

IX. REPORTS OF CONFERENCE BOARDS AND AGENCIES

[Editor's Note: The following reports are reprinted from the 2014 *Book of Reports*. To find actions taken or changes made in the reports, refer to Section IV. DAILY PROCEEDINGS of this *Journal*. The report from the Council on Finance and Administration will be found in Section VIII. FINANCIAL REPORTS of this *Journal*.]

COMMITTEE ON RULES

The Rules Committee welcomed new lay member Mary L. Brett Wright and new clergy member Joshua King. With 2015 being an election year for General and Jurisdictional Conference delegates, the committee spent a great deal of time reviewing the nomination and election process, particularly with reference to the hand-held electronic voting devices and their distribution. Our technical advisors tell us that it will be necessary for clergy and laity to sit in separate sections for voting purposes with electronic devices. It was discovered that we had not made provision for write-in votes for lay delegates as allowed in our rules (III.E.3) and further that according to Judicial Council Decision 1181, persons elected to full membership in the clergy session are eligible for *immediate* election to General Conference. To address these issues, the Rules Committee is proposing that write-in votes for clergy and laity be allowed on the first ballot **only**. Anyone wishing to vote for a write-in candidate would use a paper ballot. All additional nominees would then be assigned a number and subsequent ballots would proceed electronically. In accordance with a constitutional amendment in the 2012 *Discipline*, the committee is proposing a change to III.B. to allow for election of General Conference and jurisdictional conference delegates up to two years preceding General Conference.

Several editorial changes to the Rules were discussed and approved. In the Common Table Charter, the recommendation to delete the last sentence in the Non-voting Members section (II.B.) that was included in last year's report was inadvertently omitted, and is included here. At the request of the Common Table it was also agreed to move the chair of Higher Education and Campus Ministries (II.B.1) from non-voting to voting member status (II.A.6). Upon recommendation of the Commission on Disabilities, the committee voted to substitute "*intellectual* disabilities" for "*mental* disabilities" in V.B.6. Changes to the Name Badge Colors at the end of the rules are suggested to make it easier for tellers to determine clergy voter eligibility.

With regard to the Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center, the committee questioned continuing its listing as an administrative agency under V.B.2. and continued election of its officers by the annual conference in light of the conveying of the deed from the conference Trustees to the Blackstone Board of Directors in 2011. Concern was raised by the conference chancellor about liability issues, but at the recommendation of the Council on Finance and Administration the committee is recommending no changes to the Rules.

The committee received recommendations from the Conference Board of Global Ministries for restructuring that board (V.A.4.d.). Under suggested changes the name of the board would change to the Conference Missional Ministries Board, and the number of mission teams would be reduced from four to two with new names: "Missional Discipleship and Engagement" and "Missional Connection." The committee recommends these changes.

Finally, the committee addressed the resolutions process in the Rules (II.B.) as requested two years ago, to see if it could be shortened in order to permit all resolutions to be addressed by the annual conference. The committee recommends requiring that the submitter of a resolution be a member of the annual conference (II.B.1.), shortening the presenter time from five minutes to three minutes, and restricting debate to two speakers for and two speakers against with a two-minute limit for each speaker. Speeches by outside experts would require permission of the bishop and a suspension of the rules. Individuals would be allowed to speak only once on a resolution, unless speaking to an amendment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommended changes to the Standing Rules are:

II.B.1. RESOLUTIONS. In the second sentence replace the period with a semicolon after resolution and add "submitter(s) must be a member of the annual conference."

II.B.3. REFERRING RESOLUTIONS, RESPONSE OF AGENCY, ADDRESSING AND VOTING ON RESOLUTIONS. In the third sentence replace "five" with "three." Insert the following sentences after the fourth sentence: "Two speeches for concurrence and two speeches for non-concurrence shall be permitted with a time limit for each speaker of two minutes. If an outside expert is present and desires to speak, the bishop is the only authorized entity to grant permission with a suspension of the rules. The expert shall be considered as one of two speakers in concurrence or non-concurrence of the resolution. Once a member has spoken, the member may not speak again in consideration of the said resolution, unless speaking to an amendment."

III.B. ELECTION PROCEDURES. Delete the parentheses and wording therein. After held delete "in the calendar year" and replace with "not more than two years."

III.F.1. BALLOTS SHALL BE COUNTED ELECTRONICALLY. Add the following sentence: "On the first ballot lay and clergy members may cast write-in votes for those eligible for election by using a paper ballot."

V.A.4.D. GLOBAL MINISTRIES. Replace "Global Ministries" with "Missional Ministries." In the first sentence replace "Board of Global Ministries" with "Missional Ministries Board." In the second sentence capitalize Conference Secretary and after Ministries add "(CSGM)". In the third sentence change "four (4)" to "two (2)"; replace "health and relief mission team" with "Missional Discipleship and Engagement; and"; after (2) replace "mission Interpretation team" with "Missional Connection" and strike the rest of the sentence, so that the third sentence reads: "To discharge its responsibilities it shall divide into two (2) mission teams: (1) Missional Discipleship and Engagement and (2) Missional Connection." In the fourth sentence replace "Missional Relationship" with "Missional Connection" and "Board of Global Ministries" with "Missional Ministries Board," adding "as outlined in paragraph 633.2 of the 2012 *Book of Discipline*."

V.B.6. DISABILITIES, COMMISSION ON. In the second sentence substitute "intellectual" for "mental."

NAME BADGE COLORS

Change second "White" category to "White with Yellow Sticker"

Change third “White” category to “Salmon.”

Change fourth “White” to “Gray.”

CHARTER FOR THE COMMON TABLE FOR CHURCH VITALITY

II.B. Non-voting Members. Delete the last paragraph.

II.B.1. Chair of Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministries. Move this section to II.A. 6. and renumber.

The Rev. Stephen G. Bray, Chair

CABINET

The Virginia Conference Cabinet, under the spiritual leadership of Bishop Cho, seeks to equip local churches and clergy in their ministry of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. At this Annual Conference, we will have welcomed 10 new superintendents in the past three years. This change has been seen and felt as the Cabinet has sought new ways of doing its work – all with the goal of strengthening churches; recognizing and seeking fruitfulness; and enabling clergy to be transformational leaders.

In the individual districts, there are many signs of this transformation and fruitfulness. We praise God for each sign of God’s Kingdom:

The **Alexandria District** is celebrating its 75th year by embracing three emphases from Bishop Schnase’s *Seven Levers*. Clergy peer learning groups have been launched to enhance clergy effectiveness and support; new church plants are being nurtured and planned for the future; revitalizing existing churches through coaching groups and congregational consultations. Almost half of our churches have committed as prayer covenant congregations (23 of 53).

The **Arlington District** sought to come alongside local churches in making disciples in three exciting ways. One new church start began July 2014, and two more will begin in 2015. Nine healthy churches engaged in a “good to great” initiative by participating in group coaching for greater fruitfulness. Finally, there have been three plateaued churches who are participating in a process of “discovering the possibilities” for the future.

In the **Charlottesville District**, work has continued towards raising funds for the Heart Havens apartment complex; many churches are supporting this endeavor. The Wesley Foundation at UVA is in the process of raising \$1.5 million for a capital campaign; this ministry celebrates 50 years of ministry in their building this year!

The **Danville District** mission strategy is being directed by the newly-created Discipleship Resource Team, which will help congregations assess their function in forming disciples for the Church’s mission. Teams will be created to meet with local churches to help them understand economic realities of the region so that they can, in turn, develop faithful ministry with the most vulnerable members of their communities. The particular mission focus of the District will continue to be on children living in poverty.

Congregations on the **Elizabeth River District** are working hard to raise monies for Imagine No Malaria. Hickory Church raised over \$2,500 to save lives plus they were able to “slime” their pastor. It’s all about saving lives!

On the **Eastern Shore**, a basketball tournament for Imagine No Malaria culminated in a championship game at District Conference with conference missionaries Kip & Nancy Robinson serving as speakers and cheerleaders. Una Familia, an after school program working with Latino children, opened in two new sites at Adams and Onley. And at Camp Occohannock on the Bay a summer of new programs with a new camp director, Michael Henry, created excitement for the camp’s future.

In the **Farmville District**, the average worship attendance has increased for the second year in a row. 42 (39%) of the District’s churches have signed the Bishop’s Prayer Covenant. The District Conference set a Farmville Imagine No Malaria goal to save 4,156 lives (\$41,560) by Annual Conference; by early March, 1,690 lives (\$16,907) have been saved - or 41% of the goal!

The **Fredericksburg District** continues to live into a four foci vision of a) Unity, b) Equipping Laity, c) Leadership development, and d) Reaching God’s people near and far. Strengthening spiritual and relational unity is an ongoing challenge, but the District is bridging the geographic distances of congregations that are spread over 12 counties and the city of Fredericksburg. In its four years of existence, the district has placed a premium on presenting Leadership development and equipping opportunities. Finally, great effectiveness is being achieved in mission and outreach ministries through an El Salvador Methodist Conference partnership and the Heartwood Community Center ministries.

To accomplish the vision of “Disciples Making Disciples,” the **James River District** has restructured around two purposes: 1) Revitalize existing churches and 2) form new faith communities. Seven geographical branches have been formed for the purposes of pastoral collegiality, a local mission, Discipleship Circles and training events. Last year, a new initiative was launched, “Ten Brave Churches,” in which 10 churches are invited each year to enter a process moving toward renewal. A series of “Small Church Rallies” has begun with the goal of supporting and reviving small churches. Two new faith communities have been started: one is in a restaurant sponsored by Highland UMC in Colonial Heights, and the other is a collaboration of the Virginia State University Campus Ministry and Ettrick UMC!

The **Harrisonburg District** has had an amazing year. The district office moved into a new office suite in April 2014; a new district parsonage was purchased and the old parsonage was sold; and the new Harrisonburg District Mission Center opened in April. The Mission Center is located at Cedar Grove UMC and will begin as a Children’s Clothing Center; plans are to add an adult clothing and later a massive food pantry!

The **Lynchburg District** made a significant investment toward fighting poverty by building Park View Community Mission; this ministry provides two weeks’ worth of groceries to over 700 families every month, and now houses many other significant ministries providing aid. Lent and Easter worship was dedicated toward “Mission Saturation”, where significant donations went toward “Imagine No Malaria”, Park View Community Mission, and many local ministries.

In the **Richmond District**, the District Conference and Leadership Training Event in January reached a new high of 375 leaders registered for this day of equipping and resourcing. District churches graciously hosted a number of events for the entire Conference: especially in serving as the central site for the Day of Holy Conversation. The ministry of Shalom Farms continues to be celebrated and supported; it is now recognized in local, state and national media as a model ministry of engaging volunteers in learning and working to address food security issues.

In the **Roanoke District**, celebration was key: the 50th Anniversary of the Hermitage in Roanoke; the 25th Anniversary of the Community Outreach Program; and the 3rd graduating class of the “Bridges Out of Poverty Program” were all recognized and celebrated! Leadership Development included 15 churches/charges participating in “How to Reach New People”; on-district Lay Servant Training; an inaugural Clergy Summit; and hosting satellite sites of the 5-Talent Academy and the Day of Holy Conversation. Mission and Justice engagement took place through VIM opportunities at Alta Mons, in West Virginia, Costa Rica and Guatemala; as well as the VT-Wesley led Roanoke District Youth Mission Weekend and the District

Conference Stop Hunger Now event.

Staying focused on the transforming power of prayer, the churches of the **Staunton District** continue to develop prayerful teams to envision and enfold new ministries in Christ's name. In the past year, the district has begun six regional Peer Learning Groups to build relationships between clergy and equip them to lead their charges more effectively; seen the expansion of *People United in Christ*, the new Mission Community in Buena Vista; and had six churches undertake *Reaching New People* Coaching with Paul Nickerson. During the coming Charge Conference season, each church will share "the story of a transformed life" from the past year, and the DS will report on his 45-mile kayak trek down the District's western front to raise funds for Imagine No Malaria.

In October the **Winchester District** gathered at the Clark County Fairgrounds for a day of mission activity and worship. Fifty thousand Stop Hunger Now meals were prepared, 100 flood buckets assembled with sacramental worship led by Rev. Amanda Garber. The third year of a four year commitment to La Gonave, Haiti was completed with 4 UVMIM teams participating. Imagine No Malaria has taken root in the Winchester District and continues to save many lives.

The **York River District** has celebrated God's faithfulness in the midst of challenges and the District has continued partnering with the churches and agencies to faithfully live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To strengthen mission and ministry, the District Ministry Excellence Team has provided several trainings and workshops: trainings on S/PPRC, Lay Leader, Church Council and Finance; and workshops on centering prayer and healing prayer. The District Board of Missions has granted over \$80,000 to support 25 projects this year. Through the "How to Reach New People" workshop and coaching program, led by Jim Griffith and his ministry team, churches continue to be invited to reach out to make new disciples of Jesus in moving forward with God.

The superintendents are grateful to the members of the extended Cabinet, the Rev. Marc Brown, David Dommissiee, Warren Harper, the Rev. Meredith McNabb and the Rev. Mark Ogren for the many ways that they support our ministry of superintending. We join in welcoming the Rev. Dr. Peter Moon who becomes a part of the Cabinet team at this Conference.

Finally, this Dean would look back at two appointments totaling 12 years in serving at the Cabinet Table and would thank his 54 colleagues and three Bishops for their faithfulness, patience, encouragement, forgiveness, laughter and love. The Virginia Conference Cabinet continues to be a place of grace for all who share in this unique ministry. Thanks be to God!

*The Rev. Dr. Steven R. Jones
Dean of the Cabinet*

CONFERENCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Fall 2014 issue of *HERITAGE*, the journal of the Conference Historical Society, contains articles on early church plantings, race relations and mission initiatives, all of which remind 2015 readers that we stand in a continuum which, through the efforts of the saints preceding us, has brought us to this point and will guide those persons who follow us. At the 2014 SEJ Historical Society annual meeting, longtime Virginia Conference archivist and *HERITAGE* editor Patti B. Russell was awarded the denomination's Ministry of Memory recognition, illustrating the impact which one dedicated servant may have. Looking forward, the Reverend John T. Martin, Jr., has been elected to the presidency of the Conference Historical society, following his service as president of the Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation.

The following persons are presented to the Annual Conference for election as clergy and lay trustees of the Conference Historical Society for 2015-2016. CLERGY: Paul A. Beighley, Stephen E. Bradley, Michael H. Browder, Carlton D. Casey, Robert T. Casey, Alexis S. Fathbruckner, William R. Freeman, Daniel L. Garrett, Myrtle F. Hatcher, H. Hasbrouck Hughes, James M. John, John T. Martin, Jr., Reginald H. Potts III., Karen J. Sandoval, Lee B. Sheaffer, Theodore Smith, Carl O. Stewart, Elizabeth W. Taylor, James Tongue, Kenneth S. Waclo, Roy P. White, J. Brooke Willson, Elizabeth A. S. Wright and Gary A. Ziegler. LAY: Marcella Bullock, Neill M. Caldwell, Thelma Crowder, Jesse H. Fanshaw III., Clarence R. Geier, Queen Green, Margaret Kidd, Mark Leep, Audrey Lewis, L. Boyd Lucas, Myra P. Lindsey, Stephen S. Mansfield, Harold McKee, Margaret Mock, Catherine D. Morgan, Brenda NeSmith, William A. Olson, Laurie Preston, Leona Salter, Ann P. Shappell, William Stead, Frank Vetting, James Wall and Charles E. Williams

Stephen S. Mansfield, President

The Old Stone Church Foundation

The Old Stone Church Foundation is responsible for the care and preservation of Methodism's Old Stone Church site in Leesburg, the first Methodist-owned property in America. Members of the Foundation help support this mission. We are grateful for those who maintain their membership in the Old Stone Church Foundation year after year. Our Brick Prayer Garden is continuing to grow. Individuals and churches can purchase bricks to add to the garden. Phase II of the Brick Prayer Garden was dedication on the Old Stone Church site in May 2013. The annual meeting was held on The Old Stone Church Site on Sept. 6, 2014. Board members elected were: Charles Williams, Lou Legard, Shirlita West, John Creamer, Dennis Hanrahan, Dr. Michael Browder, James Roberts and myself. The next annual meeting for the Foundation will be held the second week in September (date and time TBD) in Leesburg, VA. Membership in the Old Stone Church Foundation is open to all who share its purposes and who make tax-deductible contributions for the care and preservation of the Old Stone Church site.

Ralph Carver, President

William Watters Foundation

The William Watters Foundation was established by the Virginia Conference Historical Society in 1996 to protect and preserve the small Adams-Wren-Watters Cemetery in McLean, VA, where William Watters, the first American-born itinerant Methodist minister, and his wife are buried. The cemetery, a circular plot 90 feet in diameter and one-quarter acre in area, is located at 6430 Linway Terrace (off Old Dominion Drive) McLean, VA. It has been registered as the United Methodist Historical Site #7 since 1970. For additional information, write The William Watters Foundation, PO Box 6144, McLean, VA 22106-6144.

E. Jean Balcom, President

VIRGINIA UNITED METHODIST PENSIONS, INC.

Section I: Reports

Report 1: Role & Responsibilities of Virginia United Methodist Pensions, Inc.

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church directs each annual conference to establish a conference board of pension auxiliary to the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits of the United Methodist Church (GBOPHB), to have charge of the interests and work of providing for and contributing to the support, relief, assistance and pensioning of clergy and their families, other church workers, and lay employees of the United Methodist Church, its institutions, organizations and agencies within each annual conference except as otherwise provided for by the GBOPHB.

On June 22, 1965, the Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church (VAUMC) established and incorporated the Virginia Methodist Pensions, Incorporation, (subsequently renamed on February 2, 1971 to Virginia United Methodist Pensions, Inc., or “VUMPI,”) as its conference board of pension.

VUMPI, in conjunction with the GBOPHB, develops and administers the numerous employee pension and benefit plans sponsored by the Virginia Conference. Some plans are employer-paid, while others are voluntary and 100 percent participant-paid:

VUMPI Plans

Health
Prescription
Dental
Supplemental Life
Voluntary Life
Long Term Care
Healthcare Flexible Spending Account
Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account

GBOPHB Plans

Ministers Reserve Pension Fund (Pre-82)
Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP)
Clergy Retirement Security Program –
Defined Benefit (CRSP-DB)
Clergy Retirement Security Program –
Defined Contribution (CRSP-DC)
United Methodist Personal Investment Plan
(UMPIP)
Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP)

Report 2: Conference-sponsored Health Plan for Medicare-Eligible Retirees

Retired clergy of the Virginia Conference who are eligible for Medicare and meet certain other eligibility requirements based on total years of full time ministry in the Conference currently have access to a health plan that consists of a Medicare Supplement policy and a prescription drug plan. A variety of factors, including improvements in the Medicare Part D prescription drug program and changes in the tax treatment of components within the current program structure, along with opportunities to offer greater retiree choice while pursuing more advantageous risk pooling, has led VUMPI to recommend a change in the Conference-sponsored health plan for Medicare-eligible retirees.

As is detailed in **Recommendation 3**, VUMPI is recommending the Conference’s adoption of a hybrid retiree medical health plan beginning January 1, 2016. Under the hybrid structure of the program, there will be two options, as follows:

- The “group plan” option, which is a medical and prescription drug program designed to closely match the current plan offered to Medicare-eligible retirees
- The “Connector” option, which will provide access to a range of medical and prescription drug plans, with funds offered to qualifying retirees through a Retiree Reimbursement Account

VUMPI has worked closely with its consultants and advisors to design this program in a way that preserves retiree value, while enhancing the flexibility and choice available to retirees. More detail describing the structure and financing of the recommended health plan for Medicare-eligible retirees is included in Recommendation 3.

Report 3: Conference Wellness Programs

Since 2008, wellness initiatives in the Virginia Conference have been developed and administered by Virginia Conference Wellness Ministries (VCWM). Those initiatives include an incentive program which enables enrollees in the Conference-sponsored health plans to qualify for a premium reduction by participating in certain wellness-focused activities. VCWM has also worked closely with vendors such as Health Advocate to build a comprehensive advocacy and engagement program for the benefit of Virginia Conference clergy and their families. Input from plan participants demonstrates that the programs administered by VCWM have been effective and extremely well-received by many who have engaged with them.

After discussions with Conference leadership, the VCWM Board of Directors and the VUMPI Board of Directors, administration of the Conference wellness programs will be moved from VCWM to VUMPI effective July 1, 2015. VUMPI intends to maintain the current incentive program and the partnership with Health Advocate for the near term, while also exploring other opportunities to promote and support wellness-focused activities within the Virginia Conference.

VUMPI is extremely grateful to the VCWM Board of Directors for all that they have done in support of wellness within the Conference and is especially thankful to the Rev. Charlie Reynolds who has led VCWM as its Executive Director since its creation.

Report 4: VUMPI Financial Reserve Strategy

The health benefit plans administered by VUMPI for the benefit of active clergy in the Virginia Conference are self-funded health plans. Because VUMPI assumes the financial liability associated with payment of medical claims under the terms of those plans, VUMPI maintains a financial reserve recognizing the potential for claims which exceed the funding made available through apportionments and participant contributions. VUMPI’s financial reserve also supports the projected financial liability associated with the health plan made available to retired Virginia Conference clergy, as well as pension funding and other financial obligations.

In 2014, the VUMPI Board of Directors approved a financial reserve strategy that is primarily intended to mitigate the burden of clergy benefits apportionments on Virginia Conference churches. Under the terms of the strategy, the VUMPI Board of Directors identified a portion of VUMPI’s

financial reserve that has been dedicated to partial reduction of the Pre-82 pension apportionment. For each year from 2015 through 2021, VUMPI has committed \$420,000 from its financial reserve toward reduction of the Pre-82 pension apportionment. In total, the amount already committed toward the Pre-82 pension funding strategy exceeds \$2.9 million.

Due to favorable investment market returns in 2014, the VUMPI Board of Directors has committed additional reserve funds under this strategy. An additional \$435,000 per year for each year from 2016 through 2021 has been committed toward offset of the Pre-82 apportionment, bringing the total commitment of funds under the reserve strategy to nearly \$5.6 million.

Report 5: Denominational Average Compensation

Several of the pension and welfare plans incorporate the Denominational Average Compensation (“DAC”) into the formula for determining the plan benefit. The formula VUMPI uses for funding those plans relies on the DAC, as well.

As reported by the GBOPHB, the DAC is projected to increase from 2015 to 2016, as follows:

Denominational Average Compensation	
2015	\$66,259
2016	\$67,333

Report 6: Pension Plan Structure

There are four components to the Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP):

- A. Ministers Reserve Pension Fund (Pre-82) for service and benefits accrued on and/or prior to December 31, 1981.
- B. Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP) for service and benefits accrued on and/or after January 1, 1982 through December 31, 2006.
- C. Clergy Retirement Security Program - Defined Benefit Plan (CRSP-DB) for service and benefits accrued on and/or after January 1, 2007.
- D. Clergy Retirement Security Program - Defined Contribution Plan (CRSP-DC) for service and benefits accrued on and/or after January 1, 2007.

The GBOPHB refers to plans A – C above as defined benefit (“DB”) pension plans. That is, each year an eligible clergy member of the Virginia Conference served/serves and received/receives pension credit, the applicable plan will pay a certain benefit, or “defined” monthly income, during retirement. Hence, the term “defined benefit.” Defined benefit plans do not maintain participant account balances since the employer, or in our case, the GBOPHB, has the responsibility to manage the funds in a manner sufficient to pay the monthly defined benefit.

Simultaneous to the GBOPHB calculating each participant’s defined benefit, it calculates each annual conference’s cost to provide these defined benefits. The GBOPHB bills each annual conference the amount due. Each annual conference, or in our case, VUMPI, then in-turn bills and apportions our local churches for the cost of these plans.

In addition to these defined benefit plans, annual conferences provide their clergy pension benefits from the CRSP-DC, a defined contribution (“DC”) plan. Each year an eligible clergy member of the Virginia Conference serves and receives pension credit, the Virginia Conference determines how much pension contribution each clergy participant will receive in his/her pension account. Hence, the term defined contribution. VUMPI bills local churches for the required amount of pension contribution, then in-turn, makes monthly contributions into the clergy CRSP-DC accounts.

Report 7: Welfare Plans Structure

The welfare plans made available to Virginia Conference clergy include the Comprehensive Protection Plan (“CPP”) sponsored by the General Board, as well as supplemental benefits sponsored independently by VUMPI. The CPP disability benefits are as follows:

- For clergy disabled on or after Jan. 1, 2002, the 2015 CPP disability benefit equals 70 percent of Plan Compensation with compensation capped at 200 percent of the DAC.
- For clergy disabled prior to Jan. 1, 2002, they will continue to receive the same CPP disability benefit and conference disability supplement per the plan document in-force at the time their disability claim originated.

The following generally describes the death benefit amounts payable under the CPP to eligible participants and their beneficiaries:

Active Participant Death Benefits: payable upon the death of an eligible active CPP participant, as follows:

- Participant: \$50,000, payable in 12 monthly installments or one lump sum
- Spouse of active participant: 20% of DAC in the year of death
- Surviving spouse of active participant: 15% of DAC in the year of death
- Child of active participant: 10% of DAC in the year of death
- Annual surviving spouse annuity benefit of 20% of DAC, less the annuity benefit payable from CRSP and other Church-related sources
- Annual surviving child benefit of 10% of DAC, payable in 12 monthly installments (for those age 17 and younger; benefits are paid through the month in which the child attains age 18)
- Annual surviving child educational benefit up to 20% of DAC, payable in equal installments (for those age 18 through 24 and attending school full time)

Retired Participant Death Benefits: to be eligible for death benefits in retirement, a clergyperson must have been covered in CPP for a specified number of years. The 2012 General Conference approved a change to the CPP program which increases the length of service requirement for retirees. Retirees with 25 or more years of enrollment in CPP are eligible for the death benefits in retirement, and the eligibility criteria for those with fewer than 25 years in CPP is phased in with one-year increments, as detailed in the table below:

Retirement Year	CCP Enrollment Requirement for Death Benefit Eligibility
2013	6 of last 10 years
2014	7 of last 10 years
2015	8 of last 11 years
2016	9 of last 12 years
2017	10 of last 13 years
2018	11 of last 14 years
2019+	12 of last 15 years

The death benefit amounts associated with retired participants are detailed in the table below:

Plan Provision	Clergy Who Retired Before Jan. 1, 2013	Clergy Who Retire Jan. 1, 2013 or Later
Death of retired participant	30% of DAC in the year of death	\$20,000
Death of retiree's spouse	20% of DAC in the year of death	\$15,000
Death of retiree's surviving spouse	15% of DAC in the year of death	\$10,000
Death of retiree's child	10% of DAC in the year of death	\$8,000
Annual surviving child benefit, payable in 12 monthly installments	10% of DAC	10% of DAC
Annual surviving child educational benefit, payable in installments	20% of DAC	20% of DAC

The Conference Supplemental Death Benefit for all active full-time clergy under episcopal appointment, and who are enrolled in CPP, is \$25,000. This Conference Supplemental Death Benefit is payable in addition to the CPP death benefit. During retirement, a \$5,000 Conference Supplemental Death Benefit will be payable to CPP participants, in addition to the CPP death benefit. The beneficiary will receive the Conference Supplemental Death Benefit payable in one lump sum. The Conference pays the entire cost of this Supplemental Death Benefit.

In combination, the CPP and Conference Supplemental Death Benefit provide total death benefits as follows:

- \$75,000 to beneficiaries of active clergy participants
- 30% of the DAC + \$5,000 (or \$25,000 for those retiring January 1, 2013 or later) to beneficiaries of retired clergy participants.

Gift Benefit

VUMPI currently elects to provide a one time \$1,500 gift at the time of retirement or disability (once awarded disability benefits under the Comprehensive Protection Plan) to each clergyperson who has served at least 10 years of service in a full-time Virginia Annual Conference episcopal appointment in the Virginia Conference with pension credit. Further, a gift to the family of each clergyperson meeting the eligibility criteria above who dies in active service is paid in the same amount as the gift to retired or disabled clergypersons.

Section II: Recommendation for Annual Conference Approval

Recommendation 1: 2016 Pension and Health Plan Apportionment Recommendations

For 2016, VUMPI recommends a total Clergy Benefit Apportionment of \$16,770,000. This total includes funding for the Pre-82 pension, the Active Clergy Health Plan (which includes health care coverage for eligible clergy on medical leave and widowed spouses of active clergy) and the Retired Clergy Health Plan. The apportionment total is allocated among these components as follows:

Clergy Benefits Apportionment Recommendations - 2016

Active Clergy Health	\$ 9,710,000
Retired Clergy Health	6,060,000
Pension Liability Assessment – Pre-82	1,000,000
Total Clergy Benefit Apportionments	\$ 16,770,000

VUMPI recommends the above Active Clergy Health and Retired Clergy Health apportionments as part of its broad strategy focused on maintaining adequate health plans for Virginia Conference active and retired clergy, while moderating the financial impact on local churches and individual participants to the extent possible.

VUMPI will continue to bill Conference-responsible salary-paying-units (such as Extension Ministries) in 2016. The amount billed will be \$11,671 for each eligible clergyperson, plus their applicable Participant Contributions for active clergy as noted in Recommendation 4: 2016 Participant

Contribution Recommendations.

The Pension Liability Assessment associated with the Pre-1982 pension program is calculated by the General Board of Pension and is partially based on the projected funding liability that VUMPI is required to meet in 2016. Changes in each year's assessment are driven by multiple factors, including actual and projected investment earnings on pension assets held on behalf of the Virginia Conference at the General Board of Pension. For 2016, the projected funding liability was favorably impacted by positive investment market returns which increased the value of existing Pre-82 assets. Furthermore, VUMPI's financial reserve strategy, under which a portion of VUMPI's reserve is being deployed to mitigate the required Pre-82 pension over the remaining Pre-82 funding period led to a somewhat lower funding requirement than in 2015. Based on input from multiple entities, including the Virginia Conference Council on Finance & Administration, the recommended Pre-82 pension apportionment in 2016 is \$1 million. This amount is estimated to approximate the expected annual funding obligation through 2021 at which point all Conferences are expected to have attained a fully funded status in the Pre-82 pension program. Accordingly, rather than recommending an apportionment amount that is temporarily low, with an expectation of potentially significant volatility in subsequent years, the recommended 2016 Pre-82 apportionment is intended to meet the long term funding obligation while minimizing volatility in future apportionments.

Recommendation 2: 2016 Pre-82 Pension Past Service Rate

The Pre-82 pension provides a benefit to all eligible clergy who have served in the Virginia Conference prior to 1982. This program pays the greater of the following:

- An annual benefit equal to the Past Service Rate (PSR) times years of pre-1982 service, or
- An annuity amount based upon the participant's cash balance in his or her Defined Benefit Service Money Account

The Virginia Annual Conference establishes the PSR each year. For 2016, VUMPI recommends that the PSR be increased from \$562 to \$563.

Recommendation 3: Retiree Medical Program for Medicare-Eligible Retired Clergy

Currently, retired clergy of the Virginia Conference who are eligible for Medicare and have a sufficient number of years of full time service in the Virginia Conference are eligible for a Medicare Supplement insurance plan through the Hartford and a prescription drug benefit program through Anthem. VUMPI has worked closely with its consultants and advisors, and is recommending a change in the structure of the retiree medical program for Medicare-eligible retired clergy beginning in 2016.

Under the recommended structure, retirees will continue to have access to a medical plan and prescription drug plan that provides benefits which are very similar to the current plan. This new plan, which is referred to as the "group plan," will be insured by United Healthcare. Eligible retirees who enroll in the plan will pay a monthly contribution, set by VUMPI and approved by the Virginia Conference, just as is the case with the current plan. The expectation is that retirees who enroll in the group plan will see very few differences from the current plan's coverage design. Because of a more advantageous financial structure, however, VUMPI is able to recommend participant contributions which are somewhat lower for retired clergy with fewer years of service.

While all clergy with at least 10 years of full time service immediately prior to retirement in the Virginia Conference will continue to be eligible for the group plan, clergy with at least 20 years of full time Virginia Conference service will be offered a second option for retiree medical coverage. This option, which is referred to as the "Connector" option, will enable Medicare-eligible retirees to select any Medicare Supplement plan or Medicare Advantage plan, and any Part D prescription drug plan, offered by United Healthcare. The Conference will provide funding through a Retiree Reimbursement Account ("RRA"), and those funds can be used to partially or fully offset the cost of the coverage elected through the Connector. United Healthcare personnel will provide telephonic guidance to assist clergy with selection of the most appropriate plans. For 2016, VUMPI is recommending the following annualized RRA funding for clergy electing coverage through the Connector option:

Years of Full Time Virginia Conference Service	Annualized RRA Funding
20 to 24	\$1,800
25 to 29	\$2,400
30 or more	\$3,000

The above funding amounts will be pro-rated monthly for clergy gaining Medicare eligibility or otherwise first enrolling in coverage within a calendar year. The spouse or surviving spouse of a Virginia Conference retiree who qualifies for coverage will also receive RRA funding as detailed above, so a retiree and spouse, both of whom qualify based on the retiree's full time years of service and both eligible for Medicare, may receive total annualized RRA funding of up to \$6,000. Any funding remaining in a Virginia Conference-funded RRA at the end of the calendar year remains in the RRA and is available for use by the enrollee for future qualified medical expenses. Retired Virginia Conference clergy with fewer than 20 years of service will have access to the Connector option to evaluate coverage options and to purchase coverage but will not receive RRA funding to offset the cost of coverage.

Recommendation 4: 2016 Participant Contribution Recommendations

As part of its strategy to ensure the long-term viability of adequate and affordable health care plans, VUMPI is recommending no increase in participant contributions, resulting in the following monthly participant contribution rates for 2016:

Active Clergy:

Medical			
	HMO	PPO	CMCP
Individual	\$113	\$102	\$90
Family	\$351	\$318	\$294

Dental		
	Core	Major
Individual	\$13	\$34
Family	\$56	\$105

Note: Active clergy have the opportunity to earn a \$15 reduction in Individual contribution rate or \$30 reduction in Family contribution rate through participation in the Virginia Conference wellness program.

Clergy on Voluntary Leave and Sabbatical:

Medical		
	HMO	PPO
Individual	\$687	\$626
Family	\$1,852	\$1,659

Dental		
	Core	Major
Individual	\$31	\$60
Family	\$58	\$131

Clergy on Medical Leave with CPP Benefits & Under Age 65 Surviving Spouses of Clergy:

Medical (\$500 deductible)	
	PPO
Individual	\$112
Family	\$180

Dental		
	Core	Major
Individual	\$13	\$34
Family	\$56	\$105

Clergy Retired Under ¶358.2.a (With 20 Years of Service) or ¶358.3 (Prior to Age 62 With Fewer Than Thirty Years of Service):

Medical (\$7500 deductible)	
	PPO
Individual	\$626
Family	\$1,659

Dental		
	Core	Major
Individual	\$31	\$60
Family	\$58	\$131

Retired Clergy Under Age 65 – Retired Under ¶358.1, ¶358.2b, ¶358.2c, or ¶358.3:

Individual Tier - Personal Monthly Contributions			
Years of Service	PPO	Dental Core	Dental Major
10-14	\$698	\$31	\$60
15-19	\$567	\$31	\$60
20-24	\$433	\$31	\$60
25-29	\$301	\$31	\$60
30+	\$167	\$31	\$60

Family Tier - Personal Monthly Contributions			
Years of Service	PPO	Dental Core	Dental Major
10-14	\$1,607	\$58	\$131
15-19	\$1,301	\$58	\$131
20-24	\$995	\$58	\$131
25-29	\$690	\$58	\$131
30+	\$381	\$58	\$131

Retired Clergy Age 65 or Over – Retired Under ¶358.1, ¶358.2b, ¶358.2c, or ¶358.3

As was detailed in Recommendation 3, VUMPI is recommending a new structure for medical and prescription drug coverage for Medicare eligible retirees in 2016. Under the recommended hybrid structure, there will be two coverage options, as described below.

Group Plan Option: The group plan option is similar to the current coverage made available to qualifying Medicare eligible retirees. This option has a required participant contribution based on full time years of service in the Virginia Conference. The recommended 2016 participant contributions for the group plan coverage option are as follows:

Medicare-eligible Retirees - Monthly Personal Contributions		
Years of Service	Individual	Family
10-14	\$375	\$750
15-19	\$310	\$620
20-24	\$245	\$490
25-29	\$180	\$360
30+	\$115	\$230

Connector Option: The Connector option will allow qualifying clergy to select any available Medicare Supplement or Medicare Advantage plan, and any Part D prescription drug plan, offered by United Healthcare. Retirees electing coverage through this option will receive Retiree Reimbursement Account (“RRA”) funding, which can be used to offset the cost of the selected coverage. VUMPI recommends 2016 monthly RRA funding based on qualifying years of Virginia Conference service as follows:

Connector Option - Monthly RRA Funding		
Years of Service	Retiree Only	Retiree and Spouse
20-24	\$150	\$300
25-29	\$200	\$400
30+	\$250	\$500

As was noted in Recommendation 3, the monthly funding amounts will be prorated for qualifying retirees and/or spouses of qualifying retirees who gain Medicare eligibility or otherwise gain eligibility for retiree coverage within a calendar year. Any RRA funds remaining at the end of a calendar year will roll over into the subsequent year for use by the enrolled retiree and/or spouse for qualifying medical expenses.

General Virginia Conference Health Plan Information

Virginia Conference clergy members earn a year of service towards his or her Total Years of VAUMC Service as indicated in the coverage options above for each year that Virginia Annual Conference health plan eligibility is met.

For participants enrolled in the Anthem health plans, either as active clergy or as a retiree not yet eligible for Medicare, plan selections will be made during the open enrollment period in the fall of 2015. If an eligible clergy person does not elect coverage options during the annual open enrollment period, the default enrollment option is the prior year’s plan selections (except for Flexible Spending Account or Dependent Care Spending Account contributions), and enrollees will be subject to the associated individual personal contribution rates.

If not selected during the open enrollment period, no Flexible Spending Account contributions can be made during 2016, in accordance with federal laws.

All who are eligible to enroll in a Virginia Conference health plan are strongly encouraged to participate in online open enrollment in the fall of 2015. Details will be distributed through normal annual open enrollment means.

Active clergy with at least 10 consecutive full time years of VAUMC service, and who are going on approved leave or taking an Extension Ministry appointment, can “freeze” those consecutive years of service until such time as they return to full time service or retire from the Virginia Conference. Clergy desiring to freeze their years of service under this provision are required to pay a Clergy Retiree Health Plan Monthly Access Fee. As part of the recommended participant contributions for 2016, VUMPI recommends that the Clergy Retiree Health Plan Monthly Access Fee remain at \$20 per month for 2016.

Recommendation 5: 2016 Health Plan Design Change Recommendations

As was detailed in Recommendations 1 and 4 above, VUMPI is recommending an Active Clergy Health apportionment for 2016 which reflects no increase from 2015, and 2016 Active Clergy Health Plan participation contributions which reflect no increase from 2015. While total health plan costs are expected to grow in 2016 consistent with ongoing general health care cost trends, VUMPI is recommending that the impact of that cost growth be mitigated by modest health plan design changes.

Under the Affordable Care Act, a new excise tax on high cost employer-sponsored health coverage will be implemented in 2018. VUMPI, working with its consultants and advisors, projects that the current Virginia Conference-sponsored self-funded health plans would likely exceed the threshold specified and be subject to payment of the new excise tax beginning in 2018. Accordingly, VUMPI has developed a strategy in which incremental plan design changes will be recommended between 2016 and 2018 to avoid becoming subject to payment of the new excise tax. Specific plan design changes recommended for 2016 are as follows:

Anthem PPO 750 plan:

- Increase the in-network deductible to \$1,000 individual/\$2,500 family

- Increase the out of network deductible to \$1,500 individual/\$3,750 family
- Increase the in-network medical out of pocket maximum to \$4,500 individual/\$9,000 family
- Increase the out of network medical out of pocket maximum to \$4,500 individual/\$9,000 family
- Reduce the prescription drug out of pocket maximum to \$2,000 individual/\$4,000 family

Anthem HMO-POS plan:

- Increase the in-network deductible to \$500 individual/\$1,000 family
- Increase the out of network deductible to \$750 individual/\$1,500 family
- Increase the in-network medical out of pocket maximum to \$4,500 individual/\$9,000 family
- Increase the out of network medical out of pocket maximum to \$4,500 individual/\$9,000 family
- Reduce the prescription drug out of pocket maximum to \$2,000 individual/\$4,000 family

No plan design changes are recommended for the Clergy Managed Care Plan or the PPO 500 plan for disabled clergy and surviving spouses of clergy.

Recommendation 6: 2016 CRSP/ CPP/ Supplemental Plan Funding RecommendationsClergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP)

The 2016 CRSP Contribution from the local churches and/or salary-paying-units for each appointed eligible clergy member under episcopal appointment at that location shall be:

- For the Defined Contribution component of CRSP: Plan Compensation (base salary plus housing allowance or parsonage rate in accordance with the Internal Revenue Service), times 3%.
- For the Defined Benefit component of CRSP: Plan Compensation (base salary plus housing allowance or parsonage rate in accordance with the Internal Revenue Service, up to 135% of the Denominational Average Compensation (“DAC”)) times 9%.

Local churches and salary-paying units are to make their monthly CRSP payments to VUMPI.

Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP)

The 2016 CPP contribution from the local churches and/or salary-paying-units for each appointed eligible full time clergy member under episcopal appointment at that location shall be:

Plan Compensation (base salary plus housing allowance or parsonage rate in accordance with the Internal Revenue Service, up to 200% of the Denominational Average Compensation) times 4.4%.

Local churches and salary-paying units are to make their monthly CPP payments to VUMPI.

If, for any reason, CPP contributions are more than 30 days in arrears, participation in the CPP is suspended. If contributions are more than six consecutive months in arrears, participation in the CPP is terminated. For terminated participants, readmission into the CPP requires payment of seven months of contributions and submission of medical statement of good health.

Erroneously enrolled clergy who are ineligible to participate in the CPP have no right to benefits under the CPP. Eligible clergy who have not been properly enrolled in the CPP have no rights under the CPP until after proper enrollment.

Recommendation 7: 2016 Comprehensive Funding Plan

Virginia Annual Conference 2016 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan Summary

The 2012 *Book of Discipline* ¶ 1506.6 requires that each annual conference develop, adopt and implement a formal comprehensive funding plan for funding all of its benefit obligations. The funding plan shall be submitted annually to the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits for review and be approved annually by the annual conference, following the receipt and inclusion of a favorable written opinion from the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (GBPHB). This summary document is only a portion of the information contained in the actual signed funding plan. As such, it might not contain all the information required for a comprehensive view of the benefit obligations of the conference. You may request the full contents of the 2016 comprehensive benefit funding plan from the VUMPI office.

Following is the summary of the Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan (CBFP) that received a favorable written opinion from GBPHB for the 2016 conference benefit obligations:

Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP) Defined Benefit (DB) and Defined Contribution (DC) Plan Overview: The Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP) is an Internal Revenue Code section 403(b) retirement program providing lifetime income and account flexibility designed for those who serve as clergy of The United Methodist Church. The plan is designed to provide participants with one portion of their overall retirement benefits. CRSP replaced the Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP) effective January 1, 2007, which had previously replaced the Pre-82 Plan for service rendered prior to January 1, 1982.

CRSP consists of both a defined benefit (DB) plan, which provides a monthly benefit at retirement based upon years of credited service to The United Methodist Church, and a defined contribution (DC) plan, which provides a retirement account balance established and funded by annual conferences. The Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP-DB) annuities total liability as of January 1, 2014 is \$1.105 billion, while total plan assets are \$1.274 billion resulting in a current plan funded ratio of 115%. The Virginia Conference portion of the liability is 4.0060% and the 2016 contribution is \$4,579,904. The conference anticipates that the amount will be funded by direct billing to local churches. Additionally, General Conference 2012 approved a change to CRSP that provides each annual conference the discretion to determine whether to cover three-quarter and/or

half-time clergy. The Virginia Conference has elected to cover clergy serving 50% or more under CRSP effective January 1, 2016.

Effective January 1, 2014 CRSP-DC plan was reduced from a 3% to a 2% of plan compensation non-matching contribution. Clergy have the opportunity to earn up to an additional 1% CRSP DC contribution by contributing at least 1% of their plan compensation to UMPIP. Therefore, if a participant contributes at least 1% of plan compensation to UMPIP, the individual will receive a contribution of 3%, which is unchanged from 2013 and prior. The 2016 CRSP-DC contribution will be funded by direct billing to local churches.

Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP)

Plan Overview: Supplement Three to the Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP), also known as the Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP) provides clergy with a pension benefit for their years of ministry with The United Methodist Church from 1982 through 2006. MPP is an Internal Revenue Code section 403(b) retirement plan. Effective January 1, 2014, exactly 65% of the account balance must be annuitized when it is to be distributed. The remainder may be rolled over to UMPIP, another qualified plan, an IRA, or paid in a lump sum.

The Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP) annuities total liability as of January 1, 2014 is \$3.018 billion, while total plan assets are \$3.345 billion, resulting in a current plan funded ratio of 111% and no required contribution for 2016. The Virginia Conference's share of the total liability is 3.2487%. Future MPP annuitants have a total account balance of \$4.332 billion and the Virginia Conference's portion of that balance is \$157,058,894 or 3.63% of the total.

Pre-1982 Plan

Plan Overview: Supplement One to the Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP), also known as the Pre-82 Plan, provides clergy with a pension benefit for their years of ministry with The United Methodist Church prior to 1982. The Pre-82 Plan was replaced by MPP effective January 1, 1982. If a clergy person retires within the Conference (and does not terminate), the minimum benefit payable is based on two factors: 1) years of service with pension credit and 2) Conference pension rate. Years of service with pension credit are approved by each Conference on the recommendation of the Conference Board of Pensions (CBOP) in accordance with plan provisions and *The Book of Discipline*. The pension rate, also called the past service rate, is the dollar amount chosen by the Conference as the amount payable for each approved year of service with pension credit. The pension rate may change from year to year. The number of years of service with pension credit is multiplied by the pension rate, and the product is the minimum annual benefit payable to those clergy eligible for Pre-82 Plan benefits. In certain situations, the benefit received from the Pre-82 plan may vary based on the applicability of what is referred to as Defined Benefit Service Money (DBSM), which is the defined contribution feature of the Pre-1982 Plan. At the time that a participant retires, the DBSM account is converted to a life based benefit. At that point, the clergy's benefit is the greater of the PSR benefit or DBSM benefit. If the conference increases the PSR, the clergy's benefit is recalculated; however the DBSM based benefit does not change.

The 2016 Past Service Rate (PSR) recommended to the Virginia Conference is \$563.00, representing a \$1.00 increase from the 2015 rate. VUMPI expects to recommend future increases in the PSR in order to recognize the reality of inflation while demonstrating appropriate stewardship of the conference's financial resources.

The contingent annuitant percentage is recommended to remain at the 70% level.

VUMPI will continue to fund the Pre-82 annual funding obligation through apportionments, which are being offset by VUMPI's financial reserve strategy. Under the terms of that strategy, VUMPI is deploying funds held in reserve in order to reduce the required apportionment associated with the Pre-82 funding liability.

Active Clergy Health Benefit Program

Plan Overview: The Virginia Conference offers sponsors a self-funded health benefit plan for active eligible participants.

The total cost of the program for 2016 is anticipated to be \$11,481,001 and will be funded primarily by apportionments. It is anticipated that increases for future years will average approximately 5%, reflecting overall health cost trends and the impact of plan design strategies which are intended to mitigate the impact of those trends.

Post-Retirement Medical Benefit Program (PRM)

Plan Overview: The Virginia Conference post-retirement medical program currently offered includes benefits made available to certain pre-Medicare-eligible and Medicare-eligible clergy. For qualifying clergy not yet eligible for Medicare, the post-retirement medical benefit program is a self-funded health plan. For qualifying clergy who are eligible for Medicare, the post-retirement medical benefit program is a fully-insured Medicare Supplement plan and a self funded prescription drug plan.

Based on the most recent PRM actuarial valuation dated January 1, 2013, the following is the funded position of the post-retirement medical benefits:

Accumulated Post Retirement Obligation (APBO) or net conference cost	\$94,821,405
Expected Post Retirement Obligation (EPBO) or net conference cost	\$115,131,039
Service Cost (SC) or net conference cost	\$1,526,045
Assets designated for PRM	\$7,561,500

These values are based on a 5.7% long term discount rate, a 7.0% long-term expected return, and a current increase trend of 8.0% with an ultimate medical increase of 5.0%, beginning in 2017.

Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP)

Plan Overview: The Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP) provides death, long-term disability and other welfare benefits for eligible clergy of The United Methodist Church and their families. It is an Internal Revenue Code 414(e) "church plan" funded by plan sponsor insurance premiums. Generally, clergy are eligible to participate in CPP if the conference or salary-paying unit sponsors the plan and they are able to satisfy the eligibility requirements which include full-time appointment with plan compensation equal to or greater than 60% of the Denominational Average Compensation or the Conference Average Compensation, whichever is less.

For 2016, the Virginia Conference has an expected required contribution to the Comprehensive Protection Plan of \$1,595,590, which is anticipated to be funded by direct billing to local churches. The anticipated average increase in future years is expected to be approximately 2% per year, consistent with the expected rate of increase in overall compensation.

United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP) for Lay and Clergy

Plan Overview: The United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP) is an Internal Revenue Code section 403(b) defined contribution retirement savings plan for clergy and lay employees of The United Methodist Church and affiliated organizations. Participants may make before-tax and/or after-tax contributions through payroll deductions. Participant contributions, various optional plan sponsor contributions and investment earnings comprise the individual's retirement account balance.

Other Conference Benefit Obligations: Defined Contribution (DC) Type

DC Plan Overview: The Virginia Conference currently offers a supplemental life insurance plan made available to clergy who are enrolled in the Comprehensive Protection Plan. The funding obligation for 2016 is anticipated to be \$214,000, with the funding sources to be direct billing to local churches.

Conclusion:

The 2016 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan and the above summary document incorporates, to the best of our understanding, the Virginia Conference's obligations and funding requirements of the benefits provided to the clergy and laity of the Virginia Conference.

Recommendation 8: 2016 Housing Allowance/Exclusion

Resolutions Relating to Rental/Housing Allowances for Retired, Disabled, or Former Clergypersons of the Virginia Conference

The Virginia Conference (the "Conference") adopts the following resolutions relating to rental/housing allowances for active, retired, terminated or disabled clergypersons of the Conference:

WHEREAS, the religious denomination known as The United Methodist Church (the "Church"), of which this Conference is a part, has in the past functioned and continues to function through ministers of the gospel (within the meaning of Internal Revenue Code section 107) who were or are duly ordained, commissioned or licensed ministers of the Church ("Clergypersons");

WHEREAS, the practice of the Church and of this Conference was and is to provide active Clergypersons with a parsonage or a rental/housing allowance as part of their gross compensation;

WHEREAS, pensions or other amounts paid to active, retired, terminated and disabled Clergypersons are considered to be deferred compensation and are paid to active, retired, terminated and disabled Clergypersons in consideration of previous active service; and

WHEREAS, the Internal Revenue Service has recognized the Conference (or its predecessors) as an appropriate organization to designate a rental/housing allowance for Clergypersons who are or were members of this Conference and are eligible to receive such deferred compensation;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT an amount equal to 100% of the pension, severance or disability payments received from plans authorized under *The Book of Discipline* of The United Methodist Church (the "*Discipline*"), which includes all such payments from the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits ("GBOPHB"), during the period January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016 by each active, retired, terminated or disabled clergyperson who is or was a member of the Conference, or its predecessors, be and hereby is designated as a rental/housing allowance for each such clergyperson; and

THAT the pension, severance or disability payments to which this rental/housing allowance designation applies will be any pension, severance or disability payments from plans, annuities or funds authorized under the *Discipline*, including such payments from the GBOPHB and from a commercial annuity company that provides an annuity arising from benefits accrued under a GBOPHB plan, annuity or fund authorized under the *Discipline*, that result from any service a clergyperson rendered to this Conference or that an active, a retired, a terminated or a disabled clergyperson of this Conference rendered to any local church, annual conference of the Church, general agency of the Church, other institution of the Church, former denomination that is now a part of the Church or any other employer that employed the clergyperson to perform services related to the ministry of the Church, or its predecessors, and that elected to make contributions to, or accrue a benefit under, such a plan, annuity or fund for such an active, retired, terminated, or disabled clergyperson's pension, severance, or disability plan benefit as part of his or her gross compensation.

NOTE: The rental/housing allowance that may be excluded from a clergyperson's gross income in any year for federal (and, in most cases, state) income tax purposes is limited under Internal Revenue Code section 107(2), and regulations thereunder, to the least of: (a) the amount of the rental/housing allowance designated by the clergyperson's employer or other appropriate body of the Church (such as this Conference in the foregoing resolutions) for such year; (b) the amount actually expended by the clergyperson to rent or provide a home in such year; or (c) the fair rental value of the home, including furnishings and appurtenances (such as a garage), plus the cost of utilities in such year. Each clergyperson or former clergyperson is urged to consult with his or her own tax advisor to determine what deferred compensation is eligible to be claimed as a housing allowance exclusion.

Robert G. Sanford, Jr., Chair

COMMON TABLE FOR CHURCH VITALITY

The mission of the Virginia Annual Conference is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by equipping its local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church all to the glory of God.

The mission of the Virginia Annual Conference has guided and aligned the focus of the Common Table for Church Vitality during the 2014-2015 annual conference year. Responsible for providing direction and oversight to the Board of Church and Society, Board of Communications, Church Development Team, Board of Discipleship, Board of Global Ministries, Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministries, Board of Laity, Commission on Disabilities, Commission on Ethnic Minority Concerns and Advocacy and Commission on the Status and Role of Women, Common Table continues a focus on leadership development that has been aligning Virginia Conference ministries since the approval of All Things New in 2008. Reports from Common Table affiliated boards and commissions are included in the *Book of Reports* and provide more detailed information than is possible with this report. Among these reports you will find information about conference ministries that are aligned with the mission of the Virginia Annual Conference. Some of these ministries are campus ministry at seven Wesley Foundations, six ecumenical campus ministries, two All God's Children camps for children of incarcerated parents, two weeks of Camp Rainbow Connection for persons with intellectual disabilities, regional schools for children's ministry, youth ministries, support of new faith communities, revitalization of existing congregations, IT support for Equipping Vital Congregations (EVC) website, Conference VAUMC website, *Advocate* print magazine, *Book of Reports*, *Conference Journal* and web-based information such as the *e-Advocate*, *Sunday Advocate*, Clergynet, Laitynet, Lay Servant Academy, Virginia Conference Initiatives of Hope partnerships in Mozambique, Brazil, and Cambodia and Volunteers in Mission, Mission Encounter, United Methodist Day at General Assembly, Care for God's Creation, 5 Talent Academy, Church Leadership Institute, Reaching New People workshops. A fuller listing of the conference program ministries and missions may be found in the reports of the conference agencies that are amenable to Common Table.

Another focus of Common Table is grants. Special Grants and Sustaining Grants are provided to congregations that are seeking to be in ministry with their surrounding community through outreach efforts that are beyond their financial ability. The Conference United Methodist Women contribute \$30,000 to Special Grants and Sustaining Grants each year. They also participate in the awarding of grants for Special Grants, Sustaining Grants and Conference Benevolence Grants. In 2015 Conference Benevolence Grants were provided to the following ministries: GraceInside (formerly Chaplain Service of Virginia), Virginia Council of Churches, Virginia Interfaith Center, Society of St. Andrew, Industrial and Commercial Ministries, Just Neighbors and Disciple Bible Outreach Ministries.

During the past Conference year, Common Table oversaw the implementation of a Day of Holy Conversation. This joint effort of Common Table, Virginia United Methodists Reconciling Ministries and Evangelical Fellowship was designed to present three different interpretations of the current disciplinary statements regarding human sexuality, a round-robin conversation and small group conversations at different sites across the Conference. Follow-up to this event included the production of a DVD and online resources for additional conversations within districts and congregations.

At last year's annual conference, Common Table recommended the approval of a conference-wide financial campaign for Imagine No Malaria. Ms. Maria Maxwell was selected as the Virginia Conference Field Coordinator for Imagine No Malaria through a grant from the General Board of Global Ministries. Her report on this campaign is included in the *Book of Reports*.

Looking forward, Common Table:

- Has repurposed the position of Director of Ministries with Young People through a primary focus in creating a culture of call for young people. This focus will continue to be developed in ways that help young people discern God's call upon their lives through their baptism.
- Supports the implementation of Discipleship Circles for the purpose of creating grassroots support for the laity and clergy leadership of the Virginia Conference through the Board of Discipleship.
- Is developing a new way of providing congregational grants through a micro-financing model of financial and personnel support.

In addition to providing guidance and alignment for the ministry of conference agencies, Common Table has responsibility for employing the conference program staff that helps to resource and facilitate the ministries of these agencies. There were two changes in Common Table personnel during the past year as Martha Stokes (director of Inclusivity and Lay Leadership Excellence) and Neill Caldwell (editor of *Virginia Advocate* and *Conference Journal*) resigned. There will be one additional staff change as Derrick Parson (director of Ministries with Young People) begins a new appointment in July. Appreciation is expressed to each of these staff for their ministry. In turn, Cheryl Edley-Worford became the director of Inclusivity and Lay Leadership Excellence. The hiring process for the other staff positions were in the interview process when this report was written. These new staff will be announced as employment decisions are made. Common Table expresses appreciation to all Connectional Ministries staff and other conference staff who resource and provide leadership for the ministries of the Virginia Conference.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Approve the following recommendations by the following boards:

- By the Board of Discipleship regarding the observance and special offering for Christian Education Sunday
- By the Board of Discipleship regarding the recommendation and endorsement of Gregory B. West as a General Evangelist according to the standards set by the General Board of Discipleship
- By the Board of Global Ministries regarding the continuation of Conference Relationship Agreements
- By the Board of Global Ministries regarding special offerings for Heart Havens, United Methodist Family Services of Virginia and Virginia United Methodist Homes, Inc.
- By the Board of Global Ministries regarding Advance Special Offering.

The reports of boards, agencies and organizations that follow, from page 147 to 160, fall under the umbrella of the Common Table for Church Vitality.

BOARD OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY

The Conference Board of Church and Society is charged by the United Methodist *Book of Discipline* (§629) and the conference to help the conference, districts and local congregations employ our Social Principles in connecting their faith communities to the world around them. This work is both individual and societal. It is the sacred, transforming work of inviting faithful disciples to lead the world prayerfully into the world of Christ. We are called to help the conference and our churches answer “How will our social actions be faithful to the gospel?”

We believe the board best meets conference needs by employing our energy to enact the visions of our Bishops’ pastoral letter, “God’s Renewed Creation: Call to Hope and Action” and our church’s Social Principles. We order our board into four working groups – three follow the outline of the Bishops’ letter and focus on Biblical mandates to: 1. End poverty; 2. Care for God’s creation; and 3. End violence in our world. The fourth group, Criminal Justice and Mercy Ministries, provides a ministry to all persons who are in prisons, their families, families of victims of crime and advocates for criminal justice system reforms.

The Conference Board promotes the Peace with Justice Sunday Special Offering, one of six Church-wide offerings that The United Methodist Church General Conference asks of each local church. Half of the Peace with Justice Offering stays in the conference to fund ministries in the conference. This offering is taken on Trinity Sunday (May 31, 2015) or at another time decided by the local church. In 2014, we increased the offering taken by our local churches by more than 20 percent, but we need more churches to take the offering. Only 10 percent of Virginia Conference churches took the offering in 2014. In 2014-2015, we used Peace with Justice Funds in the following ways:

1. Fredericksburg District is training churches using the Just Faith curriculum to help members connect their faith to social action.
2. Creation Care Ministry of Resurrection UMC in Chesapeake, VA.
3. Rising Hope UMC in Alexandria District received funds to help it partner with Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement (VOICE) for leadership development in community organizing, especially housing for low income and homeless people.
4. Scholarships for young adults and others to participate in the BCS trip to Israel/Palestine.
5. Kingsway Prison and Family Outreach Ministry in Harrisonburg District to support its Sexual Offenders Safe Sanctuary Program which provides a place where sex offenders can worship and be ministered to through Bible Study and worker training programs.
6. Remember and Recommit: a program of three Richmond District churches to hold workshops which explore the history of race relations between black and white churches.

Each year, United Methodist Day at the General Assembly is held on the first Thursday in February. We hold this event jointly with the Virginia Conference United Methodist Women and our Conference Legislative Network. Our bishop always comes: we need you, too! Our maximum participant number for this event is 300 people, so register early!

The Conference Board of Church and Society has developed educational and advocacy resources addressing Creation Care, death penalty, immigration, minimum wage, voting rights and wage theft. These can be accessed on the Conference BCS webpage.

This year, we worked with the Conference Pensions board to develop a resolution on divesting investments related to fossil fuels which contribute to carbon dioxide and methane pollution. Together, we found that both boards could agree that thermal coal is a most polluting kind of fuel and that both boards recommend that our conference and the general church not invest church funds in companies producing thermal coal.

In January 2015, we regrettably accepted the “retirement” of Rev. Hunter Mabry as a member of the board. Hunter faithfully served many terms on the board and is a model of how one person can link together their faith and a passion for social justice to make a difference in the world.

Jaydee Hanson and Rev. Gretchen Nelson, co-chairs

VIRGINIA UNITED METHODIST COMMUNICATIONS, INC.

The mission of Virginia United Methodist Communications, Inc. is to assist faith communities in communications and related technologies, empowering their mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

As I conclude my tenth year on the Board and my first year as President, I am reminded that the one thing that has not changed over time is the need for the church to tell its story. It is a privilege to be able to serve the Virginia Annual Conference while serving the local churches and encouraging them to tell their stories in new and effective ways for all generations.

Over the past year, our board has held communication training events at Annual Conference and at the annual Virginia Chapter Professional Association of United Methodist Church Secretaries (PAUMCS) Fall Event. Topics covered included blogging, website development, social media, the use of email management systems, among others. Members of the Board have also led local church training events or been accessible as resource point persons to answer church communication questions. The Communications board also heavily supports the operation of Annual Conference by providing camera operators, help on the tech desk, production of *The Daily Advocate* and a display to provide resources to attendees of Conference including the availability to order Conference DVDs and subscribe to *The Advocate*.

This year, we welcomed Nick Ruxton to the Conference communications staff as a part-time Videographer and Video Production Coordinator. We also said goodbye to Neill Caldwell who resigned his position as editor of *The Virginia United Methodist Advocate*. His dedication to the Conference through photography, news writing, and publication editing has been superb. He will be greatly missed.

At the 42nd annual meeting of the United Methodist Association of Communicators, held in Savannah, Ga., our Conference communications staff brought home seven awards. *The Virginia United Methodist Advocate* was selected as the best magazine in the Print Publications category, and designer Cathryn Huff won second place for her work on the *Advocate* in the Print or Electronic Design classification of the Visual Design category. Huff also won a first place honor for her layout and design of the Virginia United Methodist Foundation 2013 annual report and third place under Branding Development for her “Every Life Save a Life” logo for the conference’s Imagine No Malaria effort. Former *Advocate* editor Neill Caldwell won a third place award in photography for his shot of the “Moment of Ordination” as Bishop Young Jin Cho ordained Lynda Harding as a deacon at 2013 Annual Conference in Hampton. Two videos produced by Director of Communications Linda Rhodes for this year’s Annual Conference gathering also won honors. The animated Discipleship Circles “whiteboard” video won first place in videos costing more than \$2,000, and the Imagine No Malaria promotional video, created by Rhodes and the Rev. Mike Maxwell, won second place for videos costing between \$500 and \$2,000.

The Board of Communications continues to look for new ways to support the work of our local churches. Please feel free to reach out to us either through the Conference staff or through the Conference website.

Keri L. B. Marston, President

BOARD OF DISCIPLESHIP

The Directing Board of the Board of Discipleship responded to the 2014 Bishop's Prayer Convocation by sponsoring follow up events in different regions of the Conference. Wendy Miller, professor emeritus of spiritual formation, Eastern Mennonite Seminary and adjunct professor of spiritual formation, Garrett Evangelical-Theological Seminary was our keynote speaker. Various workshops were offered which provided opportunities to experience prayer in many different ways. These experiences were met with great reviews and the Board of Discipleship may look at how we can provide these learning events in the future. 2015 will mark the third year the BOD has helped with the Bishop's Convocation on Prayer and looks forward to how it can partner in the continued movement of lifting up prayer in our faith communities.

This year the BOD has focused efforts on the Conference-wide initiative of Discipleship Circles. Most of the board members have been trained as facilitators and are ready to assist circle launches in every region of the Conference. Regional Leaders continue to connect with leadership in their assigned districts to find out how the BOD can best serve their local faith communities.

Older Adults

Change and new vision have been the focus of this year's Older Adult Council. With knowledge of the "Boomer" generation's distaste for being identified as older adults, we are attempting to improve our focus and identity. Our council has addressed the activities, events and interests that better mesh with the Boomer interests and that will encourage use of their many gifts and strengths for ministry. We have had discussions related to a more inclusive name for our council.

Suggestions for celebrating Older Adult Recognition Sunday in May were again prepared by council members and placed on Clergynet to serve as a resource when planning this day.

This year we have been privileged to share in two exciting new adventures. On April 25 the Senior Council at Shady Grove (Mechanicsville) and the Council co-sponsored an "Old Time Revival" for the Richmond District. The program included an old fashioned gospel sing, guest speaker Clarence Brown and ended with music by a gospel quartet. Our vision is that this model might excite and re-ignite older adults in their call to ministry in all stages of their lives.

Our second adventure was a day's retreat partnership with Overlook Retreat and Camp Ministries (in the Harrisonburg District) on May 12. Our council led the morning session with how to create "Your Legacy" box and taking a look at "How Faith Shapes Us". In the afternoon Overlook presented "Life Beyond This Life" with individuals sharing their personal experiences of glimpses of heaven.

Both of these events, new for our council, are ways we are discovering how to partner with other groups, creating programs that strengthen and expand Older Adult Ministry. The Boomer Generation challenges us to provide opportunities to reunite them with worship, fellowship and service in our churches as they retire. We look forward to increasing our programs for other districts in 2016.

Carol Bookwalter, chair

Children's Ministries

Each year the School for Children's Ministries is held in four different districts spread throughout the Conference in order to provide training, connection, and inspiration to Christian educators. This year the class offerings will include areas of spiritual development, practical classroom skills, hot topics in children's ministries, outreach events, volunteer retention, creative worship, and music.

The age level of Children's Ministries has been present and is engaged in conversations as the Va. Conference takes a look at how it can best equip local churches and faith communities in Safe Sanctuaries processes.

CCYM

This year, our ministry spent some time focusing.

Spring 2014, we hosted an event for people who work with young people called Cultivating Young Leaders. This event brought in 22 people who are in ministry with young people across the Conference to learn about strengths-based leadership within faith communities. Our facilitators presented learnings they have come across in their use of the model. We believe this focused investment of time and energy in those who serve our young people was important.

LEAD 2014 was cancelled and it was determined that we should schedule it every other year (allowing "Poverty in America" - which replaces our UN Seminar - to be the focus on the off years). This will prevent us from competing with our own events. During Summer 2015, we will focus on Poverty in America and will not run LEAD again until Summer 2016.

Our fall retreats for 2014 featured Keith Elgin (a nationally recognized artist and worship leader within at Vine Church in the Virginia Conference) and Dugan Sherbondy (author and speaker). We found this team to be a draw and increase attendance while also pulling in new groups from around the Conference. Dugan's messages focus on being created in God's image and being God's "masterpiece." Additionally, all Virginia Conference folks were invited to download Dugan's ebook, *Sow What?* about serving in youth ministry. Our team found Dugan to be inspiring, captivating and constantly willing to partner together to make ministry happen (we even found him hauling boxes of supplies alongside us!). By really digging into the message and focusing every aspect of our retreat on Dugan's talks, we feel we were able to serve our community well.

In addition to focusing during the retreat, our volunteers spent much time developing and producing better marketing (we still have room to grow, of course!). Our Facebook account now boasts 636 "likes" and our Twitter account has 63 "followers." It is our belief that this increased base helped bump our fall retreat participation up as well. This focus on direct contact with interested parties will help us better share information in the years to come.

Alison Malloy, adult chair

RECOMMENDATION:

The Board of Discipleship continues to recommend and endorse Gregory B. West as a General Evangelist according to the standards set by the General Board of Discipleship.

BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES

We completed a year-long process of prayerful reflection and visioning toward a restructure which would further strengthen our conference commitment to mission. The goal for the proposed structural change is to acknowledge the past strengths of the board while expanding its scope and function to engage more churches in mission and justice across the conference and strengthen the connection. A second element of that goal is to highlight missional activity and theology as an expression of our individual and corporate discipleship as we serve others in charity and justice while building up the body of Christ in its endeavor to make new disciples for the transformation of the world. To that end the Conference Board of Global Ministries has drawn upon the portion of the conference mission statement "...by equipping its local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church; all to the glory of God." for its new structure of "**Engaging, Connecting and Equipping Clergy and Laity of the Virginia Conference for God's mission.**" as the base for the new structure. We have discerned dividing into two teams: Missional Discipleship and Engagement and Missional Connections to facilitate the function of the Board.

Mrs. Anne Klotz, **Missionary Itineration Coordinator**, has facilitated connections and visits for approximately 13 missionaries with their covenant churches during the past year. Under the new Global Mission Fellows program to engage young persons in short term mission ministry, two placement sites are being created within the Virginia Conference.

Mission Encounter, is a cooperative school offered by the Board of Global Ministries and the United Methodist Women to help us understand God's work in our world and our involvement as United Methodists. Two sessions were offered in 2014: July 25-27 and July 28-30 at the Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center in Blackstone with approximately 184 in attendance. Mission Encounter 2015 will be offered July 24-26 with study focuses on 3 areas: Social Issue – The Church and People with Disabilities, Spiritual Formation – The Pursuit of Happiness and the Geographical Study – Latin America.

United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM), Forrest White, Coordinator, offered 10-12 team leader trainings in 2014 and is developing a re-certification process for veteran team leaders. The Facebook page, (<https://www.facebook.com/VirginiaUMVIM>) continues to be a place for inspiration, information and connection. Team leaders are invited to share the specifics about their trip: i.e. church or district sending the team, location and ministry project particulars by emailing the conference UMVIM Coordinator who will post to the Facebook page. Others are invited to pray for the team and those they'll be serving. Teams looking for additional information are invited to "recruit" via the Facebook page. Our prayer is that we truly embrace and live the UMVIM mission statement based on 1 John 3:18 -- "Christian Love In Action."

The Conference Committee on Mission Personnel (CMMP), chaired by The Rev. Joanne Maughlin, is a committee of local church clergy and laity within the Virginia Annual Conference that is committed to mission service and whose members guide and mentor interested persons through the application and discernment process for mission service and assist them in identifying, within the Annual Conference, congregations for missionary financial support. One interview was held in April 2014.

Initiatives of Hope (IOH), chaired by The Rev. Judy Fender, has been in prayerful discernment and visioning regarding its scope and function as mission initiatives transition to mission partnerships. Mutuality in mission is highly valued and being presently explored with **Mozambique**. The Shade and Fresh Water Project in **Brazil** celebrates its 15th anniversary in October 2015. There is a continuing need for VIM teams to serve on the Medical Boat in the Amazon; to partner with projects in the Northeast; to participate in a new project with the indigenous people near the border with Paraguay and a new project in the countryside outside Sao Paolo. The Rev. David Vaughn chairs the Brazil initiative. The newest initiative, **Cambodia**, chaired by Mrs. Juanita Csonotos, hosted a consultation at Aldersgate UMC in Alexandria, Va., in May 2014, with several annual conferences in attendance. Early in 2015, there are two VIM teams planned, one centering on the role of Christian women and the other on young adults exploring issues of mission and justice.

The Rev. Verónica Barrell, BGM Chair

Partnership Reports

Heart Havens

Heart Havens, Inc. continues to focus on empowering adults with intellectual disabilities to live and thrive in a safe and nurturing environment. Presently, this is done through the operation of 11 group homes spread throughout The Virginia Conference. The Charlottesville District is working with us to raise funds to build an apartment complex. In the fall, the difficult decision was made to close the Norfolk home after determining this home was operating at a loss and would adversely impact the organization.

Fundraising activities continue with grants totaling over \$126,000. Of special note are the following:

- Department of Rail and Transportation Grant \$ \$79,148 (vans to Winchester and Stuarts Draft homes)
- Richmond Memorial Health Foundation \$10,346 for a Direct Support Professional Career Ladder (three-year grant)
- Commission on Disabilities \$500 for the startup of an Advocacy Group
- \$15,862 from USDA (van to the Kilmarnock home)
- \$20,000 KOVAR (updates to Macleigh-Holland home and furniture)

Mentioned above, one of these grants is focused on building a Career Ladder for our direct-care employees. This program is providing valuable continuing education opportunities for staff to support their growth and development.

For the third year, Heart Havens held a motorcycle rally called "Ride for Independence." This annual event helps us expand our visibility in the community, while also being a great fundraising opportunity. Riders, volunteers, staff and, most of all, our residents had a great time at this year's event.

We continue to have active involvement from our board members, church groups and community volunteers. The Board of Directors are often found in our homes where they are planning activities, making birthday cakes or doing maintenance on the home. We also continue to strengthen our relationship with HandsOn Greater Richmond volunteers. These volunteers have supported us this year in various ways, including painting, doing crafts or stuffing brochures. We also were blessed with a visit from Circle of Friends, who brought 12 ladies to volunteer for seven hours. Churches continue to

be a source of support through donations and volunteer service including maintenance projects and social visits with our residents.

In 2014, Heart Havens continued to hold the BBB Accredited Charity Seal. We also improved our charitable rating status in Guidestar to Gold. As the year concluded, we wrapped up our existing three-year strategic plan and finished development of the plan that will carry the organization through the coming three years.

Finally, Heart Havens was proud to announce the 2014 Manwiller Award recipient was Fred Rathel of the Winchester District. Fred is instrumental in coordinating volunteer work days and events to benefit Heart Havens. He serves as a non-board member on the property committee and is a speaker for Heart Havens in the Winchester District. Fred's commitment to the organization can best be seen through the loving relationships he has made with the men who reside in the Winchester home.

Jennifer Boyden

United Methodist Family Services of Virginia (UMFS)

As a faith-based nonprofit social service organization, we do whatever it takes to empower high-risk children, their families and communities throughout Virginia. From addressing behavioral and emotional issues to finding foster and adoptive homes, UMFS never gives up. UMFS is an unwavering champion for high risk children and families, collaborating with communities to help them reach their full potential.

UMFS provided services in 2014 last year to over 9000 children and families throughout Virginia. With regional centers in Richmond, Northern Virginia, Tidewater, Fredericksburg, South Hill and Lynchburg; intensive treatment centers in Richmond and Centreville; and offices in Farmville, Charlottesville, Roanoke, Tazewell, and Loudon counties, our reach is across the Conference. We are dedicated to creating a world where caring, opportunity and generosity are passed on from generation to generation. We strive for and get results that transform lives. Through our five core values, we do whatever it takes to help children and families in need. Here are some of our achievements from the last year.

This year we celebrate our 115th birthday! This means that for the last 115 years UMFS and The United Methodist Church have worked tirelessly to minister to children often forgotten by our society. Since the very beginning The United Methodist Church has partnered with us to be an advocate for those most at risk. With the help of the Church we have made a concerted effort to engage youth, parents, community groups, business partners and the faith community in providing resources, expertise and support so that all families can thrive. We continue to strengthen our connection with congregations and the broader church to support high risk children and families. With your help, we are helping to usher in the Kingdom of God by providing love, support and care for kids who need it the most. Because of you 800 children are in our care, 90 communities are being served, 178 children were placed to 89 families, and 87 new foster /adoptive families were approved. We are bridging the needs of the world with the gifts of the Church and our expertise but we cannot stop now. Our 115 year history is rich in tradition and impact but we must continue to press forward, currently 1000 kids in the commonwealth of Virginia are waiting for a foster or adoptive family. We must work even harder to eradicate this number. With your help we can do it. Without the VAUMC we cannot be the advocate and voice for at risk youth, children will not have safe and loving homes and life will not be forever transformed. So join us as together in the next 115 years we will change the lives of the next generation of children and their families.

We ask you as the Church to be the champion for at risk youth and their families and also help us to find forever homes for the thousands of youth who are in the Virginia foster care system. Become a partner church with UMFS or a local church ambassador of UMFS. We value our Virginia Annual Conference connection and feel privileged to be a part of the ministry of the United Methodist Church. As a part of the body of Christ, with you together we can serve the most at-risk children in our Conference.

*Bruce Whitehurst, Chair, UMFS Board of Directors
Greg Peters, Chief Executive Officer*

Virginia United Methodist Homes, Inc.

Throughout its 68 year history, Virginia United Methodist Homes, Inc. (VUMH) has embraced the basic foundations of the Social Principles of the nurturing and social community. Our forefathers recognized as our first nurturing community was begun that even those growing old in years should have the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential as individuals. With seven communities throughout the Virginia Conference, VUMH has always been, and will always strive to be, a provider of communities where older adults can live life as they choose.

In the summer of 2014, VUMH began a process to identify the core values and standards that residents, family members and staff recognize as central to the reputation of VUMH. The work is far from complete; however, three fundamental themes from this effort are worthy of sharing with the Annual Conference:

- **The mission of VUMH has never wavered: To provide facilities, services and programs to enhance the quality of life for older persons.** Our communities now serve more than 1,200 elders every day. VUMH is dedicated to the very highest standard in quality of living, placing a priority on personal independence supported by attentive, experienced staff.
- **As the needs and expectations of seniors continue to change, so too do the services and programs VUMH provides.** VUMH is committed to delivering individualized and enhanced amenities, programs and services to meet the need of each Resident. VUMH is working with residents, staff and professionals to develop an updated master plan for Cedarfield in western Henrico County and the expansion of the health services center at WindsorMeade of Williamsburg. More importantly, an intensive staff training program focused upon greater person-centered engagement in each community began in February 2015.
- **Our rich history with the Virginia Annual Conference is key to our foundational philosophy of placing the needs of each individual resident at the center of everything we do.** A cornerstone of how we continue to live out our Wesleyan heritage is the Samaritan Program, which provides financial assistance to residents who have outlived their monetary resources, and, through no fault of their own, can no longer afford the full cost of their care. For fiscal year 2014, the Samaritan Program provided \$965,749 to residents, offering security and peace of mind when our residents are most vulnerable.

Looking forward, all of the work that VUMH is currently undertaking will set a new direction for the future. As our Social Principles state, VUMH believes we have a responsibility to continually “innovate, sponsor and evaluate new forms of community that will encourage development of the fullest

potential in individuals.” An important component of this dynamic will come from enhanced partnerships with the clergy and laity of our local churches as together we address the needs of those who are aging in the congregations and communities.

Christopher P. Henderson, President and CEO

Virginia United Methodist Housing Development Corporation

The mission of the Virginia United Methodist Housing Development Corporation is to provide affordable and safe housing for the elderly and disabled. In 2015, VUMHDC managed 32 multi-million dollar properties (1800 units) which are located throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia and in West Virginia. For the conference year 2015-16, we are attempting to build, develop and rehab an additional two to three additional properties located in Virginia. We will use existing government grants and service programs so that no cash outlay is required by the Virginia Annual Conference. For more information about this mission and our amazing history, please visit our website.

Jim O’Quinn, Vice President

Wesley Housing Development Corporation

Wesley Housing’s mission is to preserve, develop, own and operate affordable housing and sustain quality communities for families and individuals who might otherwise face homelessness. In 2014, we celebrated 40 years of service to Northern Virginia, having served more than 25,000 residents during that time. We currently manage 19 properties (approximately 2,200 residents) in Alexandria, Arlington, Manassas and Fairfax County. We also manage four Community Resource Centers and four special needs Resident Services Centers that offer a full range of desperately needed programs and services to support children, adults, seniors and those with chronic disease as well as those with disabilities to regain and maintain their dignity and renew their lives.

Real Estate Development Projects

- Lewinsville Senior Residences (McLean): Wesley Housing has been chosen to renovate and expand the McLean property from 22 to 82 units of affordable, independent senior housing. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors approved an agreement with Wesley Housing who is partnering with Hamel Builders on the project. If low-income-housing tax credits are approved in 2015, the construction will begin in 2016 and finish in 2017.
- Pierce Queen Apartments (Arlington): Construction has begun on the Arlington County project that will preserve and renovate two of Pierce Queen’s garden apartment buildings and construct a 12-story residential tower. The family-friendly project will increase the number of affordable bedrooms from the existing 67 to 151 and will preserve affordability for 60 years. Eight units will be fully accessible for people with physical disabilities.
- Lynhaven Apartments (Alexandria) and William Watters Apartments (Arlington): The combined 49 units are being redeveloped to include energy efficient upgrades as well as new interiors.

Resident Services/Special Projects

- Housing Stability Initiative: Every month, approximately 125 adults take advantage of housing stability and eviction prevention programs such as resume and job search skills training, computer training, crisis intervention, referrals to community resources and financial literacy and household budgeting.
- Holiday Help: One hundred ten low-income Wesley Housing family members, children and seniors in 45 households had a special holiday because of hundreds of volunteers who participated in our 2014 Adopt-A-Family program. St. John’s UMC once again donated space for the 85 volunteers who worked more than 250 hours to sort and wrap Adopt-A-Family gifts as well as the donations of more than 600 toys from Toys for Tots.

Shelley S. Murphy, President/CEO

Advance Specials 2015-2016

INTERNATIONAL

Mozambique: Chicuque Rural Hospital, Advance #09734A
 Mozambique: Cambine Agriculture Program, Advance #3020561
 Congo: North Katanga Wings of the Morning, Advance #08597A
 Chile: Methodist Construction Projects, Advance #3020485
 Liberia: Ganta United Methodist Hospital, Advance #15080N
 Haiti: Haiti Emergency Projects, Advance #418325
 Cambodia: Mission Initiative, Advance #00230A
 Cambodia: Street Children Ministry, Advance #14921A
 Macedonia: Macedonia in Mission Together, Advance #00220A
 Brazil: Ministry with Children, Shade and Fresh Water Project, Advance #11580A
 Israel: Bethlehem Bible College, Advance #12017A
 Russia: Russia Mission Initiative, Ukraine, Moldova, Advance #14053A
 Sierra Leone: Child Rescue Program, Advance #14377A
 Sudan: Sudan Emergency, Advance #184385
 Global: Anti-Human Trafficking, Advance #333615
 Global: The Medicine Box, Advance #982630
 Global: Sustainable Agriculture, Advance #982188
 Guatemala: Highland Support Project, Advance #15022A
 Mexico: Give Ye Them To Eat, Advance #07629A
 Mozambique: Evangelization and Church Expansion Ministry, Advance #12580A

NATIONAL

Mississippi: Choctaw United Methodist Mission, Advance #761544
 USA: Project Crossroads, Advance #781380
 District of Columbia: Christ House, Advance #381215
 Kentucky: Red Bird Mission, Inc., Beverly, Advance #773726
 Kentucky: Henderson Settlement, Frakes, Advance #773365
 Florida: Cornerstone Family Ministries, Advance #751202
 South Dakota: Tree of Life Ministry, Advance #123615
 Tennessee: Jubilee Project, Inc., Sneedville, Advance #781350
 USA: Justice for Our Neighbors Immigration Ministry, Advance #901285
 USA: Volunteers in Mission, Southeastern Jurisdiction, Advance #901875
 USA: Society of St. Andrew, Advance #801600
 USA: Response and Recovery to Natural Disaster, Advance #901670

VIRGINIA

Rising Hope United Methodist Mission Church, #5043
 Shalom Zone: Grace Ministries, #5046
 Tuesday's Table, #5024
 Disciple Bible Outreach Ministries of Virginia, #5029
 Henry Fork Service Center, #5008
 United Methodist Community Outreach Program of Roanoke, #5004
 Virginia Conference Disaster Response and Recovery, #5037
 Agape Christian Children's Community Center, Inc, #5020
 GRACE Ministries of The United Methodist Church, #5035
 ESL and Immigrant Ministries Childcare Support, #5036
 Teens Opposing Poverty, Inc. (TOPS), #5010
 Heart Havens, #6442
 Park View Community Mission, #5019
 Wesley Community Center, #5025
 Helping Hands Mission Camp, #5026
 Just Neighbors Ministry, Advance #803002
 Pathways Virginia, Advance #5045

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Relationship Agreements as presented to the Health and Relief Team of the Conference Board of Global Ministries between the Virginia Conference and Heart Havens, Inc.; United Methodist Family Services of Virginia; Virginia United Methodist Homes, Inc.; Virginia United Methodist Housing Development Corporation; and Wesley Housing Development Corporation, be continued.

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND CAMPUS MINISTRIES

Campus ministry in the Virginia Conference continues to be 'a dynamic, diverse demonstration of God's creative and inviting love' expressed through the ministries of seven Wesley Foundations, six ecumenical campus ministries and six chaplains at United Methodist educational institutions in Virginia. These campus ministries touch the lives of tens of thousands of students (most between the ages of 19 and 30) with invitations and opportunities 'to explore, engage and embody an active faith in God'. In varied ways appropriate to each campus ministry context, God is worshipped, faith is explored, communities and people are served and lives are changed – all in the name and through the power of Jesus Christ. I trust you will read the stories shared by each of our campus ministries.

The Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministries is in place to provide oversight, policies and resources for fruitful ministry with college students. BHECM was better able to meet its charge by filling key board vacancies with persons with specialized skill sets. We welcomed to the board Mr. Bill Pike as our building/facilities expert. Bill has taken the lead with an outside consultant to inspect and assess the short and long term maintenance and safety needs of our eight Wesley Foundation facilities. Many of the immediate maintenance needs have now been addressed and a long-term plan is being developed. We are grateful to the CFA for their support in funding these assessments. We also welcomed Mr. Josh Blakely as our 'data-techy'. Josh, with the support and efforts of Bryan Compton, developed and launched our 'Campus Ministry System' – a data reporting system replacing an unwieldy 'metrics' system that was previously developed and unused. This is a giant step toward our goal of putting a success metrics in place and toward more 'holy conversations about data'. The third important vacancy was filled by Mr. John Dunning giving us expertise in Board Development and leadership for our efforts to train and resource local campus ministry boards. We are grateful for the service and commitment of these three new board members and for that of each board member.

This year BHECM has also begun looking at our 'formulas' and approaches to determining funding levels for each local ministry and each type of ministry (Wesley Foundation, Ecumenical, Faith Community/Campus Ministry). We have also begun a long term conversation about Conference ownership of the Wesley Foundation buildings.

Things to Celebrate: A new ministry, Ignite, was started at Old Dominion University in partnership with Church Development– a faith community that will reach and serve the students of ODU and young adults in the ODU area. The Ministry at Mary Washington University has a new Campus Minister, Rev. Shannon Waite. The Wesley Foundation at UVA is celebrating 50 years and has kicked off a significant capital campaign to fund renovations at the Wesley UVA building. In an incredibly difficult year at UVA, we give thanks that we have had the presence, leadership and caring ministry of the Rev. Deborah Lewis and the Wesley Foundation community at UVA. How important it has been to have a ministry on campus at UVA this year – as it has been in other places in other years. Thank you, VA Conference for your continued prayers and support of our campus ministries.

Herb Brynildsen, President

ARISE/United College Ministries in Northern Virginia (UCMNV)

The mission of this ministry is “to share God’s universal love as revealed in Jesus Christ with the campus communities of Northern Virginia by providing and developing an authentic Christian community for students to explore, engage and embody an active faith through worship, missions, small groups and leadership opportunities.

This has been an incredible year! By sticking to our vision and faithfully attempting to follow Christ, ARISE continues to be that place that carries out this mission. In 2014, ARISE witnessed a deeper sense of community and student involvement, than we have experienced yet. Our attendance at worship has increased, the energy among students is palpable and the level of commitment by our core group seems to only grow deeper.

In October we brought Brian McLaren to discuss interfaith dialogue at Mason. We had over 120 people from the community and 20 students in attendance. We ended the day with an interfaith panel consisting of a Rabbi, Imam, Buddhist, Sociologist, Protestant Clergy and Brian. It was an amazing day! In the two weeks leading up and the two weeks following the event we held a series in worship called Faith. We started with talking about having faith like a child and moved to when things get complicated where we focused on why disagreements between Christians have led to different denominations. We closed with having two weeks of honest conversation about looking at our own faith and how to interact and love those who have a completely different faith.

Over 200 student volunteers from several student organizations on campus helped at our Stop Hunger Now meal-packaging event in November. This was our fourth SHN and students were already asking when we are hosting the next one. By the grace of God, this year has truly been amazing.

The other noticeable change in ARISE is the level of commitment from our students. We now have multiple, weekly small groups. These groups have become a priority for the students who attend.

Thank you for the support you provide to help make ministry possible I do hope you’ll share our story with others. I encourage each of you to keep posted on the “happenings” of the ministry through our website www.arise.gmu.edu and through www.facebook.com/arise.gmu. Thank you!

Rev. Mark Montgomery, Minister Director

The Campus Christian Community (CCC)

The Campus Christian Community (CCC) is an ecumenical campus ministry serving the campus of the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg. It is supported by the Presbyterians, United Methodists, Episcopalians and Lutherans. The mission of the CCC is: “Welcoming all people, The Campus Christian Community witnesses to the love and power of God in Jesus Christ. The CCC ministers with students, faculty and staff of the University of Mary Washington and the surrounding community through worship, study, fellowship, service, and provides a forum to explore and question issues of faith and life.”

This mission statement is something that we strive to live into every day at the CCC. We have several recurring weekly events and work to keep students engaged in exploring their faith. Our largest event continues to be our Thursday evening program. We are grateful for the area churches that continue to support us with this event by bringing us meals for students. Gathering together at table is an important part of our ministry. We also meet on Sunday nights for worship followed by our Coffeeology program. This is a time where we discuss different topics related to theology and how they impact our lives while drinking coffee and tea. We also have small groups that meet during the week. On Wednesdays we gather for a Bible study. The first half of the year was lead by one student and for the spring semester we rotated where each week a different student is leading the study. This is giving more students a chance to delve deeper into scripture and practice sharing where they find meaning in it.

This year marks a big transition for the ministry as we have a new Campus Minister, Shannon Waite, working with the group. This transition allows us to continue to evaluate how we can best be a ministry together and to serve the Mary Washington community. Our student ministry team meets once a week to plan out and implement the weekly events, as well as our other programs. We have been striving to engage more with both our local Mary Washington community as well as the larger community through mission. We are looking forward to continuing to learn together what it means to be a Christian in today’s world and how we can grow in our faith. We invite you to check out our website www.campuschristiancommunity.com to see what we have been up to and to keep up to date with our ministry.

The Rev. Shannon Waite

Wesley Foundation at Longwood University & Hampden-Sydney College

In faithful response to God’s love for all creation, the Wesley Foundation in Farmville, Va., exists in order to be an expression of this love, primarily to and with the students. We seek to enable students to commit their lives to Jesus Christ and to live out that commitment in a life of love and service. In addition, we seek to be in ministry to and with the faculty and staff, larger college community and local United Methodist churches.

This has been another great year for Board development. The local Board has looked for ways to be more supportive both financially and with their presence. They continue to be active by seeking ways to raise money to fund the ministry and properly maintain our property. Board members are often present at our weekly large group gathering. All these efforts are designed to make the students feel more connected to the local Board. Each year we also have several Board members participate in our spring break mission trip. The Board continues to be supportive and encouraging through the implementation of building use policies and staff support. All this has been under the leadership of our Board Chair, Jeff Postans.

As always, missions have been a big part of our faith community at the Wesley Foundation. Our mission efforts have been focused on the Farmville area. They have included Health Kits for Haiti, Homework Buddies with Journey UMC and the Local Habitat for Humanity. These local mission events have made it possible for students not interested in a weeklong trip to experience the transformation that can take place through service to others. This year for our spring break we travelled to Chocowinity, NC. We had nine students, several Board members and several local church members for a total of 15 participants. It was a powerful trip and God changed lives because of time in the community.

The heart and soul of our full-time program of Campus Ministry continues to be our weekly Tuesday Fellowship Dinner and Program. Farmville District churches, groups and individuals provide meals that are followed by meaningful programs on a variety of topics given by different speakers. These speakers include pastors, college professors and administrators and students. It is a time of community building and fellowship that serves as the base of our ministry. Our gathering, which includes fellowship, worship and small group discussion, continue to challenge us to reexamine our commitment to Christ and our Discipleship. We also offer Bible studies and other small group ministries that are designed to challenge and support students. We have a “Round Table Discussion Group” meeting on the campus of Hampden-Sydney. This has become a “guy’s group” and provides an opportunity for discussions that range from deep theological issues to dealing with stress and peer pressure. We have reached out onto the campus more this year with small group gatherings on campus. One of these gatherings is our new Prayer Circle. Students gather in the grill of the student union and

have a time of prayer. Other students in the area are invited to offer prayer request or just join in the circle.

The doors of the building are left open most of the time, for study, prayer, relaxation, movies and TV, pool and ping-pong, and many fellowship opportunities. Many groups use the Wesley Foundation Student Center. These groups include AA, NA, the Farmville District Youth program, other community and church organizations, the Farmville District Pastors, and the District Committee on Ordained Ministry. It is our hope and prayer that the Wesley Foundation continues to be “a place where hearts are warmed.”

Richard Meiser, Director and Campus Minister

RISE: A United Methodist Faith Community

This past year at RISE has been one of change and growth among our community. We are continuing to grow and see the lives of college students be transformed. We continue to imagine what it looks like to be with the college students at James Madison, Eastern Mennonite, and Bridgewater. I could go on and on about the amazing students we have and how their lives are being transformed, but we thought it would be best if you heard it directly from them.

Justin Hicks, Coordinator of Campus Outreach RISE

The reason I went to RISE the first time is not nearly as important as the reason I went to RISE a second time. You can go to any church just once, or any event really, and never have any need to return. It happens all the time. But what convinces you to go a second time? I had heard RISE was weird, that it was a bunch of strange hippies- and even that I wouldn't “fit in” with a group “like that.” To be honest I have no idea why I went the first time. As a college freshman and a tired out Christian, I was looking for any group to plug into and anyone who would help me feel like I belonged. The world was very black and white then, and easy was better. Easy was safe.

Which ironically (or not so ironically if you think about it), is not who RISE is. I have asked more questions with RISE than I think I'm particularly comfortable with, and black and white turned more and more into a gray; a gray which I'm convinced is starting to be the true color of love and forgiveness. Gray is not easy, which I think is why I went back a second time to RISE and many more after that. It was the first place I had come across that didn't try to explain everything all at once; I wouldn't find any answers to the universe here. And to be honest it was uncomfortable and fascinating at the same time. It wasn't what I was looking for, but I know now that these are the people that I needed. With this community I consider to be my disastrously beautiful family, I have grown to live in the fraying gray of here and now. I have fallen in love with an immensely diverse group of people (which keeps things spicy), and been okay to ask the hard questions without really looking for an answer. We don't work towards answers; we work towards acceptance, honesty, love, and something we call God's dream. These are the things I needed most, and I found them in the most unlikely places.

I think these are some of the few words that I think are befitting to explain the impact that this community has made in my life, and the opportunities of life they have given me. I am proud of the work we do in our community, and the way we unconditionally love everyone we meet. That's something I think is really hard to find, inside or outside of a church. I am so thankful for the love I have been given here and the unconditional love I have been taught to show to others. I have never been part of a group that is so aware of every story that walks through our doors. We ask no questions. We make no judgments. One of our sayings is “Everyone means everyone.” We don't care what you look like or what you might believe. We're just glad you came and that we got to meet you, because you matter to God and so you matter to us. That makes things messy sometimes and really painful. It's a big risk to be brutally honest and authentic, but that's how the most beautiful relationships are built.

This is the place I have come to call home and a family I have come to love. As I'm preparing to graduate and move onto another city, I hope to create honest communities like RISE everywhere I go. As hard as it will be to leave, I can be RISE to those who may never walk through their doors. I can show the authentic love of God, I know I am a gift to this world and one by one we are working to mend it together.

Jordan Garrett, JMU Senior, RISE Worship Leader

In reflecting on what RISE has meant to me and how RISE has impacted my college career, I can only smile. My entire sense of meaning and faith have deepened far beyond I could have ever imagined. This community took me into a relationship with God that I could have never envisioned before. RISE has taught me what love looks like and what it means to live as a resurrection people. This community has taught me how to question everything I have ever known and challenges me each day to love people like Jesus radically loved every person he came into contact with.

I have become a person that wants to mend every part of creation that I touch with love. Jesus put me here to jump in and love this world he created. RISE has taught me that I am transformed through relationships. RISE has shown me what it looks like to not give up even when loving Jesus is not the “popular” thing to do. RISE has held me when I am broken and reminded me that I am enough and that God is enough. RISE has challenged me to jump outside of my comfort zone and trust that God is going to be there when I may fall flat on my face.

In college, it is easy to get caught up in the bubble that is the whole university life. Through RISE has beautifully torn those bubbles away to show me the Jesus that passes me on every street and whispers to me, “THAT person has something incredible to show you, if you let them”.

Maggie Nave, JMU Senior, RISE Worship Leader

My name is Alexis Ward and I am a junior at James Madison University. I am currently a religion major, music minor and beginning the journey towards ordination in the United Methodist Church. I firmly believe that this is the call that God has placed upon me, and I can testify without a doubt that he placed RISE in my life to get me there.

I started out at JMU as an eighteen-year-old girl with a full ride scholarship to play the bassoon and study to be a music teacher. I grew up as a military child and when I started at JMU my family had just moved to Connecticut, which felt like a lifetime away. I was surrounded by people and yet all alone in a strange valley. As an extrovert I knew this loneliness couldn't last for long, I needed people. I was born, baptized, and raised in United Methodist Churches across the United States; I figured a church was a good place to start. The first Sunday I attended church in the valley was at RISE and they were celebrating their second birthday, and what a day it was. There was celebration, music, laughter, party hats and praise, but the greatest thing that happened on that sunny Sunday morning was I knew that I had found my home in Harrisonburg.

Since my first Sunday at RISE I have gone from being volunteer, to intern, to Worship Coordinator and sitting on the church council which we refer to as the “Roundtable”. I am currently the only college student sitting on the Roundtable, which is both terrifying and exciting. The family I have found at RISE has pushed and encouraged me to use the voice I have been given me to do all that I can to mend God's creation. They've also taught me what it means to own up to my mistakes and ask for help when I need it. Since being at RISE I have grown as a student, daughter, friend, leader, and follower of Jesus.

Marianne Williamson said, “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.” This fear is what has held me back my entire life, and it is probably something I will continue to struggle with, but RISE has taught me to continue to have hope because love is stronger than fear.

Alexis Ward, JMU Junior, RISE Worship Coordinator

IGNITE United Methodist Church (formerly Tidewater Wesley Foundation)

2014 was a year of transition for the United Methodist Campus Ministry at ODU. After Annual Conference, we began the process of transitioning from the Tidewater Wesley Foundation to IGNITE United Methodist Church. This is new approach to campus ministry, creating a hybrid between a campus ministry and a new church.

The vision of IGNITE is to “IGNITE people’s hearts to change the city.” We believe that church is more than just a building or a service. In our words, it’s a verb: it’s who we are, what we do, how we live; it changes lives. This has been a message that has resonated deeply in our community.

For many years, Norfolk has struggled with serious poverty issues. The layout of the city is such that often the very wealthy will live a mere block from the very poor, with little or no interaction between the two. Within the city, there is a great desire for change, but often a lack of clarity for how to begin. We believe that the answer is Jesus Christ and his church.

Within the ODU context specifically, there is a palpable desire within the student body to make a difference through their lives. However, there is obvious resistance to religious institutions, especially the church. Students long to change the world, but do not trust the church. Our goal has been to help them reimagine what it means to be a church, to overcome many of their preconceived notions or past experiences, and to experience the body of Christ in action.

Much of our efforts this year have centered around establishing our name in the community and building a committed team of people who want to help bring a church like this to life. To do this, we have utilized a variety of methods. We have led a variety of mission experiences throughout the city, from feeding the homeless to painting with children from impoverished families. We have held Bible studies and worship nights. We have even handed out free t-shirts and water (almost 10,000 bottles) at home football games as a means of meeting people and sharing our vision.

Perhaps our most unique outreach opportunity has been a monthly gathering we have dubbed Theology on Tap. At this event, we meet at a local restaurant or social spot and discuss current events and how they relate to our faith. For instance, in the wake of the riots and court decisions in Ferguson, MO, we talked about issues of race in our own community, what the Bible speaks to these issues, and how we should respond. Such events have helped us to meet and build relationships with many people who have little interest in the institutional church, but are looking for community and the opportunity to impact the world around them.

What has been quite unique and exciting about IGNITE is that we have been reaching a population far broader than college-age Christians. Almost half of the people who have joined our team or attended our events have been unchurched. Furthermore, many have also been young adults and young families beyond the campus. Through this, we have experienced a growing momentum that will lead us into IGNITE’s launch in just a few months.

Starting on Easter, we will begin monthly worship services. Throughout this period we will continue to build our team and improve our services. Then, in late September, we will “launch” IGNITE, beginning to worship weekly. What is most exciting, though, is not merely holding regular worship or monthly events. It is the experience of making disciples, of watching God transform the lives of those who have joined our team, and anticipating the tremendous hope of what is still yet to come.

Brandon Robb

United Campus Ministries, Christopher Newport University

UCM, CNU has two basic overlapping components: the student discipleship group with the campus minister serving as advisor and resource; and the campus minister’s broader role on the CNU campus.

The student discipleship group meets almost every Sunday evening for a meal, fellowship and student-led program on a faith-related topic. Our group has a strong emphasis on showing our love for God by our service to others. Addressing hunger and poverty and alleviating their causes are our central focus. 2014 was our third consecutive year for conducting conversational English classes each Sunday afternoon, to enable them to improve their opportunities for employment. Most of our learners are native Spanish speakers, with a very broad range of prior education and work experience.

UCM’s major event to alleviate hunger was the Potato Drop, organized entirely by our students, in cooperation with the CNU Student Assembly and the Society of St. Andrew. 42,000 pounds of potatoes were deposited on the CNU lawn, and roughly 75 volunteers packaged them in ten-pound bags for distribution through food banks, church pantries, and feeding programs. The students have obtained funding for a second Potato Drop, to be held April 10th, 2015. In addition, UCM (and Circle K) assists each year with the local with the local CROP Walk, which circles around the CNU campus.

In October, the students provided two Halloween-related events: a fun house for young children and a Spook House for CNU students after the Homecoming Game. We served about a dozen children and 75 CNU students, and all had an exhaustingly good time. In February, students took valentines to a senior residence, where they participated in leading a worship service.

In November, UCM hosts our annual fundraising event, the Festival of Church Music. The university has been generous in allowing us to use the Chapel without charge for this, and the community loves the venue. One of our supporting churches provides a music director, who leads us to make a truly blessed sound of praise. Members of the Board and the UCM students take speaking parts, which several local choirs join together for a beautiful afternoon of worship. In 2014, we had over 200 participants, and we received the largest dollar amount of contributions ever. This was in large part due to the compelling remarks made by Paul Tribble, president of the university, and those made by two of our student leaders.

Our Board of Directors underwent a large amount of turnover in 2014, due to a number of folks completing 3 or 6-year terms. However, we have been led to a host of new and enthusiastic new board members, representing 6 Protestant denominations.

UCM partners with local congregations to provide free snacks and words of encouragement to students during exams. This results in over 1,500 direct contacts with CNU students each semester, helping young adults to connect or reconnect in a very gentle way with the church. Students and local church folks both enjoy this very much!

Over the six years I have been at CNU, I’m pleased that the relationship I have with the administration has grown strong. Simply put, I have become known as a trustworthy colleague who always tries to be considerate of those whose faith perspectives differ from my own. Consequently, I am often called upon to provide prayers for public occasions: Honors Invocation, Commencement, Memorial Services, etc. In the fall of 2014, I was an adjunct professor teaching Western Religions, in which I taught 19 students for 2 ½ hours a week. That’s more than I ever had as a pastor!

Susan H. Cothran, Campus Minister 155

Pace Campus Ministry (Wesley Foundation @ VCU)

As we began 2014, in many ways we resembled a local congregation in that we met every Sunday during the year. God blessed us by allowing us to welcome 6988 persons in our Sunday afternoon worship experience! To me, that's cause for celebrating the glory of our Risen Savior! In addition, there were another 1739 persons in our Monday night bible study (Drop Zone). All glory belongs to our God. A special thanks to the Office of Church Development for trusting us again with a generous grant to compensate our worship team, including a young preacher who has since decided to leave us. And while these numbers are impressive and may indicate fruit to some, they also indicate there's a hunger on the part of young adults for the Living Word.

Bishop Young Jin Cho attended one of our worship services and was so moved that he decided to share with the entire Virginia Annual Conference what God was doing here in response to our prayers. I am humbled to be recognized simply for being obedient to the Holy Spirit.

So we begin 2015 in transition as we wait to behold the wonders of our Lord in this New Year. What will God do? How will we respond to the move of the Holy Spirit? Who will step forward in response to the invitation of Jesus Christ? These and other questions await an answer as we endeavor to be faithful. Please, pray with and for us as we walk with students and others in the VCU Community.

James "JD" Daniely, Director

United Campus Ministries at Virginia State University Home of FLOW: Faith, Love, Outreach & Worship!!!

As always, United Campus Ministries at Virginia State University is extremely grateful for the support of the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church and the James River District for their prayerful and generous support of our ministry with young adults! God has provided an abundance of new opportunities for the 2014-2015 year and we are rejoicing over what has taken place and what is to come!! Our first class of Oikonomia: A Service Program for Future Church Leaders students provided the communities surrounding VSU with a number of instances to serve the needs of others in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Six students worked in groups of two with a number of local churches to volunteer at adult care facilities, elementary schools, faith communities, men's and women's shelters, and other civic minded organizations in an effort to share the love of Christ with others! In exchange for their services, they were granted stipends of \$2,000.00 at the end of the fall 2014 semester. The same award is awaiting them at the end of the spring 2015 term! We look forward to working with a new class of students in the fall of 2015 as they serve the ministry as interns to help us with a new vision for our campus ministry!!

In December of 2014, a new chapter of ministry in the village of Ettrick was catalyzed! The Ettrick United Methodist Church voted to partner with United Campus Ministries giving birth to a new church idea for young adults on the college campus and the community!! On February 1, 2015, this relationship commenced affording United Campus Ministries the opportunity to worship at the Ettrick UMC sanctuary on Sunday afternoons at 2:00 pm! By God's grace, by the fall of 2015, Ettrick UMC and United Campus Ministries will give birth to a ministry by the name of FLOW: Faith, Love, Outreach, & Worship!! With support from the Virginia Conference's Center for Congregational Excellence and the James River District, this new faith community will exist to serve as a vessel through which the power of the gospel will flow through the community of Ettrick!! There is much work to do in the restructuring of the ministry with an emphasis to reach both the campus community and those outside of it!! It is our continued prayer that God's grace and a harvest of dedicated students will continue to provide the levels of discipleship needed to thrust this ministry forward in Jesus' name!! We continue to pray for the spiritual, intellectual, and social growth of all of our ministries including the Avodah music ministry, the Chara performing arts ministry, the Girlz at the Gate intercessory prayer ministry, and the Friday night student led bible study "What's the Word?"

It has been an exciting year and we are confident that the new year will be even more so! We continue press towards the mark of the high calling of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!! We are thankful for the United Methodist Church as we could not answer to call of Christ in our area without your undying support!!

Rev. Delano Douglas, Director

The William and Mary Wesley Foundation

This year has been an amazing year of ministry at Wesley. The numbers of students, their passionate commitment to following Jesus, as well as our mission and ministry, are all very strong. Our campus ministry community continues to lead the way, as our vision statement says, "Through following Jesus, we embrace God's radical hospitality towards all." Not only are the students involved in Wesley aware of the grace and love that is embodied here, other students and the college recognize it as well. The students are following Jesus and leading the way.

Speaking of leading the way, our new Leadership Team took office in January. They are Carolyn Hartley, President; Victoria Gum, Devotions; Cara Dost, Discipleship; Erica West, Communications; Allison Harkness and Sadie Meadows, Fellowship. This group of dedicated, passionate students led the way in Wesley having a new focus and direction to our Sunday Night Programs. We now have themes that guide several weeks of worship, discussion, and reflection. This spring semester, those themes are God and Mental Health, Race and Faith, and Christianity as a Call to Action. We are already seeing a great response of students to these meaningful worship services, discussions, and programs.

Students are coordinating our partnerships with local churches in mission and ministry, as our connections with Williamsburg, Wellspring, and New Town UMC continue to grow. Nothing exemplifies this better than the Exam Break that we had at the end of the fall semester, sponsored by the Williamsburg UMC United Methodist Men. The UMM and the students partnered together in planning the event, and made some meaningful changes. The result was over 200 students coming to the Wesley Foundation to share in over 450 cookies baked by the UMM, gallons of hot chocolate. In addition, someone from Wellspring UMC had the idea of bringing their yellow lab puppy to the event, and that grew to three more dogs joining us for the event. We also had tins of cookies to share with students from Urbanna UMC's UM Women, exam break study bags from Wellspring UMC, and stress relief bags from the VA Center for Pastoral Care. In addition, students are also partnering together with Williamsburg UMC in their Messy Church ministry. Finally, this spring semester saw a new partnership develop with WindsorMeade retirement community. A group of four Wesley students lead a weekly Bible Study in their assisted living and health care area.

In addition to our Bible Study and Doubters Club weekly meetings, we continue to partner with other campus ministries and student groups in events, service, mission, and ministry. Already this year, Wesley has partnered with the Lutheran, Presbyterian, Catholic, Baptist, and Episcopal campus ministries, as well as the student NAACP, the Center for Student Diversity, and the Muslim Student Association from hosting speakers, to partnering in events, to joining together in services of remembrance. Finally, Wesley students are coordinating a service day at Shalom Farms for the entire campus ministry community, and this year our mission trip takes us to Costa Rica to partner with Costa Rica Mission Project. It continues to be a joy and a

privilege to serve with the students and board of The Wesley Foundation, as the students actively follow Jesus on campus, locally, regionally, and beyond.

Rev. Max Blalock, Campus Minister

Wesley at Virginia Tech

In our second year leading over 100 Roanoke District Youth in a “Mission Weekend” at Wesley, one of the youth remarked, “this generous extension of God’s love has made a

real impact on so many lives. The students at Wesley are all truly exceptional; they radiate such a magnificent love for Christ and others. I am amazed at the ministry that goes on [at Wesley] that is spread into the community...I experienced sanctifying grace working in my life through you all.”

It is this type of transformational ministry that is taking place at Wesley! We challenged our ministry to “Don’t Just Go to Church...Be the Church” and they have responded. We are living into our desire to “Love Out Loud” through outreach, discipleship, fellowship, mission, and worship. The students engaged in our ministries are embodying their gifts and strengths to build the Kingdom of God.

One of our growing areas of ministry is leading youth retreats across the Conference. Students are being the Church through leading the district youth in worship, mission, and small groups on their retreats. This ministry to the district youth has enabled our students to live out their faith while sharing about campus ministry to youth that will be attending Colleges and Universities across the Conference. It is incredible how many youth and youth leaders have given witness to the impact this ministry has had on them.

One youth shared, “I have been coming on this district retreat for 6 years and this was by far one of the best. I experienced God through the Wesley students in a way I haven’t before.”

The second year of 209 Manna Ministries (our student food pantry for Virginia Tech at Wesley) has seen such growth! The University calls on Wesley any time there are students who have need (such as apartment fires and homelessness) as well as the steady stream of students each week who come to the pantry due to food insecurity. We just recently partnered with another campus ministry to open the pantry more times throughout the week. We believe that this partnership will enable us to reach more students who have need. One student mentioned, “As an international grad student on a student’s budget, I am most grateful that an organization such as this exists to help those like myself or in a similar position.”

Last year over 40 students spent their Spring Break doing mission work in Brooklyn, NY for Hurricane Sandy Recovery. This year over 45 students are going to Edenton, NC to help the NC UMWIM tornado recovery efforts. The students’ passion for mission is witnessed in their desire to be the Church in the world. Whether it is the mission trips, collecting cake mixes for the Christmas Store, handing out 350 hot dogs to students downtown on a Friday night, tutoring at a local trailer park, or getting backpacks and school supplies for a local elementary school, the students at Wesley are truly “Loving Out Loud” in all aspects of mission work.

Being in the second year of our new worship service “Foundations,” we have seen tremendous growth. It is exciting to see students engaged in worship and it is becoming a huge part of our ministry. Our attendance is growing, but more importantly we are seeing students being transformed in the community of worship, gathering at the Table together on a weekly basis. Our small group ministry “Communities of Grace” is helping us be intentional about community. The revitalization of this ministry has seen a shift in our community building and authentic relationships. In just the second year, our “CoGs” have grown in number and in participation. We believe this is only going to continue, as our Outreach Ministry to new students is more active than ever. Reaching out to youth prior to them coming to Tech, more intentional and strategic advertising, and a desire to share the Wesley brand to more people on campus, we are witnessing our ministry being the Church to more and more people.

Wesley at Virginia Tech strives to be a vibrant part of our United Methodist Connection in ways that students can passionately enter into fellowship, discipleship, outreach, worship and mission while being a faithful witness to the love of God for all of our neighbors. As you can see, campus ministry is vital to the lives of our young adults and, at Virginia Tech, we are committed to providing a space where doubt and struggle, hope and joy are a healthy and authentic part of students’ faith journeys.

“When I think about the ways that Wesley is engaged in both the Virginia Tech and Montgomery County communities, and the ways that our students are embodying their faith through loving others and their actions, I see people that are truly striving to be the church. I believe that this importance of Being the Church and Loving out Loud will be something that continues to be a part of my life, as well as the rest of Wesley’s.”

Lauren Wright, Student Campus Minister

Bret Gresham, Campus Minister

BOARD OF LAITY

The Board of Laity continues to create a culture of call by engaging, equipping, and empowering laity so that we might effectively partner with each other and our clergy to live out God's call upon our lives.

Associate Conference Lay Leader, Larry Creamer (S) leads a team of the board for Engaging (Holistic Stewardship) and is developing a culture of call for all laity focusing on prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness identifying networking and learning opportunities for District Lay Leaders and Local Church Lay Leaders, establishing and giving oversight to various means of communication between members of the Board of Laity (i.e. e-mail groups, articles for *The Advocate* and other print communications, website). Additionally developing and offering communications alternatives for meetings of teams.

Associate Conference Lay Leader Joyce Duncan (L) leads Equipping (Leadership Excellence) This office is responsible for developing and offering training to new District Lay Leaders overseeing Lay Servant/Speaking Ministries, developing resources for District and Local Church Lay Leaders, and resourcing Local Church Leadership Development and Nominations Committees.

Associate Conference Lay Leader, Johnnie Morris (F) leads a team of the board for Empowering (Shared Ministry) and is strengthening lay-clergy partnerships for ministry (Partners in Ministry Empowering Shared Ministry has launched this year with the help of Martha Stokes, Conference Staff), advocating for the laity and promoting Laity Sunday, encouraging the presence of the District Lay Leaders, Associate District Lay Leaders, or other laity involved in District ministries at all local church Charge Conferences and the assessment of needs of District and Local Church Lay Leaders in order to better support their service.

Lay Servant Ministries, led by Johnnie Draughon have had a year of fruitful ministry. Johnnie and the District Directors continue to implement our new structure and the courses reflective of the *Discipline* 2012 requirements.

Extremely exciting was our invitation from the Virginia Conference to the Association of Conference Directors of Lay Servant Ministries that was held in Williamsburg, January 22-25, 2015. Directors from all over the country enjoyed creative worship, were greeted by Bishop Cho, conducted very important ministry awareness time and had opportunity to visit ministries in the area and relaxed in Colonial Williamsburg.

The Lay Servant Academy led by David Bailey and his dedicated team created a weekend of learning and fellowship at Blackstone. While hampered by winter snows, all who gathered were well fed by the Spirit.

The Board of Laity will also welcome the Southeast Jurisdiction Conference Lay Leaders in July 2015 to Richmond for their summer meeting. We are grateful for this opportunity to welcome them to our conference and share in their time with us.

We have celebrated the leadership of two District Lay Leaders whose terms have ended on the board. Peggy Oakes (D) and Janie Nuttall (R) have greatly enhanced their respective district ministries. We thank them both. In addition we have celebrated two new faces joining the board. We welcome T. Bobby Thompson (D) and Ron White (R).

Thank you to Martha Stokes for many years of always being at the ready when the board needed assistance or guidance. And welcome to Cheryl Edley-Worford, our not so new anymore Director of Inclusivity and Lay Leadership Excellence. Thanks to Cindy

Ingroff, Administrative Assistant for invaluable assistance and gifted wisdom always. My partner in ministry, Bishop Young Jin Cho continues to shake my spiritual being. I thank him for his ministry among us, as we clergy and laity together look excitedly forward to a new conference year 2015 in continued prayer and spiritual growth.

Warren R. Harper, Conference Lay Leader

UNITED METHODIST MEN

The primary purpose of United Methodist Men is to declare the centrality of Christ in the lives of men and all their relationships. Accordingly, the conference UMMen works with the General Commission of United Methodist Men (GCUMM) in Nashville Tennessee. We also work with the Districts and Local fellowships on developing and sharing programs that the needs and interests of men of all ages.

With the support of the General commission of UMMen in Nashville and the Virginia Conference for Ministry to men through men is done mainly with men's chartering and Every Man's Share (EMS) renewals in accordance with the *Book of Discipline*.

The charter is the connectional link that binds our UMMen local units together in ministry with all those even in other annual conferences.

The full UMMen conference cabinet consists of 41 members broken down as follows: Six elected officers, 16 districts presidents 11 appointed positions, six past-presidents and the Bishop as an Honorary member.

In addition to the four cabinet meetings we have spring leadership training day. We also have our annual Men's breakfast during annual conference. We sponsor a men's spiritual retreat the first full weekend at the conference and retreat center in Blackstone Va.

We support the Disciple Bible Outreach Ministries (DBOM) in Virginia which is a bible study for our prisons also Heart Havens and Wesleyan Building Brothers.

Jeff Hall, President

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

The organization of United Methodist Women will be 150 years old in 2019. In the past 145 years we have successfully fulfilled our PURPOSE and served women, children, and youth in our local communities, across the Conference, and around the world. We do this by equipping our women in the local church through education and opportunities to be in mission.

It was a United Methodist Women in the Danville District who saw a need and began a mission which became Henry Fork Center in Rocky Mount; a United Methodist Woman who saw a need to educate the children of Franklin County and began what is now Ferrum College; it was a United Methodist Women in Portsmouth who began what is now Wesley Community Service Center, a National Project of the organization; and it was the United Methodist Women who wrote the Charter For Racial Justice 40 years prior to it being adopted by the UMC - leading the fight for justice through foresight and wisdom. We continue to make our women aware of needs and opportunities and are making plans now for the next 150 years.

All women are invited to join this worthwhile organization which is dedicated to improving the lives of women, children, and youth. A woman

does not have to be a United Methodist to become a United Methodist Women. She just needs the desire to use her God-given gifts to engage in God's mission in the world.

We will provide many opportunities in 2015-2016 to equip women to be God's hands in the world. All are invited; registration forms for each event can be found at www.vaumw.org.

- Mission Encounter July 24 - 26 in Blackstone sponsored by Conference Board of Mission and United Methodist Women
- Young Women's Event (18 - 40 years), Blackstone, September 18-19
- 43rd Annual Meeting on October 24 - 25, Blackstone
- February 4, 2016 United Methodist Day at General Assembly, Richmond
- Spiritual Life Retreat on April 29 - May 1, at Blackstone Conference and Retreat Center.
- June 3 - 5, Southeastern Jurisdictional Meeting in Charleston, SC
- June 11 is our Annual United Methodist Women's Day at Ferrum College

The *Discipline* says there will be a United Methodist Women organization in each local church. Pastors are members of the United Methodist Women and are an important part of the organization and its success. If your church would like help in organizing or reorganizing a unit, please call either Mary Jane Rawley or Joyce Winston for assistance. UMW are great supporters in the church's mission because of its organization and educational opportunities.

Joyce Winston, President

CHURCH DEVELOPMENT TEAM

The Church Development Team has been working hard to fulfill its mission to assist in creating New Faith Communities and supporting the work of vitality in existing churches under the All Things New Plan. Below you will find CDT's activities toward this work.

The Five Talent Academy continues to offer training opportunities related to worship, financial stewardship, discipleship, evangelism, and ministry with the poor. We also continue to offer these events via web-based simulcast to regional locations throughout Virginia. Recent events have included leadership by Maria Hall Dixon and Shane Claiborne.

The Equipping Planter team directs the invitation, discernment, and training of planters of new faith communities for the Virginia Conference. Those who are interested in planting engage in a process of discernment as to each person's gifts for this unique ministry. The first stage is the Church Leadership Institute, which is held annually each fall. We had over 60 participants this past November. Some who attend this event decide that they wish to explore this call more deeply. These prepare a self-reflective paper and are interviewed by members of our Church Development Team. Summaries of these interviews are given to the cabinet, to help inform their appointment of planters of new faith communities. Once appointed, church planters attend a boot camp during the summer of their appointment, and coaches are assigned to help guide their ministry.

The New Faith Community subgroup of the CDT continues to help create a culture of excellence, fruitfulness and vitality in the area of new faith community development in our conference. This year we have continued to resource and encourage recently initiated new faith communities, local churches, district Boards of Mission and their equivalents, the Cabinet and others in our conference to live out the "All Things New" strategy through the planting of new faith communities. The New Faith Community subgroup is eager to work with local churches and groups of local churches who are discerning where, when and how to give birth to a new faith community. We continue to be available to work with district Boards of Mission or their equivalents in the new faith community discernment process. In addition to resourcing our conference in the area of new faith community development, the New Faith Community subgroup also receives, reviews and makes recommendations to the CDT and the Common Table regarding funding for new faith community development proposals. This year we received multiple proposals that were reviewed and given careful consideration. We remain prayerful and excited about the future of new faith community development within our conference.

The Church Development Team partners with the Large, Medium and Small Church leadership teams. In 2015 the training is as follows:

- 1) Just in Time training for Large Church pastors is May 7-8, Mid-Size church pastors is May 12-13. And Small Church will be July 11.
- 2) Fall event for LC is Oct 27 with Gil Rendle leading, Mid Size will be Oct 1, 2 and 3 with Phil Maynard leading and Small Church will be Oct 31 with Lewis Parks leading.

We would like to thank Wayne Snead (former CDT chair), Mark Ogren, Kim Johnson and Pat Hickman for their efforts that help make All Things New in the Virginia Conference.

Melissa Dunlap, CDT Chair

COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES

The Commission on Disabilities (COD) is charged with being the primary Virginia Conference resource and advocate for persons with disabilities and their families. While one focus has been the more obvious disabilities and challenges of mobility, visual, speech and hearing deficits, we are no less aware of the difficulties facing those with developmental, intellectual, emotional and spiritual issues. We seek to serve in order that all might participate and reach their fullest potential as valued Children of God.

Education, awareness and spiritual support are the main keys, along with commensurate economic and other forms of assistance. COD continues to provide grants for accessibility improvements and scholarships for those without the financial means to participate in appropriate summer camp opportunities. We all need a little help from our friends from time to time. For many persons with disabilities, just having a friend can be crucial. Camp Rainbow Connection (CRC) lost one of its best friends and energetic advocates this past year. Dorothy Crowder was so much more than the resident camp nurse for the staff and campers alike. The new part-time CRC Coordinator is Stacy Roberts.

Our Virginia Conference agency should be strengthened and facilitated through our mutual responsibility and partnership with COD, CRC and the Core Leadership Team. COD has greatly benefited from the love, energy and guidance of our former Conference Director of Inclusivity, Martha Stokes. Martha has moved on to other responsibilities. We at COD look forward to continued growth and possible new ministries under the capable leadership of our new Director of Inclusivity, Cheryl Edley-Worford.

Rev. Charles W. Townsend, Chair

COMMISSION ON ETHNIC MINORITY CONCERNS AND ADVOCACY

Having engaged the previous year in identifying objectives and strategies to further its mission of serving as a prophetic voice for the full and equal participation of ethnic and racial minorities into the total life and mission of the Virginia Annual Conference, the Commission on Ethnic Minority Concerns and Advocacy (CEMCA) focused this year on seeing that mission in action throughout the conference. In September, we convened a group of conference leaders to seek to connect others who are already doing vital work in this area, and to discuss how our efforts overlap and could be strengthened. The conversation was fruitful, identifying successes and challenges in cross-racial and cross-cultural ministry and explicitly examining the processes by which we go about this, and how it can be improved. One of the needs we identified is the necessity of finding and sharing widely stories of success and challenge in cross-racial and cross-cultural ministry, and so we welcome the input of all in the conference in identifying such stories.

In addition, we are excited about the possibility of renewing the Bishop's Convocation on Race and Religion in 2016, and look forward to the process of prayer and discernment in helping to plan what promises to be a time for holy conversation around difficult issues, as well as a time for rejoicing in common worship among the incredible diversity already present in the Virginia Annual Conference. Finally, CEMCA was pleased to assist with travel to both the Black Methodists Church Renewal (BMCR) national conference as well as the conference of the Metodistas Asociados Representando la Causa Hispano Americano (MARCHA).

We are indebted to the enthusiasm and fresh ideas the Commission as a whole has brought to this process, and most especially to those outside CEMCA who took the time to share with us the wonderful ministry the conference is already doing, and to learn, together, how we might further these ministries. With their help, your prayers and support, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we look forward to continuing the work of living more fully into this vision.

Jake Paysour and Gary Miller, Co-Chairs

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS AND ROLE OF WOMEN

The Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW) encourages participation of women in the full life of the United Methodist church. To further this mission, COSROW collects data on the participation of women, minorities, youth and young adults, and persons with disabilities in the leadership roles of the church as represented by on-stage and at-the-microphone presence at Annual Conference. Data collection continues with Annual Conference 2015 and the selection of delegates for South East Jurisdictional and General Conference.

Data collection at Annual Conference 2014 continues to suggest women are encouraged to participate, yet we still have work to do. During the planned worship services, men and women are both involved at a relatively equal rate. This modelling of women in leadership has a massive impact, encouraging our congregants to recognize women have an important and active role in the church. Unfortunately, women represent only one-third of the activity in the plenary and business portions of the meeting, compared to men's representation at two-thirds. Likewise, minorities average 10-20% of the participation in plenary, business and worship sessions compared to the 80-90% of those of Caucasian descent. Youth and young adults account for 3-7% of the activity during the business session, and the proportion of persons of disability participating is negligible.

The Virginia Conference still has work to do and it is up to all of us to be part of that work. We need to encourage women, persons of color, young people, and persons with disabilities to be active stakeholders in the life of the United Methodist church. Our churches need to welcome all God's children in the leadership of their churches. It means encouraging women to be lead pastors in large membership churches. It means welcoming women as pastors in all UMC churches in the Virginia Conference. It means encouraging women as leaders in committees, such as Finance and Trustees, beyond the traditional care-giving roles so often assigned to them. Likewise, minorities, youth, and persons with disabilities should be encouraged and welcomed to take up the mantle God passes to them.

We are called to go forth and make disciples of ALL nations. To make ALL feel welcome, ALL need to be visibly and actively involved in the life of the church. Let us strive to become the church for ALL persons.

Shan Sixbey, lay chair

DISCIPLESHIP CIRCLES

Two Discipleship Circles Facilitator Training Events resulted in over fifty (50) trained facilitators equipped to assist in the formation of Discipleship Circles throughout the Virginia Conference. The Discipleship Circles movement formed from the Bishop's *All Things New – Equipping Vital Congregations* Task Force designed to increase discipleship formation and congregational vitality through leadership development. Discipleship Circles focus on connections: to God, to one another, and to the world beyond our local churches. Beta Groups formed in 2014 continue to meet and assist in the development and implementation of Discipleship Circles. Look for updates on the Discipleship Circles Facebook page as Discipleship Circles continue to form throughout the Virginia Conference and become a grass-roots, conference-wide resource. You are invited to join in prayer along with the Prayer Team ministry as we work to increase congregational vitality and fulfill the Great Commission to make disciples for the transformation of the world.

Cheryl Edley-Worford, Director of Inclusivity and Lay Leadership Excellence

IMAGINE NO MALARIA

The Bishops Initiative, Imagine No Malaria, hit the ground running in June 2014 with our goal of saving 100,000+ lives from the treatable and preventable disease of malaria by Annual Conference 2015. Since then we have worked through our Bishop, our Cabinet, our Steering Team, our Field Coordinator, our District Point People and our pastors to inform our churches and encourage them to participate in this initiative. We have seen tremendous support and creativity from all age groups, especially the children, youth and young adults. We have appreciated the way our churches have reached into their community to educate and involve as many as possible in this effort. We have made a difference in the lives of thousands who will not have to struggle any longer from the devastating effects of malaria. As we have hopefully transformed the lives of so many, we pray our lives have also been transformed in this process!

Maria Maxwell, Virginia Conference Field Coordinator



*The following five reports are from agencies that have been awarded
Conference Benevolence Grants:*

GRACEINSIDE (FORMERLY CHAPLAIN SERVICE PRISON MINISTRY OF VIRGINIA)

Shot at point blank range in the face with a sawed-off shotgun, it is a miracle that Robert Ball survived. But what happens next is a testimony to the power of grace received. As a young man, left for dead, Robert Ball became a Corrections Officer intent on finding the man who had all but killed him. Twenty-five years later, he retired as a Captain from Virginia Correctional Center for Women in Goochland, Virginia – never having found his perpetrator but having found forgiveness. Called into ministry and convicted by what he had seen and lived, Robert Ball completed his theological education and returned to prison as a chaplain in 2006. Chaplain at both Lunenburg and Baskerville Correctional Centers, Chaplain Ball is a living example not only of how God can transform a heart – but also how God can radically transform lives – inmates and staff. Learn more about Chaplain Ball and other chaplains like him throughout our Commonwealth at www.graceinside.org. Virginia Conference support helps Chaplain Ball and his colleagues continue saving 30,000 incarcerated lives (and the staff who tend them) from the inside-out!

GraceInside has employed chaplains, like Chaplain Ball, since 1920. Although almost 100 years old, we are also brand new! 2014 was a year full of reasons to celebrate something new at GraceInside:

- New name - from Chaplain Service Prison Ministry of Virginia, Inc. to GraceInside.
- New website! www.graceinside.org.
- New Facebook presence at GraceInside
- New Twitter presence @GraceInsideVA
- New YouTube channel
- New print and video materials
- New organizational structure

We celebrated a stronger presence in the community and heightened awareness of our ministry and mission. All those things make our real mission, saving lives from the inside-out, more attainable!

Unique in the United States, Virginia is the only state that maintains expressly Christian chaplains inside the prisons and can do this only because GraceInside obtains private funding. The prison mission field is extremely fertile and fruitful. Broken lives open to the healing of Christian influence and the touch of Jesus. Through GraceInside, lives are truly saved and entire families can be transformed. Sharing Jesus through worship services, baptisms, Bible studies, grief groups, recovery programs and pastoral care, GraceInside's 30 privately funded Christian chaplains provide hope for our Christian brothers and sisters incarcerated in Virginia's many state prisons. The Methodist church was among our founding denominations. Your support is ESSENTIAL to the survival of GraceInside. Without your continued help, we cannot do the job you have tasked us to do. We rely on our founding denominations to keep us in their hearts.

We end 2014 with a commitment to increase our efforts to provide our chaplains with the support they deserve as they visit those in prison on behalf of all Christians. We are grateful that six chaplains now can serve full-time for GraceInside but we need to increase the hours our chaplains share the ministry of Jesus Christ within the prison environment. We at GraceInside thank you for your support! We know this vital ministry impacts all of us, whether we see it or not. It is our privilege to see firsthand that lives, through Christ, are changed from the inside-out.

Rev. J. Randy Myers, President

DISCIPLE BIBLE OUTREACH MINISTRIES OF VIRGINIA

Disciple Bible Outreach Ministries (DBOM) of Virginia began in Virginia in 2011. There were 39 prisons and juvenile detention centers identified as sites to take the Disciple Bible study and Rings of Fellowship for the youthful offenders ministry into. Since then, with the help of volunteers and contributions D.B.O.M has been able to take the study to ten prisons and one juvenile detention center. Three of those prisons are now studying Disciple II in addition to Disciple I studies they had already completed. Once the studies are started in an institution, they usually continue as there is a turnover of participants at each institution. The motto of Disciple Bible Outreach Ministries is "Transforming lives in prisons and pews." Because we are trying to encourage as many people as possible with studying the Word of God, we also provided the necessary materials for a small rural church which asked for help. It is our goal to eventually reach more prisons.

Gene Mims, President

JUST NEIGHBORS MINISTRY

Just Neighbors Ministry is a mission project of the Arlington District. Just Neighbors has a unique focus on humanitarian cases, serving people who for the most part have no other place to turn for immigration legal assistance. The northern Virginia area is fortunate to have an array of legal services providers, but no other organization can assist clients who cannot afford to pay any fee amount, however reduced. Just Neighbors helps women who have experienced domestic violence or other violent crimes, the homeless who have lost their documents, and youth and young adults who seek temporary permission to work in the United States.

Our impact is multiplied by the extraordinary talent of volunteers, both professionals and others who provide clerical, interpretive and other services. In 2014, we had 141 volunteers donate 6,969 hours to serve 761 clients in 887 cases. Since Just Neighbors began in 1996, we have helped clients from 127 countries.

One client wrote, "When I first came to you all, I had lost all hope but now I feel like everything I have been through is for a reason. I don't know what that reason is yet, but I have hope for the future. . . . It wasn't just the immigration services, it was the conversations we had; the way you encouraged me. Thank God and thank you so much!" Another said, "You care. That makes all the difference in the world."

With statements of appreciation like that in mind, it is heart wrenching that Just Neighbors turns away two-thirds of the individuals calling for assistance. Our limited capacity forces us to close our door to eligible clients. We expect the need for immigration legal services to those of low-income

to increase with any change to immigration law.

The 2015 budget of Just Neighbors is \$520,312. Funding comes from this conference, local churches, foundations, local governments, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and individuals. Six percent of the budget comes from client fees.

Allison Rutland Soulen

SOCIETY OF ST. ANDREW

Started by the VA Conference 36 years ago, SoSA has become the most successful, and effective, ministry of its kind in the nation.

During the last 12 months millions of people were blessed by this ministry of “faith into action” by saving and distributing highly nutritious food to our brothers and sisters in need. Also, in the most recent 12 month period tens of thousands of volunteers and supporters were able to “be a blessing” through SoSA.

The ancient Biblical practice of “gleaning” is alive and well. SoSA received national recognition by being invited to speak at three high level national forums and many regional venues to help focus attention on food waste. SoSA also established a formal partnership with the Disciples of Christ denomination and will play a key role in their bi-annual General Assembly in Columbus, OH this July.

Through good stewardship of creation SoSA provides millions of pounds of the highly nutritious fresh fruits and vegetables so important in any diet. For many of the poor in America, SoSA is their only source of fresh produce. As always, SoSA continues to accomplish much:

- All three programs, the Potato and Produce Project, the Gleaning Network, and Harvest of Hope experienced excellent program performance during the past 12 months
- SoSA saved and distributed 28.9 million pounds of fresh produce. All of this food would have otherwise gone to waste!
- The Potato Project distributed over 10.5 million pounds of produce all across the country.
- The Gleaning Network saved and distributed over 18.3 million pounds of healthful food
- Over 34,800 volunteers put their faith into action by volunteering in SoSA's Gleaning Network and using the Biblical practice of Gleaning to help feed the hungry
- More than 5,600 separate gleaning events were conducted throughout the country providing hands-on opportunities for people to be involved in the ministry.
- Food was distributed nationwide including in every county in the VA Conference area.
- The ministry touched the lives of millions of people all across the country
- Hundreds of churches across the country joined in SoSA's ministry for the very first time and thousands of churches, of all denominations, continued their partnership
- SoSA's influence has played a key role in national associations such as the Alliance to End Hunger, NAHO (National Anti-Hunger Organizations) and others.
- SoSA hosted the VA Conference District UMW presidents for a meeting
- SoSA was invited as a presenter at three national food waste forums
- SoSA's Harvest of Hope program had nearly 500 participants in a dozen work/study/mission retreats in five states.
- SoSA hosted a VA “Day of Gleaning” on behalf of the Governor and First Lady of VA and gleaning events were held all across the Commonwealth on a single day.
- Over 86.6 million highly nutritious servings of fresh produce were provided at a cost of about two cents a serving!
- Our belief in good stewardship of all resources resulted in a total overhead of less than 3.5%!

We are called to love “in deed and in truth” and that has been SoSA's ministry for over 36 years. That ministry happens because many others take that calling to heart. Volunteers, churches, individuals, farmers, feeding agencies, transporters, Board members, staff, and financial partners, all comprise a thriving network to feed the hungry in our land. The leadership demonstrated by the Virginia Conference continues to be a blessing to this ministry and to all those in need of food; for the body and the Spirit.

Steven M. Waldmann, Executive Director

VIRGINIA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

“At a time like this, when a large part of the world is in turmoil, the work of a council of churches becomes more significant than ever.”
The Rev Henry Lee Robison, Jr, 1st Executive Secretary VCC 1945

These words of Rev. Robison seem even more prophetic today as we face challenges on all fronts. Even as we face tight economic times, your council remains strong albeit on very fragile financial footing. During our Annual Meeting in 2014 we elected a new president, the Rev. Dr. John Myers, of the Eastern Association, Southern Conference, UCC to continue the strong leadership tradition of the council and the work of Bishop James Mauney(ELCA). Changes in the refugee and migrant head start programs have exacerbated our financial position, creating a significant unexpected loss of revenue, forcing restructure and significant downsizing. Continuing declines to revenue have created the need to reduce our staff to part time and cut all other areas of our budget in an effort to control expenses. Our vice president the Rev. Jenee` Gilchrist(BGC) has stepped up to assist in representing the council at various strategic meetings in Washington, DC, with the NCCCUSA and various denominational gatherings augmenting the work of the staff, as well as having planned the November 6, 2014 Annual Gathering of the Council featuring the Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III.

Exciting plans are underway in 2015 with an Ecumenical Young Pastors Summit on September 2-3; followed by a Faith Leaders Fly-In in collaboration with LifeNet Health and UNOS regarding issues of Life, Death, and Regenerative Medicine. The Council continues to support LARCUM, the National Workshop on Christian Unity, and The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and other expressions of ecumenism within the

Commonwealth. Rev John Myers' challenge to the denominations is bringing renewal, excitement and technology to the way the Council relates and functions. This challenge has brought new excitement and energy to the Council as we discern God's call in the 21st Century. We also play an enlarging role in Interfaith Dialogues, including our long-standing dialogue in Richmond involving five of our judicatory executives (of which Bishop Cho is one), three Rabbis, and two Imams.

Our work with VA VOAD, VDEM, and the Department of Homeland Security in helping the Faith Based Community prepare for and respond to disasters continues to have a high level of respect and integrity with our partners. We continue to stand with our Native American brothers and sisters of the six Virginia Tribes as they continue to seek federal recognition now in our 15th year of this effort. The Council joined with other religious leaders in providing testimony for the second Congressional Hearing on Solitary Confinement in February. Our partnership with the VICPP and the Virginia Catholic Conference helps give voice to our shared concerns for justice on the floor of the General Assembly. Our Rural Family Development Program continues to serve children in Caroline County through the Head Start Program.

Jesus prayed "that all may be one so that the world may believe" (John 17). The Apostle Paul reminds us we may not all look alike, but we need each other, and together we comprise one body. When we come together through the Virginia Council of Churches, we provide a common voice that becomes believable in the midst of turmoil and change that the Lord God is one.

The Rev. Dr. John Myers – President
The Rev. Jenee' Gilchrist – Vice President
Vacant – Treasurer

The Rev. Kate Costa – Secretary

For further information, contact Virginia Council of Churches, 1214 West Graham Rd., Richmond, VA 23220-1409, (804) 321-3300, FAX (804) 329-5066. The website at www.vacouncilofchurches.org has information about the council and links with member denominations at national and Virginia levels.

The Rev. Jonathan M. Barton, General Minister



CONFERENCE LEADERSHIP DISCOVERY & DEVELOPMENT TEAM Nominations

Director of Connectional Ministries

Marc Brown

Common Table for Church Vitality

Larry Lenow
Rachel Miller

Board of Church and Society

Calvin Hughes
Mikang Kim
Richard Obermann
James Page Jr.
Samantha Wilds

Church Development Team

Mike Plasters
Susie Wolf
Johnnie Morris
Randy Duncan

Board of Discipleship

John Hall
Mike Davis
Paul Greer
Cindy Banek
Scott Beck
Liz Buxton
Albert Wright

Young Adult Council

Robert Michalides
Kathleen Royston

Youth Council

Justin Hicks

Older Adult Council

Barbara Parker

Board of Global Ministries

Michael Southall-Vess
Marcia Huntsman
Emmanuel Nkrumah
Angela Peabody
Richard Cobb
Drew Colby
Darlene Runaldu

Board of Higher Education and Campus

Ministries
Josh Blakely
John Dunning
Michelle Hettman
Bill Pike

Blackstone Conference and Retreat Center

Catherine Bolton
Debra Broadwater
Franklin Gillis
Lee Sheaffer

Virginia United Methodist Communications, Inc.

Brian Bachrach
Scott Bach-Hansen
Jennifer Kinne
Barbara Lewis
Sandra Benton Plasters

Commission on Disabilities

Marjorie Long-Brown
Alan Follett
Sylvia Massie
Neil McLaughlin
Robert Steven McMillen
Cheryl Nester
Patrick Pillow
Shaun Smith

Equitable Compensation Commission

Pat Harding
Jim Thomas

Commission on Ethnic Minority Concerns and Advocacy

Chenda Lee
Sandra Green
Kyla Silver
Shana Colwell
Gustavo de Segovia
Karen Bragg

Council on Finance and Administration

June Carpenter
Chris Reidel
Marilyn Traynham
Bret Hrbek

United Methodist Foundation

David Bates
Bobbie Henley
Lyman Kelley
Pat McGukin
William Ricketts
Bradley Watson
Jeff Wilson
Neil Wise

Virginia United Methodist Pensions, Inc.

Larry House
Johnathan Kennedy
Mildred C. Spiers

Commission on the Status and Role of Women

Jan Prentace Commander
Candace Martin

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Sandra Benton Plasters

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Virginia United Methodist Housing Development Corporation

Sue Boltz
J. P. Hong
Kathy Lutman
Harold White Sr.

Society of St. Andrew

Ken Bradford
Bob Gibson
William Kuecker

Preachers' Relief Society

Edward Lilly

Ferrum College

Sue Bolz
Peter Hartman
Carolyn Smith
Marilyn West
George Yancey

Randolph College

Cara Smith Barnes
Hylan Thomas Hubbard

Randolph Macon College

F. Gillis Green
R. Earl Johnson
Charles W. Steger

Virginia Wesleyan College

Alexander B. Joyner
Seonyoung Kim
Amy Mallett Richard
Cynthia M. Rodriguez
Marshall Wayne Snead

COMMITTEE ON EPISCOPACY

The Committee on Episcopacy is charged by the *Discipline* to be responsible for the review and evaluation of the Episcopal leader of the Annual Conference. The Southeastern Jurisdiction COE and the College of Bishops approved a Review and Evaluation tool that would be used by all conferences in the Jurisdiction. We began the process in 2014 of meeting quarterly and emphasizing two sections of the evaluation tool at each meeting. We had invited guests who work closely with our Bishop at each meeting to participate in the discussion. The discussions have been open and honest. We began year two of the process at our February 2015 meeting.

The purpose of these discussions is to be supportive of the work of our Episcopal leader both within the Annual Conference and in the General Church. We also offer encouragement and prayers for our Bishop.

I want to express appreciation to our Committee for their dedication to our work and to Bishop Cho for his spiritual leadership in our Annual Conference.

Shirley Cauffman, Chair

EPISCOPAL RESIDENCE COMMITTEE

The Episcopal Residence Committee completed the annual inspection of the Episcopal Residence in September 2014 and it was found to be in good condition. There is a humidity problem for which we have not yet found a solution.

Shirley Cauffman, Chair

Sallye Bowen, President Conference, Board of Trustees
Steven Summers, President, Council on Finance and Administration

BOARD OF ORDAINED MINISTRY

The Board of Ordained Ministry enables disciples of Jesus Christ to become effective clergy and certified lay professionals. To this end, the Board assists these persons in the areas of call, development and collegial support. Our full report on changes in conference relationship has been reported to the clergy executive session for its action.

This year we welcomed the Reverend Meredith McNabb as Director of the Center for Clergy Excellence. Meredith's abilities and passion are furthering the mission and effectiveness of the Board and other ministries which the Center has oversight. We are grateful for her presence in this position.

This spring saw the graduation of the first cohort of clergy participating in the Virginia Clergy Leadership Program. This program which Bishop Cho has supported so faithfully, identifies gifted clergy and helps them: grow deeper in their spiritual maturity, excel in the areas of interpersonal and leadership skills, bring out the missional potential in their faith communities and strengthen their disciple-making abilities. A second cohort will begin in the fall. Funding for this program is provided by the Center for Congregational Excellence, the Bishop's Foundation, the Virginia United Methodist Foundation and the Council for Finance and Administration. The Board is grateful to these groups for providing this funding.

The Calling 21 program places interns in local churches so they may experience the intersection of their gifts with the life of a congregation. This year marks the first Calling 21 intern who will be ordained at this annual conference with Megan Roth Clayton. It also marks the beginning of the new Connections 21 where interns spend a second year but this time at the Conference Center in Glen Allen. This summer there will be seven Calling 21 interns serving: Casey Akers at Basic (S), Steven Field at Belmont (Rd), Susan Pullin at Braddock Street (W), Matt Simpson at Charity (ER), JoAnn Batteiger at Culpeper (C), Andrew Dietz at Lane Memorial (L), Virginia Greer at St. Luke's (YR) – and three Connections 21 interns – Elijah Ferebee, Michelle Hettmann and Sara Nichols -- assigned to the conference center but also relating to: Welborne (Rd), Boulevard (Rd) and Woodlake (Rd), respectively.

Across the United Methodist connection, there is much conversation to address the growing problem of clergy debt. While our Board provides grants and loans to assist seminary students, we are also looking at ways to educate candidates early in the process to understand personal finances and how to make healthy financial decisions – including loans for education.

The work of the Board continues sponsoring the annual Licensing School for all first-time appointments, supporting the gathering of the Orders of Deacon and Elders and the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members, examining persons seeking credentialing as ministers, interviewing those of United Methodist and other denominations who wish to transfer to the Virginia Conference, holding two Candidacy Summits for those embarking upon the candidacy process, interviewing those seeking retirement, reviewing requests for extension appointments, visiting students – those from Virginia and those interested in coming to Virginia -- at eight seminaries, awarding scholarships and service loans to seminary students, training district Committees on Ordained Ministry, providing continuing education assistance to clergy, guiding provisional members on their journey, promoting lay professional certification, providing ongoing ethics training, assisting those on clergy medical leave, and attending to conference relationship matters.

Ed Walker, chair

VIRGINIA CONFERENCE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Conference Board of Trustees met for their regularly scheduled meetings plus an additional conference-call meeting.

The Articles of Incorporation for the Virginia Conference Board of Trustees were approved by the Virginia State Corporation Commission.

The final figures for the net proceeds from the sale of the previous Episcopal residence and the total cost of the current Episcopal residence, which was built in 2012, were submitted to the Board of Trustees.

The net proceeds from the sale of the former Episcopal residence, which was situated in the Fox Run area of Richmond, were \$390,372. In addition, some items of furniture were sold with net proceeds of \$1,000. These totalled \$391,372.

The expenses for the new/current Episcopal residence were as follows: construction costs were \$472,629; the cost for new furnishings was \$80,697; moving costs were \$5,630; and landscaping costs were \$11,280. This makes the total cost for the new/current Episcopal residence \$570,236.

The Episcopal residence meets the Minimum Parsonage Standards for the Virginia Conference, complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and has been certified as a "green house" with energy efficiency. Everything in the residence is in good working order, and work on the driveway has been completed.

Because of the changes that have taken place in our society over the past fifteen years and the subsequent changing needs of the Church, the United Methodist Conference Center, in Glen Allen, is addressing how these changing needs affect the Conference Center. The Conference Board of Trustees appointed a Facilities Use Plan and Process Committee, which will look into re-configuring some of the areas of the building to meet current needs. Architectural plans, including electrical needs, will be presented to the Trustees in late March. Cost projections are not yet available. Construction is anticipated to begin in mid-April, and is projected to take place in three stages.

Dewitt Hartwell, President of the Virginia Conference Board of Trustees from 1984 to 2004, claimed the promise of the Resurrection on November 25, 2014. DeWitt, a World War II veteran, was decorated seven times while serving as a navigator with the 8th Air Force in the European theatre. DeWitt was a devout Christian and a faithful United Methodist. We remember DeWitt with love, respect, and appreciation for his many years of service to the Virginia Conference. During his years as President of the Board of Trustees of the Virginia Conference, he served with gracious dignity, with expertise borne of many years of experience in the savings and loan industry, and with the greatest degree of integrity. Thanks be to God for DeWitt Hartwell, and the contributions he made to the life and work of the Virginia Conference Board of Trustees.

The Conference Board of Trustees elected the following officers for the coming conference year: Carl L. Moravitz, President; Kathleen Lutman, Vice-President; Clyde T. Nelson, Secretary; David Dommissie, Treasurer.

Sallye E. H. Bowen, President

THE BISHOPS' FOUNDATION

The Bishops' Foundation provides training for leadership development of both laity and clergy in the areas of evangelism and preaching. Three predecessor organizations, the Goodson Foundation for Preaching, the Stockton Endowment for Evangelism, and the Pennel Endowment, merged and formed the assets of the Bishops' Foundation. The foundation is led by a board of directors (five clergy and four laity) nominated by the Cabinet with endowment funds invested with the Virginia United Methodist Foundation.

The Bishops' Foundation is not a funding source for scholarships or local church financial assistance but is an event-sponsoring or co-sponsoring organization that supports the training of both lay and clergy. In 2014-2015 the inaugural Clergy Leadership Program was financially supported. Preparations are underway for a preaching event, similar to the Academy for Preaching, at Blackstone Conference and Retreat Center on September 21 – 24, 2015. Seeking to raise the level of vital preaching in our congregations, this small group participant event is designed to encourage and inspire those who

have engaged in preaching for many years.

During the year the foundation has reviewed incorporation issues and clarified its investment policy. The board remains interested in addressing any “gaps” that may exist in current conference ministry programming to foster opportunities for young adult laity and clergy to help the church in reaching all generations in the areas of evangelism, preaching and discipleship. www.vaumc.org/BishopsFoundation

Kevin W. Bruny, Chair

UNITED METHODIST-RELATED SCHOOLS

Ferrum College

At “100 years and counting!” Ferrum College enters its second century with purpose, passion and pride.

Our sense of purpose has never been stronger, a feeling that was certainly felt by the visionary Methodist women who founded Ferrum Training school in 1913. Ferrum treasures this heritage that grew into today’s Ferrum College and is extraordinarily grateful for this enduring relationship.

We remain passionate about our historic mission of opportunity, access and affordability that has allowed legions of young men and women, many who are first generation, minority, underprepared or otherwise “at risk” to obtain a college education when other doors were closed to them.

The pride we take in our beautiful campus, our second-to-none facilities, our outstanding academic programs and extracurricular activities and our incredibly devoted faculty and staff is boundless. The “spirit of Ferrum” is palpable as you stroll across campus and catch snatches of student conversations about class projects, play rehearsals and athletic accomplishments. Faculty members are making full use of the new “Saari Faculty House” on campus, named in memory of our late, beloved professor, Sasha Saari. This space has been set aside solely for use by faculty for meetings, seminars, and receptions with fellow academics.

We were thrilled by the success of our recently concluded 5-year Centennial Campaign. We surpassed our \$25M goal to support academic programs, additional classroom and science lab facilities, endowed professorships, scholarships. Most importantly, the successful \$1M endowed chaplaincy component of the campaign will help ensure the strength and continuity of our Dean of the Chapel position. We particularly thank United Methodist Women for their enthusiastic support of this effort since this is core to our Mission.

Jan Nicholson, our Dean of the Chapel, has begun her second year of service to the campus and has become the “face” of our faith at Ferrum. She has reinvigorated Vaughn Chapel with much needed technology upgrades and the installation of inspirational banners, and has reinvested the campus into the daily use of that beautiful facility. The chapel is the venue not only of regular weekly services but is also used daily for classes and special activities such as our exciting worship service on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day that featured the student Gospel Choir.

Dr. Nicholson also presided over another memorable United Methodist’s Women’s Day in June that, as always, included worship, fellowship, food and fun for the hundreds of UMW members who gather on our campus for this annual event.

And, at “100 years and counting” we are incredibly blessed by strong support from alumni, friends, foundations, the UMW, The United Methodist Church and the Virginia Annual Conference to help us build a better college, a stronger community, and a world filled with opportunities. With the encouragement and trust of all of our constituents, Ferrum will continue to thrive and succeed.

It is always a privilege for me to take part in Virginia Annual Conference activities and have the opportunity to work with such an amazing group of clergy and lay people who are involved in so many important ministries. Most importantly, we thank the members of the Conference who recommend the unique Ferrum educational experience to potential students. We acknowledge this with gratitude and ask you to always remember our campus community and our students in your prayers.

Jennifer L. Braaten, President, Ferrum College

Randolph College

My first year at Randolph was one of great excitement and success for the College. We are building on that momentum as I near completion of my second year at the helm of this wonderful institution. I am pleased to share positive news in enrollment: the College is experiencing its largest enrollment since 2008. A significant contributor to this enrollment success has been our focus on retention, which continues to improve. In addition, support from the College’s alumnae and alumni has increased yet again, both in terms of actual dollars, as well as the percentage of this group who give back to the College.

The enhancements we continue to make on campus are proving popular with students. Students are overwhelming enthusiastic about the recently opened Grosvenor Apartments, our first apartment-style housing we have been able to offer. The first phases of the renovation of Wright Hall and Cheatham Dining Hall were completed in August with the second phases scheduled for completion by the time students arrive in the fall. The students are eager to return to the historic Wright Hall with its vaulted ceilings and hard wood floors but with the new amenities of an elevator, laundry facilities, air conditioning, and more.

The College has launched a new partnership with the National Gallery, London. Each year we will receive a high level visitor who will lecture on our campus while we will send two students to the Gallery for summer internships. Our first visitor was Dr. Ashok Roy, director of collections for the Gallery. He spent several days on campus speaking with our students and faculty and delivered a keynote to a standing room only crowd from the community. The partnership continues to grow, and this year will feature an alumnae and alumni event at the Gallery, as well as a visit from the retiring director of the Gallery, Nick Penny.

U.S. News and World Report, Forbes, The Princeton Review, The Washington Monthly, and others continue to name Randolph a “best college.” While I caution that one should never put too much stock in the various College rankings, the fact that Randolph is consistently mentioned as one of the nation’s finest indicates that the quality of the education we offer students is one that others find valuable. Most remarkable is that we provide this highly regarded educational experience at an affordable cost to our students, thanks to the College providing over \$13 million in institutional grants to students.

We at Randolph are thankful for the strong relationship that exists between the College and the Conference. An important focus for my presidency has been to strengthen the opportunities for spiritual development of our students. Our campus chaplain, Rev. V. Jennifer Moore is developing new and exciting programs to help minister to the needs of students. We continue to seek ways to increase her ability to impact the lives of our students. I conclude by thanking the Conference for its ongoing support of our mission. Your contributions help us to create the next generation of civic and economic leaders.

Bradley W. Bateman, President

Randolph-Macon Academy

This past year was a time of mixed blessings for Randolph-Macon Academy, but one in which the Lord’s grace and provision have been evident throughout. We were profoundly blessed in our college acceptances and scholarship offers this past year—the 73 graduates of the Class of 2014 earned 292 college acceptances to 171 different colleges, with nearly \$9 million in college scholarship offers. It is a record amount for our school, and we are

thankful to God for providing those opportunities to our students.

Our students continued to serve our school, local, and international communities, topping in 15,000 hours of service last school year. They raised funds for Special Olympics, collected food and coats for the Salvation Army, ran a campus recycling program, held bake sales for a child in need of a heart transplant, cleaned roadways, and wrote letters to soldiers, among many other projects. In addition, we received word in the late spring of 2014 that our Air Force JROTC unit earned the Distinguished Unit Award with Merit, placing it among the top Air Force JROTC units in the country.

In September 2014, Maj Gen Maury Forsyth resigned from his post as President of R-MA and I was named Acting President. Gen Forsyth was well-loved on campus, and the days following his departure were emotional. However, with God's help, our campus community pulled together. Our Lord of course knew the storm was coming and he prepared many things to help us through this time of transition. Among those was the appointment of Joshua Orndorff to serve as our chaplain.

We have always had a mandatory weekly chapel service at Randolph-Macon Academy. Under Chaplain Orndorff's leadership, students look forward to these services, and have become more involved than ever in their planning and execution. He implemented the Fellowship of Christian Athletes Bible Study at both our Middle School (grades 6-8) and our Upper School (grades 9-12). R-MA has a unique blend of students from over a dozen countries, coming from a wide variety of faiths. At the start of the year, Chaplain Orndorff held an ice cream social and invited local Christian pastors and leaders of other faiths to come in and meet our students. He challenged the R-MA community to truly be a "city on a hill," and they have responded. One of the major events we have held during this school year was a "Nothing But Nets" basketball game to raise funds for Imagine No Malaria. Chaplain Orndorff also formed a SALT (Serving as Leaders Together) team of students to help plan and lead chapel services, Bible studies, and ministry events.

This past fall we celebrated the 50th anniversary of John Campbell Boggs Chapel. Through this service we were able to re-dedicate the chapel to God's service, and also come to a renewed appreciation for the blessing of this wonderful facility. It is the site of not only our own services, but guest speakers, weddings, baptisms, and funerals.

We thank God for his continued blessing and provision throughout this past year. We also thank you for your prayers and financial support, the latter of which has made it possible for us to provide scholarships to United Methodist students, many of whom could not attend Randolph-Macon Academy without financial assistance. Please know that your gifts are making a difference in the lives of children every day.

In March 2015, we welcomed Brigadier General David Wesley, USAF Retired, as our new president. We are excited to have him join the Randolph-Macon Academy family and ask that you keep him and all of us in your prayers.

Jonathan Ezell, Acting President

Randolph-Macon College

Randolph-Macon is a selective, co-educational, nationally ranked liberal arts college located in Ashland, Virginia, just minutes north of Richmond and 90 miles south of Washington, D.C. The college achieves its mission of "developing the minds and character of its students" by balancing a demanding academic program with individualized attention or "moments of connection" between its exceptional faculty and students. The student-faculty ratio is 11:1 and the average class size is 15 students. The college has an outstanding reputation for its national and international internships, study abroad programs and undergraduate research opportunities.

Randolph-Macon College integrates an exceptional, individualized education with an intentional, personalized four-year program called The Edge, which is focused on preparing our students for careers and post graduate success. Faculty serve as mentors and offer important advising, while instilling important career success strategies and life skills in the classroom. The Edge, offers our students the tools they need to lead the pack and have a "competitive advantage" after graduation. This success of this program is reflected in the college's new tagline, Building Extraordinary Futures.

R-MC offers a Four-Year Degree Guarantee, which pledges in writing that freshmen who meet all necessary requirements will graduate within four calendar years. If not, Randolph-Macon will waive tuition costs for R-MC courses needed to complete the degree. Currently, 95 percent of Randolph-Macon graduates complete their degrees in four years or fewer.

The 2013-2014 academic year began with a total enrollment of 1,325 students. Nineteen states and five foreign countries are represented in the Class of 2017; 51% of the students are male and 49% are female. In addition, 21% of the 410 students are minorities, and 34% are Presidential Scholars, R-MC's signature scholarship that recognizes students who demonstrate the highest levels of academic achievement and leadership.

Randolph-Macon's Building Extraordinary campaign reached its \$100 million goal in 2014—a full 19 months ahead of schedule. The Campaign, which launched in April 2011, was designed to build or renovate residential, academic, athletic and student-centered facilities, greater opportunities for faculty and students in and out of the classroom, scholarship assistance, and programs that support the continued improvement of student outcomes through career and graduate school preparation. The goals for the campaign were set forth by the college's strategic and master plans. Because of its early success, the campaign goal was extended to \$115 million to include building a new science building.

Alumni support for their alma mater is at an all-time high with 38% of the alumni making a gift to the college. This ranks R-MC's alumni participation among the top 30 of all colleges and universities, private and public, in the country.

Brock Commons, a new student center, was completed in summer 2013 and is the new "hub" of activity on campus. Brock Commons includes a movie theater, campus bookstore, dining services with an open café, balcony, portico with tables, student mailroom, and multi-purpose rooms and spaces to support campus camaraderie. Construction of Brock Commons was made possible by a \$5 million gift from Joan and Macon F. Brock Jr. '64 and by the generous support from numerous alumni and friends of the college. During summer 2013, construction began on Birdsong Hall, a residence for upperclassmen. This three-story facility opened in summer 2014 and includes 30 suite-style residences, plus common areas, study rooms and a two-story 3,280-square-foot multipurpose room, the Lindgren Pavilion. Birdsong Hall, which borders the football/lacrosse field, is named for Constance and Thomas Birdsong '49 and The Birdsong Corporation; construction was made possible through their \$2 million gift.

Renovations to Copley Science Center, which took place during summer 2013, include a new roof and window replacements. In addition, a new Psychological Sciences Complex was created in Smithy Hall. Fundraising is underway for a new science building, which will connect to the Copley Science Center on the northwest side. This three-story, 2,700-square-foot facility, with state-of-the-art teaching laboratories, plus classrooms, faculty offices, and the Office of Pre-Health Advising, will also house the biology, environmental science/geology, and chemistry departments.

The faculty also approved a new behavioral neuroscience major, the college's fifth new major in the past four years.

Randolph-Macon's pre-med program continues to flourish. In April 2013 the college announced its Guaranteed Admission Agreement with the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Nursing Program. In October 2013, the college formed a Guaranteed Admission Agreement with the George Washington University School of Nursing and established an Early Assurance Program with the Eastern Virginia Medical School (EVMS) Physician Assistant program. In addition, the college has medical school partnerships with George Washington University, EVMS, and VCU.

R-MC was also thrust in the national spotlight in June 2014 when Economics Professor Dave Brat defeated incumbent Eric Cantor in a stunning upset during the 2014 Republican primary for Virginia's 7th District Congressional Seat. One day earlier, R-MC Sociology Professor Jack Trammell announced his candidacy for the same race representing the Democratic Party. National and international media were drawn to the college campus, to cover the impact this "living civics lesson" was having on the R-MC community and highlighted R-MC's rich, long-standing history of political and civic engagement.

R-MC's January Term is a four-week session in which students can immerse themselves in other cultures, conduct a regional, national or international internship or take an on-campus course in a specific area of interest. In 2014 students studied abroad in Austria, Germany, England, France, Japan, Greece, Turkey, and Italy. J-term not only offers global educational opportunities, but life-changing experiences. January term internships that provide unique opportunities for our students would not be possible without the support of Randolph-Macon alumni who offer students one-of-a-kind experiences. Other students gained experience interning at companies and non-profits such as Bon Secours St. Mary's Hospital, Mailing Services, Inc., the Children's Theatre of Virginia, Genworth Financial Services, and the Cultural Arts Center in Glen Allen.

The Schapiro Undergraduate Research Fellowship program (SURF) is an endowment to support scholarly undergraduate research by students in all disciplines. SURF allows students the opportunity to conduct original research, under the guidance of a faculty member, and to be paid a stipend. Many students present their findings at academic and professional conferences both nationally and internationally.

The A. Purnell Bailey Pre-Ministerial Scholarship Program, designed to support students who express an interest in a Christian vocation in ordained ministry, established in 2004, continues to flourish. A limited number of select students are awarded this scholarship each year and receive half-tuition for the first two years and full tuition for the junior and senior years; mentoring; and assistance in fulfilling the requirements needed for acceptance into seminary in the United Methodist Church. Two internships in a ministry setting are also mandatory during the students' college careers.

Student outreach through community service continues to be an important aspect of a Randolph-Macon College education. The SERVE program (Students Engaged in Responsible Volunteer Experiences), in the Office of Student Life, is an integral part of Randolph-Macon's community engagement and leadership initiatives. R-MC coordinates dynamic opportunities for service and service-learning to help students explore the root causes and contexts of social needs through connections with the greater community. Students are actively engaged in Habitat for Humanity and the American Cancer Society Relay for Life, and in April, students volunteer for Macon a Difference Day, which is held annually in conjunction with Earth Day.

At Randolph-Macon College, students bond with their peers, faculty mentors and alumni to build meaningful relationships that last a lifetime.

Shenandoah University

With 4,000 graduate and undergraduate students, Shenandoah University educates and inspires students through its College of Arts and Sciences, Harry F. Byrd, Jr. School of Business, Shenandoah Conservatory, Eleanor Wade Custer School of Nursing, Bernard J. Dunn School of Pharmacy, and the School of Health Professions. As a proud United Methodist institution, Shenandoah University continues to collaborate within The Four Areas of Focus initiative of the United Methodist Church to engage the Church's mission "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world" and to reach beyond the university to engage the world. However, this year I would like to concentrate on just one of them — how the university develops principled Christian leaders.

Calling 21

Next year Calling21, the partnership of Shenandoah University's Institute for Church Professions, the Virginia Conference Cabinet and Office of Clergy Excellence, the Fund for Theological Education, and Wesley Theological Seminary, will celebrate a decade in helping students explore and discern their call to ministry in the 21st century! Since the program's beginning in 2007, more than 70 young adults have been placed in local churches in the Virginia Conference and have discerned their call to ministry as Calling21 interns. Approximately two-thirds of these interns have started the candidacy process, have entered the seminary, or are currently serving local churches. Shenandoah University continues to offer the orientation for the interns on campus led by Rev. Dr. Justin Allen, our dean of spiritual life, and Emma Johnston, a spiritual life intern, a student at Wesley Theological Seminary, and 2007 Calling21 intern, who provide mentoring for the interns. Twelve Shenandoah University students have participated in Calling21 over nine years, including two this year — first-year student, JoAnn Batteiger, second-year student, Andrew Dietz, and recent graduate, Virginia Greer, who will be attending the Candler School of Theology in the fall.

Faith Seeking Justice Christian Leadership Program

The Faith Seeking Justice Christian Leadership Program at Shenandoah University continues to educate and inspire new leaders. In April our students coordinated and led a large event (in partnership with the Winchester District) for our United Methodist youth groups titled Thy Kingdom Come. Shane Claiborne, from The Simple Way, and Lisa Sharon Harper, from Sojourners Magazine, led the event with the Keith Elgin Band providing music. The proceeds for the event went to our Imagine No Malaria initiative. The "every life save a life" rally cry was a reality as every student that attended the event paid \$10 that went directly to the Imagine No Malaria campaign.

This April our Faith Seeking Justice students also welcomed Brother John from the Taize community in France. After our students visited Taize for a week last year, we invited Brother John to lead us in a day discussing young adult leadership and spirituality. The United Methodist community was invited to participate in a Taize worship experience at noon on Wednesday, April 22 and a session at 4 p.m. led by Brother John addressing the question, "Why do over 100,000 young people flock to Taize each year?"

Next year our Faith Seeking Justice students are gearing up to attend General Conference in Portland, Oregon! This will be our second time attending General Conference with our students. In 2012, twelve students accompanied Rev. Dr. Rhonda VanDyke Colby, Rev. Dr. Justin Allen, and Rev. DeLyn Celec to Tampa. Before the trip our students and spiritual life staff will study the General Conference committees, the issues on the table, and then they will observe the process for our global United Methodist Church.

Multiple Worshiping Communities

Shenandoah University continues to provide multiple worshiping communities. We have a University Chapel worship service on Sundays at noon and a Wednesday Night Live (WNL) service at 10pm. Students not only worship at these two services, but they provide the music, lead the community in prayers, and they also preach at every WNL service.

This year we have also created an interfaith prayer and meditation space. Providing a place where people of all faiths on our campus can pray and meditate represents the radical hospitality that we hope to create for all children of God. Additionally, Shenandoah University was nationally recognized as part of President Obama's Honor Roll for Interfaith Community Service in 2014. Only two other Virginia schools of higher education were recognized for this award.

Finally, it is my joy to announce that we installed a new trustee at the October meeting of the board. Beatrice B. von Gontard has joined our team, dedicated to making a difference in the lives of our students.

We are grateful for the continued relationship with the Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church as together we seek to make an impact at the local, national, and global levels. I can assure you that Shenandoah University is embodying the mission of the United Methodist Church as we simultaneously seek to engage our calling to educate and inspire leaders for our church and the world.

Tracy Fitzsimmons, Ph.D., President

Virginia Wesleyan College

The Board of Trustees, faculty, staff and students would like to thank those in the United Methodist community for their leadership and support of Virginia Wesleyan College. We are grateful for our connection to the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church and respectful of our Methodist heritage.

The 2014-2015 academic year can be characterized as one of achievement and transition. On May 21, 2014, the Virginia Wesleyan College Board of Trustees approved a new strategic plan that provides a path for growth and positive change for the College. VWC 2020: Pathway to Prominence grew out of the College's existing mission of preparing each student for a meaningful life and career. At its core is a new vision for Virginia Wesleyan College as a beacon for the liberal arts in the 21st century, where experiential learning opportunities empower students to grow as principled scholars and community leaders. At this same Board meeting President Greer announced that he would be retiring on June 30, 2015 after 23 years of dedicated service as Virginia Wesleyan's president. This announcement launched a comprehensive nationwide search which culminated on February 26, 2015 with the selection of Dr. Scott D. Miller as VWC's fourth president. Dr. Miller has been the president at Bethany College in West Virginia for eight years. He was previously president of Wesley College in Delaware and Lincoln Memorial University in Tennessee. He earned his B.A. in communications from West Virginia Wesleyan College, an M.A. from the University of Dayton, an Ed.S. from Vanderbilt University, and a Ph.D. from The Union Institute and University. Dr. Miller, 55, brings to VWC a lifetime of commitment to the values of a residential, liberal arts campus in a pluralistic society, with an emphasis on teaching, service, student-faculty engagement, and lifelong learning. Dr. Miller and his wife Annie are lifelong Methodists.

In May 2014, the College graduated 230 students, earning their degrees in 31 different majors. Currently, the College has over 1,400 undergraduate students with a student faculty ratio of 13:1. Our students receive individualized attention and are encouraged to grow, both as students and citizens of the world. They are challenged by talented, supportive professors, 90 percent of whom hold the highest degrees in their respective fields.

Here are some of the highlights from this past academic year:

- In October, a new documentary about Virginia Wesleyan's annual on-campus winter homeless shelter premiered. *Winter Shelter, On Campus: College Students Encounter Homelessness at Home* is a 16-minute documentary directed by VWC Associate Professor of Communication Stu Minnis and Director of Community Service Diane Hotaling. The film brings viewers through one full night of the shelter, breaking down the evening's events into segments including arrival, dinner, social time, lights out and departure. The filmmakers hope that other colleges and universities will view this structured sheltering model and consider adopting a similar program.
- In January, Virginia Wesleyan College's 9th Annual On-Campus Winter Homeless Shelter was once again a transformative experience, not only for the shelter guests but for the VWC students, faculty and staff who volunteered for this unique event. Many students who volunteer for the shelter enrolled in a Winter Session course that addresses the sociological underpinnings of homelessness and encourages students to look beyond stereotypes about the homeless.
- Dr. Wansink and Dr. Lindvall led a March 2015 trip with 23 students to explore Religious Freedom and Expression in the Continental Reformation. October 31, 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's nailing of his 95 theses on the Wittenberg Door. Students experienced Castle Church and the city of Wittenberg, traveled to Worms and learn about the Swiss reformers in Geneva and Zurich.
- We acknowledge a gift from the Board of Missions of the Elizabeth River District of the UMC to provide scholarships for thirteen VWC students toward the March 2015 Spring Break Nicaraguan mission trip lead by our Chaplain, the Rev. Greg West. Once again, students worked with the House of Hope, a ministry to women and children who have been trapped in prostitution or human trafficking and with several local churches.
- In addition to the annual mission trip, Chaplain Greg West continues to lead Marlin Ministries on campus, a growing Christian community. He encourages students to be a part of the College's weekly worship gathering on Sundays as well as participate in any one of fourteen different Christian gatherings during the week. Chaplain West leads four Life Groups during the week. They are an experience in Christian community where students share life together while studying the Bible, praying and serving together. The vision statement for Marlin Ministries reads: *Discovering who we are in God's eyes; Experiencing Jesus' love and grace together and Living by the Spirit and sharing Jesus' ministry with everyone.*
- In connection with the Virginia Conference, Virginia Wesleyan continues to host the annual Continuing Education Seminar for Clergy. This year's speaker, who led a two day workshop on March 16-17 on the topic of Turbo-Charging the Wesleyan Tradition in the 21st Century was Rev. Jorge Acevedo of Grace United Methodist Church in Florida.
- Our students have also participated in projects such as the Empty Bowls fundraiser and Marlins Read neighborhood tutoring projects. With the success of Marlins Read has come another opportunity for community service, Marlins Add, an expansion of the highly successful student led mentoring program.
- With the retirement of Dr. Paul Rasor, long-time Virginia Wesleyan College faculty member Dr. Craig Wansink was appointed the Joan P. and Macon F. Brock Jr. Director of the Center for the Study of Religious Freedom (CSRF). Created in fall 1996, the CSRF is a resource for education, respectful dialogue, and mutual understanding relating to issues of religion and faith perspectives. Wansink is leading the College's plans to modernize the Center along with Kelly Jackson, who joined the CSRF team as Associate Director and Dr. Eric Mazur, who will serve as Fellow for Religion, Law, and Politics. "The goal of the CSRF is to equip students to be leaders and citizens who recognize how the reconciliation of religious differences creates the most meaningful opportunities for civil solutions to difficult and urgent problems," Wansink says. "Our challenge is to do so in ways that are both exciting and meaningful for our students and the broader community." The reorganization of the CSRF creates new and unique opportunities for increased student involvement, curriculum-based programming and dynamic community partnerships that support the Center's mission. Among other events, the Center hosted speakers on Islam, a sponsorship of the One Love Festival, and a lecture via Skype from Amman, Jordan on health care and Palestinian refugees.

Throughout the past year, the College has celebrated its Methodist heritage and its strong ties to the larger community, while continuing to reconfirm its aspiration to be a supportive community that is committed to excellence in our academic programs, higher learning, social responsibility, ethical conduct, and religious freedom.

ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED MINISTERS AND SPOUSES (ARMS)

ARMS is an association of retired clergy, spouses, and surviving spouses in the Virginia Conference that promotes fellowship, encouragement, support, learning, and sharing. ARMS provides a voice for retirees by facilitating vital connections with each other and the church. All retired clergy, spouses, and surviving spouses are members of ARMS.

The main ARMS event has traditionally been an annual fall retreat. However, in response to suggestions received via a survey of members in October 2014, we are in the process of setting up a series of regional meetings that will allow our members to come together without traveling great distances or staying overnight. As of this writing, the first series of these gatherings is being planned for April, 2014. ARMS is sponsoring these initial gatherings in partnership with the Conference Board of Pensions and Health Benefits.

ARMS maintains contact with members through its newsletter *To Arms* and electronically through the conference Retiree Net.

The theme of this year's Fall Retreat, Oct 7-8, is *Seeing the World through the Eyes of the Millennials: A Path to Justice and Peace*. Our main facilitator will be Joe Eldridge who has spent more than twenty-five years working in the public policy arena as an advocate and analyst on international human rights and humanitarian issues. Also featured is an evening of music with Joshua N. Wortham, a graduate of Campbellsville University with a degree in Church Music. As always, worship and fellowship will be central to the retreat. Retreat brochures are available at the ARMS Display Table, the Retiree Banquet, and from VUMAC.

Harry & Gale Kennon, co-presidents

BLACKSTONE CONFERENCE AND RETREAT CENTER

The Blackstone Conference and Retreat Center or as many remember it –VUMAC – continues to do well and serve our Annual Conference. Sam McCracken is the Executive Director and is a smiling face for all who use and come to BCRC. The Board of Trustees works very hard to make sure that BCRC is the Retreat Center that our whole Conference will love and use.

In 2014 we saw many changes and additions:

- The Biomass Boiler and Heating System came into its own. There was a great deal of fine tuning but this system now heats all the hot water, heats the entire building and heats the swimming pool. The new system burns wood pellets and saves the Center \$8500 a month over what was previously paid for oil.
- A challenge Grant from the Titmus Foundation was met and now the historic building's front portico has been restored to its original beauty. The wicker room under the front porch is being restored and will be dedicated in October as the UMW Room. This room will be restored and commemorate all the funds the UMW has given to BCRC through "Dimes and Dollars" for Blackstone.
- In 2014 BCRC accommodated over 12,000 overnight guests and hosted nearly 200 events an increase of 1500 people and 50 events over 2013.
- Our Annual "Christmas at Blackstone" this year featured Elizabeth Von Trapp, the granddaughter of the Von Trapps of the "Sound of Music" fame, who entertained us with a mix of traditional and contemporary music and song for nearly two hours to a group of over 150. The event started with an open house, delicious meal, and concert and concluded with an open carol sing in the Virginia room.
- We are in the process of hiring a Development Person and Program Person, so we will have staff to go all over our conference to spread the good news about all the programming that is happening and sharing the good news of how individuals and groups can help us continue the renovation. We are looking for individuals and groups to sponsor a room on the second and third floor. Renovation includes new windows, two new twin beds, new sleeper sofa, new ceiling and new handicap bathrooms in every room. It's been more than 40 years since the last renovation and we need to make the second and third floor shine like the first floor. When we contact you, please give us a hand in this renovation so Blackstone will continue to be a place of beauty and rest for many years to come.

BCRC's commitment is to "Let Every Soul Be Jesus' Guest". Give us a hand and schedule your next event at BCRC. Be part of the thousands who come to Blackstone every year to find fellowship and a closer walk with Jesus.

Tommy Herndon, chair

PREACHERS' RELIEF SOCIETY

In the past year between its annual meetings, November 2013--November 2014, the Preachers' Relief Society made five grants to assist clergy families who were experiencing severe financial distress. The needs of these families were all brought to the attention of the Society by the superintendents of the districts in which the families lived. The crisis for which four of the five grants were made came about because of medical expenses which were incurred but not covered by insurance.

The work of the Society is currently supported primarily by proceeds from its investments but also by income from bequests from estates. The Society also welcomes contributions from the living.

The trustees of the Society are Robert N. Baker III; James R. Bergdoll, secretary; Sallye Bowen; Robert F. Cofield, vice-president; Katherine Kidwell; K. Dane Mills, treasurer; Henry Rogers, Harold E. White Sr.; and Robert T. Casey, president. Larry Field of Scott and Stringfellow is the investment advisor.

Robert T. Casey, president

RETIRED CLERGY HOUSING CORPORATION

The Retired Clergy Housing Corporation began serving the needy Ministers of the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church in 1932. In the beginning, however, the Corporation was known as the Home Corporation. Thanks to Ministers and Lay Members of the Conference, funds and property have been contributed with enthusiasm that now our assets are almost five million.

Now we have 23 homes located in the communities of Danville, Roanoke, Lynchburg, Raphine, Staunton, Bridgewater, Winchester, Richmond, and

Hampton. One in Roanoke is vacant at this writing which gives us an opening in case someone has to take leave of absence or retire unexpectedly.

Perhaps someone reading this report would want to explore the possibility of including Financial Contribution or Property to the RCHC through their will. To do so is very easy and the leadership of our Corporation is eager to help anyone so motivated. Your help can and will mean so very much to needy Ministers in future years.

Nancy and I have been serving our Corporation since 1994. During our Annual Board Meeting in November we asked the Board to explore avenues of cooperation with the Virginia United Methodist Homes. Chris Henderson, President of VUMH, with Nancy and I, will seek avenues in which this cooperative effort can be achieved, and present our discussion to the respective Boards for approval. We invite you to be in prayer for us as we seek to move forward.

Again, I would like to emphasize that I remain ready to share with any Organization in your local Church the importance of our work. There is a short video available and I am happy to answer any questions you may have. There is a completely free service to you and your church. Perhaps, Superintendents might find time (about 7 minutes) for this video presentation at their District Conferences which in turn would reach many individuals on the local level.

Dr. Thomas L. Coffman, President

SOCIETY FOR WESLEYAN STUDIES

The Society for Wesleyan Studies (SWS) was established in 1983 to renew Wesleyan themes in the life of the Virginia Annual Conference and in the United Methodist Church. For thirty years, the society has sponsored events devoted to the study of issues related to the history, theology, practice and mission of John and Charles Wesley and the Wesleyan tradition. We seek to understand more thoroughly the richness of our unique heritage, and to do so with an eye toward applying those resources in the service of the contemporary church in its ongoing mission and ministry. We welcome all interested laity and clergy at our events and to contribute to the mission of the society. Continuing Education credit is available at all our events.

The Society for Wesleyan Studies typically sponsors one or two public events annually. In recent years, we have given special attention to introducing the Virginia Conference to some of the younger and most promising of a new generation of Wesleyan scholars/church-persons.

In years to come the Society for Wesleyan Studies will continue to search out the best-informed contemporary guides to our Wesleyan tradition, in order to make accessible to the disciples and churches of the Virginia Conference our distinctive heritage of faith and practice as a vital resource for “making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” We hope you will join us for our events as we explore together our living Wesleyan legacy.

R. Bruce Johnson

VIRGINIA CHAPTER PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION OF UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SECRETARIES

The purpose of the Professional Association of United Methodist Church Secretaries (PAUMCS) is to provide a supportive base for the unity and fellowship of its members in order to provide individual growth, professional development, continuous education and spiritual enrichment. PAUMCS promotes and encourages the training and support of United Methodist church secretaries; serves as an advocate for emerging concerns that affect church secretaries; encourages and assists in the establishment of chapters of church secretaries, within or across jurisdictional and annual conference boundaries, and assists in coordinating the program and work of these chapters.

Legislation was adopted at the 1988 General Conference which states that the General Conference of Finance and Administration (GCFA) has the authority and responsibility to provide guidance and consultation for continuing education of church secretaries, including establishment of professional standards, training and certification programs and to provide assistance to PAUMCS (2008 *Book of Discipline*, ¶807.19).

The Virginia Chapter of PAUMCS sponsors two meetings each year: a one-day fall training event and a two-day spring spiritual growth retreat. Members are persons presently or previously, full-time or part-time, paid or volunteer, engaged in administrative work in any local church or agency of The United Methodist Church.

Highlights of Virginia PAUMCS activities in 2014-2015 include a six-page mailing sent to the administrative staff of the 1,200 charges of the Virginia Conference and the fall “Experience Your Conference Connection” event held in October. This gathering featured several members of the board of Virginia Conference Communications, Inc. who brought much-needed information about the importance of communicating using the most current methods: FaceBook, Instagram, blogging, and website design and hosting.

Our spring training/spiritual growth retreat in May was led by Buena (Beanie) Rankin, retired Assistant Director of Records and Statistics with the General Council on Finance and Administration. Beanie shared her knowledge on a range of subjects: membership, church software, record retention, cyber communications and apportionments. Attendees also valued the networking and spiritual component of this time together.

If you have administrative staff in your church, either paid or volunteer, we encourage you to help them become a part of Virginia PAUMCS for their professional growth, to the benefit of your church!

Beverly Myers, President

VIRGINIA UNITED METHODIST CREDIT UNION

John Wesley was among the first to organize financial cooperatives among the faithful in the Methodist movement and it is in the spirit of Wesley that in 1952 the Virginia Conference established our credit union to help pastors pool their resources to help each other. As we celebrate 63 years of service in 2015, our membership has grown to include United Methodist churches, church members, clergy, organizations, agencies and institutions within the Virginia Annual Conference.

We are a full service financial institution and we operate solely to serve the financial needs of our member owners. Our all volunteer board of directors is comprised of a cross section of lay and clergy. We help our members by providing quality financial products and services, including savings and checking accounts, loans, Visa credit cards, online services and resources to assist our members with personal financial management. We sponsor scholarships for college bound students and have partnered with several conference churches to establish Jubilee Assistance Funds; a program that assists churches with short term help for persons in need during a financial crisis, as well as financial management tools to guide them toward long term financial stability.

Our church loan program helps conference churches with the refinance of current loans, loans for parsonages, renovations, and vans and buses. We also offer project loans (up to \$50,000 unsecured) and Visa credit cards for church business.

Our goal is to be the premier financial institution and primary resource for encouraging sound stewardship principles and helping Virginia United Methodist churches, individuals and institutions “to earn all they can and save all they can so they can give all they can” as servants of Christ in the world.

Alvin J. Horton, Chair

THE VIRGINIA UNITED METHODIST FOUNDATION

“People have made at least a start at understanding the meaning of life when they plant shade trees under which they know full well they will never sit.”

-D. Elton Trueblood

Every year, more of the “Greatest Generation” and “Baby Boomers” are leaving this world to claim the promise of the resurrection. They leave behind a legacy of incredible testimonies of sacrifice and service. They often leave a hole in the annual support of the local church. Finance committees, trustees and church staff cope with shrinking budgets while working harder to reach more of the lost or needy. Faced with the reality of an aging church membership, Age Wave experts point to this generational shift increasing more rapidly around 2018 when deaths in our country is projected to rise sharply.

The dilemma for church leaders is to continue “to serve Christ by setting disciples on fire with Spirit-filled, risk-taking love for all God’s children” while increasing budgets, meet a continued and dramatic decrease in the faithful contribution base. For leaders with a vision for their church to continue to be relevant, only two options appear to be considered: trim ministry, which eventually results in the decline of the effectiveness of the local church; or proactively seek a new funding base. The Virginia United Methodist Foundation exists to assist churches who are looking to face this dilemma with a strategic planning approach and an effective solution through Planned Giving and Endowment building.

There is a need for churches to re-envision their future with fresh goals for mission and ministry. Such vision is birthed through concerted prayer and holy conferencing. Vision alone may only be wishful thinking if not structured with clear metrics and benchmarks. Vision for tomorrow’s outreach must have a parallel track and resources to make that vision reality.

Helping congregants understand that they may make the largest giving impact of their lives through effective planning can provide the much needed boost to resource a vision for future outreach into their community. One church this past year experienced the blessing of a bequest through a planned estate gift that came as a surprise benefit to their church. The Foundation staff was able to come alongside the church leadership to discern and strategize what God was calling the church to do in mission – and how these new resources could be effective in opening doors and extending ministry. The role of the Foundation is to educate and elevate the importance of charitable gift planning in endowing the church’s vision into the future. This is ‘planting shade trees for future generations!’

Foundation assets have grown over the last three years as we have increased the number of churches and ministries we serve by more than 30%!

VIRGINIA UNITED METHODIST DEVELOPMENT COMPANY, LLC

I’ve been involved as a pastor and Conference member for more than 70 years. I remain committed to see ministry expand in local churches. I believe that as we help churches through the loan program of the Development Fund, we can see a renewed harvest of church growth and expanded ministry. It is an approach that has been done all across the country, and it has come at the right time to Virginia to help us expand impact through local churches.

I made a wise decision to invest in the Development Company, because it was a win-win situation. It was a win for me on my return on my investment.

It also is a win because the Foundation invests in people and in churches by helping them to improve their ministries. - Dr. Raymond Fitzhugh Wrenn, the longest serving ordained Elder in the Virginia Conference.

Virginia United Methodist Development Company, LLC was created in May 2014 by The Virginia United Methodist Foundation as a subsidiary entity, managed by its own Board. Investments are offered to United Methodist individuals, churches and ministries at competitive interest rates, so that the Development Fund may in turn lend those funds to local United Methodist churches and related entities for construction projects, property acquisition, capital improvements and loan re-financing. Everyone wins when you purchase interest-bearing certificates from the Development Company!

Investors may purchase either Savings Certificates for 30 days at adjustable rates, or Loan Certificates from six months through sixty months, at a fixed rate of interest. Churches, agencies, entities and individuals (18 years of age or older), who reside in Virginia and are affiliated with The United Methodist Church or one of its related entities may invest. \$1,000 minimum investment is required.

Interest rates are set by the Development Fund’s Investment Committee on at least a quarterly basis. Rates are determined by taking into consideration the rate of interest earned from current loans, market conditions and rates of similar investments. At least 30 days prior to the maturity date, the Development Company will notify investors that they have the option to either redeem the certificates or extend them.

The Development Fund is a registered Offering with the Commonwealth of Virginia. Although investments are not insured, they are safeguarded through strict investment and lending policies, strong board leadership and competent staff. The purpose for the Development Company is to enable United Methodist investors to fund church capital improvement loans. Initial deposits have been encouraging though not sufficient to meet the loan demand. Our prayer for 2015 is increased participation in the deposits to help meet the loan demand! The purpose for the loans is to enable local churches to expand ministry in their community; and thereby, our motto: United Methodists Investing to Impact Virginia!

In 2014, the Development Company realized:

- 2014 Deposits - \$1,525,871
- 2014 Loan Commitments to Churches - \$355,562

Stephen B. Clark, President

VIRGINIA CONFERENCE WELLNESS MINISTRIES (VCWM)

This year marks both a milestone and a sea change in wellness ministry. Seven years ago, in collaboration with Virginia United Methodist Pensions, Inc. (VUMPI), Bishop Charlene Kammerer appointed The Reverend Charles F. Reynolds to establish a new wellness ministry. This ministry was charged with developing an educational program on wholistic wellness, and working with clergy and their families, advocating for healthy lifestyles and better choices in matters of physical, mental/emotional, and spiritual health.

Over the past seven years, Reverend Reynolds has logged tens of thousands of miles – across Virginia and in six other States. He has delivered numerous educational presentations, participated in multiple research working groups, sponsored legal affairs seminars for clergy and lay employees, and from 2008-2012 served on the denomination’s Church Systems Task Force (CSTF). VCWM’s Board of Directors has performed detailed analysis on volumes of current health and wellness data, identifying issues and offering recommended solutions to leadership at the District, Conference, Jurisdictional, and

General Church levels. Reverend Reynolds served as a presenter at multiple annual Ministers' Convocations, District clergy meetings and retreats, the Order of Elder retreat, and training for Provisional Members. VCWM became a regular fixture in the Annual Conference display area.

VCWM partnered with the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits' *Center for Health* and Duke University's *Clergy Health Initiative* to create and help fund a three-year study of clergy health and wellness across the United States. Reverend Reynolds was invited to participate in the Drew University School of Theology's working group on Theological Education and Clergy Health, and the COSROW-sponsored Clergy Family Health Task Force (CFHTF).

Ecumenically, VCWM worked closely with the Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA) CREDO Institute and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) *Healthy Congregations* and *Bridgebuilder* programs. These mutually supportive efforts resulted in Reverend Reynolds working with pastors and lay members of several Lutheran congregations, as well as his assisting in the vocational development of ELCA pastors through the Virginia Synod's First Call Theological Education Program. An additional benefit of this ecumenical cooperation was the mutual sharing of educational opportunities between United Methodist and Lutheran clergy.

Perhaps most significantly, VCWM selected Health Advocate, Inc. (HA) to serve as VUMPI's contracted wellness partner. VCWM oversaw the day-to-day operations of the VUMPI-HA relationship and, primarily through the efforts of Program Director Ms. Lynn Rhein, created *Wellness 100*, a program through which clergy, lay employees and their spouses can improve their personal health and wellness while reducing their personal health plan contributions.

Now, after seven years of wellness ministry efforts, it is time for the torch to be passed. Through the hard work of VCWM, and the inspirational leadership of Bishop Young Jin Cho, the clergy and laity of Virginia Conference have gained a renewed understanding of the importance of the Spiritual Disciplines, and the need to be attentive to their spiritual health. Our clergy, lay employees, and their respective families better comprehend the importance of mental, emotional and physical health, and the roles personal responsibility and self-care must play in their wellness efforts. This demonstrated appreciation for the importance of wholistic wellness offers tremendous hope for the future life and ministries of our Virginia Conference.

Effective June 30, 2015 VCWM will conclude its work in support of the Virginia Conference. In its place, VUMPI will assume oversight of the wellness and advocacy services which will continue to be provided by Health Advocate, Inc. The Center for Clergy Excellence and the Board of Ordained Ministry will continue to be attentive to matters of clergy mental/emotional health, and will serve as a resource for clergy/families in need of professional assistance. The Office of Connectional Ministries, under the leadership of The Reverend Marc Brown, will continue to emphasize the critical importance of spiritual health and vitality for all Christians through the content of its numerous programmatic offerings.

One chapter draws to a close, and another begins. On behalf of Reverend Reynolds, and the Board of Directors of VCWM, we conclude our ministry with this simple prayer for all our sisters and brothers in Christ: *May you have life, and have it abundantly.*

Donald C. Yesukaitis, CPA, President

Resolutions and Petitions are ordered alphabetically by title. This does not indicate the order in which they will be considered.

RESOLUTION 1

Ban the Box

Whereas Scripture teaches us to provide a refuge for the outcasts and that in welcoming a stranger we welcome Christ into our midst;¹

Whereas our Social Principles “affirm all persons as equally valuable in the sight of God” and support the basic rights of all persons to equal access to employment;²

Whereas the majority of the over 325,000 ex-felons in Virginia who have completed all court-imposed punishment find it almost impossible to obtain gainful employment because most employers use a check box on their job applications to ask if the applicant has a felony conviction/arrest record – and then pass over applicants who check that box, even though the vast majority of such offenses were nonviolent and the ex-offenders have since tried to turned their lives around;

Whereas the inability to obtain employment makes it impossible for ex-offenders to support themselves and their families, and thereby contributes to a vicious cycle of higher unemployment, increased crime, more recidivism and higher taxes to support imprisonment;

Whereas this vicious cycle begins early in life for a large segment of our population – as revealed by recent studies which have found that by age 23, half of all black males and 40 percent of all white males have been arrested – and thereby virtually destroying the lives of such persons and depriving our nation of contributions they could make to our society;³

Whereas these trends affect not only men but also women, with the number of women in prison nationally “increasing at a rate fifty percent higher for women than for men since 1980,” and among all persons incarcerated in Virginia over eight percent are women – with such women who are the head of a single parent household facing especially daunting challenges upon their release;⁴

Whereas 14 states and at least 96 cities and counties (including 13 cities and counties in Virginia) have enacted “ban the box” policies to eliminate questions about an applicant’s criminal history from the initial employment application so that selection of persons to be interviewed will be based on skills and qualifications for a specific job position;⁵

Whereas several major corporations, including three of the nation’s top retailers – Home Depot, Target, and Walmart – have enacted ban the box policies by removing questions about criminal history from their job applications, thereby joining several other employers who have taken steps to end hiring exclusions that make it nearly impossible for anyone with a criminal record to get a job, even if that offense be in the distant past;⁶

Whereas deferring questions about any criminal history or conducting a criminal background check until after an applicant is selected for an interview, given a conditional offer of employment or found otherwise qualified for the job will provide an opportunity for applicants to demonstrate their qualifications and enable employers to select the most qualified applicants;

Whereas jobs relating to public safety, handling finances or requiring contact with vulnerable populations such as working with children and the elderly will continue under law to require full criminal background checks prior to employment, and

Whereas, as some perceptive members of the clergy have pointed out, while banning the box is about fairness for people with records, it is also good for the “economy and for the safety of our communities to ensure we’re maximizing job opportunities for everyone.”⁷

Be it hereby resolved by this 233rd Session of the Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church that:

1. We commend the states, municipalities and private employers who have eliminated questions about past criminal history from their initial job applications in order to provide all job applicants an opportunity to be considered on the basis of their qualifications for a specific job.
2. We call upon our Virginia state legislators to enact legislation banning questions about criminal history from the initial job application for public and private employment so that questions about criminal history or conducting a criminal background check can be deferred until after an applicant has been selected for an interview, given a conditional offer of employment or otherwise found qualified for a specific job.
3. We urge private employers to follow the example of those private employers who have already banned the box from their employment applications.
4. We urge our clergy and lay members to contact their state legislators, urging support of a ban the box policy for Virginia.
5. We authorize the Board of Church and Society to join with other like-minded groups in a campaign to ban the box in Virginia and request that it keep the Conference updated on progress toward this goal.

Submitted by Dot Ivey on behalf of the Board of Church and Society

1. Isaiah 16:4; Matthew 25:31-46.

2. *Social Principles of The United Methodist Church 2013-2016*, ¶162.

3. “Study: Half of all black males, 40 percent of all white males arrested by age 23,” Press Release, University of South Carolina, 6 Jan 2014, accessed 8 Feb 2014, http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2014-01/uosc-sho010314.php.

4. “Fact Sheet: Trends in U.S. Corrections,” The Sentencing Project, www.sentencingproject.org; “Annual Report of the Quarterly Report of Demographic, Offense and Health Information of Offenders Incarcerated in VADOC Facilities - CY2014,” Virginia Department of Corrections, 2015, accessed 11 Feb 2015, <http://leg2.state.va.us>.

5. The 14 states that have enacted ‘ban the box’ policies are: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico and Rhode Island. In Virginia, Alexandria, Arlington County, Charlottesville, Danville, Fairfax County, Fredericksburg, Harrisonburg, Martinsville, Newport News, Norfolk, Petersburg, Portsmouth, Richmond, Roanoke, and Virginia Beach have enacted ban the box policies. Nationally, other cities that have enacted this ban include Atlanta, Austin, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Detroit, Durham, Memphis, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, DC. <http://bantheboxcampaign.org/>; “Advancing a Federal Fair Chance Hiring Agenda,” National Employment Law Project, accessed 11 Feb 2015, <http://www.nelp.org/>; “Victory! Georgia becomes the first state in the South to “ban the box” on state employment applications,” Georgia Justice Project, accessed 24 Feb 2015, www.gjp.org.

6. “Advancing a Federal Fair Chance Hiring Agenda,” National Employment Law Project, accessed 11 Feb 2015, <http://www.nelp.org>.

7. Father Gregory Boyle and Rev. Joseph Clopton, “Fair hiring policy gets an unfair rap,” *The Sacramento Bee*, accessed 8 Feb 2014, <http://www.sacbee.com/2013/09/10/5721634/another-view-fair-hiring-policy.html>.

RESOLUTION 2**Caring for God's Creation through Improved Investment Policies**

Whereas, The United Methodist Church has acknowledged the risks of global warming and climate change from fossil fuel dependence for the last 35 years through its Energy Policy Statement (§ 1001) in the *Book of Resolutions* and has called in that statement for the greatest investment to be made in energy efficiency and renewable energy and directed that “all United Methodist programs and missions must model our sustainable and just energy values.” And;

Whereas, we confess that the Church has not reoriented its own investments toward energy efficiency and alternative energy sources. And;

Whereas The investment policy goals of The United Methodist Church as outlined in the *Book of Resolutions* § 4071 include investing in corporations, companies, institutions or funds making a positive contribution to the realization of the goals outlined in *The Social Principles* and the *Book of Resolutions*, and exclude investing in companies that violate church values. *The Social Principles* § 160-D state that climate change will bring “severe environmental, economic, and social implications,” which will “disproportionately affect individuals and nations least responsible for the emissions.”

Be it resolved that the Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church affirms the investment policies of the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits of The United Methodist Church which have begun to focus on strategies to mitigate the impacts of climate change. We particularly commend the policies which exclude from investment companies with revenues from the extraction and/or mining of thermal coal, and further encourage the agency to continue exploring opportunities to invest in companies which focus on the development and utilization of renewable energy sources and improved energy efficiency.

Be it resolved that the Virginia Conference encourages all general boards and agencies, including the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits and the General Board of Church and Society, and all administrative agencies and institutions, including hospitals, homes, educational institutions, annual conferences, foundations and local churches to work to promote meaningful legislation at the local, state and federal level which will effectively address climate change concerns.

Be it resolved that the Virginia Conference encourages all general boards and agencies, annual conference boards and agencies and local churches to follow investment practices which are focused on the mitigation of the impacts of climate change, particularly those policies which exclude from direct investment any companies with revenues from the extraction and/or mining of thermal coal, and to consider opportunities to invest in companies focusing on the development and utilization of renewable energy sources and improved energy efficiency.

Submitted by Jaydee Hanson on behalf of the Board of Church & Society

RESOLUTION 3**Establish a Mentoring Ministry for Adolescents in the Community that It Serves**

Whereas, educational success is frequently the essential element in achieving economic opportunity and social advancement; and

Whereas, the American educational system has fallen short of its goal of promoting economic and social mobility; and

Whereas, a recent landmark report on American education, entitled “Separate and Unequal,” found that the likelihood of children exceeding their parents’ educational level is “lower in the United States than in any other advanced nation”; and

Whereas, the federal Title 1 educational program, including No Child Left Behind, whose goal has been to improve the academic performance of economically disadvantaged children, has done little to improve student performance; and

Whereas, successful student performance results from significant investment by the student, of time and effort to learn; and

Whereas, many students being raised in poor families are performing worse than any other group because they are the least motivated to put in the time and effort to be successful; and

Whereas, in Virginia, nearly 20 per cent more students from middle to high income families graduate from high school than students from low-income families; and

Whereas, the situation in Virginia is most desperate and unjust for African-American young men, where about 40% of these students are not graduating from high school while only 20% of white males are not graduating from high school; and

Whereas, in responding to the commandment of Jesus to love others as Jesus has loved us, Christian men and women have been given clear direction to provide guidance and encouragement to those underperforming adolescents living in their communities; and

Whereas, included in the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church is the declaration: “We believe that every person has the right to education. We also believe that the responsibility for education of the young rests with the family, faith communities, and the government”; and

Whereas, because United Methodists believe that “quality education opens doors of hope and possibility”, the church has declared that serving others by advancing their education is a priority of the transformational process called “Rethink Church”.

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church calls on each congregation to establish a ministry to adolescents who are not reaching their full academic potential, where congregation members would provide these adolescents in their community with the guidance and encouragement that they so desperately need to be successful in school, thereby giving these students a greater chance for social and economic advancement and justice.

Submitted by Dave Stegmaier on behalf of the Board of Church and Society

RESOLUTION 4**Parsonage Air Conditioning Costs**

Whereas the Virginia Annual Conference has a well defined and long standing policy regarding heat reimbursement for parsonages and whereas the rationale that varying parsonage ages and constructions require varying costs to heat is valid and whereas at the time of that policy’s adoption, many parsonages did not have cooling systems and most now do, and whereas the same rationale also applies to parsonage cooling costs,

Be it resolved that the current policy should be amended to include reimbursement of cooling expenses. Unless otherwise determined by the church, a possible mechanism for reimbursement would be to take the lowest bill of the year and subtract from each other bill, leaving the difference of heating and cooling expenses to be reimbursed.

Submitted by Brian Siegle

RESOLUTION 5

Resolution on Predatory Lending

Whereas, the practice of charging interest on a loan in an excessive amount is considered usury and is against the common good;

Whereas, Christian and Jewish tradition warn in scripture of such usurious practices that harm the welfare of the poor;

Whereas, usurious practices have always been odious to a healthy society and often only been available in the shadows of illegal loan sharking;

Whereas, the 2002 General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia made the practice of loan lending at rates far exceeding the caps of loans made through traditional banking processes possible, at rates of triple digit annual percentage rate or higher, raising rates much more than the market traditionally bore;

Whereas, the resulting proliferation of an industry focusing on high interest rate loans, known as “predatory” loans, has effectively raised concerns that such practices are against the general welfare and good of all persons especially those who are in the most desperate situations, namely young and older people, immigrant populations, who are vulnerable and unfamiliar with banking, credit, and legal obligations in this new land, and others financially marginalized in our society;

Whereas, this industry that offers loans of this nature have mutated into many forms, exploiting legal loopholes, sometimes using and encouraging illegal tactics when offering or collecting on such loans and evolving into more precarious lending practices to the detriment of the most vulnerable;

Whereas, predatory lending shops are most frequently located in areas of poverty or economic blight, or targeting the financially vulnerable, undermining the fabric of stable family life as predatory practices move onto the internet, open ended credit loans, car title lending loans, and any practices that suggest easy access and little or no verifiably sound lending practices;

Whereas, the lawmakers/decision makers have been reticent to legislate strong boundaries that would protect the public from practices that encourage a cycle of debt that creates a weakened community and perpetuates a culture of greed and easy money;

Therefore, be it resolved that this Virginia Annual Conference authorize Bishop Young Jin Cho to communicate that this conference condemns the usurious practices of predatory lending in whatever form it takes, whether pay day lending, internet lending, open ended credit lending, or car title lending and that these practices should become illegal;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Virginia Annual Conference authorize Bishop Young Jin Cho to communicate to the Attorney General of the Commonwealth of Virginia that we urge strict enforcement of laws pertaining to illegal internet lending practices that impinge on the welfare of all persons;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church promote practices of teaching sound financial principles and of promoting ways and means to offer alternatives to predatory lending that are available through the Virginia United Methodist Credit Union and other resources.

Submitted by Charles Swadley

Co-signers: Bill Jones, Larry Tingle, Sarah Manner, Jay Speer, Carol Mathis, Rodney Hunter

RESOLUTION 6

Responding to Requests from Christians in the Holy Land

Whereas it is God’s will that all people enjoy peace/shalom/salaam, i.e. peace, security, prosperity, and right relationships with one another and the earth.

Whereas the psalmists calls us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Ps. 122.6), and to “seek peace and pursue it” (Ps. 34:14)

Whereas we affirm Israel’s right to permanent, recognized and secure borders, and Palestinians’ rights to self-determination and formation of a viable state; and,

Whereas the 2012 *Book of Resolutions* states “we seek for all people in the Middle East region an end to military occupation, freedom from violence, and full respect for the human rights of all under international law.” Resolution #6073, 2008 *Book of Resolutions, amended and readopted in 2012*

Whereas “The United Methodist Church opposes continued military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, the confiscation of Palestinian land and water resources, the destruction of Palestinian homes, the continued building of illegal Jewish settlements, and any vision of a ‘Greater Israel’ that includes the occupied territories and the whole of Jerusalem and its surroundings (Resolution 6111: “Opposition to Israeli Settlements in Palestinian Land.” 2012 *Book of Resolutions*); and,

Whereas we are called to support members of Christ’s church around the world, including Palestinian Christians who are being forced to leave the Holy Land due to Israel’s confiscation of their property and the severe hardships of living under occupation; and,

Whereas the Palestinian Christian community, through the Kairos Palestine document, has requested the support of the wider Church; (Kairos Palestine. “A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith, Hope and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering” <http://www.kairos-palestine.ps/content/kairos-document> Web. December 2009); and,

Whereas Palestinian Christian leaders have specifically requested the support of the United Methodist Church; (Letter to the United Methodist Church from Rifat Odeh Kassir, General Coordinator, Kairos Palestine, November 28, 2014 https://www.kairosresponse.org/Rifat_Kassis.html. Web. January 2015); and,

Whereas the 2012 General Conference reiterated the call to end the occupation, through boycotts of goods produced in the occupied territories (Resolution 6111: “Opposition to Israeli Settlements in Palestinian Land.” 2012 *Book of Resolutions*); and,

Whereas all UMC missionaries serving in the Holy Land over the last 25 years support concrete actions by our denomination to show our support of Palestinian rights. (United Methodist Missionaries Support Divestment from the Israeli Occupation, https://www.kairosresponse.org/UMC_

Missionaries_Divestment.html. Web. January 2015).

Therefore, be it resolved that the Virginia Annual Conference shall create a diverse and representative task force to review and research actions that can be taken to respond to these requests by our UMC missionaries and our Palestinian sisters and brothers in Christ, and formulate recommendations for the 2016 annual conference; and,

Be it further resolved that the Virginia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church calls on the U.S. government, the government of Israel, and the elected Palestinian leadership to work for diplomatic and nonviolent solutions to the problems of the region, to respect the equality and dignity of all the region's people, and to forge solutions based on the principles of international law and human rights.

Submitted by John Copenhaver on behalf of the Board of Church and Society

RESOLUTION 7

Recognize the Right of the Nation of Israel to Exist

Statement for discussion in accordance with the Holy Bible, the Doctrine inspired written word of our LORD God Almighty, and due to a growing anti-Semitic movement in our nation and the World today, we must review certain truths:

Whereas, the first truth: The Lord told Abram: "I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you." Genesis 12: 2-3 (NLT)

Whereas, the second truth: "And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous because of his faith. Then the LORD told him, "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as your possession." Genesis 15: 6-7 (NLT)

Whereas, the third truth: "So the LORD made a covenant with Abram that day and said, "I have given this land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt to the great Euphrates River— the land now occupied by the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites." Genesis 15: 18-21 (NLT)

Whereas, the fourth truth: Abraham's obedience was tested, God told Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Because Abraham proved his faith, the LORD told Abraham: "I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies. And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me." Genesis 22: 17-18 (NLT)

Whereas, the fifth truth: The LORD appeared to Isaac at Beersheba to reaffirm the covenant He made to his father Abraham: "where the LORD appeared to him on the night of his arrival. "I am the God of your father, Abraham," he said. "Do not be afraid, for I am with you and will bless you. I will multiply your descendants, and they will become a great nation. I will do this because of my promise to Abraham, my servant." Then Isaac built an altar there and worshiped the LORD. He set up his camp at that place, and his servants dug another well." Genesis 26: 24-25 (NLT)

Whereas, the sixth truth: The LORD reaffirmed the covenant to Jacob (Israel) that was made to his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac: Jacob had a dream at Bethel. In his dream he saw a stairway to heaven. "At the top of the stairway stood the LORD, and he said, "I am the LORD, the God of your grandfather Abraham, and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I am giving it to you and your descendants. Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will spread out in all directions—to the west and the east, to the north and the south. And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants. What's more, I am with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. One day I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised you." Genesis 28: 13-15 (NLT)

Whereas, the seventh truth: The LORD reaffirms the covenant to Moses and tells why He chose the Nation of Israel: "Then Moses climbed the mountain to appear before God. The LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "Give these instructions to the family of Jacob; announce it to the descendants of Israel: 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.' This is the message you must give to the people of Israel." Exodus 19: 3-6 (NLT)

Whereas, the eight truth: The LORD reaffirmed the covenant concerning King David and his descendants: "Yes, our protection comes from the LORD, and He, the Holy One of Israel has given us our king." Psalm 89: 18 (NLT) "I will extend his rule from the Mediterranean Sea to the west to the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in the east." Psalm 89: 25 (NLT) "if they do not obey my decrees and fail to keep my commands, then I will punish their sin with the rod, and their disobedience with beating. But I will never stop loving him nor fail to keep my promise to him. No, I will not break my covenant; I will not take back a single word I said." Psalm 89: 31-34 (NLT)

Whereas, the ninth truth: The Apostle Paul explains God's mercy is for everyone: Jew and Gentile alike: "Many of the people of Israel are now enemies of the Good News, and this benefits you Gentiles. Yet they are still the people he loves because he chose their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For God's gifts and his call can never be withdrawn." Romans 11: 28-29 (NLT)

Whereas, the tenth truth: The study of the Holy Scriptures confirms the Nation and the People of the Nation of Israel have the right to exist and possess their land, for this is God's purpose for them to His Glory.

Therefore Be it Known: That we the leadership and body of the Virginia Annual Conference of United Methodist Church do recognize the right of the Nation and People of Israel to exist in accordance with the Holy Covenant made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as described in the Holy Scriptures meaning the Holy Bible, Old and New Testaments, the written inspired word of the LORD GOD Almighty, thus let us pledge our support of the Nation of Israel in word and deed. Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem.

Submitted by Robert Gray, Onley United Methodist Church, Eastern Shore District

RESOLUTION 8

Tax Fairness

Whereas Scripture teaches us that we are called to be our 'brother's keeper,' that loving one's neighbor as yourself is part of the greatest commandment, second only to loving God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind; that payment of taxes is a virtue which contributes to peaceful living with all people; that God punishes those who "crush the weak, tax their grain (daily life necessities) and turn away the poor who seek help,"

and that “From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded;”¹

Whereas John Wesley held that Christians should not merely tithe but give away all extra income, and in 1744 set for himself the high standard of “If [when I die] I leave behind me ten pounds, . . . you and all mankind bear witness against me, that I lived and died a thief and a robber,” “taught and practiced that excessive wealth, absence of effective stewardship and radical charity, prevents a believer from growing in grace and cultivates sinful actions and attitudes” . . . “believed that stewardship that centers on care for the poor is a means of grace” . . . [and] “encouraged government leaders to develop public policies that provided for the well-being of the poor and just distribution of wealth;”³

Whereas our Social Principles proclaim that “We support measures that would reduce the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. We further support efforts to revise tax structures and to eliminate governmental support programs that now benefit the wealthy at the expense of other persons;”⁴

Whereas the above commandments, practices, principles and teachings are being widely disregarded in our society as evidenced by:

- Growing economic disparities between the ultra-rich and the rest of us: In the U.S. in 2013 the top 1 percent received 20.1 percent of all income, and the top 10 percent received 48.9 percent of all income.⁵ In Virginia and 15 other states all of the increased income, on average, went to the top 1 percent while income for others stagnated or declined.⁶ World-wide, the richest 1 percent of the world’s population owned 48 percent of the world’s wealth in 2014, with its share projected to grow to over 50 percent by 2016, leaving less than half of the world’s wealth for the other 99 percent. The 80 richest people in the world now own as much wealth as the bottom 50 percent of the world’s population – in other words, 3.5 billion people must subsist on the same amount of wealth as these 80 extremely wealthy people.⁷
- Growing educational disparity. Schools: 51 percent of U.S. public school students now come from families living in poverty.⁸ Colleges: In 1970, students from high income families (\$108,650 or more in current dollars) were 5 times more likely to complete college by age 24 than students from low income families (\$34,160 or less in current dollars). By 2013, students from high income families were 8 times more likely to have completed college by age 24 than students from low income families. Actual completion of a bachelor’s degree rose from 55 percent to 99 percent for students from high income families but dropped from 23 percent to 21 percent for students from low income families.⁹
- False claims that the poor do not pay taxes: According to a January 2015 report by the non-partisan Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, “Virtually every state tax system is fundamentally unfair, taking a much greater share of income from the low- and middle-class than from wealthy families.” Taking into account all state and local income, property, sales and excise taxes that Americans pay, the poorest 20 percent of individuals and families (those earning less than \$21,000) pay an effective tax rate of 10.5 percent while the top 1 percent (those earning \$542,000 or more) pay only 5.4 percent. In Virginia, the poorest 20 percent pay an effective tax rate of 8.9 percent while the top 1 percent pay only 5.1 percent of their income for taxes; the consumption tax is highly regressive with the poorest 20 percent paying an average of 4.9 percent of their income on sales and excise taxes while the wealthiest 1 percent pay only 0.5 percent of their income for such taxes.¹⁰
- False slogans that tax cuts for the rich will help grow our economy: A study by the Congressional Research Service, the non-partisan research arm of the Library of Congress, covering 65 years of data, found that “reduction in the top tax rates has had little association with saving, investment or productivity growth;” the main effect has been to further enrich those already wealthy.¹¹
- Huge loopholes that benefit large corporations: A study of the five year period of 2008-2012 found that 26 large U.S. corporations paid no federal income tax during that period, even though collectively they earned \$170 billion in profits. At least 28 of the largest public American companies listed on the S&P 500 stock index with headquarters in the U.S. are incorporated in low-tax countries to avoid paying U.S. taxes – even though they receive substantial U.S. government benefits paid for by the rest of us. 362 of the biggest companies listed on the Fortune 500 have more than 7,800 tax haven subsidiaries in foreign countries to avoid paying U.S. taxes. A 2014 Bloomberg study found that 307 U.S. based multi-national corporations have accumulated nearly \$2 trillion in offshore accounts to avoid U.S. taxes – which could be as much as \$90 billion annually.¹²
- Other loopholes by which the rich preserve and pass on their wealth such as (1) the ‘trust fund loophole’ under which the rich can, at the time of their death, pass on to their heirs stock of unlimited value without any tax being paid for the growth in the value of that stock while with the original owner; (2) low estate tax rates, increased exemptions to the estate tax rate, and the elimination of the estate tax – all of which contribute to the growing concentration of wealth among the super-rich, and (3) current laws which permit companies to deduct as business expenses payment of more than \$1 million to company executives if it is considered ‘performance based.’

Whereas the above realities are inherently unfair since they promote extreme wealth and income accumulation at the top, undermine the common good, and threaten the well-being of all of us since more unequal societies “have higher rates of violent crime, lower life expectancy, poorer mental health and physical health, worst educational outcome and a whole range of social ills of greater magnitude than the more equal ones,¹³

Be it therefore resolved that in view of the above, and in affirmation of the principle of ‘leveling the playing ground’ for all taxpayers so that everyone will be responsible for their fair share of taxes and uphold the common good, this 233rd session of the Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church:

1. Calls upon our federal and state governments to reform our tax system by:

- (a) Implementing a more progressive individual income tax under which the share of income paid by the rich for all taxes will be at least equal to the share of income for all taxes paid by the poor.
- (b) Raising the cap on payment into Social Security so that contributions as a proportion of income by high income persons will be similar to the proportion of income contributed by low income workers.
- (c) Closing corporate loopholes by imposing a tax on global income to remove incentives for firms to move to low-tax jurisdictions (with credit for any tax paid in other jurisdictions), blocking the use of tax havens, and providing incentives in the form of lower taxes for firms that invest and create jobs in the U.S.
- (d) Taxing returns on capital at the same rate as for earned income, thereby removing the current unjust practice of taxing those who work hard to earn a living at higher rates than those who derive their income from speculation, dividends and capital gains.
- (e) Creation of a financial transaction tax which will help to reduce volatility in the financial system and raise significant revenue, while affecting

primarily the richest 10 percent.¹⁴

(f) Reduce or eliminate corporate welfare such as 'bailouts,' which primarily benefit those already wealthy, and agricultural subsidies that primarily benefit large agro-businesses (corporations).¹⁵

(g) Reduce or eliminate exemptions in federal inheritance and estate tax laws, and reinstate the estate tax in Virginia.¹⁶

2. Requests Bishop Cho to communicate adoption of #1 above to President Obama and members of the Virginia Congressional Delegation, and to the Virginia Governor and members of the Virginia General Assembly.
3. Encourages our clergy and lay members to join in this justice mission by contacting their congressional and state legislators, urging implementation of point #1 above.

Submitted by Hunter Mabry

1. Genesis 4:9; Luke 10:25-28; Romans 13:7; 12:18, Amos 5:11-12; Luke 12:48.

2. The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, Vol. 8, 40, accessed 2 Feb 2015, www.books.google.com.

3. The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church 2012, #4056, "Greed".

4. Social Principles of The United Methodist Church 2013-2016, ¶163.

5. Emmanuel Saez, "Striking it Richer: The Evolution of Top Incomes in the United States," (updated, 2015), assessed 4 Feb 2015, www.eml.berkeley.edu/~saez.

6. "The Increasingly Unequal States of America: Income Inequality by State, 1917-2012," accessed 2 Feb 2015, www.epi.org.

7. "Wealth: Having it All and Wanting More," Oxfam Issue Briefing, Jan 2015, accessed 3 Feb 2015, www.policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk.

8. Roanoke Times, 18 Jan 2015:11.

9. "Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States," the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunities in Higher Education and the University of Pennsylvania Alliance for Higher Education and Democracy, 2015, 31, accessed 3 Feb 2015, www.pellinstitute.org.

10. "Who Pays: A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All Fifty States," 2015, Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy, accessed 2 Feb 2015, www.itep.org.

11. "Tax cuts for the rich don't boost the economy," Roanoke Times, 20 Sept 2012: 14.

12. "The Sorry State of Corporate Taxes," Citizens for Tax Justice Report 2014, Executive Summary, 1; Just Taxes, Winter, 2014:5; "Positively un-American Tax Dodges," Fortune, 7 Jul 2014; "Corporate America Is Hiding \$2 Trillion From The IRS," accessed 4 Feb 2015, www.thinkprogress.org.

13. "The 1% are Bad for Your Health – It's Time to Tax Them More," Truthout, 23 Jan 2015, accessed 15 Jan 2015, www.Truth-out.org.

14. A financial transaction tax is a small fee on trades of financial instruments – such as stocks, bonds, and derivatives. Currently there is no tax on such transactions in the U.S., although there is in more than 30 other countries. In an analysis of a bill in Congress proposing such fees, the Joint Committee on Taxation has concluded "that a tax of 0.03% on stock, bond, and derivative trades could raise \$350 billion over 10 years." Such fees would not affect the approximately half of U.S. households that have no investment in financial markets. "FAQs on Financial Transaction Tax," Institute for Policy Studies, accessed 2 Feb 2015, www.ips-dc.org.

15. A recent study found that corporate welfare in the federal budget costs about \$100 billion a year – which is approximately 50 percent more than what the federal government spends on traditional welfare programs that serve vulnerable populations. "Reforming Taxation To Promote Growth and Equity," Roosevelt Institute White Paper by Joseph Stiglitz, 28 May 2014: 12, fn. 38, accessed 29 May 2014, www.rooseveltinstitute.org.

16. Virginia dropped the estate tax in 2007. In fiscal year 2006-2007 it affected only estates exceeding \$2 million in value but had provided approximately \$150 million annually from the ultra-wealthy in much needed state revenue.

GENERAL CONFERENCE PETITION 1**Total Number of Pages: 1****Suggested Title: Add “Disciple” to the Index****Discipline: Index****General Church Budget Implications: None****Global Implications: None**

Whereas Jesus said to his eleven disciples in Galilee after his resurrection “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Holy Bible, Matthew 28:18-19. (NIV)

Whereas “The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” ¶ 120 in *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2012*.

Whereas ¶¶ 121, 122, 123, 133, 136, 138, and 1117(1 & 2) in *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2012* discuss the importance of disciples.

Whereas the word “Disciple” is not listed in the Index of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2012*, as it should be, given the mission of our denomination.

Petition Text:

Require the publisher of the 2016 *Discipline* to include the word “Disciple” at the appropriate alphabetical position in the Index along with appropriate paragraph numbers, including the mission paragraph.

Submitted by Thomas A. Hassler, Carol Bookwalter, Ron Hardman

GENERAL CONFERENCE PETITION 2**Total Number of Pages 2****Suggested Title: Additional Definition for Self-Avowal****Discipline Paragraph: Discipline ¶304.3, Footnote 1****General Church Budget Implications: None****Global Implications: Yes**

¶ 304. Qualifications for Ordination –

...

3. While persons set apart by the Church for ordained ministry are subject to all of the frailties of the human condition and the pressures of society, they are required to maintain the highest standards of holy living in the world. The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals¹ are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.²

...

¹“Self-avowed practicing homosexual” is understood to mean that a person has entered into a civil union, domestic partnership, or marriage with a person of the same sex or gender, communicates in any public setting that they are a practicing homosexual, or openly acknowledges to a bishop, district superintendent, district committee of ordained ministry, Board of Ordained Ministry, or clergy session that the person is a practicing homosexual.

Rationale: The added language identifies other means by which an individual openly acknowledges that they are engaged in the practice of homosexuality and can be determined by access to public records or declarations made in public forums.

Submitted by H. O. Tom Thomas, David Ford, R. Bruce Johnson, Edward H. Johnson, Becky Livermon, Burt Robinson, Tom Barnard, Keith Boyette, Diane M. Smith (Petition originated by Thomas A. Lambrecht, Elder of the Wisconsin Annual Conference.)

GENERAL CONFERENCE PETITION 3**Total Number of Pages: 1****Suggested Title: Avoid Investment in the Production of Petroleum, Coal and Natural Gas****Discipline Paragraph: Discipline ¶717****General Church Budget Implications: None****Global Implications: Yes**

Budget Implications: There are no financial implications to the Conference operating budget but conference investments will be realigned if the desired action is taken by the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits or the General Conference.

Implications for the Conference: The conference would join a growing list of churches, religious, educational, student, governmental bodies, and individuals calling for divestment and/or divesting from fossil fuel.

Rationale:

Whereas the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (GBOPHB) manages more than \$20 billion in assets on behalf of United Methodist clergy, staff, agencies, churches, and other institutions; and

Whereas The United Methodist Church has acknowledged the risks of fossil fuel dependence for the last 35 years through its Energy Policy Statement in the *Book of Resolutions* ¶1001; and

Whereas the investment policy goals of The United Methodist Church as outlined in the *Book of Resolutions* ¶4071 include investing in corporations, companies, institutions or funds making a positive contribution to the realization of the goals outlined in the Social Principles and the

Book of Resolutions, and exclude investing in companies that violate church values; and

Whereas the *Social Principles* state that climate change will bring “severe environmental, economic, and social implications,” which will “disproportionately affect individuals and nations least responsible for the emissions;” and

Whereas, despite a strong commitment to the *Social Principles*, none of the GBOPHB’s investment screens speak to the climate concerns named in the Natural World section of the *Social Principles*; and

Whereas the GBOPHB maintains significant holdings in petroleum, coal and natural gas companies; and

Whereas while shareholder advocacy can be effective in pressuring industries to change practices, it cannot change fossil fuel companies’ core business model, which is to produce fossil fuels; and

Whereas fossil fuel companies are spending up to \$600 billion each year to seek additional reserves while governments worldwide spend another \$600 billion each year subsidizing fossil fuel consumption;¹ and

Whereas the processes and byproducts related to the extraction of petroleum, coal and natural gas are damaging to the health of people who work in these industries as well as those who live on or near extraction sites; and

Whereas the extraction and burning of petroleum, coal and natural gas exacerbates climate change;² and

Whereas limiting the warming of the earth to 2-degrees Celsius, the internationally agreed upon limit for human survival, requires that the vast majority of the world’s fossil fuels be left in the ground;³ and

Whereas avoiding the worst impacts of climate change urgently requires a transition to sustainable energy; and

Whereas United Methodists live and serve on the front lines of disasters like Hurricane Sandy, Typhoon Haiyan, prolonged droughts, devastating floods, massive wildfires, and other extreme weather events, which will increase in frequency and severity with climate change;⁴ and

Whereas continued investment in fossil fuel companies undermines The United Methodist Church’s ministries to the most vulnerable among us-- including those who are hungry, sick and/or living in poverty; and

Whereas continued investment in fossil fuel companies signals a grave disregard for the lives of young people;

Be it resolved that the *Book of Discipline* ¶717 be amended as follows:

It shall be the policy of The United Methodist Church that all general boards and agencies, including the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, and all administrative agencies and institutions, including hospitals, homes, educational institutions, annual conferences, foundations, and local churches, shall, in the investment of money, make a conscious effort to invest in institutions, companies, corporations, or funds whose practices are consistent with the goals outlined in the *Social Principles*; and shall endeavor to avoid investments that appear likely, directly or indirectly, to support racial discrimination, violation of human rights, sweatshop or forced labor, gambling, or the production of petroleum, coal, natural gas, nuclear armaments, alcoholic beverages or tobacco, or companies dealing in pornography. The boards and agencies are to give careful consideration to shareholder advocacy, including advocacy of corporate disinvestment.

Rationale: United Methodists serve on the front lines of extreme weather events that will increase in frequency and severity with climate change. Limiting climate change requires that most fossil fuel reserves stay underground. Continued investment in fossil fuels undermines The United Methodist Church’s ministries with young people and vulnerable people.

*Submitted by Katharine Layton
(Petition originated by Fossil Free UMC.)*

1. Justin Gillis, “U.N. Panel Issues its Starkest Warning Yet on Climate Change,” *The New York Times*, November 2, 2014, accessed November 24, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/03/world/europe/global-warming-un-intergovernmental-panel-on-climate-change.html?_r=0.

2. “Causes of Climate Change,” United States Environmental Protection Agency, accessed November 24, 2014, <http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/science/causes.html>.

3. Bill McKibben, “Global Warming’s Terrifying New Math,” *Rolling Stone*, July 19, 2012, accessed November 24, 2014, <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/global-warmings-terrifying-new-math-20120719>.

4. Gillis, “Starkest Warning Yet.”

GENERAL CONFERENCE PETITION 4

Total Number of Pages: 1

Suggested Title: Balancing Lay and Clergy Membership of the Annual Conference

Discipline Paragraph: Discipline ¶32. Article I. (and the same sentence in ¶602.4)

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Petition to Amend: ¶32, Article 1 (and the same sentence in ¶602.4): “If the lay membership should number less than the clergy members in attendance of the annual conference, the annual conference shall, by its own formula, provide for the election of additional lay members to equalize, as far as possible, lay and clergy membership in attendance of the annual conference.”

Rationale for General Conference: Clearly, the intent of ¶32 of the Constitution our *Book of Discipline* is to ensure equal representation of laity and clergy at sessions of the annual conference. With the current wording, this is not being achieved in actual practice as well as it could be. The reason is that many retired clergy, clergy serving extension ministries, and clergy on incapacity leave are not able to attend annual conference sessions, due to infirmity, illness, or distant location. There are no alternate clergy members prepared to attend in their absence, as there are for lay members of annual conference. Electing lay persons to balance out such absent clergy requires the expenditure of considerable funds, and increases the size of the annual conference session unnecessarily.

Further Rationale for the 2015 General Conference Session: The 2014 Virginia Annual Conference elected a total of 474 lay members to balance clergy serving in extension ministries, clergy on various forms of leave, and retired clergy. In 2014, 1,353 lay members attended the Annual Conference session, and 1,153 clergy attended. This means that there were 200 more lay members than clergy members in attendance. Those 200 additional lay members were present at an additional cost of \$80,000 to the annual conference (200 persons x \$200 per diem x two days). This is an expense which we pay every year.

A similar petition to change ¶602.4 was overwhelmingly (as a part of the consent agenda) approved by the 2012 General Conference, but was ruled unconstitutional, because it did not address ¶32 of the Constitution.

Submitted by Kirk Nave

GENERAL CONFERENCE PETITION 5**Total Number of Pages: 3****Suggested Title: To Change from an Annual Conference to a Biennial Conference****Discipline Paragraphs:**

- Section I. Conferences. ¶ 8. Article IV.
- Section VI. Annual Conferences ¶32. Article I. through ¶36. Article V.
- Section IX. The Annual Conference ¶601 through ¶657

General Church Budget Implications: None**Global Implications: None**

Whereas, in *The Book of Discipline* of the United Methodist Church 2012, (pages 25-26) Section I. Conferences. ¶ 8. Article IV. states, “There shall be annual conferences as the fundamental bodies of the Church and, if necessary, provisional annual conferences, with such powers, duties, and privileges as are hereinafter set forth.”

Whereas, there are 57 Annual Conferences in the United States and 76 Annual Conferences throughout Africa, Europe and the Philippines per the General Conference website.

Whereas, approximately \$11,400,000 is possibly spent in annual conference expenses just in the United States alone if each of the 57 Annual Conferences in the United States spend approximately \$200,000 in annual conference expenses. The \$200,000 was derived by using the numbers which are shown in the *Book of Reports* for the Virginia Annual Conference in years 2012 (\$210,000), 2013 (\$214,357), 2014 (\$200,000), and for 2015 (\$240,000 is budgeted). The \$11,400,000 does not include the delegate expenses paid by the individual churches, nor the delegate expenses paid by the districts.

Whereas, there also are Jurisdictional Conferences (8-15 annual conferences per year) and Central Conferences (approximately 7 per year) which also would realize a significant amount in savings if these were to also become biennial conferences rather than annual conferences.

Whereas, the General Conference meets in the even years; therefore, the biennial conferences could meet in the odd years. For example, if the biennial conference schedule began in 2017, the biennial conference would again meet in 2019, the year before the General Conference would meet again in 2020.

Whereas, during the “even” years when the biennial conferences would not be meeting, with the current technology (video conferencing and live-streaming events) which is readily accessible in most areas of the world, delegates of annual conferences and church members could gather locally in one place in their districts rather than having to travel great distances to participate in conference-level meetings, worship services, or other seminars and conference-wide events.

Therefore be it resolved, (1) amend ¶8. Article IV to read: “There shall be annual biennial conferences...” (2) Amend Section VI. Annual Conferences ¶32 Article I. through ¶36. Article V. wherever “annual conference(s)” appears to “biennial conference(s).” (3) Amend Section IX. The Annual Conference ¶601 through ¶657, wherever “annual conference” appears to “biennial conference.” These are the major sections of the *Discipline* which deal with annual conferences. (4) Add a new paragraph where appropriate: “The biennial conference will meet in the odd years, i.e. 2017, 2019.” (5) There are numerous references to “annual conference” in the *Discipline*; if the changes in (1) through (3) above are approved, then all references in the *Discipline* where “annual conference(s)” appears would be amended to “biennial conference(s).” With the General Conference convening in 2016, this would be an opportune time for the governing body to take a critical look at reevaluating the frequency of the conference meetings termed “annual conferences” and to discern if we are being good stewards and wisely using the gifts, tithes and offerings which faithfully have been given to carry out God’s work in being a light in the world and in helping our neighbors and communities in need. “It’s not our parent’s church anymore,” meaning let’s not stay in the yesteryears of doing things a certain way rather than looking for ways to improve them.

Submitted by N. T. Daley, Onley United Methodist Church, Eastern Shore District

GENERAL CONFERENCE PETITION 6**Total Number of Pages: 2****Suggested Title: Clergy Pension Preserved****Discipline Paragraphs: Discipline ¶ 361****General Church Budget Implications: None****Global Implications: None**

Add new subparagraph to ¶ 361:

¶361.5. Pension Status – When an ordained member withdraws from the ordained office or from the denomination for any reason, the withdrawing clergy person shall be entitled to the full pension credit they have earned up to the time of withdrawal, including all years of service and all funds deposited in their name, whether personal contributions or funds contributed by a salary-paying unit.

Rationale: This provision would reassure those who contemplate withdrawal that their pension benefit would not suffer due to withdrawal. This language codifies what is already part of the current pension plan document. The language would guard against future changes in the plan document that might deprive persons of their pension benefit.

Submitted by Tom Barnard, Keith Boyette, David Ford, R. Bruce Johnson, Edward H. Johnson, Becky Livermon, Burt Robinson, Diane M. Smith, H. O. Tom Thomas (Petition originated by Thomas A. Lambrecht, Elder of the Wisconsin Annual Conference)

GENERAL CONFERENCE PETITION 7**Total Number of Pages: 1****Suggested Title: Create a Fossil Fuel Investment Screen****General Church Budget Implications: None****Global Implications: Yes**

Budget Implications: There are no financial implications to the Conference operating budget but conference investments will be realigned if the desired action is taken by the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits or the General Conference.

Implications for the Conference: The conference would join a growing list of churches, religious, educational, student, governmental bodies, and individuals calling for divestment and/or divesting from fossil fuel.

Rationale:

Whereas the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (GBOPHB) manages more than \$20 billion in assets on behalf of United Methodist clergy, staff, agencies, churches, and other institutions; and

Whereas The United Methodist Church has acknowledged the risks of fossil fuel dependence for the last 35 years through its Energy Policy Statement in the *Book of Resolutions* ¶1001; and

Whereas the investment policy goals of The United Methodist Church as outlined in the *Book of Resolutions* ¶4071 include investing in corporations, companies, institutions or funds making a positive contribution to the realization of the goals outlined in the *Social Principles* and the *Book of Resolutions*, and exclude investing in companies that violate church values; and

Whereas the *Social Principles* state that climate change will bring “severe environment-al, economic, and social implications,” which will “disproportionately affect individuals and nations least responsible for the emissions;” and

Whereas, despite a strong commitment to the *Social Principles*, none of the GBOPHB’s investment screens speak to the climate concerns named in the Natural World section of the *Social Principles*; and

Whereas the GBOPHB maintains significant holdings in petroleum, coal and natural gas companies; and

Whereas while shareholder advocacy can be effective in pressuring industries to change practices, it cannot change fossil fuel companies’ core business model, which is to produce fossil fuels; and

Whereas fossil fuel companies are spending up to \$600 billion each year to seek additional reserves while governments worldwide spend another \$600 billion each year subsidizing fossil fuel consumption;¹ and

Whereas the processes and byproducts related to the extraction of petroleum, coal and natural gas are damaging to the health of people who work in these industries as well as those who live on or near extraction sites; and

Whereas the extraction and burning of petroleum, coal and natural gas exacerbates climate change;² and

Whereas limiting the warming of the earth to 2-degrees Celsius, the internationally agreed upon limit for human survival, requires that the vast majority of the world’s fossil fuels be left in the ground;³ and

Whereas avoiding the worst impacts of climate change urgently requires a transition to sustainable energy; and

Whereas United Methodists live and serve on the front lines of disasters like Hurricane Sandy, Typhoon Haiyan, prolonged droughts, devastating floods, massive wildfires, and other extreme weather events, which will increase in frequency and severity with climate change;⁴ and

Whereas continued investment in fossil fuel companies undermines The United Methodist Church’s ministries to the most vulnerable among us-- including those who are hungry, sick and/or living in poverty; and

Whereas continued investment in fossil fuel companies signals a grave disregard for the lives of young people;

Be it resolved that the General Conference of The United Methodist Church petitions the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits of The United Methodist Church to adopt the following policy: Investments shall not knowingly be made in any company or entity whose core business activity involves the production of petroleum, coal, or natural gas. Core business activity refers to a company’s primary, or central focus of activity and is an essential element in the company’s economic success. A “core business” is one that accounts for 10% or more of a company’s revenue derived from the objectionable products and/or services.

Rationale: United Methodists serve on the front lines of extreme weather events that will increase in frequency and severity with climate change. Limiting climate change requires that most fossil fuel reserves stay underground. Continued investment in fossil fuels undermines The United Methodist Church’s ministries with young people and vulnerable people.

Submitted by Katharine Layton (Petition originated by Fossil Free UMC.)

1. Justin Gillis, “U.N. Panel Issues its Starkest Warning Yet on Climate Change,” *The New York Times*, November 2, 2014, accessed November 24, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/03/world/europe/global-warming-un-intergovernmental-panel-on-climate-change.html?_r=0.

2. “Causes of Climate Change,” United States Environmental Protection Agency, accessed November 24, 2014, <http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/science/causes.html>.

3. Bill McKibben, “Global Warming’s Terrifying New Math,” *Rolling Stone*, July 19, 2012, accessed November 24, 2014, <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/global-warmings-terrifying-new-math-20120719>.

4. Gillis, “Starkest Warning Yet.”

GENERAL CONFERENCE PETITION 8

Total Number of Pages: 3

Suggested Title: Expedited Exit

Discipline Paragraphs: New ¶2548 and ¶361.3

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Add new ¶ 2548 as follows:

¶ 2548. *Surrender of Charter of Local Church and Disaffiliation For Reasons Of Conscience* – Because of the current deep conflict over the church’s position on the practice of homosexuality and the blessing of homosexual unions, a local church may surrender its charter from The United Methodist Church and disaffiliate based upon the local church’s declaration that for reasons of conscience, witness, or mission it can better serve Christ and his kingdom by not being affiliated with The United Methodist Church and its annual conference. Such disaffiliation shall require:

- a) A minimum of ninety (90) days of study and discernment by the congregation
- b) The affirmative vote of two-thirds (66.7%) of the church’s professing members present and voting at a duly called church conference
- c) Repayment to the annual conference any money invested by the conference in that local church through grants or loans during the previous five (5) years. The amount to be repaid shall include any payments made to the local church’s clergy by the annual conference, such as salary support, but shall not include subsidies to provide health insurance.

d) Payment to the annual conference of its current year's apportionments in full and an additional sum equal to the current year's apportionments

e) Other provisions of the *Book of Discipline* shall not be a bar to such disaffiliation.

Upon such surrender and disaffiliation, the local church shall be released from the provisions of ¶ 2501 and shall retain full rights to its property and funds, provided that any debts upon such property and any other debts payable by that local church are assumed by that local church. In the event of such proposed disaffiliation, the bishop, the cabinet, annual conference board of trustees, and other appropriate individuals of The United Methodist Church shall facilitate the orderly and timely administration of this process.

Renumber following paragraphs from existing ¶¶ 2548-2551.

Rationale: Despite efforts to preserve unity in the Church, irreconcilable differences persist regarding the practice of homosexuality. The Church needs to value the consciences of our people and provide an honorable way for those whose consciences are violated to disaffiliate without the loss of property and in a ministry-affirming way. For forty years the General Conference has consistently maintained that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. In spite of this, there are local churches and ordained ministers for whom the position taken violates their conscience. Irreconcilable differences persist, diverting time and energy from our central mission of making disciples.

*Submitted by Keith Boyette, H. O. Tom Thomas, Tom Barnard, Diane M. Smith, David Ford, Edward H. Johnson, Becky Livermon, Burt Robinson, R. Bruce Johnson
(This petition was modified from a petition that originated by Thomas A. Lambrecht, Elder of the Wisconsin Annual Conference)*

GENERAL CONFERENCE PETITION 9

Total Number of Pages: 1

Suggested Title: Investment Screen for Petroleum, Coal or Natural Gas

Discipline Paragraph or Resolution Number, if applicable: #4071

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Budget Implications: There are no financial implications to the Conference operating budget but conference investments will be realigned if the desired action is taken by the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits or the General Conference.

Implications for the Conference: The conference would join a growing list of churches, religious, educational, student, governmental bodies, and individuals calling for divestment and/or divesting from fossil fuel.

Rationale:

Whereas the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (GBOPHB) manages more than \$20 billion in assets on behalf of United Methodist clergy, staff, agencies, churches, and other institutions; and

Whereas The United Methodist Church has acknowledged the risks of fossil fuel dependence for the last 35 years through its Energy Policy Statement in the Book of Resolutions para. 1001; and

Whereas the investment policy goals of The United Methodist Church as outlined in the Book of Resolutions para. 4071 include investing in corporations, companies, institutions or funds making a positive contribution to the realization of the goals outlined in the Social Principles and the Book of Resolutions, and exclude investing in companies that violate church values; and

Whereas the Social Principles state that climate change will bring “severe environmental, economic, and social implications,” which will “disproportionately affect individuals and nations least responsible for the emissions;” and

Whereas, despite a strong commitment to the Social Principles, none of the GBOPHB’s investment screens speak to the climate concerns named in the Natural World section of the Social Principles; and

Whereas the GBOPHB maintains significant holdings in petroleum, coal and natural gas companies; and

Whereas while shareholder advocacy can be effective in pressuring industries to change practices, it cannot change fossil fuel companies’ core business model, which is to produce fossil fuels; and

Whereas fossil fuel companies are spending up to \$600 billion each year to seek additional reserves while governments worldwide spend another \$600 billion each year subsidizing fossil fuel consumption;¹ and

Whereas the processes and byproducts related to the extraction of petroleum, coal and natural gas are damaging to the health of people who work in these industries as well as those who live on or near extraction sites; and

Whereas the extraction and burning of petroleum, coal and natural gas exacerbates climate change;² and

Whereas limiting the warming of the earth to 2-degrees Celsius, the internationally agreed upon limit for human survival, requires that the vast majority of the world’s fossil fuels be left in the ground;³ and

Whereas avoiding the worst impacts of climate change urgently requires a transition to sustainable energy; and

Whereas United Methodists live and serve on the front lines of disasters like Hurricane Sandy, Typhoon Haiyan, prolonged droughts, devastating floods, massive wildfires, and other extreme weather events, which will increase in frequency and severity with climate change;⁴ and

Whereas continued investment in fossil fuel companies undermines The United Methodist Church’s ministries to the most vulnerable among us--including those who are hungry, sick and/or living in poverty; and

Whereas continued investment in fossil fuel companies signals a grave disregard for the lives of young people;

Be it resolved that the *Book of Resolutions* section 4071, Socially Responsible Investing Strategies, 1. Portfolio screening, be amended as follows: Socially Responsible Investing Strategies

The Church shall pursue its investment policy goals through widely practiced socially responsible investing tools such as:

1. Portfolio screening

Based on long-standing United Methodist values, the Church does not invest in companies deriving significant revenue (usually 10 percent or more) from:

- alcoholic beverages
- tobacco products;
- gambling equipment or enterprises;

- pornography;
- operating or managing prison facilities;
- the production of coal, oil, or natural gas;
- antipersonnel weapons, armaments, ammunition, or weapons-related systems provided for commercial and private markets and nuclear weapons.

Rationale: United Methodists serve on the front lines of extreme weather events that will increase in frequency and severity with climate change. Limiting climate change requires that most fossil fuel reserves stay underground. Continued investment in fossil fuels undermines The United Methodist Church's ministries with young people and vulnerable people.

Submitted by Katharine Layton (Petition originated by Fossil Free UMC.)

1. Justin Gillis, "U.N. Panel Issues its Starkest Warning Yet on Climate Change," The New York Times, November 2, 2014, accessed November 24, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/03/world/europe/global-warming-un-intergovernmental-panel-on-climate-change.html?_r=0.
2. "Causes of Climate Change," United States Environmental Protection Agency, accessed November 24, 2014, <http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/science/causes.html>.
3. Bill McKibben, "Global Warming's Terrifying New Math," Rolling Stone, July 19, 2012, accessed November 24, 2014, <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/global-warmings-terrifying-new-math-20120719>.
4. Gillis, "Starkest Warning Yet."

GENERAL CONFERENCE PETITION 10

Total Number of Pages: 2

Suggested Title: Limiting Apportionments

Discipline Paragraph: *Discipline* ¶ 615

General Church Budget Implication: Yes, an incentive to curb spending

Global Implications: No

AMEND ¶ 615 by adding a new sentence as follows:

¶ 615. *Apportionments*—When a change to the apportionment formula or method is proposed, the council should provide for a study of the proposed change's effects. After its study, which may include resources supplied by the General Council on Finance and Administration, the council shall recommend such formula or method to the annual conference for its action and determination which shall include the approved budgeted amounts for clergy support, administration, World Service, Conference Benevolences, and other apportioned causes (¶ 614.1-4), the sum of which shall be apportioned to the districts, churches, or charges of the conference.⁶¹ The amount apportioned to each local church for general church and conference apportionments shall not exceed ten percent (10%) of the previous year's income for operations and missions.

Rationale: The burden of high apportionments, often exceeding 15-20% of a local church's budget, hampers the ability of the local church to make disciples and engage in effective local ministry. Having a cap on apportionments forces the prioritization of budgeting decisions. Such a cap would not preclude appeals to local churches to voluntarily support conference agencies, benevolences, and missions over and above the cap.

Submitted by Burt Robinson, H. O. Tom Thomas, Keith Boyette, David Ford, Edward H. Johnson, R. Bruce Johnson, Diane M. Smith, Becky Livermon (Petition originated by Thomas A. Lambrecht, Elder of the Wisconsin Annual Conference)

GENERAL CONFERENCE PETITION 11

Total Number of Pages: 3

Suggested Title: Mandatory Penalty For Violation of ¶ 2702.1(b)

Discipline Paragraph: *Discipline* ¶ 2711.3

General Church Budget Implication: None

Global Implications: Yes

AMEND ¶ 2711 by addition as follows:

¶ 2711. *Power of the Trial Court*

3. *Penalties - If the Trial Results in Conviction.* Further testimony may be heard and arguments by counsel presented regarding what the penalty should be. The trial court shall determine the penalty, which shall require a vote of at least seven members. The trial court shall have the power to remove the respondent from professing membership, terminate the conference membership and/or revoke the credentials of conference membership and/or ordination or consecration of the respondent, suspend the respondent from the exercise of the functions of office, or to fix a lesser penalty.

Except the trial court does not have the power to and may not fix a penalty for violations of

¶ 2702.1(b) less than the following:

a) First (1st) offense - One (1) year's suspension without pay.

b) Second (2nd) offense - Not less than termination of conference membership and revocation of credentials of licensing, ordination, or consecration.

The penalty fixed by the trial court shall take effect immediately unless otherwise indicated by the trial court.

Rationale: Assigning a penalty of less than a suspension for a first offense or less than termination of conference membership and/or revocation of conference membership and ordination or consecration in such circumstances encourages open defiance of the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church.

Submitted by Keith Boyette, Diane M. Smith, R. Bruce Johnson, David Ford, Edward H. Johnson, Becky Livermon, Burt Robinson, H. O. Tom Thomas, Tom Barnard

(Petition originated by Thomas A. Lambrecht, Elder of the Wisconsin Annual Conference)

GENERAL CONFERENCE PETITION 12

Total Number of Pages: 3**Suggested Title: Peacemaking in Israel and Palestine Through Political Action****Discipline Paragraph or Resolution Number, if applicable: new Resolution****General Church Budget Implications: None****Global Implications: Yes**

Whereas, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict has proven to be one of the world's most intractable conflicts in spite of strong support for a two-state solution on the part of both the Israeli and Palestinian people. Years of a "peace process" have not resulted in a solution and the Palestinians remain under military occupation. The United Methodist Church has passed multiple resolutions related to this conflict without any tangible result.

Whereas, the United Methodist Church has committed itself to peacemaking and seeks to act as an advocate for peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the United Methodist Church recognizes that true peace must reveal itself in both the spiritual and temporal aspects of life and culture in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and

Whereas the United Methodist Church "affirms the right and duty of people of all nations to determine their own destiny," (Social Principles, ¶ 165 B), the preferred solution to this conflict is the creation of two independent sovereign nations, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and in economic justice and cooperation. (Social Principles, ¶ 165 B & C). The 1967 war between Israel and the surrounding Arab nations resulted in Israel occupying the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Israeli/Palestinian peace process, which was supposed to end with a sovereign Palestinian State and an end to the occupation, began in 1993 with the Oslo Accords. Although two peace offers were made -- one in 2000 and a second one in 2008 -- a final deal was never reached and both parties have, at different times, walked away from the negotiations.

Whereas, the result has been on-going suffering for both parties with Israeli settlement growth and control over the Palestinian population and economy on one side, and violence and Palestinian terrorism on the other side. This situation is not sustainable.

Politically, the end of the Israeli occupation will occur with a negotiated peace treaty between Israel and Palestine.

Whereas, after years of occupation and violence, a deep and fundamental lack of trust exists between Israelis and Palestinians and in order for a lasting, just and peaceful solution to be successful, the difficult work of reconciliation, restoration of right relationship and trust building must also be done.

Whereas that the 2016 General Conference call on The United Methodist Church to:

1. Lobby the United States government to draft a just and comprehensive peace process agreement to be presented to the Israelis and Palestinians with the expectation that they sign onto it within a two year period, with strong built-in incentives to encourage both parties to so sign. In addition to foreign aid, these incentives may include many things such as favorable trade and shipping agreements, favorable student and work related visa arrangements, and coordination on various diplomatic fronts. The comprehensive agreement would recognize a sovereign Palestinian State, define borders, and resolve all core issues such as status of Jerusalem, settlements, refugees and security arrangements; and
2. Fully support commitments by the General Board of Pensions and United Methodist Foundations to research and identify investment opportunities that support the Palestinian economy and also support joint ventures between Israelis and Palestinians so they can begin the work towards building trust and reconciliation.

Submitted by James R. Noland, Clarence Brown, Tim Gerde, Harry Kenon

GENERAL CONFERENCE PETITION 13**Number of Pages: 6****Suggested Title: Peacemaking in Israel and Palestine Through Restorative Justice****Discipline Paragraph or Resolution Number: new Resolution****General Church Budget Implications: None****Global Implications: Yes**

Whereas, The United Methodist Church has committed itself to peacemaking and seeks to act as an advocate for peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and The United Methodist Church recognizes that true peace must reveal itself in both the spiritual and temporal aspects of life and culture in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and

Whereas, The United Methodist Church "affirms the right and duty of people of all nations to determine their own destiny," (Social Principles, ¶ 165 B), the preferred solution to this conflict is the creation of two independent sovereign nations, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and in economic justice and cooperation. (Social Principles, ¶ 165 B & C).

Whereas, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict has proven to be one of the world's most intractable conflicts and in spite of strong support for a two-state solution on the part of both the Israeli and Palestinian people, years of a "peace process" has not resulted in a solution and the Palestinians remain under military occupation. The United Methodist Church has passed multiple resolutions related to this conflict without tangible impact.

Whereas, a significant portion of both the Israeli and Palestinians populations are exposed to traumatic events, many of them life-threatening, and after years of suffering under occupation and Israeli military incursions, Palestinians have experienced profound victimization and trauma. The Gaza Community Mental Health Program declares that PTSD is nearly universal in Gaza, with 92 percent of all Palestinian children there suffering from it. ("Psychological Impact of War on Children in Gaza," Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East Factsheet Series No. 149, (March 2012). (<https://www.cjpme.org/DisplayHTMLDocument.aspx?DO=795&ICID=4&RecID=863&SaveMode=0>).

Whereas, Israelis too, have suffered both victimization and trauma through years of wars and terrorism, at different times Israelis and Palestinians have both been victims and both have been aggressors. According to a 2008 Center for Victims of Terror and War study, between 70 and 94 percent of Israeli children in Sderot suffer from symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This is in addition to the roughly 30 percent of Sderot adults who are also diagnosed with PTSD. (Eli Ashkenazi & Mijal Grinberg, "Study: Most Sderot kids exhibit post-traumatic stress symptoms," Haaretz, 17 January 2008. Web. 7 August 2013. <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/945489.html>).

Whereas, trauma and a sense of victimization profoundly impact individuals, communities and nations and can result in the perpetuation and prolongation of the very conflict which caused the trauma in the first place, a deep lack of trust exists between Israelis and Palestinians after years of occupation and violence, making resolution of their conflict difficult, seemingly impossible. In order for a lasting, just and peaceful solution, the

difficult work of building trust must first be done. There has been far too much suffering and violence on both sides. It is time for peacemakers to get involved in trust building.

Whereas, restorative justice is a growing social movement in the Church and elsewhere which seeks to repair damages, establish trust, establish dignity, and integrate all people who have been harmed and alienated through conflict, the goal of restorative justice to heal and transform conflict into a pact of mutual cooperation fits the needs of the Israelis and Palestinians. Re-storative justice, a peace-building or conflict transformation approach to justice, can be of great assistance in trust building between parties who have been in even prolonged conflict like the Palestinians and Israelis.

Whereas, there are different types of restorative justice dialogue where the parties meet in a safe and structured setting, the dialogue includes both victims and aggressors/offenders and some sort of mediator. The focus of the encounter involves naming what happened, identifying its impact, and coming to some common understanding, often including reaching agreement as to how any resultant harm will be repaired. Restorative justice dialogue may be especially effective in a situation like the Israeli/Palestinian conflict where both parties see themselves as the victim and the other as the aggressor/offender. For example, Dr. Howard Zehr a Professor of Restorative Justice at the Center for Justice and Peace building, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia, described his experience of watching a role play in the United Kingdom by high school students and their principal. In the first role play they showed how a fight between two girls had been handled in the past: the principal sat behind his desk, interrogating participants and meting out judgment. In the second, they illustrated a restorative justice circle process in which the principal took part as one of the participants, without dominating the process, led by a facilitator. Each party told their story and expressed their own sense of harm and wrongdoing. Through this process they each began to acknowledge their responsibility in the conflict. A consensus was achieved that acknowledged some mutual harm as well as shared blame and allowed the disputants to leave as friends. (http://www.wiscomp.org/pp-v1/Howard_Zehr_Paper.pdf). As shown by this role play, restorative justice seeks not to shame or to punish, but to heal, not by ignoring or denying wrongdoing, but through the process of acknowledging all injustices. This model offers hope for reconciliation in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict where both sides suffer, both sides are traumatized and each accuses the other of bearing the blame. Through the sharing of personal and national narratives, mutual articulation of needs and mutual acceptance of responsibility, restorative justice processes can ultimately create empathy for the "other" -- previously seen only as an enemy -- in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Restorative justice can lead Israelis and Palestinians toward conflict resolution and trauma recovery.

Whereas, a process of restorative justice may provide a new and creative way forward where trust might be developed and the beginning of a solution found and

Whereas, "Justice" in the Bible is restorative as God seeks to bring about healing in relationships, transform alienation into community, restore offenders into God's family, and bless all the families of the earth. While it contains retributive components, God's justice is fundamentally a restoring and renewing justice. In the New Testament, Jesus' focus is on restorative responses to wrongdoing. Knowing this, the Church is obliged to practice restorative justice in its own ranks and to call our own society and all nations to move in the same direction.

THEREFORE be resolved that the 2016 General Conference call on The United Methodist Church locally and denominationally to:

1. Affirm strategies which will engage both Israelis and Palestinians in an effort to learn more about their historic and current lived experiences and to gain an understanding of both of their fears, aspirations, and hopes; and
2. Strive to develop an understanding of the concerns and perspectives of both Palestinians and Israelis and then communicate them within the church in a manner that dispels stereotypes and caricatures and promotes better understanding; and
3. Commit to lifting up the voices within both Israel and Palestine, especially those of victims of violence and injustice, that seek peace with justice through nonviolent and restorative responses to the conflict; and
4. Actively seek ways to restore right relationship and promote reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians through restorative justice dialogue and projects involving mutual cooperation; and
5. Commit to supporting U.S. and international efforts at serious and effective diplomacy that promotes a just peace and cooperation for all parties to the conflict and that will lead to a two-state solution, an end to the occupation and the creation of a viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace with Israel.
6. Encourage concrete measures that can be taken by the Church, Church Boards and Agencies and Church members to support ways in which United Methodists actively pursue restorative justice mechanisms for peace and justice between Israelis and Palestinians.

Submitted by James R. Noland, Clarence Brown, Tim Gerde, Harry Kenon, Clark Williams

GENERAL CONFERENCE PETITION 14

Total Number of Pages: 3

Suggested Title: Remove the Incompatibility Phrase

Discipline Paragraph: Discipline ¶ 161F

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Whereas, ¶ 161F in the 2012 *Book of Discipline* states that, "We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God... We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons"; and

Whereas, the following statement in ¶ 161F, "The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching," contradicts the above sentences; and

Whereas, most laity, clergy, theologians and biblical scholars interpret scripture passages such as Leviticus 20:9 (put to death a child who curses his parents), Exodus 21:20-21 (humans as property in slavery) and I Timothy 2:12 (women should not teach or have authority over a man) to be bound by historical context and not God's Will for all time; and

Whereas, scripture passages such as Genesis 19:1-29 (gang rape); Leviticus 18:21-23 (pagan worship rituals); Leviticus 20:13 (death as penalty); and Romans 1:22-27 (as consequence of idolatry of graven images) describe violent, sacrilegious and exploitative behavior that most people would view

negatively, regardless of whether they occurred in a homosexual or heterosexual context. These passages do not address the practice of homosexuality that is affirmed in a life-long, covenanted relationship that embodies “celibacy in singleness and fidelity in marriage”; and

Whereas, a thorough interpretation of the Word of God as expressed in the Old and New Testaments reveals a God of grace whose love reigns over all creation and whose righteousness calls us “...to resist evil, injustice and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves,” as professed in the United Methodist Church’s baptismal vows; and

Whereas, medical science has established that homosexuality is a state of being and not a personal choice (See Amicus Brief filed by the American Medical Association, American Psychological Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, and other widely respected and authoritative medical, psychological and psychiatric associations in the recent case of Hollingsworth v. Perry before the United States Supreme Court) and therefore homosexuals – including their sexual orientation - are part of God’s creation; and

Whereas, the previous understanding of homosexuality as treated in ¶ 161F of the *Book of Discipline* presumed that it is a choice, and the current understanding is that it is a state of being which therefore can be affirmed in a life-long, covenant relationship that embodies “celibacy in singleness and fidelity in marriage”;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Virginia Annual Conference petition the 2016 General Conference of the United Methodist Church to delete the sentence found in ¶ 161F of the 2012 *Book of Discipline* that states, “The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.”

Submitted by Mark Ogren, W. Clark Williams, Jr.

Co-signers:	Elizabeth Sims	Rebecca Lewis	Marilyn Bursch	Kristy Pullen
Amy Reed	Glenn Birch	Robert Woody	Milton Wood	Larry Gsellman
Becky Suter	Ray Martin	Sandy Wheeler	Nancy Searls	Larry Pullen
Brigid H. Davis	Susan Shearouse	Scott G. Jenkins	Nick Knoke	Laurie F. Callahan
Bruce Johnson	Tandy Goodwin	Sue Gunter	Scott O'Brien	Lee Schmidt
Cathy Schmidt	Don Cook	Terry Lewis	Sue Warrick	Lesley Irmingier
Charles Rawls	Peggy Cook	Wendy Moniz	Trish Fiser	Lloyd W. Kinzer
Christine Stoneman	Andrew Hunter	Lori Deem	Kathleen Kelly	Lois McMahon
Cynthia Suter	Anne Wilson	Erica O'Brien	Al Stevens	Lorrie-Ann Melnick
Harlene Clayton	Barbara Glomb	Sean O'Brien	Arthur L. Banks	Louisa L. Davis
Jason Kidd	Beth Strausser	John Mann	Ashley Aschenbach	Marilyn Silvey
Jennifer Kilmer	Bill Durow	Katrina Zurasky	Barbara Schell	Martha Jenkins
Jennifer Mendez	Brad Yost	Kitty Mann	Beverly Ann Smith	Mary Jackson
Jennifer Ozawa	Brent Miller	Elizabeth Turner	Billie P. Sutter	Menda M. Ahart
Joan S. Miller	Carol Hunter	Bob Harkness	BJ Silvey	Michelle Johnson
Julianne Paunescu	Carol Weldon	John Long	Brent Raby	Nancy W. Vollmer
Karen Beasley	Carolyn DeVilbiss	Sandy Long	C. Mitchell Chambliss, Jr.	Pam Olmes
Karisue Wyson	Chris Ammon	Silvia Fenton	Catharine Raby	Paula M. SteinmannPenny
Kerry Ploetz	Daphne Miller	Tina Harkness	Claudia Stallings	Johnson
Linda Rhodes	Darlene Salo	Virginia Johnson	Connor Young	Rachkel Wood
Pete Hamilton	Diane Charles	Neil Sumerlin	Constance K. Walbert	Ramya Charles
Marianna Garrett	Doris Brown	Kay Alexander	D. Jay Losher	Robert Gehring
Martha Larson	Doug Brown	Barbara McGilvray	David Tiller	Robert Haley
Mary Beatley	Ed Morawetz	James McGilvray	Debbie Aschenbach	Ruby Hamilton
Mary Stewart	Elizabeth (Lisa) Jenkins	Sean Devolites	Devin DeGeneste	Sharlan Starr
Paul Schmidt	Everett DeVilbiss	Kathy Lutman	Diane P. Hallnor	Sheila Allen
Rebecca Yowell	Gerard Ruel	Carol West	Dora Ahearn-Wood	Steven B. Webb
Sara Manner	Holly Sapp	Debbie Reach	E.P. Hebenstreit	Sue Martin Stewart
Steve Honley	Ingrid Sanden	Elizabeth C. Lanthier	Fran McElvey	Susan Erdman
Verenda Camire	James (Jim) Brown	Holland Markwalter	Gerald T. Hebenstreit	Trudy McCrear
William Clayton	Janese Bechtol	Lester Kurtz	Hannah Brown	Judy McKinley
James R. Lewis	Jennie Gwin	Michael McEntire	Ian Hodges	Neal McKinley
Mary Beth Glass	Jennifer Kamber	Savannah McEntire	J. Richard Allen	Carole B Blackley
Mary Lou Lewis	Jennifer McBride	Sharon Vermilyea	James E. Vollmer	Frances B. Wilkins
Becky Hundley	Jennifer Weroniski	Susan Chandler	James M. McConnell	Julia Blackley-Rice
C. Nancy Cook	Jim Barthmaier	Betty Wood	Jan Gsellman	Terry Bain
Rives Priddy	Joan Nagle	Beverly Kinego	Jane M. Plum	Brian Lambert
Carolyn Matthews-Dyer	Jula Kinnaird	Bill Fiser	Jeff Smith	Cynthia Breaux
Frank Allen Philpot	June Stowe	Craig Searls	Joan Bell-Haynes	Allie Rosner Bass
Maurla K. White	Karen Palmer	Dan Whitford	John C. Moore, Jr.	Alvin J. Horton
Amy Thompkins	Kathleen Richards	Diane Frost	John Melnick	Amanda Garber
Bob Thompkins	Lyndsey Curtis	Hugh McIntosh	Karen A. Stevens	Bret Gresham
Brian W. Moores	Lynn S Mohler	Jane H. Euler	Kathleen A. Schauer-	C. Alan Layman
Carol Gibson	Margaret (Meg) Moore	Jim Frost	Schmidt	Charlene Beethoven
Carol Martin	Mark Elder	Joseph Kinego	Kathleen Elder	Cheryl Harrison-Davidson
Catherin Kelle	Melanie Dunn-Chadwick	Judy Knoke	Kay Rodgers	Christian White
David Goodwin	Myrta Zayas Alonso	Kristen Carter	Kevin Fletcher	David F. Jarvis, II
David Stoakley	Nancy O'Brien	Laurie Juliana	Kimberly J. Baum	David Hindman

Deborah D. Porras	John Copenhaver	Larry Tingle	Rachel May	Steve Hundley
Deborah Lewis	Judith Hall	Lawrence W. Buxton	Rob Vaughn	Steve Rhodes
Hunter Mabry	Karla Kincannon	Rev. Leigh Anne Taylor	Robert Lewis	Tim Tate
James M. Truxell	Keary C. Kincannon	Lynne Caldwell	Rosemary Welch	W. Benjamin Pratt
Jan Rivero	Kendra Swager	Margie Turbyfill	Samantha Jesse Tuttle	Wendy Tate
Jeffrey Pugh	L. Douglas Hill	Matt Bates	Sara L. Manner	William E. Olewiler
Joanna Paysour	L. Glenn Tyndall	Pat Shipley	Sara Pugh Montgomery	William G. Davidson

GENERAL CONFERENCE PETITION 15

Total Number of Pages: 3

Suggested Title: Use of “Disciple” in the Baptismal Covenant (Membership)

United Methodist Hymnal (Next edition)

An on-line Addendum to Baptismal Covenants to be created.

General Conference Budget Implications: The cost should be minimal by making it available on-line. The cost would be minimal at the next United Methodist Hymnal revision.

Global Implications: All United Methodist Churches will be affected because this will be a new aspect of baptism and membership process and the life that follows.

1. *Whereas*, Jesus, in Matthew 28:18-20, commanded His followers to “make disciples,”
2. *Whereas*, Matthew 10:1 says: “Jesus called “his twelve disciples.”
3. *Whereas*, Jesus’ followers in the Gospels and New Testament are called “disciples” in the NIV, 257 times; NKJV, 239; NASB, 234; NRSV, 235; NLT, 274; and AMP, 258.
4. *Whereas*, the United Methodist Church and the Virginia Conference state: “The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”
5. *Whereas*, the 2015 Virginia Annual Conference theme is “From Members to Disciples.”
6. However, in the United Methodist Hymnal under “The Baptismal Covenants I, II, and III,” persons making the covenant are referred to as “members” and the congregation expresses that “We will pray for them, that they may be true disciples...” noting that they are never called “disciples.” (UMH page 38, #16; page 40, #4, #8; page 42, #10, #11; page 43, #11 and #16). (bold added)
 - a. Also in the Congregational Pledge 2, it is stated on page 44 “...whom we this day recognize as a member of the family of God.
 - b. In the Baptismal Covenant III, page 47, the pastor questions “Do you prom-ise...and walk in the same all the days of your life as faithful members of Christ’s holy church?”
 - c. In this same Covenant under “Laying on of Hands, Confirmation, or Reaffirmation of Faith: “...and by his Spirit confirm you in the faith and fellowship of all true disciples of Jesus Christ.” (bold added)
7. *Whereas*, references to “members” and to “disciples” are dispersed in the 2012 *Book of Discipline*, Part IV THE MINISTRY OF ALL CHRISTIANS: THE MISSION AND MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH beginning on page 91 especially noting ¶123 through ¶138. These paragraphs provide good information about the role of Christian laity with some guidelines and purposeful action, but still referring mostly to “nurture for disciples to come to maturity” (¶137, page 98) and “guiding Christian disciples in their witness to Jesus Christ” (¶138, page 98).
8. *Whereas*, the identification of those making a decision to the United Methodist Church is as “members” only appears incongruent with our “mission” and with the New Testament identification of Jesus’ followers.
9. *Whereas*, United Methodists are often members of many other wonderful organizations that advance society, being a follower of Jesus is something more, a great deal more. It is a calling to love everyone, to make sacrifices, and to surrender one’s life to our Creator, Savior, and Redeemer. The name “disciple” conveys this life-changing commitment clearer than “member”

Petition Text

Add to our Baptismal and Membership Covenants in the United Methodist Hymnal to identify those in union with the United Methodist Church as “disciples”, the biblical identification title, as an addition to becoming members of the United Methodist Church.

Add two questions to the next revision of the United Methodist Hymnal and an addendum created for on-line access:

- a. In the Baptismal Covenant I on page 34, following the question: “Do you confess Je-sus Christ as your Savior put your whole trust in his grace, and promised to serve him as your Lord, union with the church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races?” “I do.”

Add the following two questions:

“Do you accept Jesus’s call to you to be his disciple and follow him?”

“I do.”

“Do you commit yourself to practice those spiritual disciplines that encourage growth towards becoming a mature disciple?”

“I do.”

- b. Add the two questions above to Baptismal Covenant II on page 40, section 4, following the same question in Covenant I.

- c. Add the two questions above to Baptismal Covenant III on page on page 46 following the question “Do you receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments?” “I do.”

- d. Add the two questions above to Baptismal Covenant IV on page 50 following the same questions found in Baptismal Covenants I and II.

Submitted by Thomas A. Hassler, Carol Bookwalter, Ron Hardman

GENERAL CONFERENCE PETITION 16

Total Number of Pages: 4

Suggested Title: Withdraw from the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

Discipline Paragraph: Non-Dis

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Whereas, “The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC) was originally founded in 1973 as the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights (RCAR) to safeguard the newly-won constitutional right to privacy in decisions about abortion.” (“History,” <http://rcrc.org/homepage/about/history>, accessed on 01/15/15);

Whereas, RCRC works to defend and expand the absolute right to abortion – that is, the right to all abortions, whatever the circumstances, without exception – in American law;

Whereas, one RCRC publication describes aborting unborn children as “God’s work” or “holy work, service provided by God’s people on behalf of God’s people,” and encourages religious leaders to bless the work of providing elective abortions (Prayerfully Pro-Choice: Resources for Worship, RCRC, <http://www.readbag.com/rcrc-pdf-prayerfully>, pp. 73-74, 101-102, accessed on 02/02/15);

Whereas, RCRC, in its “Words of Choice: Countering Anti-Choice Rhetoric” (https://web.archive.org/web/20110320103739/http://www.rcrc.org/pdf/Words_of_Choice.pdf, accessed 02/02/15), explicitly argues against using the following words, phrases, and moral claims that are found in The United Methodist Church’s central teaching on abortion (§ 161J, *The Book of Discipline* [2012]): “abortion as...birth control,” “[abortion] as...gender selection,” “adoption,” “crisis pregnancy centers,” “mother,” “notification and consent,” “partial-birth abortion” opposition, “sacredness of...life,” “sanctity of...life,” and “unborn child;”

Whereas, RCRC works for abortion rights in any and all circumstances, while The United Methodist Church teaches that moral discernment, on matters related to abortion, is essential, because the Church “[is] equally bound to respect the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother and the unborn child,” “cannot affirm abortion as an acceptable means of birth control,” and “unconditionally reject[s] [abortion] as a means of gender selection or eugenics” (§ 161J on Abortion, *The Social Principles, The Book of Discipline* [2012]);

Whereas, RCRC has consistently lobbied government against any attempt to limit the practice of partial-birth abortions, while The United Methodist Church has since 2000 “oppose[d] the use of late-term abortion known as dilation and extraction (partial-birth abortion) and call[s] for the end of this practice” with rare exceptions (§ 161J on Abortion, *The Social Principles, The Book of Discipline* [2012]);

Whereas, RCRC has consistently favored the availability of partial-birth abortion, while the 2012 General Conference decided that the Church’s General Council on Finance and Administration “shall be responsible for ensuring that no board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall expend United Methodist funds in a manner that violates the expressed commitment of The United Methodist Church to ‘oppose the use of late-term abortion known as dilation and extraction (partial-birth abortion) and call for the end of this practice [with rare exceptions]’ (§ 161J). The council shall have the right to stop such expenditures.” (§ 806.10, *The Book of Discipline* [2012]);

Whereas, RCRC supported the Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA), which if adopted would have overturned all federal, state, and local laws even mildly restricting abortion, while The United Methodist Church’s General Board of Church and Society withdrew its support of FOCA in 2008, because this RCRC-supported bill was in conflict with The United Methodist Church’s position on abortion (“Living in the Truth: Church and Society, Obama, and Abortion,” *Lifewatch* [03/01/09], p. 6, www.lifewatch.org/pdf/lifewatch_newsletter_03-09.pdf, accessed 02/02/15; and § 161J on Abortion, *The Social Principles, The Book of Discipline* [2008]);

Whereas, Bishop Timothy W. Whitaker, retired bishop of The United Methodist Church, has declared: “At the 2004 General Conference, the church endorsed our [United Methodist] agencies’ continued participation in the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice without much of a debate about how participation in this coalition compromises our public witness against abortion” (“Do No Harm!,” *Lifewatch* [03/01/05], p. 3, www.lifewatch.org/pdf/lifewatch_newsletter_03-05.pdf, accessed 02/02/15);

Whereas, the 2008 General Conference narrowly voted, when many African delegates were not present, to continue participation in RCRC;

Whereas, during the 2012 General Conference, although a legislative subcommittee and committee had both voted to withdraw The United Methodist Church from RCRC, a regular plenary vote on this matter never took place, so that this petition had no opportunity to be adopted;

Whereas, “the members of our denomination are not of one mind over the precise conditions in which abortion can be supported” (#2026, *The Book of Resolutions* [2012], p. 124), and therefore agencies of the entire United Methodist Church should not be permitted to join a political lobby such as RCRC;

Whereas, other mainline denominations, with positions on abortion similar to that of The United Methodist Church, have either chosen not to become members of RCRC (e.g., the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Disciples of Christ) or severed ties with RCRC (American Baptist Churches USA and the Northern Province of the Moravian Church);

Whereas, “Reverends like us should never oppose access to abortion or sex ed” (sic, www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/09/29/reverends-like-us-should-never-oppose-access-to-abortion-or-sex-ed/, accessed on 02/02/15) – written by RCRC’s President and CEO Rev. Harry Knox, and by RCRC’s Board of Directors Chair Dr. Alethea R. Smith-Withers – advocates for “abortion care” and thereby demonstrates that RCRC’s work continues to be divisive in The United Methodist Church because of its lack of care for the unborn child; and

Whereas, individual United Methodists can dialogue with RCRC without leading The United Methodist Church to legitimate RCRC’s educational and political agenda, which conflicts with our Social Principles’ teaching on life and abortion (§ 161J on Abortion, *The Social Principles, The Book of Discipline* [2012]).

Therefore, be it resolved, that the 2015 session of the Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church hereby charges its Conference Secretary to forward this resolution, in a timely and appropriate manner, to the 2016 General Conference to withdraw immediately the General Board of Church and Society and the United Methodist Women from membership in the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC).

Therefore, be it further resolved, that the 2015 session of the Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church hereby charges its Conference Secretary because of the fifty-word limit that has been imposed on the printed rationales in the public listings of General Conference petitions, to include with this petition the following rationale: “RCRC is a one-sided political lobby that opposes all disapproval or limitation of abortion. RCRC’s advocacy often directly contradicts our Social Principles on abortion, but it still uses our Church’s name. Several Annual Conferences and many United Methodist leaders have urged the Church to end all association with RCRC.”

*Submitted by Tom Barnard, Keith Boyette, David Ford, R. Bruce Johnson, Edward H. Johnson, Becky Livermon, Burt Robinson
(This petition originated with Lifewatch.)*