

Advocate

REDISCOVERING

the Bible



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The Advocate is published once a month. The deadline to submit news and ad copy for the November 2019 issue is September 27. For more information on future deadlines, contact the Advocate office or visit the website.

Advertising/Tributes

Rates for advertising and tributes are available upon request.

Local Church News

Items should be typed (preferably sent via e-mail) or printed legibly, no more than 100 words, and of conference-wide interest. Complete names of individuals, churches and districts should be included. Because of space limitations, the Local Church section prohibits news items related to church members' birthdays (of less than 100 years), wedding anniversaries, receptions for moving and/or retiring pastors, photos of traditional Christmas trees or Easter trees/crosses, and any item over two months old. 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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USPS 660-740 ISSN 0891-5598

Published monthly by Virginia United Methodist Communications, an agency of the Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. Periodical postage paid at Glen Allen, Va., and at additional mailing offices. The Virginia United Methodist Advocate is owned by Virginia United Methodist Communications.

POSTMASTER: Send changes of address to Virginia United Methodist Advocate, P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058. Editorial and business offices are located at 10330 Staples Mill Rd., Glen Allen, Va. Office hours are 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

PILLOW TALK



Madeline Pillow

Editor

I remember being back in grade school, first learning how to write a paper. The sequence of questions that we needed to focus on were: who, what, when, where, and, why.

Flash forward to college while working in technical and journalistic writing, I learned about the inverted pyramid: the tool journalists use in their writing to share the most important news first. It involves these same questions.

A book I read recently, *Start with Why*, has the author Simon Sinek positing the question, why are people and businesses so focused on everything else but why?

He finds that businesses and people focus so much on the what, the product they make or what they think people will most focus on, and rarely consider that the why of their businesses will have a much larger pull for themselves, their employees and their customers.

Sinek states that not knowing our sense of "why" leads to problems in our jobs and on a larger scale the mission and goals of an organization. He cites Apple as being a company that fully understands why they exist and their employees believe it too. They don't exist to create computers or electronics; it's much more than that. It's about being innovative and testing the bounds of what is possible. Oh, and they just happen to sell some electronics you might want to buy. Apple knows their "why" so well that even non-customers understand it.

In Luke 13:10-17, Jesus heals a woman on the Sabbath. The synagogue leader is angry and tells Jesus that he had six other days he could have healed her. Jesus however knows his "why." He didn't come to maintain the status quo; he came to save the world.

I wonder if we personally and we as a church can glean something from this. Do we know our "why?" Do we know it so well and communicate it so well that even non-Christians understand it?

No.

Jesus told us that everyone will know we are his disciples if we love one another. Christians as a whole could learn that even in our differences of theology or beliefs that everyone should know us by our love.

I encourage you to figure out what is your "why" today. 🍷

Who,
what,
when,
where,
why?



TABLE OF CONTENTS



SECTIONS

- 4 Letters
- 5-7 Virginia News
- 22-23 Snippets
- 24-25 Equipping
- 26-27 Living the Word
- 28 Clergy & Diaconal
- 30 Bishop
- 31 One Last Word

SPECIAL INSERT

- 8-15 The Advocate remembered

FEATURE

- 16-21 Rediscovering the Bible

STORIES

- 6 Clergy return from pilgrimage
- 22 Deacon sees theology in pop culture
- 23 General Conference 2020 updates



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Not an argument — Just a testimony

After hearing the sermon for ordination at Annual Conference, I began to think about the Scriptures that have influenced my life in powerful life-changing ways. There are too many to comment here, but three stand out for me and our present situation as a conference.

Early in my life, John 3:16 became of vital significance. I heard the words of grace and transformation read and preached by Billy Graham on my television. I said “yes,” accepted Christ, and committed my life to Jesus as my Lord and Savior. From that moment, I considered myself an evangelical Christian.

Later as a part of a “read your Bible” program, I read the Great Commission in Matthew for the first time. I understood that Jesus was addressing his original disciples, but it was as if his words leapt off the page at me. I felt God speaking to me through those words and set me on a course of 39 years as an ordained minister in The United Methodist Church. From


that moment, I thought of myself as called to be a preacher, an ordained pastor in this denomination.

Later, in my years of ministry and especially in the years of retirement, the words of Jesus in Matthew 25 became the central focus of my faith. I consider those words of Jesus not as a threat of judgment, but as a call to participation in justice ministry.

When Libby, my wife, and I moved to Florida in retirement, we were looking for a way to live out our discipleship in the context of that Scriptures’ charge. Our first Sunday at First UMC we met a wonderful married couple who invited us to be a part of their ministry called Street Warriors. Every Saturday that couple, working with a group of people, volunteered to travel to streets and back alleys of Lakeland, Fla., to deliver roughly 100 meals to poor and homeless people.

Libby and I participated for over two years in the preparation and the distribution of the meals. We rejoice to think of ourselves simply as followers doing what we are told to do. That married couple? They are still out there every Saturday deliver-

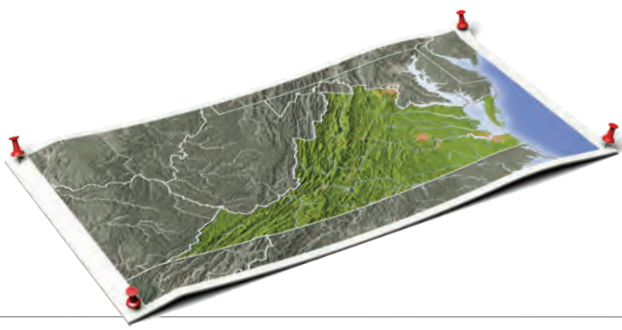
ing meals and much more. They literally share their own very evangelical faith in Christ and redemption and believe that God calls them to this particular ministry. They say “yes” even though it is a time and financial hardship for two working people. They seek to live out their discipleship by serving the hungry, the thirsty, the homeless, and the least and the lost. I would say their spiritual journey is like mine. Robert and Stephen, that married couple, are simply two disciples of Christ living out the Christian faith.

Not an argument,
just a testimony. 

— The Rev. Alan G. Reifsnnyder,
retired pastor



Letters to the Editor are printed on a space-available basis. Letters may be emailed to MadelinePillow@vaumc.org by the first of the month.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

Diverse group of United Methodists explores separation

Council of Bishops press release (August 19, 2019)

A GROUP OF THEOLOGICALLY DIVERSE UNITED METHODISTS met at Floris UMC in Herndon, Va., on Aug. 16 and 17 to continue seeking a way to resolve the impasse on the ordination of LGBTQ members and the blessing of same-gender marriages in the denomination.

Organized by bishops from Central Conferences, the meeting was attended by

Tom Berlin and Junius Dotson, representing Centrists; Jan Lawrence and Randall Miller, representing Progressives; and Patricia Miller and Keith Boyette; representing the Conservatives.


Also, in attendance were Bishop John Yambasu, Bishop Christian Alsted, Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey and Bishop Thomas Bickerton. Bishop Gregory Palmer and Bishop Ciriaco Francisco were invited to the meeting but were

unable to attend.

Joris Brombach, a layperson from Germany, was also in attendance, representing Central Conference lay and clergy. Two other persons from Mozambique and the Philippines were invited to the meeting but were unable to attend.

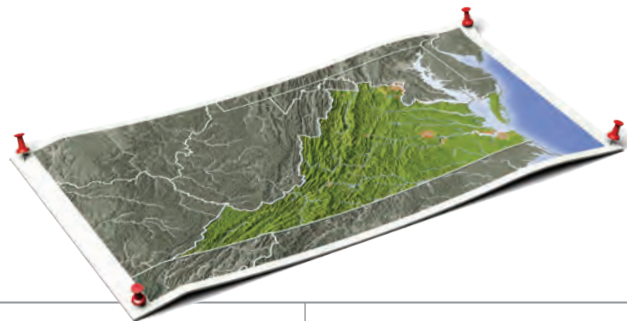
During the candid and prayerful discussions, the group agreed that it seems inevitable that there will be some form of separation of the church as a way to resolve the impasse.

The participants listened to presentations from some of the plans that were being discussed, including the Indianapolis and the UMC Next plans, both of which offer separation as gracious ways for the future of the church.

In upcoming meetings, the group said it hopes to reach a consensus of what might be the future of the denomination by using a professional, non-United Methodist mediator to help in navigating the differences. 



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Reflection begins as group of clergy return from parks pilgrimage

By Gennie Bowles

Organized by the Rev. Meredith McNabb and the Rev. Tim Ward, a group of clergy set out for Alaska from Aug. 1-8. This Alaska Parks Pilgrimage allowed the clergy to explore “the unknown frontier” of Alaska and see the real effects of climate change firsthand in the area and to have conversation about the unknown territory of The United Methodist Church’s current climate.

Participants read “While Glaciers Slept” by M Jackson prior to arriving and each individual prepared a podcast for the group to listen to and led discussion. The group met with the Alaska Missionary Conference district superintendent, toured glaciers and Denali National Park, visited the Museum of the North at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks and the Native Museum in Anchorage.

I HAVE ALWAYS ENJOYED a good museum. I am a chronic sign reader, bringing up the rear on hikes to stop and read about local ecology or history. I expect to be surprised by new information; you never know what kind of trivia you may stumble upon. I found the Parks Pilgrimage trip to Alaska to be an incredible opportunity to learn. But it is in the coming home, the telling of stories and sharing of pictures, that the reflection begins. I am delighted to do some of this reflecting with you.

Our team of 12 clergy colleagues and friends set out for Denali driving through fog and clouds with hopes of seeing caribou, moose, and grizzly bears. We took in the mountains and scenery, some choosing to climb 1,000 ft. straight up to do so. We snuggled with sled dogs before leaving for Fairbanks to learn about Alaskan history and the effects

of extreme weather due to climate change. We hiked to Exit Glacier and saw signs of the glaciers increasing retreat. At the Alaska Native Heritage Center in Anchorage we learned about the history and culture of the native people of Alaska through music, dance, and architecture. It was a whirlwind of sights and experiences shared with an incredible group of pastors brought together for faithful reflection.

The day of our trip that has most caused me to pause and reflect was our last full day in Alaska, the day we spent on a boat exploring Kenai Fjords National Park. We saw two glaciers so large I could hardly wrap my head around their scale. Yet, I was also painfully aware of the evidence we had seen and heard that these glaciers were retreating far too quickly. Standing on a boat in a fjord in Alaska, taking in the water, mountains, and glaciers, I was in awe of all that we had seen and done. We saw wildlife in their natural habitat, from puffins and sea otters to three species of whale. Having already seen fin whales and a pod of orcas we set off, our



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

captain sharing that there had been a report of a baby humpback in a nearby cove. It was in this moment that the absurdity of whale watching hit me with full force.

The idea that we had started the day with the audacity to think that we would board a boat and wander about the ocean with the intention of randomly bumping into a whale struck me as outrageous, preposterous, laughable even! And yet, that is precisely what we did.

It brought to mind a story in Luke 11. The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, so he gave them a prayer and a parable about knocking on a neighbor's door at midnight. Luke 11:8 in the NIV translation reads, "I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need."

Practicing shameless audacity was exactly what we were doing in the fjord looking for whales that day, and it may have been the reminder I needed the most. I don't often practice shameless

audacity, particularly in my prayers. Perhaps it has been years of being taught that God is not a vending machine, or a fear of disappointment if a prayer is too big or asks too much. But I try to keep things simple and not make large requests. But that day on that boat I was reminded that not only are we allowed to pray with shameless audacity, Jesus himself encourages us to do so.

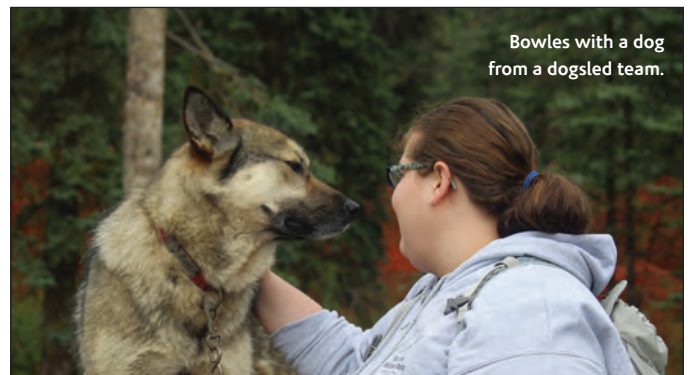
Watching the fluke of a humpback whale breaking the surface of the water as he dove into the depths I found God reminding me to pray with shameless audacity. To pray that we might as a world have a greater respect for the land and sea and sky that God has given us, to pray that someday the news won't be filled with stories of gun violence, acts of terror, and human rights abuses, and even to pray that in the midst of the changing climate of The United Methodist Church, that the winds of change may guide us towards inclusion and love. Amen. 🍀

—The Rev. Genevieve (Gennie)
Bowles is pastor of Prince of Peace
UMC in Manassas, Va.

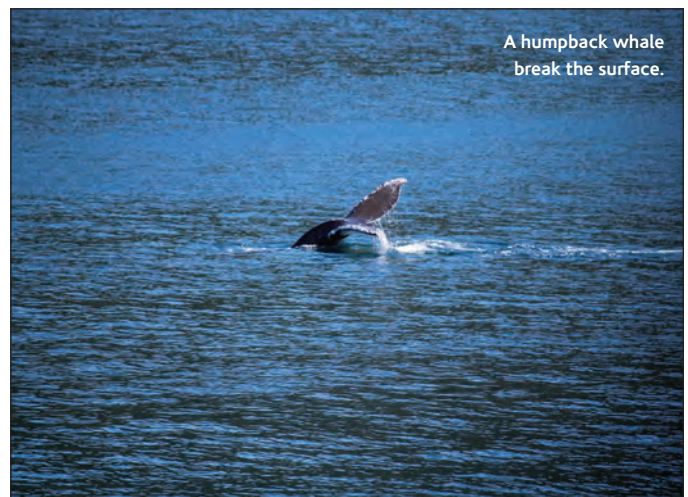
Photos courtesy of
the Rev. Meredith McNabb.



Group shot from the pilgrimage.



Bowles with a dog
from a dogsled team.



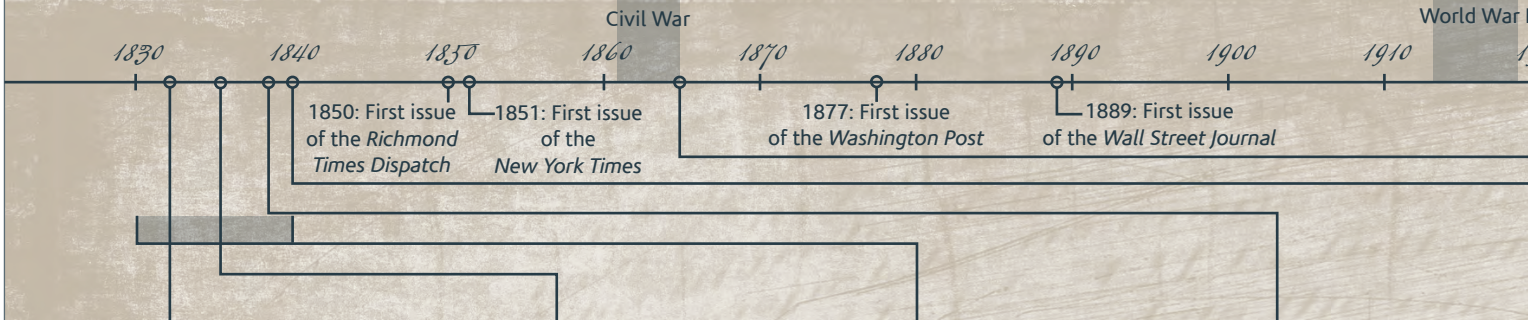
A humpback whale
break the surface.

Advocate Memories



In March 2019, it was announced that The Virginia United Methodist Advocate magazine was coming to an end after almost 200 years of publication. The magazine has gone through many changes over the years from name (it all started with the Methodist Christian Sentinel) to format to frequency of publication. In the final issues of this publication, you will find history about the magazine, memories of past issues and words from the magazine's former and present staff. Thank you for being a part of this journey, Advocate readers.

Fair winds and following seas.

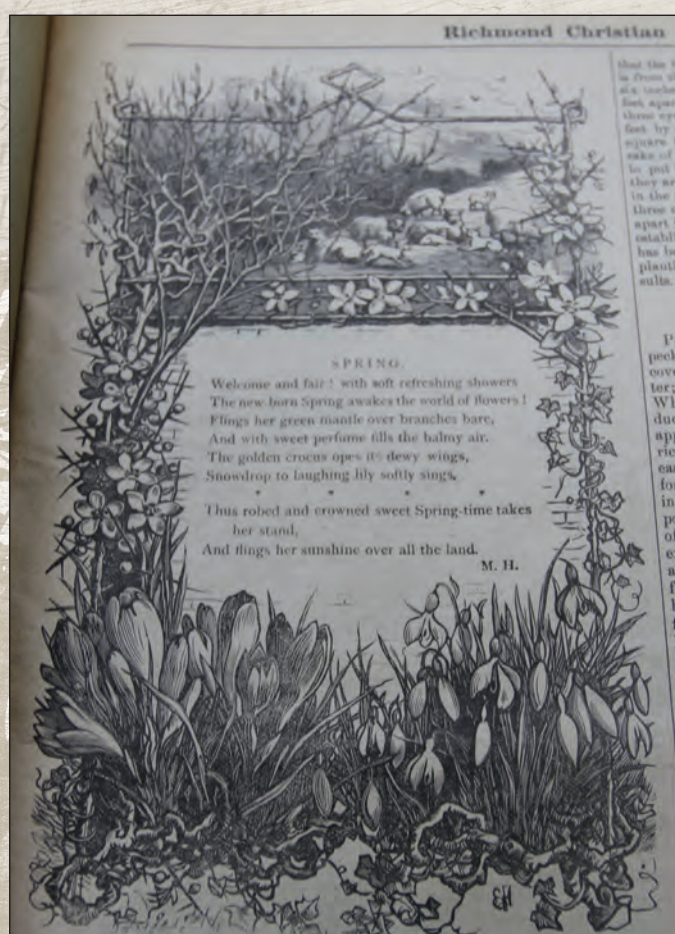


June 8, 1832
 Ethelbert Drake started the newspaper, *The Methodist Christian Sentinel*. The publication was similar in size to other papers of the time: folio size with six columns of print on each of its four pages. "It was published every Friday morning four doors above the Columbian Hotel, Cary Street, Richmond, Virginia" (*The Richmond Christian Advocate: 1832-1840*" by Joseph Mitchell)

1836
 Drake ran the newspaper as a one-man operation but was soon broke. The conference voted to take it over with a new editor and a committee overseeing its work. Leroy Lee was selected editor.

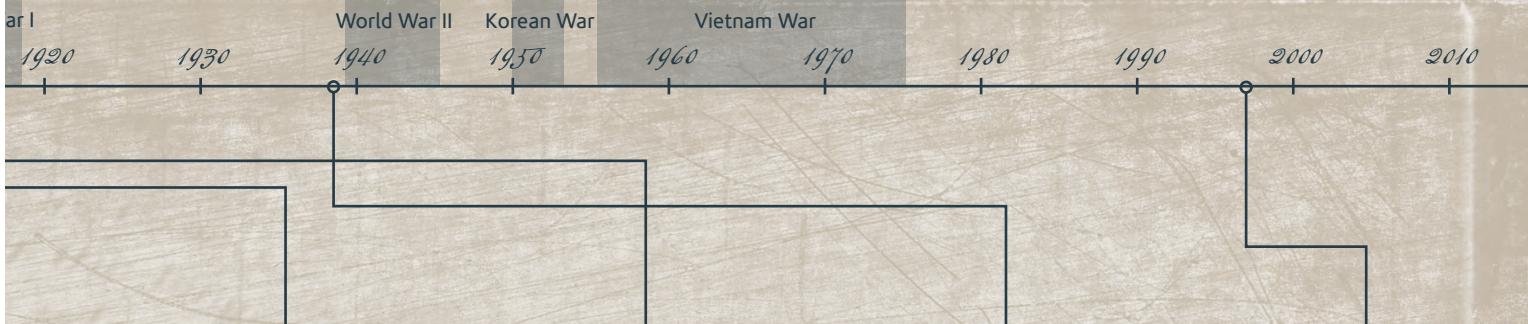
1832-1840
 Subscriptions grew from 400 subscribers to more than 3,000.

Late 1840s
 The publication was affectionately known as "Old Richmond"



Quick Fact

Andrew Jackson, seventh president of the United States, was in office when the *Advocate* magazine, began as *The Methodist Christian Sentinel* in 1832.



1840

General Conference assumes control of the Virginia and North Carolina Conference *Journal* and the question of the magazine's name comes up once again. It becomes the *Richmond Christian Advocate*.

1865

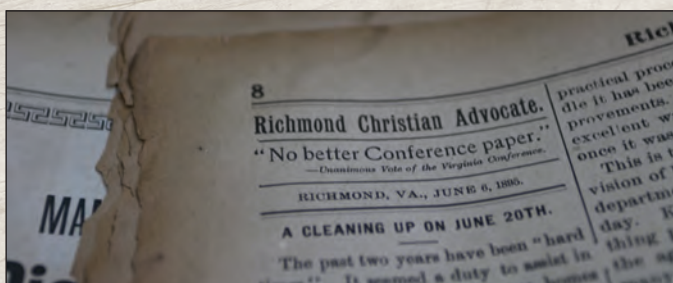
All *Advocate* assets were burned in the fire that devastated Richmond at the end of the Civil War.

1938

The publication takes on the name the *Virginia Methodist Advocate*.

1997

The *Advocate* begins printing in full color



Early *Advocate* issues give insight

THE CONFERENCE COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE was recently gifted a number of *Advocates* dating back to the 1890s by the Rev. John Peters. In the upcoming issues, we will share more pictures of these *Advocates* as well as the interesting history they share.

In reviewing these *Advocates*, the difference between our time and the world of the 1890s is stark. I (Madeline), thoroughly enjoyed looking at the wagon and mule milliners ads in these issues; I don't exactly have the same transportation

avenues here in 2019. Other time markers come through other ads varying from medicinal aids to train schedules.

The *Advocate* has gone through several changes over the years from format, number of pages, type of papers, use of pictures and eventually a change to the production of full color photos.

As I read through, there was a different style of writing used; articles were long and writers were not afraid that you would stop reading in order to check your social media or cell phone.

Readers sent in a great many letters that were published in the *Advocate* with topics ranging from Annual Conference to conversations about the Civil War.

I look forward to sharing more with you in the upcoming two issues with more of our *Advocate* history. 🍷



Advocate editor Madeline Pillow takes a look at *Advocate* issues.



At a time when print media was the dominant delivery system for many United Methodists, our readers wanted to hold the magazine in their hands, see the interconnected articles and features, and organize copies on a shelf for future reference and action.

Reflections on the Advocate magazine

By Carole Vaughn

WHEN I THINK ABOUT MY MOST VIVID MEMORY

of the *Virginia United Methodist Advocate*, I remember beginning my position as Virginia Conference director of Communications and executive editor of the *Advocate* in January of 2003. It was the best of times — I felt profound excitement to be part of the *Advocate* legacy so capably shaped by my predecessors. It was also the worst of times — our nation was in chaos, and those of us in the communications office felt the uneasy tension as we prepared to respond.

The newly-appointed monthly editor would not be joining our staff until April. We were already outlining the March issue, which was titled, “Images of War.” For weeks, a rumor that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and was prepared to use them against the United States and its allies was prompting President George W. Bush to declare war against Iraq. This particular edition could be a timely

resource for churches seeking a Christian response to a possible prolonged military conflict.

Indeed, President Bush declared war on Iraq on March 19, 2003 about three weeks after this issue of the *Advocate* arrived in subscribers’ mailboxes. Saddam Hussein was eventually toppled, but, as we now know, no weapons of mass destruction were found. The conflict lasted for eight years with thousands of casualties among military troops on both sides, their allies and the Iraqi civilian population. Thoughtful United Methodists are still debating the necessity and impact of this war.

Even now, with unsettling tensions in North Korea, Iran and Russia, I think about the editorial I wrote back then:

“And now there are more images of war. The focus has shifted to Iraq, a nation with an arrogant leader who defies world opinion (I am afraid once again for the dads and moms, the

sons and daughters who have left their families behind, for the Iraqi innocents who will become casualties, and for the survivors on both sides who will be marked forever by the horrors of war). I shudder at the persistence of evil and the destructive nature of unchecked power. But I also wonder how launching another war can possibly lead to permanent peace. And if I take seriously the message of the Prince of Peace, I must find ways to befriend my enemy. The sheer complexity of the task overwhelms me; I am praying through my tears.”

In the midst of that hectic time, I recall discussing the role of the *Advocate* with staff and key leaders. How should we best be informing our lay and clergy readers? In what ways could we assist them in their theological reflections about issues? How could we help them engage in meaningful responses?

Historically, the

Virginia Advocate was an award-winning magazine recognized by our denomination. As a 36-40-page full-color monthly magazine, it demonstrated a standard of excellence in writing, editing and design. At a time when print media was the dominant delivery system for many United Methodists, our readers wanted to hold the magazine in their hands, see the interconnected articles and features, and organize copies on a shelf for future reference and action.

The *Virginia Advocate* was a forum expressing diverse opinions from thoughtful United Methodists who didn't always agree. For this particular issue on the Iraq war, a variety of writers, including a general church secretary, a deployed U. S. Army chaplain, a CEO of an international relief organization (who had just returned from eight days in Iraq) and a counselor serving children of deployed military troops offered their insightful reflections on the nature and impact of war. It provided readers with facts, helped them to think critically, and invited them to exercise compassion as they grappled with a

complex issue.

As a study resource, extra copies of the *Advocate* were frequently ordered by churches for Sunday school sessions, leadership training and confirmation classes. It was not unusual for church leaders to ask what our bishop thought about theological matters. Every issue included a feature article from our episcopal leader that focused on the topic being discussed. This particular issue on the conflict in Iraq also offered practical ideas for local churches (how to support the troops, how to send rice bags for Iraqi citizens, where to find resources on the web).

During my tenure, the communications staff was privileged to

produce the *Virginia United Methodist Advocate* with all its various components. In a time of diminished reliance on print media, different communications instruments will replace this magazine. Perhaps it will include increased use of social media, blogs, podcasts, web resources, cable media and yet to be formed delivery systems. Whatever the combination, my gratitude flows for the honor to have served as executive editor of the *Virginia Advocate*. More importantly, my prayers continue for those who will create all things new. 🍀

– Carole Vaughn lives with her husband, Peter, at Laurel Springs, her family home place, an 18th century farm in Caroline County, Va.



U.S. Marines escort captured enemy prisoners to a holding area in the desert of Iraq in March 2003.



From wax to silicon: The Virginia Advocate's chronicle of change at the close of the 20th century

By Alvin Horton

WHEN I ARRIVED ON THE SCENE AS EDITOR of the *Virginia United Methodist Advocate* in June of 1986, our office didn't even have a computer. There was a monitor that Georgie Cheatham, office secretary, had on a side table beside her desk. It was connected to the building's main frame computer that kept a record of our subscribers. That was it.

Debbie Duty, production assistant, made sure plenty of hot wax was available for rolling on the back of the strips of type that she and Brenda Capen, associate editor, would print out of the typesetter. Articles had to slowly emerge from the large, heavy machine that printed single-columns of type onto glossy photographic paper. I would create "dummies," hand-drawn layouts, of the 24 pages that would religiously make their way to Beacon Press

every two weeks for printing and mailing.

Type would be cut, waxed, and pressed onto card-thick "paste-up" boards to match the dummies; and photographs would be sized, labeled, and packaged for delivery to the printers.

We could not have been more thrilled when technology changed so the typesetter monitors could actually show us what a page might look like before printing out the type. It was called WYSIWYG (whizzy-whig) for "what you see is what you get."

Eventually, we bought new Macintosh computers, at the time the only desktop computers that could show both type and graphic images on the screen, allowing us to see a completed page before printing. Even then, we still had to use the paste-up boards and send photographs to the printers so they could create photographic negatives of the

pages and eventually the metal plates for printing.

As more of our churches, pastors, and writers acquired their own computers, we found that PCs were becoming the norm among those who needed to communicate with our office. By then, the world of computer technology was changing exponentially and Microsoft was catching up to Apple's ease of use in the publishing field; so, we changed, too. We became a PC office and PageMaker became our go-to publishing software. By the time Y2K arrived our wax machine had grown cold and we were creating the *Advocate* wholly on our computer screens and sending the finished product to the printers, photos and all, in digital files originating from the silicon of chips and circuits inside our desktop machines.

But more than technology was changing in our office. Theological



and cultural controversies were brewing across the Virginia Conference. In 1986, the United Methodist Council of Bishops issued a pastoral letter titled "In Defense of Creation: The Nuclear Crisis and a Just Peace." World hunger was finally catching the attention of both the church and society; the Society of St. Andrew hunger relief organization was only seven years old but gaining in influence and effectiveness. A statewide lottery in Virginia, abortion, and homosexuality issues were all swirling in the air. And The United Methodist Church was struggling to find its voice in a growing technological world, eventually giving birth to a cable TV program, *Catch the Spirit*, and launching a nationwide advertising and evangelism campaign called *Igniting Ministry*. It was my belief—when I left the local church pastorate and became the youngest *Advocate* editor at the time — that lay people needed a vehicle for discussing these issues much like the clergy had in those days, a denominational magazine for theological inquiry called *The Circuit Rider*. I knew

in my heart that the *Advocate* newspaper needed to become a news magazine with thematic theological material worthy of discussion.

There was no way that we could afford a full-color, glossy magazine format. So, the least expensive first

It has been the keeper of our corporate memory.

Its pages have recorded the history of the United Methodists in the Commonwealth of Virginia and beyond. It has journaled for us our disagreements and our bonds of mission and ministry.

step in changing the purpose of the publication was to change its subliminal feel, and that meant to change the paper on which it was printed. My first edition, June 19, 1986, was printed on white paper, not the newsprint so

often associated with newspapers. To pay for the better grade of paper, we began publishing twice a month instead of the normal every-two-weeks, saving the cost of two full editions over the course of the year. Later, in 1997, we began to use color on half of the publication's pages (utilizing color on only one of the two printing plates Beacon Press needed to print the paper). To pay for this expense, we reduced the number of issues during the summer months. Eventually, in 1999, we began to publish only once every month so we could provide some color on all pages, and today the *Advocate* is printed in full-color throughout and on magazine quality paper to boot.

I had the privilege of being the *Advocate's* editor for 15 years. I returned to the local church as pastor in 2001, for that had always been my calling. In many ways, I saw the readers of the *Advocate* as my church when I wrote, designed, and edited the pages that fanned out across the Virginia Conference. I was a pastor at heart, and the local church was the place where I needed to return.

It will be sad to say farewell to this venerable newspaper/magazine called the *Virginia United Methodist Advocate*; it has been the keeper of our corporate memory. Its pages have recorded the history of the people called United Methodist in the Commonwealth of Virginia and beyond. It has journaled for us our disagreements and our bonds of mission and ministry. It will be missed by those of us who have sweated over its production and by those who have turned its pages as faithful readers. But no one will miss it more, even if they do not fully realize it, than the generations that will come, wondering how wax and silicon could have ever been the conduit for ideas and actions of people of faith. As changes continue to emerge, my prayer is that a new mechanism will be employed to chronicle what we dare not forget. 🍷

— The Rev. Alvin J. Horton was *Advocate* editor from 1986-2001.

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Bible

By Madeline Pillow

FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS, Bishop Lewis has encouraged the Virginia Conference to read the Bible with her each year, all the way through, with each year featuring a different way of reading. In 2017, participants read the Bible straight through from beginning to end. In 2018, the conference read the Bible chronologically. This year, the reading has consisted of a blended style with a mixture of Old Testament and New Testament reading each day.

Bishop Lewis started this challenge as a new kind of New Year's resolution in 2017. At Annual Conference 2017, she shared the conference vision "to be lifelong learners who influence others to serve." She cited the Bible Challenge as a way that clergy and laity can continue to learn and grow as disciples.

We all have passages of the Bible that are near and dear to us. As well there are passages or books of the Bible that we have a hard time understanding or agreeing with. As we grow as disciples, reading and wrestling with the Bible needs to be a part of the journey.

Dr. Phil Maynard is a ministry coach who has often been featured at conference events for the Office of Congregational Excellence. He has a "Real Discipleship survey" that has been conducted at these events to show people where they are in their discipleship journey. He has separated it into four categories: exploring, beginning, growing and maturing. You can find this quiz at www.vaumc.org/realdiscipleship.

Our pastors wrestle with the Bible quite a bit as

they prepare for sermons each week. Further in this feature, pastors share how they do the work of exegesis to prepare their sermons throughout the year.

The Rev. Kelly Shushok, associate pastor at Blacksburg UMC, shared that at their church, this work of understanding the text prior to preaching is not just work done by the pastor but by a team of nine people each week. This theological development team, "Theo," prepares, executes and evaluates each sermon and through this work Shushok said that God is found everywhere. After the Theo group wrestles with the Scripture for the week, small groups in the church are then given questions for them to further reflect on that sermon for the day.


In her preaching life, Shushok preaches as if those in attendance almost didn't attend that day.

"People are offering a trust, a gift, a chance. In our preaching, we need to help people enter into a relationship with God and help connect the people with God, to help them find each other in a moment that has been given."

Shushok also references the Rev. Dr. Fred Craddock, world-renowned preacher, when he shared that preaching is like sitting in two different chairs. There is a straight-backed chair and an easy chair. It is in the straight-backed chair that preachers do the work of learning about their text and interpreting it. It is in the easy chair where this knowledge has time to "bake" and come alive, where pastors relate their lives and to present times. It is the preacher's task to find a way to "sit" in both of these chairs while preaching.

Read on to learn more about how clergy prepare themselves to preach the Word, how we can see the Bible through the eyes of a child, and resources for further learning.

—Madeline Pillow is the conference director of Communications and Advocate editor.



The BIBLE through the eyes of a CHILD

By Dawn Peck

"...and a little child shall lead them." Isaiah 11:6

WHERE IS GOD IN OUR PARENTING? Do we seek God's guidance as we parent? How do we share the stories in the Bible with our children?

Parenting is a humbling experience. Children do not enter this world as blank slates. Nor are we, as parents, able to give and receive love perfectly. How do we open our heart, mind, and spirit to the Lord as we seek guidance for the living of our days?

Many see a baby as a universal sign of hope. The birth of a baby (or the fostering of / adoption of a child) changes one into a parent. The true depth of this transition doesn't happen instantly. This transition begins and never stops. Parents continue to grow and develop as their children grow, change, and interact with the larger world.

The forming of some questions may help us begin to grasp the breadth of this topic:

How do we allow ourselves to be formed by God as we hear, read, and interact with Scripture?

How do we share the Bible with our children and do so while taking into account their development across time? If a child is asked to "just believe" a biblical story that at a surface level is in conflict with modern knowledge, they may not learn how to dive deeper and unearth the

truths beneath the cultural world awareness of the ancient world.

How do we help our children recognize and become aware of God's intimate and transcendent presence?

How do we share honestly the mystery and wonder behind the biblical stories of old so that this wonder can be appreciated and recognized in our world of today?

These are questions for us to live with on a daily basis and to bring to God in prayer. These are questions to be discussed in families and within small groups in a community of faith.

Our United Methodist tradition is a resource in this endeavor. We, as United Methodists, affirm that God is present, active and working for good in our world. We, as United Methodists, anticipate and at times are privileged to witness some signs of "the transformation of the world."¹ Do we also recognize that this transformation of the world begins with the transformation of human hearts (including our own)?

We, as United Methodists, refer to Holy Scripture to help us see the world through the lens of faith. We have learned, through John Wesley, to consider Scripture as primary and we interpret Scripture using tradition, reason, and our own experience — all done

1

from the UMC mission statement

within community.

We, as United Methodists, pray. Paul advises us to “pray without ceasing” (in 1 Thessalonians 5:17). We can pray without ceasing as we live, as much as possible, from our grounded center in God. In order to do so, we must intentionally attend to our own spiritual formation through the spiritual disciplines.

The gift of a child offers the opportunity for seeing the wonder of the world anew through the eyes of that child, if we only have “eyes to see and ears to hear” (Isaiah 32, Matthew 13, Mark 8). Jesus said, “Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:3). What is this change we need to undergo, and can our children actually help us?

Thomas Ryan writes:

“If I had influence with the good fairy...over the christening of all children, I should ask that her gift to each child in the world would be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unfailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantment of later years, the sterile preoccupation with things artificial, the alienation from the source of our strength. Could this sense of wonder be what Jesus was talking about (Luke 18:17) in order to enter the Kingdom of God we must receive it as a little child?”²

Our children can open us to an increased awareness of Divine Presence; but, we must allow ourselves to see life through their perspective. Doing so can bring us to a new and deeper awareness of the God “in whom we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). As we deepen our relationship with God and live more continuously from our groundedness in God, we can also learn to parent from that center. If we can see life from our child’s perspective, we have the possibility of parenting in a way that is supportive of who they truly are.

Parenting is not easy. Children are challenging. We do not have all the answers. There is usually not one perfect answer. Sometimes there is no apparent solution at all. Difficulties can come so fast that we feel unprepared; we are overwhelmed. In these moments of great stress, where an instant response on our part


2 Reclaiming the Body in Christian Spirituality by Thomas Ryan, p. 164

is called for, our response to our child (of any age) will be in the best interests of that child if we respond from our center in God; if we can truly be a loving presence for our child.

Gerald May³ expresses this stance well:

“I might recognize the importance of the situation and the need for my action in it, and at the same time appreciate myself as utterly dependent upon the Power and Love of God. Then, although I may find myself in the midst of great external drama, my heart is open and at the deepest level of my awareness, I am relaxed and at peace.”

Parenting from the spiritual heart is an art; it is parenting from this deepest level. It allows compassion, understanding, forgiveness, and love to guide our relationship with our children. It helps us bring them into the Light of God, and it helps us recognize the true Light within them that is struggling to shine forth into our world. We as parents are given the opportunity to help guide our children so that their true self may blossom.

May we allow our children to lead us as we open our hearts to them, deepen our relationship with God, and invite God fully into our parenting. Amen. 

– Dr. Dawn Peck is a member of the Kindred Project group in the Virginia Conference. The Kindred Project is an ecumenical movement in and outside the conference for the advocacy of a prayer focused lifestyle. Learn more: <https://www.kindredprojectva.com/>.

3 “Will and Spirit” by Gerald May, p. 314

RESOURCES

Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible: editors Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim

The following are excellent but are not written with inclusive language for God. One can read them aloud using inclusive language by simply substituting “God” for the pronoun “he” wherever it appears:

Psalms for Young Children by Marie-Hélène Delval, illustrated by Arno

Images of God for Young Children by Marie-Hélène Delval, illus. by Barbara Nascimbeni

Pastors share their

MY SERMON PREPARATION BEGINS ABOUT A YEAR IN ADVANCE. I begin by spending time planning out all of the series for the next year. I draft ideas for the overall series, and then break it down into specific topics for each week. I tend to think in terms of “what is a problem that people are facing that Scripture addresses). This can be anything from “How do I best parent my kids?” to “How do I share my faith?” to “Who is Jesus and why does he make any difference to my life?”

Regarding each specific sermon, I begin by doing research to find relevant Scripture for the subject being discussed. Sometimes this means researching passages other pastors have used for that subject. Other times it involves using a software like Logos to glean suggestions.

Then, I spend time exegeting the Scripture, reading through commentaries, studying cross-references, etc. From the passage, I try to draw out several relevant, teachable lessons that will guide the sermon and address the overall subject (in other words, rather than having 3-4 totally random lessons, they help the person listening to address the overall subject, the problem they’re facing that Scripture addresses).

Once I have those basic elements of the sermon, I go back and add elements that allow the sermon to flow and connect. For instance, I’ll add a story or joke or statistic at the beginning as a hook to draw in the listener, and then introduce the “problem” in a way that relates to every person in the room (usually giving examples of how this subject could be a question they’ve been asking or a challenge they (or someone they love) have been facing).

I do the same thing with each lesson. I connect it back to the Scripture, explain how it addresses the overall problem, and tell as story, provide an illustration, or break down the idea in a way that makes it both relevant and understandable.

Finally, at the end of the sermon, I always make sure there is some way for the person to respond. It’s either a “Next Step” they’ll commit to take on the back of their connection card or a physical response they’ll be able to make in the moment (e.g. coming down to touch the water and remember their baptism.”)

Resource ideas: Logos software is my chief tool. I also read a lot, so ideas from those books are incorporated throughout the process (e.g. I used an illustration of “eating the frog” once, drawn from a Brian Tracy book, and shared some insights from Tim Keller’s book *Kingdom Come* in a Lenten sermon.

– The Rev. Brandon Robbins is pastor of Lynnhaven UMC, Virginia Beach.

DO ANY OTHER PASTORS SHARE MY LOVE/HATE RELATIONSHIP WITH PREACHING? I find an exhilarant exhaustion when sermons come together well but am simply exhausted when they don’t. A good sermon can shake the heavens and unbind the soul. There is so much potential for positive change in the world when preachers deliver. When sermons don’t connect, the loss of that potential adds to the exhaustion all the more.

How can we do it consistently well, in a manner that both leaves space for the creative work of the Holy Spirit and meets the inevitable deadline of Sunday? There is no singular method for excellence in preaching. We are different, both from one another and from our former selves, and our processes differ and change accordingly. What follows, then, are four regular components of my routine that seem to infuse the exhaustion with exhilaration.

When I began my career, I spent several hours each Monday trying to determine what I would preach the following weekend. Over time, I developed a strategy for creating a yearly sermon plan. Each spring I go away for a week with a series of books. In preparation I will pester friends and colleagues for ideas. Generally, I simply ask them to share their favorite sermon or series from the last year. I spend a week writing, praying, and dreaming asking God all the while for a fruitful strategy to lead the congregation well through the work of proclamation.

With a plan in place, I begin each week knowing my text, title and the main concept for each sermon. This is when I begin the deep dive of exegesis. I have adopted the Rev. Mark Miller’s chosen exegetical strategy: “What? So What? Now What?” What does the text say? Why does it matter in our lives today? What am I being called to do? Unsurprisingly, it is

SERMON PREPARATION

the final question I find most challenging and most important to answer. It is highly contextual, deeply spiritual and immensely fruitful.

The third step is what I would call the vulnerable hook. While praying and studying, I'm asking God to help me find the deep part of myself that connects to the text. It never ceases to amaze me that this deep connection usually involves a vulnerability, an admission about fear, sin, or a challenge in my own life. I am often amazed at how well congregations respond when we are faithfully vulnerable.

Step four is practice. I write sermons on Monday. Generally, the sermon I write on Monday is quite bad. That's part of the reason I write on Monday. By establishing a basic structure within which to operate, I find creativity is unleashed. Writing on Monday allows time for an aural editing process. Sermons are meant to be heard, and there is nuance between the written and spoken word which requires some fleshing out. Practicing a sermon makes it better and more accessible.

We all do it differently. Let us all strive to do it well, and may your exhaustion be exhilarating. 🍷

—The Rev. Rob Lough is pastor of Ebenezer UMC, Stafford.

Books:

Unleashing the Word by Adam Hamilton
The Preaching Life by Barbara Brown Taylor
Introduction to Christian Worship by James White
The Word on the Street by Stanley Saunders & Charles Campbell

Commentaries:

Interpretation Series
Imaging the Word, visuals accompanying lectionary years
The Bible for Everyone by N.T. Wright
The New Interpreter's Bible

Blogs:

Strangely Warmed with Taylor Mertins, sermons posted

Podcasts:

Strangely Warmed with Taylor Mertins, lectionary podcast
Adam Hamilton's Sermon podcast

Websites:

textweek.com
gbod.org Board of Discipleship

Studies:

Disciple Bible and *Disciple Fast Track Covenant*
The Bible in 90 Days
The Wesleyan Way by Bishop Scott Jones



SNIPPETS



United Methodist deacon sees theology in pop culture

THIS SUMMER, Mike Friedrich stood in front of a small group gathered for a retreat. As an ordained deacon in The United Methodist Church, Friedrich's leadership in the five-day retreat on "Ordinary People with

Extraordinary People" was unsurprising. But what all of the participants didn't know was, that at one time, Friedrich had written stories about Batman, Iron Man, and others, published on the colored pages of superhero powerhouses like Marvel and DC.

Last month, Friedrich, the emerging ministries specialist for the Bay District of the California-Nevada Conference of the UMC, was recognized at Comic-Con International with the Bill Finger Award for Excellence in Comic Book Writing. Friedrich's work, on DC properties like Justice League of America, Batman, The Flash, Green Lantern, Teen Titans, and The Phantom Stranger, and later on Marvel's Iron Man, Ant-Man, and Captain Marvel, all began when he started writing to Julius Scwhartz, for those notes to the editor that once filled the back pages of every comic book. His love began in his upstairs attic, unpacking the stories of some of his favorite characters when he was just 12 years old.

An avid collector of Batman comics, the adolescent Friedrich believed that the world

should be fair, and as he got older, he discovered that it wasn't. Initially, he didn't set out to be a comic writer but he wanted to express himself, and began replying to the stories he read with letters to the editor. Slowly at first, with simple likes or dislikes of elements of the stories, Friedrich's writing built to liking certain elements, then pointing out slight improvements, and finally proposing what he would write if given the opportunity.

As a comic writer, Friedrich says he worked to convey as much meaning as possible, but as a pastor, there's layer after layer of meaning meant to be conveyed through a sermon. "Sometimes, I just want to say, 'Love God, love your neighbor, let's go home!'" he shared with a chuckle. But even ending up a minister is still something of a mystery to him after experiencing a call to ministry in his 60s.

The exploration into his own calling, and in how theology and culture could work to share the gospel, led Friedrich out of his home into the church down the street, which he says just happened to be United Methodist.



Hungering for more, he took classes, looking for the ways that people built community in the secular world, like at football games or rock concerts, instead of the way they once had in church. He says his own connections led him into a United Methodist ordination service for a friend of his, where he heard Mark Miller's rendition of "O For a Thousand Tongues," and knew he needed to be part of something bigger. So, he started taking classes, and gradually found himself pulled deeper into another calling.

Friedrich's favorite class at the Pacific School of Religion was titled Pop Goes Religion, exploring the intersection of pop culture and theology. His professor most likely taught oblivious to the fact that a real conveyor of comic culture sat in the lecture hall just like the students fresh out of college. "Theology operates in pop culture, and organized religion tends to miss the connection," proposed Friedrich. "Often, it denounces pop culture and tries to be countercultural or it tries to appropriate it, but it rarely dialogues. But John Wesley understood it, and he rec-

ognized that the Holy Spirit could be reached through music so he wrote his hymns to the beats of drinking songs. The rhythm reaches past our conscious level to a deeper spiritual level."

But the questions he asked in the attic as a 12-year-old still drive him. Why do these stories, from the pages of DC or Marvel, or the narrative of the Bible, matter? He finds himself looking at the world we live in, and seeing that people feel powerless, that there are forces so large that they can't handle them – and then there are these creative, major players who control their worlds by using their powers for good. You could be talking about the worlds of comic book characters ... or stories from the Bible.

"Our spiritual connection gives us access to the power of the divine," Friedrich the minister said. "We wouldn't have that on our own. But most people aren't even taught in Sunday school to feel that way. Superheroes provide ready access to that kind of connection, that if you're willing to sacrifice yourself, you can change the world and evil won't triumph." "I've felt that way



my whole life. I'm still exploring that, every time I see an Avengers movie!"

Read more at: <https://dove.org/conversation/>.

General Conference 2020

THE COMMISSION ON GENERAL CONFERENCE approved the theme "...and know that I am God" from Psalm 46 for the 2020 gathering.

Delegates can expect stricter requirements for their credentials following an investigation from the 2019 General Conference in which it was discovered that four ineligible people voted by using credentials of absent delegates. At the upcoming assembly there will be more time for legislative action in plenary session and some proposed revision to the rules of order. The gathering will take place May 5-15,

2020 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Learn more with UMNews: <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/what-to-expect-at-general-conference-2020>.

General Conference 2024

AT THE BEGINNING OF AUGUST, it was announced that plans to hold General Conference 2024 in the Philippines have been canceled. The Commission on General Conference decided to cancel holding the event in Manila based on lack of availability of hotel rooms and convention space. The Commission on General Conference originally authorized plans in 2015 to work toward holding General Conference in Manila. 🇵🇭

EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY



What Bible translation should United Methodists use?



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH does not have an “official” version or translation of the Bible. Only the General Conference can designate specific ritual texts or other liturgical texts for the denomination. It has not established any official translation for us. Given our worldwide nature and the vast diversity of languages we speak across the church, this is wise!

In practice, United Methodists affirm the usefulness of a number of translations and versions as being helpful for study, teaching, memorization and other purposes, since each sheds a slightly different light in translating or paraphrasing the original languages and manuscripts.

When it comes to United Methodist teaching resources published by The United Methodist Publishing House in English, the Common English Bible (CEB) and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) are the preferred texts for curriculum, largely because these are the preferred versions of many of our pastors and teachers in the United States. However, writers are also free consult other versions or quote from them when doing so strengthens the teaching resource. 📖

—AskTheUMC

Definition Word Bank (for Cokesbury Guide Chart):

Dynamic equivalence:

Emphasis on reproducing the functional meaning of the ancient words with freedom to rearrange the order of the words (syntax) in the target language.

Masoretic:

The most widely used Hebrew text of the Old Testament.

Paraphrase:

Emphasis is on expressing the meaning in contemporary language, with numerous additional words.

Textus Receptus:

“Received Text”; 1550 edition of the Greek NT used by most translators before 1900.

Verbal equivalence:

Emphasis is on reproducing the modern English equivalent of the ancient words, with tendency to use same word order as the ancient language.

EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY

Cokesbury Guide to Popular Bible Translations

Learn more at:

web.archive.org/web/20170302020436/https://www.cokesbury.com/FreeDownloads/BibleTransGuide.pdf

Translation (Abbreviation)	Date	Reading Level	Translation Method	Translators	Manuscripts and/or Texts used
Common English Bible (CEB)	2010, 2011	7	Hybrid: Verbal equivalence with dynamic balance and common language	Common English Bible Committee, an alliance of five denominational publishers (117 translators from 22 faith traditions and 5 countries; 77 field testing groups with 400 participants in 13 denominations)	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (4th edition), Biblia Hebraica Quinta (5th edition); Nestle Aland 27th Edition (1993), Gottingen Septuagint (in progress), Ralf's Septuagint (2005)
English Standard Version (ESV)	1995	5	Verbal equivalence	Crossway	Conservative revision of 30-35 passages in the Revised Standard Version (RSV)
King James Version (KJV)	1611	12	Verbal equivalence	54 English scholars	Masoretic (OT), Textus Receptus (NT); The Bishop's Bible, 1568
The Message	The Message 1993;2001	6	Paraphrase	Eugene Peterson	Paraphrase from original languages
New International Version (NIV)	1978, 2011	8	Hybrid: Verbal equivalence with dynamic balance	Biblica: 2011 update by 10 person committee (2%-4% change from 1978 edition) based on some TNIV changes	Biblia Hebraica; eclectic mix of original texts for NT
New Living Translation (NLT)	1996; 2007	6	Dynamic equivalence	90 scholars, primarily from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Asbury Seminary	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia; UBS Greek NT (1993), Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece (1993)
New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)	1990	11	Verbal equivalence	National Council of Churches; 30 scholars	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (3rd edition); UBS Greek NT (3rd edition, corrected) revision of RSV (1952)

LIVING THE WORD



The Rev. Andrew Ware is an ordained elder in the Virginia Conference currently serving Wood's UMC in South Chesterfield, Va. Ware is a lifelong United Methodist growing up at St. Andrew's UMC in Virginia Beach where he first heard his call to ministry. He has been active at a variety of levels in the church both as a lay and clergy person. He graduated from Randolph-Macon College in 2011 and Wesley Theological Seminary in 2014. Ware has a wife and two children, and outside of ministry hours enjoys spending time with his family and running.

Oct. 6, 2019
Deuteronomy 4:1-14
"Are you all in?"

Are you all in or all out? God is not looking for half-hearted faith, and neither should we think we can get by through phoning in our faith. As a middle-schooler, I was always at church. I never lacked in doing "Christian things." However, in reality, I was in the camp of complacency when it came to my faith. I wasn't all in, but I wasn't really all out either. It wasn't until I really started wrestling with my faith that I realized the depth of my complacency.

Are we willing to give our whole selves to listen and be the people God has called us to be? God had a very specific plan for the people of Israel. They were being led into the promised land, and God was working within them to show others who their God is. God does not want us to pledge to a half-hearted faith that only cares about self. God seeks faithful followers to live our faith in our daily lives. God's greatest desire is a relationship with humanity embodied in the love of Jesus Christ. Our task is to receive and acknowledge that love. We live into it by expressing that love towards creation and creating spaces for God's Kingdom on earth.

How do we live into this covenant? Do we try and set our own terms or do we trust God and live into the Kingdom people we are called to be? So, are you all in?

Oct. 13, 2019
1 Kings 17:8-16
"Ministry is a leap of faith"

I have often heard it said, "God does not call the equipped, God equips the called." I cannot remember the first time I heard this quote or even gather where it came from, but I heard it dozens of times as I pursued my call into ordained ministry. As I read this text from 1 Kings, these words immediately popped into my head. Without even knowing it, this widow was called into action by God to help Elijah, the prophet of God. It takes an incredible amount of faith and trust in God's call for Elijah to believe that where he goes God will provide. So, too, does it take faith for the widow to think that Elijah is telling her the truth. Both step out and believe that they will be equipped for the work God has planned for them.

As members of the Body of Christ, we all play a vital role in living out the calling God has given to each of us. Yes, we must believe that God is going to equip us, but how can we expect God to work within us if we are not willing to take that leap of faith?

Ministry in the world is about taking all kinds of leaps of faith and trusting that God will be there beside us to guide us through. It may seem unimaginable what God is calling us toward, but when we rely on God we can do some pretty awesome things. In the Scripture, the flour and oil lasted much longer than would have been expected. We, too, may be surprised what gifts God has given us if we just trust God's call and God's timing.

I am not saying this will be easy, and it takes an incredible amount of willpower (and maybe some kicking and screaming). However, God has called each of us to go to certain places, to minister to certain people and to be disciples of Jesus Christ to transform the world. In that calling, we look toward God to lead us daily.



Oct. 20, 2019
Luke 7:1-10
"Transformational Faith"

The Wesley Study Bible (NRSV) writes in a Life Application Topic on Faith associated with this passage, "Jesus sees faith not as a matter of certain doctrinal teachings, but as trust that God can bring transformation." Therefore, it is no wonder that Jesus says, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." (Luke 7:9) Faith is meant to change us, work within us and bring us continually closer to holy living with God. The elders try to convince Jesus by proving that the Centurion man is "worthy" to receive his help. However, it is the Centurion's friends, who proclaim his unworthiness, that convince Jesus to help.

So often we try to rest on our laurels of worthiness that we forget that faith is transformational. We try to live our lives by a checklist of doing the "right" thing, but when push comes to shove nothing has truly changed in our hearts. We continue to be the same person as we were before. The Centurion could have easily done what he had done without faith. The elders said that he built the synagogue for them and had done great work for their people (despite being employed by Rome). However, we see faith is what heals his servant. The man's expression of a transformed heart showed his true sense of worthiness.

Are we allowing God to work within us? Are we willing to put our lives aside to welcome Jesus,

humbly, into our homes and work to transform our lives? Are we willing to be instruments of Christ's transformational change across the world? The Centurion shows us that faith is about transformation. Jesus tells us that transformation is what can change the world.

Oct. 27, 2019
Luke 7:36-50
"Gratitude"

When I read this text, I sometimes have to do a double-take. I always wonder if Jesus expresses forgiveness to the Pharisees. Of course he does. However, the real question is do the Pharisees even care? When we read about the actions of the woman we see a person who truly understands the work that Jesus can do within us. The woman is so grateful for who Jesus is and the work that he does that she goes far beyond what the hosts of the dinner have done for Jesus.

What does gratitude look like for us? Are we grateful for the work that God has done in our lives? If we offer true gratitude for our forgiveness that can affect the way we treat others.

The Pharisees thought their sins were not as bad as the woman's or they stopped caring about sin and were ungrateful for forgiveness. This is not that they actively pursue sin, but they have forgotten that which sees our shortcomings and offers us grace. We see others' shortcomings and want to determine their worth in the Kingdom. Jesus invites all into the Kingdom. Our gratitude toward this great

gift can reflect the way we view others in the Kingdom.

Are we grateful for the work God has done in us? Has that gratitude changed our perspective on how we minister to others? Because it should. 🍷

The 2019 Living the Word devotions are from the *Standard Lesson Commentary* from Cokesbury. Note: you can follow the October readings for the 2019 Bible Challenge from Bishop Lewis on pg 31.

CLERGY & DIACONAL



DEATHS



The Rev. Joseph Lee Lotts, 89, of Appomattox, died August 4, 2019. His appointments included Page, Cambria,

South Covington and Alleghany, Grottoes, Louisa, Zion in Seaford, Norview, Belmont in Roanoke and Appomattox Memorial. He retired in 1994 and served West Mecklenburg, Poplar and Wesleyan in retirement.

Athajean Terry Martin, 81, of Stuart, died August 8, 2019. Her son, **the Rev. Terry Martin**, is pastor of Mountain View UMC in Meadows of Dan, Va.

The Rev. Floetta G. Legg died July 24, 2019. She served at Francis Asbury, Greenwood, Ebenezer in the Winchester District, Oakwood, Parnassus-Sangersville, Mount Olive, Andrew Chapel-Edgewater, and Mount Jackson in the Harrisonburg District.

Geneva Shepherd, 81, of Wilsons, Va., died July 22, 2019. She was the widow of **the late Rev. G.C. Shepherd**. Her son, **the Rev. Thomas B. Shepherd**, is pastor of Stuart UMC, Stuart, Va.

Phyllis Ports Newman, 93, of Roanoke died August 10, 2019. She is survived by her husband, **the Rev. Dr. M. Douglas Newman**; children, Sara Newman-Frick, M. Douglas

Newman, Jr. (Sandy), and Mark B. Newman (Susan); 11 grandchildren; 30 great-grandchildren; and two great-great grandchildren. Devoted to music all her life, Newman was involved in The Thursday Morning Music Club, The Chorale Society of Lynchburg and The Wednesday Morning Music Club of Roanoke as well as choir work in many of the churches her husband served.

Laurel G. Trego, 92, of Virginia Beach, a retired diaconal minister in the Virginia Conference, died August 10.

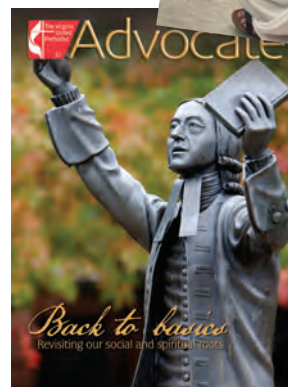
BIRTHS

The Rev. Matt Potter and his wife, **Kellie**, welcomed **Harper Ruth** on July 26, 2019. Matt is the pastor of Foundry UMC, Virginia Beach. 🍷



Advocate subscription reimbursement

If your Advocate subscription runs past 2019, you may contact the conference Communications Office to get a reimbursement at 804-521-1110 or email advocate@vaumc.org.



Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

Publication Title: Virginia United Methodist Advocate

Publication No. 660-740

Issue Frequency: Monthly

Number of Issues Published Annually: 12

Annual Subscription price: \$20

Mailing Address of Publisher:

Virginia United Methodist Communications, Inc.,
P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058

Contact Person: Madeline Pillow, (804) 521-1113

Mailing Address of Publisher:

Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church,
P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058

Name and Address of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor:

Virginia United Methodist Communications, Inc.,
P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058

Editor: Madeline Pillow, P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058

Owner: Virginia United Methodist Communications, Inc.,
P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058

Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None

Tax Status: The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes has not changed during the preceding 12 months.

Publication Title: Virginia United Methodist Advocate

Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: Sept. 2018

Extent and Nature of Circulation:

15 a) Total Number of Copies (Net press run)	2,35	,600
15 b) Paid Circulation (by Mail and Outside the Mail)		
1) Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions	2,00	1,317
2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions	83	74
3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS	237	222
4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS (e.g. First-Class Mail)	16	3
15 c) Total Paid Distribution (sum of b-1,2,3, & 4)	2,386	1,616
15 d) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (by Mail and Outside the Mail)		
1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies	35	35
2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies	3	3
3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g. First-Class Mail)	16	16
4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (carriers or other means)	46	42
15 e) Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (sum of 15d-1,2,3, & 4)	100	96
15 f) Total Distribution (sum of 15c & 15e)	2,486	1,712
15 g) Copies not Distributed	-84	-387
15 h) Total (sum of 15f & 15g)	2,402	1,325
15 i) Percent Paid (15c divided by 15f x 100)	96%	94%
16 a) Paid Electronic Copies	215	223
16 b) Total Paid Print Copies + Paid Electronic Copies	2,601	1,838
16 c) Total Print Distribution + Paid Electronic Copies	2,701	1,935
16 d) Percent Paid (16b divided by 16c x 100)	96%	95%

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FROM THE BISHOP



Bishop Lewis
set to return
from medical
leave

AFTER A SIX-MONTH MEDICAL LEAVE, Bishop Sharma D. Lewis' return to the Virginia Conference is planned for September 2019.

Lewis started her medical leave at the beginning of March as she underwent several hip surgeries. In her absence, Bishop Peter D. Weaver, retired bishop, was named the interim episcopal leader.

Lewis said she is appreciative of all the prayers and gestures of care and concern she received from around the conference and United Methodist connection. She has steadily improved in her recovery and the time frame of her return is contingent on her continued healing and by advisement of her medical team.

Lewis also wanted to share her appreciation to Bishop Weaver for his calm and steady leadership in this interim period. She asks that the conference be in prayer and give thanks for the ways that Bishop Weaver has led and served this conference. 🌸

Bishop's Bible Challenge readings for October

Oct. 1	Ezek. 27-29; John 14
Oct. 2	Ezek. 30-32; John 15
Oct. 3	Ezek. 33-34; John 16
Oct. 4	Ezek. 35-36; John 17
Oct. 5	Ezek. 37-39; John 18:1-18
Oct. 6	Ezek. 40-41; John 18:19-40
Oct. 7	Ezek. 42-44; John 19:1-22
Oct. 8	Ezek. 45-46; John 19:23-42
Oct. 9	Ezek. 47-48; John 20
Oct. 10	Song of Sol. 1-3; John 21
Oct. 11	Song of Sol. 4-5; Eph. 1
Oct. 12	Song of Sol. 6-8; Eph. 2
Oct. 13	1 Sam. 1-3; Eph. 3
Oct. 14	1 Sam. 4-6; Eph. 4
Oct. 15	1 Sam. 7-9; Eph. 5:1-16
Oct. 16	1 Sam. 10-12; Eph. 5:17-33
Oct. 17	1 Sam. 13-14; Eph. 6
Oct. 18	1 Sam. 15-16; 2 Peter 1
Oct. 19	1 Sam. 17-18; 2 Peter 2
Oct. 20	1 Sam. 19-21; 2 Peter 3
Oct. 21	1 Sam. 22-24; 1 Tim. 1
Oct. 22	1 Sam. 25-26; 1 Tim. 2
Oct. 23	1 Sam. 27-29; 1 Tim. 3
Oct. 24	1 Sam. 30-31; 1 Tim. 4
Oct. 25	2 Sam. 1-2; 1 Tim. 5
Oct. 26	2 Sam. 3-5; 1 Tim. 6
Oct. 27	2 Sam. 6-8; 1 John 1
Oct. 28	2 Sam. 9-11; 1 John 2
Oct. 29	2 Sam. 12-13; 1 John 3
Oct. 30	2 Sam. 14-15; 1 John 4
Oct. 31	2 Sam. 16-18; 1 John 5



ONE LAST WORD

READING THE BIBLE is much more insightful and helpful when we read passages in terms of the context in which they were written to understand where the writers were coming from and what were customs of the time. Doing so can help us understand the Bible more fully and develop more fully as disciples.

The United Methodist Church website shares four questions to help you when studying a particular text in the Bible:

- 1) What did this passage mean to its original hearers?
- 2) What part does it play in the Bible's total witness?
- 3) What does God seem to be saying to my life, my community, my world, through this passage? and
- 4) What changes should I consider making as a result of my study?

Below are some facts about the Bible that can help us contextualize how the Bible came to be:

Old Testament documents/books were written over 1,000 years

New Testament documents were written over the course of 50 years

Paul's letters were written over a 15-year period

367 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus and 330 years after the deaths of Peter and Paul, the final form of the New Testament was fixed. 📖

— shared in MAKING SENSE OF THE BIBLE

“Today, among the most important and respectful ways to read the New Testament letters is by trying to hear what the apostles were saying to their communities and why, and then to ask, “How does that message speak to my life or our community today?”

— the Rev. Adam Hamilton,
MAKING SENSE OF THE BIBLE





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