you in becoming the most effective disciple you can be as you continue to serve while encouraging others to serve with you. 🍀

— David Bailey and Richard Speirs



## The hard, humbling work of a call



By Mochel Morris

Two images have been metaphors for me for most of my life—a flowing river and weaving fabric—and they both came to mind when I received a prompt from *Advocate* Editor and Conference Director of Communications Madeline Pillow on the refining of

call during ministry. Even in high school I had a strong sense that every experience in my life, everything that I encounter, all of it would become a part of who I am and how I would answer God's call in life. There are many sources of water coming into a stream, mingling together in the current as they meander or rush their way toward the sea, enriching the soil, the flora and the fauna along the way. Apparently disparate fibers are spun together into threads of different textures, colors and properties. Yet woven together they provide warmth, beauty and shelter that break open a priori assumptions. Staying open to the process of the blending of waters or of fibers leads one to new discoveries.

At first, I thought that my call, like my father's, was to be an engineer. Then a high school youth retreat, at dear old, pre-renovation Blackstone, led me to a new call to work with people. I thought that this was to be lived out as a psychologist or a pastoral counselor. Just before my last semester in college, I awoke one morning to the strong sense that I was to go to seminary to be a preacher. Who, me? I quaked at the thought of oral book reports. Bit by bit, God nudged me to answer a call to be a pastor.

Throughout my life, I know that I have frustrated

supervisors as they offered what, from their perspective, was solid advice which I seemed to ignore as I blithely went on my way. Yes, I am stubborn and somewhat hard-headed (just ask my brother; he would gladly concur). I will say that most often I have held these pieces of solid advice, weighing them out over time to see how they would add beauty, depth or grace to the endeavor at hand. Do they lead me or us closer to hearing the heartbeat of God, nearer to the healing of the imago dei within us and between us, deeper into the love that is source of all creation?

It is all well and good to hone our skills with the latest offerings and programs. I have done plenty of that over my ministry. The most important and useful work I have done, however, has been that which has encouraged me to look within to name and own the gifts, graces, wounds and hardened parts I carry into every situation. More than layering on external practices and competencies, the hardest yet most healing work has been entering into the refining fire of God's presence, peeling away hindrances to allow access to the places where grace can heal and make whole, opening my eyes, ears and heart to perceive others as God sees them and loves them.

In a deep sense, this is the purpose and work of the Virginia Clergy Leadership Program, for how can we lead others to be a part of the transforming work of our Triune God if we have not done the humbling work of submitting ourselves to be transformed and healed?

I love the image the Rev. Meredith McNabb used in her presentation at the Eastern Mennonite Seminary's School for Leadership Training in January 2018, likening the Japanese art of kintsugi to the work of God in our lives, where gold is worked into broken places in pottery to mend and create new unexpected beauty.\* This is hard, humbling work to place ourselves into the hands of God who has made us, who redeems our brokenness, and sends us afresh into the world to invite others into this healing, transforming relationship. 🍷

\* (<https://emu.edu/now/news/2018/01/seminary-conference-gives-space-brokenness-kintsugi-clergy-ministry-polarized-society/>)

— The Rev. Mochel Morris is a retired elder in the Rappahannock River District.



# Resources for exploring call

## Websites

### ❖ **Explorecalling.org**

Children/Youth Call and Discernment Resources

## Events

### ❖ **Next UMC hosted by General Board of Higher Education and Ministry**

As they explore a new model for this event for students, campus ministers and chaplains are invited to be a part of a larger conversation.

<https://www.gbhem.org/umc/events/nextumc>

### ❖ **VAUMC Candidacy Summit [vaumc.org/CandidacySummit](http://vaumc.org/CandidacySummit)**

To explore calling, the connection and network with others who are discerning.

### ❖ **Exploration hosted by General Board of Higher Education and Ministry**

November 2019 in Orlando, Florida

18-25-year-olds discerning a call to ministry

<http://www.explorecalling.org/exploration/>

## Internships

### ❖ **Connectional Ministry Intern**

Contact Paulo Lopes, Director of Next Generation Ministries

10 weeks serving with directors at the conference office

### ❖ **Calling 21 Summer Internship Program**

[Vaumc.org/calling21](http://Vaumc.org/calling21)

Applications for interns and churches available December 1st and due February 1st

9 weeks

## Books

### ❖ **Memoirs**

*Still: Notes on a Mid-Faith Crisis*

by Lauren F. Winner

*Called* by Mark Labberton

*Hannah's Child* by Stanley Hauerwas

*Accidental Saints* by Nadia Bolz-Webber

*The Call* by Adam Hamilton

*Love is an Inside Job* by Romal Tune

*Questions God Asks Us* by Trevor Hudson

*The Sabbath Abraham* by Joshua Heschel

## Bible Studies

*The Wesleyan Way* by Bishop Scott Jones

## Assessments

Individuals or Groups

### ❖ **DISC Inventory**

### ❖ **Strength Finders**

## People

❖ **Local pastor, Campus Minister or Chaplain— not sure who they are? Ask Paulo Lopes,** Director of Next Generation Ministries

❖ **The Rev. Lindsey Baynham,** Associate Director of Call, Candidacy, & Discernment [lindseybaynham@vaumc.org](mailto:lindseybaynham@vaumc.org)

❖ **The Rev. Lynne Alley-Grant,** Chair of the Order of Elders

❖ **The Rev. Jason Stanley,** Chair of the Order of Deacons

❖ **The Rev. Mike Davis,** Chair of local pastors and associate pastors

# DISCIPLES HELPING TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD



▲ At Gordonsville UMC in Orange, Va., as part of their Sunday school, children ages three to 12 were given the theme of "My Favorite Bible Story." The children were given a canvas along with watercolors to paint their picture. Stories chosen were: The Rainbow, Noah's Ark, Woman at the Well, Jesus and the Little Children, The Crucifixion, Jesus Rose from the Dead, Jonah and the Whale, The Story of Moses and A Star in the East. The Sunday school co-teachers are Lois Johnson, Paul Harris and Connie Clark.

Each year during Vacation Bible School at Mount Carmel UMC in Covington, Va., a collection is received for a special mission. Adults and children are challenged to meet goals. This year's goals were \$250, \$500, \$1,000 and \$2,000. They donated over \$1,000 for Rise Against Hunger. Nine-year-old Micayliah Redman, of Covington, donated her entire savings she'd been collecting from the beginning of the year—\$94 — to Rise Against Hunger. Her donation was the largest by a single child. Micayliah was not

prompted by her parents, Tiffany and Christopher Redman, but asked them permission to give it all to feed the hungry of the world. The church prays more people will take up the challenge to live as Jesus and touch the hungry. Pictured is Micayliah Redman, Ann Elmore (representing Rise Against Hunger) and the Rev. D.E. Hollenbeck. ▼



## What is plarn yarn?

Plarn yarn is plastic grocery bags that have been cut and turned into "yarn." Yes, plastic yarn. It is a wonderful way to recycle bags and help the homeless at the same time. Betty Michael brought this concept to Main Street UMC in Suffolk, and they quickly picked up the project through their Helping Hands Ministry.



▲ While visiting Florida last year and seeing so many homeless people, she asked the Lord to lead her to something that she could do to help them. Sure enough, the next day she read about a project that had started in Florida to create mats to give to the homeless so they would not have to lie on bare, hard surfaces. The mats are made from plastic bags that are folded, cut, tied together and then crocheted. These 6 x 3 mats can be rolled up and easily carried from place to place by folks who need them. They provide a dry, fairly comfortable surface on which to lie.

In addition to the Helping Hands ministry adopting this



# EVENTS

project, Michael asked another church member, Sarah Catlett, if she would be interested in having her students at Kings Fork Middle School participate. Catlett said yes and the students are now involved. They have also gotten some of the residents at Lake Prince, a retirement center, to help.

What a wonderful ministry! In addition to helping people in need, many people are able to be involved in the process. You can save your bags, learn how to cut and tie the bags and then crochet them together. As keepers of God's earth, we are also keeping the bags out of the landfill.

Thank you Betty Michael for responding to a nudge from God! 📧

— Barbara McPhail is the congregation care coordinator for Main Street UMC in Suffolk, Va.

## OCTOBER

### Haiti Benefit Concert for School of Music

**Oct. 14, Braddock Street UMC, Winchester**

Something new and special is happening in Haiti! At the 2018 Partners Conference in Port-au-Prince, an annual gathering of leaders primarily from the United States and Canada who work in close partnership with the Haitian Methodist Church (Eglise Methodiste D'Haiti, or EMH), some exciting new opportunities for mission came into focus, which will generate a lot

of enthusiasm and support from Virginia United Methodists.

One of those opportunities is the invitation to help establish a Methodist School of Music to help strengthen worship in Haiti's churches by offering training opportunities to the church's musicians.

A benefit concert to raise funds for the Haiti School of Music will take place at Braddock St. UMC in Winchester on Sunday, October 14, at 3 p.m. Among the instruments presently needed are electronic keyboards and stringed instruments, violins in particular. Donations of quality instruments would be greatly appreciated! For more information, contact **Jack Martin at rvjtm@aol.com.**

### Virginia Academy for Spiritual Formation

**Oct. 14-19, Roslyn Retreat Center, Richmond**

Registration is now open for the 2018 Virginia Five-Day Academy for Spiritual Formation to be held Oct. 14-19, 2018 at the Roslyn Retreat Center in Richmond. Sponsored by the Virginia Conference in cooperation with The Upper Room, this retreat is open to clergy and laity who are seeking to deepen their relationship with God through prayer, learning and worship.

The Academy uses a Benedictine model with periods of silence, morning and evening prayer, daily Eucharist and covenant groups. Each day includes instruction by outstanding faculty

and this year the faculty leaders will be Dr. Luther Smith, Professor Emeritus at Candler School of Theology, and Dr. Amy Oden, Professor at St. Paul School of Theology at Oklahoma City University.

Registration information can be found at: [academy.upperroom.org/events/214](http://academy.upperroom.org/events/214).

### UMM Spiritual Weekend Oct. 26-27, Baylake UMC, Virginia Beach

For the 40th year, the Virginia Conference United Methodist Men (UMM) will host a Spiritual Weekend, this time at Baylake UMC in Virginia Beach Oct. 26-27, 2018. Theme will be "Go! and make disciples" and feature speaker Bishop James Swanson from the Mississippi Conference. As part of revamping the weekend, changes include making the event open to families and spouses, bringing in nationally renowned speakers and offering special rates. For more information about United Methodist Men in the Virginia Conference, please contact Andrew Kissell, president, at **757-839-0790** or [Andrew.Kissell@aecom.com](mailto:Andrew.Kissell@aecom.com). Learn more at [events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07efhecspje27ad838&llr=pjflbvcab](http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07efhecspje27ad838&llr=pjflbvcab). 📧

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.

# LIVING THE WORD



*Won Un serves as pastor at Central UMC in the Staunton District. He is a graduate of Methodist College ('85, B.A.), Duke Divinity School ('89, M.Div.), and Princeton Theological Seminary ('91, Th.M.). He was commissioned in 1988 and received his Eldership in 1991. Won is married to Diana, and they have two lovely children, Lili and John. He loves tennis, biking, music, and His Creation.*

**October 7, 2018**

**Mark 2:28**

**Who is your master?**

**W**ho is your master? This is a too-obvious question for Christians — or is it? Are we are sleeping too close to another master?

In the next four passages, let us parallel two masters — Sword-king and Cross-king. We will explore how they differ from each other and what it means to follow one master called the Cross-king in our daily walk.

For a brief comparison between Sword-king and Cross-king read 1 Samuel 8:11-18 and Mark 9:31. Without going into specifics, the Sword-king demands loyalty by force, the Cross-King bids loyalty by invitation. The Sword-king takes; the Cross-king gives. The Sword-king asks his followers to pick up the sword to follow; the Cross-king asks his followers to pick up the cross and follow. The Sword-king asks us to lay down our lives for him; the Cross-king also asks us to lay down our lives, but he will first show us by his own example. The Sword-king will lord over you without your consent; the Cross-king will also lord over you but only with your consent.

The way of Sword-king is intimidation, submission, exploitation, concentration, oppression, and domination. The way of Cross-king is cooperation, solidarity, dispersion, freedom, and democracy.

Julius Caesar (JC) is epitomized as a Sword-king and of course Jesus Christ (JC) is the Cross-king. Both JC and JC will do everything in their power to win our hearts and minds, but since we cannot

serve two masters we must choose one. Which JC do you chose to follow? We chose the Cross-king — Jesus the Christ — who is the Son of Man.

By the way, the term “Son of Man” is not about emphasizing the humanity side of Jesus Christ but has everything to do with the true mission and the fate he chose. The true mission of the Son of Man was to urge the people to return (repent — metanoia) to the way of our Father in heaven, and this is done by abandoning human precepts and traditions held fast and practiced by elders and religious leaders in Jesus’ time.

Jesus, the Son of Man, was the new wine poured into the old wine skin to burst wide open the false practices of the Jewish temple religion. He emerged as a teacher with authority, the lord of the sabbath (note the small letter s), and a friend to many tax collectors and sinners.

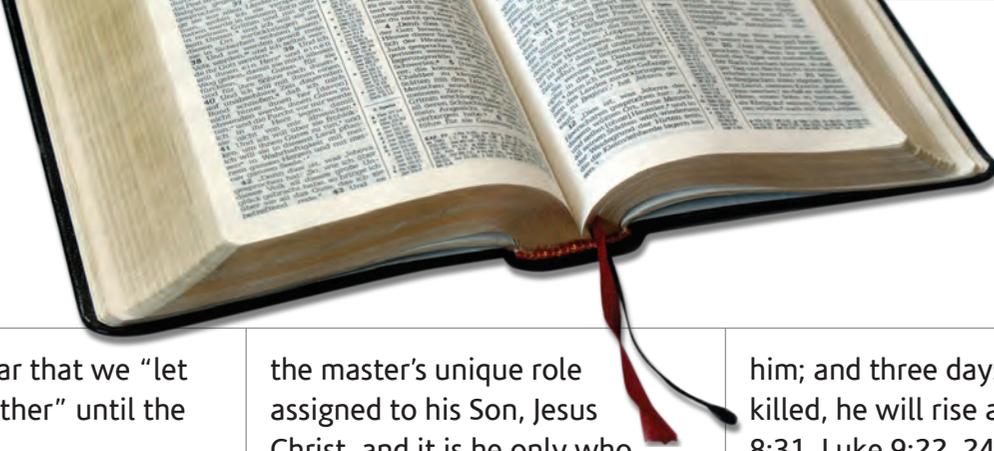
Therefore, it is not hard to imagine that this put the Son of Man at odds against pharisees and scribes because they were not only the strict observers of the human precepts and traditions of the elders, but they were also in cahoots with the Sword-king. It can only mean one thing for the Son of Man — suffer and get killed. Is this the master you chose? Is this the master you are following?

**October 14, 2018**

**Matthew 13:24-30**

**The master’s unique role**

**T**he parable of wheat and weeds depicts what the writer of Matthew sees as the reality of God’s creation. God’s creation has both good and evil, but



God made it clear that we “let them grow together” until the harvest time.

God shows no partiality, according to Matthew 5:45: “that you may be children of your father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”

In addition, v.47 explains that the Kingdom of God is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of “every kind”! Every kind means not just tuna or mackerel or flounder but all kinds of fish.

God shows no partiality, and if that is the way of God then who are we to show partiality, bias, prejudice or judgment of others? Yet we do it in all aspects of human life — age, color, gender, nationality, wealth, homosexuality, political persuasion and the list goes on. Unfortunately, we Christians lead the way. Have we not learned? Have we not heard? It is not the way of God. In fact, it is contrary to God’s way.

When we judge others we say, in effect, that we are better than God! We say God is weak and He cannot take care of Himself; therefore, we have to step in and do God’s work for Him to weed out the bad.

“Not so with you.” (Matthew 20:26) We, the children of God, must be clear on this. Judging is

the master’s unique role assigned to his Son, Jesus Christ, and it is he only who sits at the right hand of God to judge the quick and the dead at harvest time. This was never our role.

Is it not a key time to hand over this role, which was never ours to begin with, to Jesus Christ and keep our nose to the grindstone, faithfully watering both wheat and weeds growing together?

Is this not what the true church will look like and what Jesus will have us do? “Open Hearts, open minds, open doors”! This is the way of God in Jesus Christ and therefore, it is our way.

Remember, God is big and He can take care of Himself, thank you very much.

## October 21, 2018

Mark 9:2-9

### The law and prophecy in one

Let us examine once again what it means to follow Jesus.

There cannot be any mistake or misunderstanding when it comes to choosing Jesus. He was very clear on several occasions that the Son of Man would be betrayed into human hands, be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law (Luke 9:22), and they will kill

him; and three days after being killed, he will rise again (Mark 8:31, Luke 9:22, 24:7 and Matthew 17:22).

This is the Jesus we are following, and we are fairly warned what it means to follow Jesus. Do we still want to follow Jesus? Following Jesus means a life hated by others because we follow the true light. It is a life of being last, being a servant to others, having to forgive many times, and ultimately laying down our life for others.

Before we say “yes” to follow Jesus, we must know that there is one prerequisite. We must deny the Sword-king’s way. The Sword-king’s way is to control, exploit, subjugate, and dominate his people. And yet, giving up the Sword-king is easier said than done, is it not? Our lives are so closely enmeshed with the Sword-king, it is virtually impossible, as I mentioned earlier, to separate the Sword-king’s way from the Cross-king’s way. And even if we are able to differentiate them we find ourselves having a difficult time denying or abandoning the Sword-king’s way. Could it be because we are benefiting from the Sword-king’s way? Or, could it be that we secretly believe the Sword-king’s

*(Con’t. on pg. 32: “LIVING WORD.”)*

The Living Word devotions will coincide with the 2018 Bible Reading Challenge from Bishop Lewis. Find the October schedule on pg. 34. Find all 2018 readings at [www.vaumc.org](http://www.vaumc.org).

*("LIVING WORD" con't from previous page.)*

way is the best system?

Jesus said (paraphrased), "Not so with you!" If you want to follow me, deny and pick up the cross, not the sword, and follow me. And oh, by the way, Jesus said, the way of the cross is the life of betrayal, persecution, and death. But that is not the end. You will rise again in three days. This was and still is our fate if we choose to deny and pick up the cross and follow him as our master. Is our answer still yes to follow the Cross-king? Are we in all the way?

**October 28, 2018**

**Luke 16:1-17:10**

**Cross-king is still my master**

**O**ne thing is clear as we read Luke 16; there are many "name-your-own" kings we follow and worship. Examine your life to see if you put anything above God and Jesus. That is your "name-your-own" king. Many Christians have strong emotional ties with the church building – and rightly so because it is a place where we raise our children to be good Christians, come of age, marry and we hold funeral services for our loved ones. For these and other reasons, we vehemently oppose any kind of structural changes over vital ministry and mission of the church. That's Building-king. And when the

Building-king takes precedent over Cross-king then the people who are following the Building-king must repent.

Luke 16 speaks of another kind of king: Mammon-king. He is the money-king and he holds power over all aspects of human lives from daily food to the power of high position. Therefore, we can understand why many people follow and worship the Mammon-king. Who would not like to live as "a rich man dressed in purple and fine linen who feasted sumptuously every day." v.19?

The warning is the same; repent! Repent of the Sword-king, Building-king, Mammon-king, and the name-your-own-king. Distribute your riches to the lost, the least, and the last and then, pick up the cross and follow me. Is Cross-king still your master? 

# CLERGY & DIACONAL



## DEATHS

**Marlene Faye Dunn**, 71, of Schuyler, died Aug. 20, 2018, in Charlottesville. She was preceded in death by her husband, the Rev. **E. Robert "Bob" Dunn Jr.**, a clergy member of the Virginia Conference.

**Paul Joseph Budzik** died Aug. 21, 2018, in Dundalk, Md. He is the father of the Rev. **Anthony Budzik**, Upper Franklin Cooperative Parish, Danville District.

**John Voorhis III**, 88, of Richmond, died Aug. 13. He is the father of the Rev. **Amy Lenow**, deacon, family leave.

Former Portsmouth District Secretary **Bonnie Butler**, 75, died Aug. 4 in Chesapeake.

**Margaret Schneider**, 90, died Aug. 8 in Bethesda, Md. She is the mother of the Rev. **Susan Reaves**, pastor of Trinity (King George) on the Rappahannock River District.

**Sara Dawson** died July 28, 2018 in Northern Virginia. She was the wife of the Rev. **Richard B. "Rick" Dawson**, the associate pastor of the Aldie-Arcola Cooperative Parish, Arlington District.

## BIRTHS

The Rev. **Megan Saucier** and the Rev. **Jason Stanley** welcome their daughter, Alice Olivia, born Aug. 1. Megan is the pastor of First UMC, Norfolk. Jason is the coordinator of Church Revitalization for the Elizabeth River District. 

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("COMPUTERS" con't from pg. 13)

to "re-voice" the films from English to Creole.

BCFE has sent more than 20 MIIABs and 40 laptops to clinics throughout Haiti. Nurses at the clinics can now show their patients how to prevent cholera, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and other diseases. Videos on breastfeeding and infant nutrition help them provide for families with very limited resources. These laptop computers can also be taken by nurses to families in remote locations to educate them on these critical topics.

All of this is accomplished through the dedicated help of hundreds of volunteers. Ten of them work in our shop located in Warrenton. They receive the donated computers, repair them as needed and then load a fresh copy of the Linux Mint operating system

on them. They also configure the client laptops with a selection of educational software in subjects such as math, typing, geography and early education. IABs are configured with the appropriate general education or medical education materials.

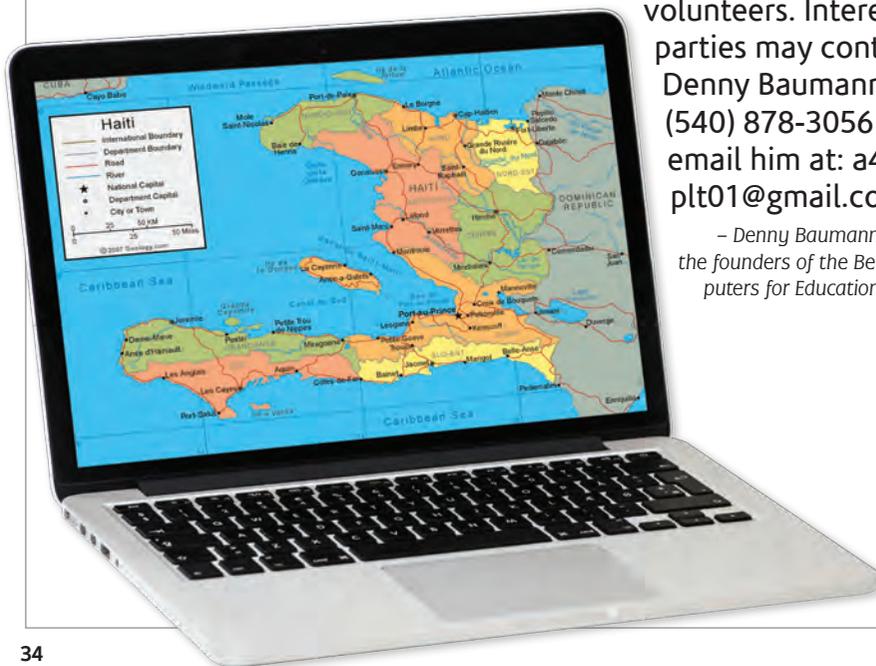
The remaining volunteers come from the churches or charitable organizations who personally deliver the computers to their schools and clinics in Haiti.

While computers aren't the answer to all of Haiti's problems, they go a long way toward providing a quality education for the children and adults of Haiti. As one teacher said "I will be more useful to my students, my family and my community. I have a broader knowledge of education after what I just discovered."

Bethel Computers for Education is always looking for donations of money, computers and volunteers. Interested parties may contact

Denny Baumann at (540) 878-3056 or email him at: a4f-plt01@gmail.com. 

*- Denny Baumann is one of the founders of the Bethel Computers for Education Ministry.*

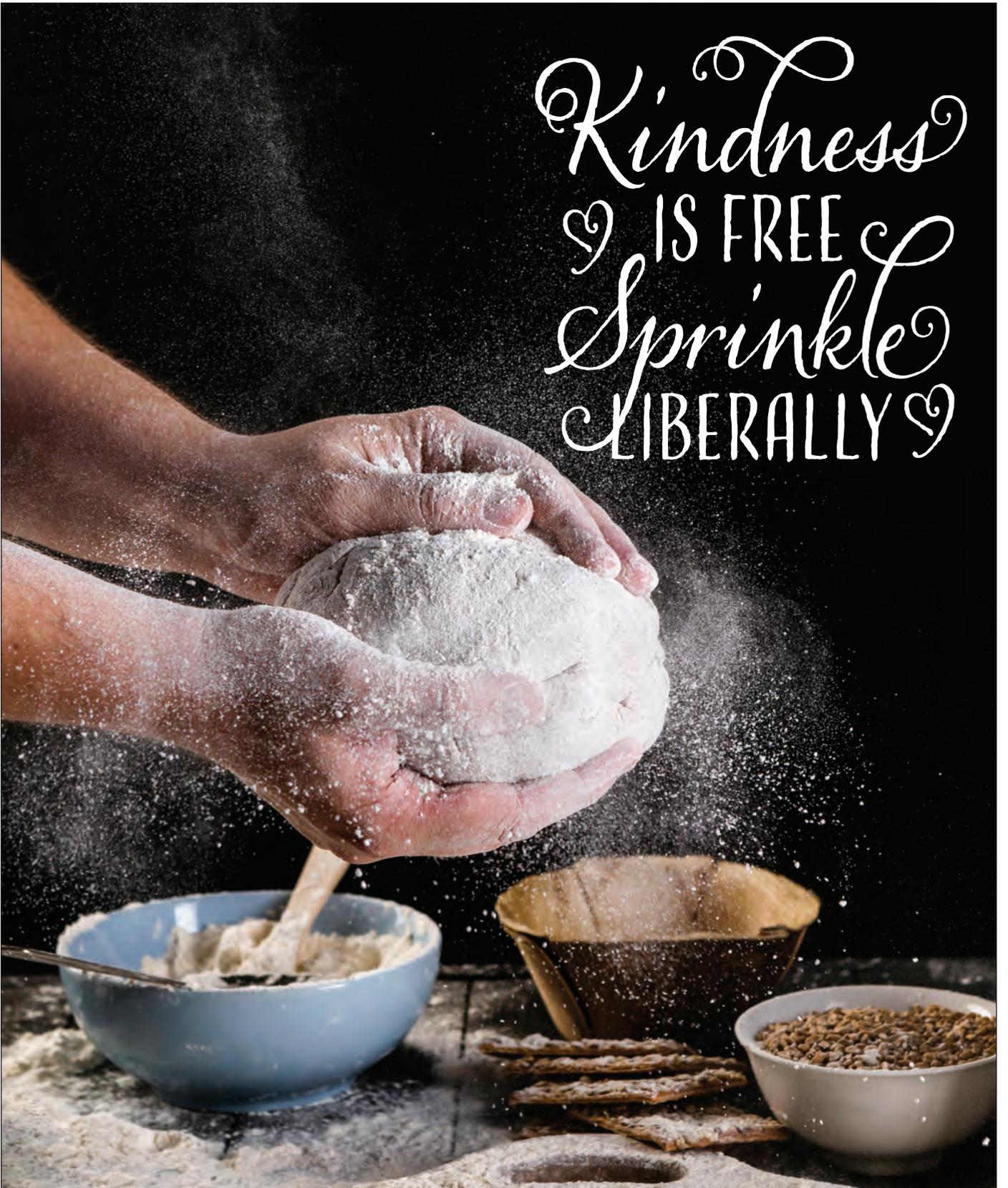


## Bishop's Bible Challenge readings for October

October 1	Luke 1, John 1:1-14
October 2	Matt. 1, Luke 2:1-38
October 3	Matt. 2, Luke 2:39-52
October 4	Matt. 3, Mark 1, Luke 3
October 5	Matt. 4, Luke 4-5, John 1:15-51
October 6	John 2-4
October 7	Mark 2
October 8	John 5
October 9	Matt. 12:1-21, Mark 3, Luke 6
October 10	Matt. 5-7
October 11	Matt. 8:1-13, Luke 7
October 12	Matt. 11
October 13	Matt. 12:22-50, Luke 11
October 14	Matt. 13, Luke 8
October 15	Matt. 8:14-34, Mark 4-5
October 16	Matt. 9-10
October 17	Matt. 14, Mark 6, Luke 9:1-17
October 18	John 6
October 19	Matt. 15, Mark 7
October 20	Matt. 16, Mark 8, Luke 9:18-27
October 21	Matt. 17, Mark 9, Luke 9:28-62
October 22	Matt. 18
October 23	John 7-8
October 24	John 9:1-10:21
October 25	Luke 10-11, John 10:22-42
October 26	Luke 12-13
October 27	Luke 14-15
October 28	Luke 16-17:10
October 29	John 11
October 30	Luke 17:11-18:14
October 31	Matt. 19, Mark 10

# ONE LAST WORD

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♡ IS FREE ♡  
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