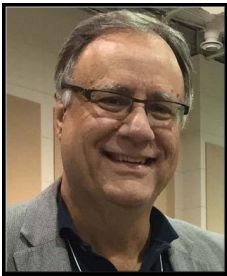


THE BEACON

Official Newsletter of the Virginia Conference United Methodist Men
To help men grow in Christ, so others may know Christ

Christmas Greetings from President Andrew Kissell *Blessing Each Other*



Good Morning,

During the season of Christmas, it is common to exchange greetings and best wishes for the New Year. It is equally as important to share a word of encouragement as well.

I had the good fortune to apply an important Biblical teaching several weeks ago when I participated in my fifth Kairos 4-day weekend at Sussex II State Prison, about an hour south of Richmond. Many of the thirty-eight residents (inmates) we met had little hope in their lives. Several will never again leave the confines of a prison having been sentenced to multiple life sentences. But we came to share the freedom of Christ anyway. Every time we do this ministry, about five men come to accept Christ and are in fact reborn as our brothers in Christ. Things are so different in prison. I feel very much like I'm on Mars when I'm there.

Knowing that encouragement is essential to effective team building, I made sure to make specific comments to each Kairos team member about what he did well during these four days, not just saying "great job". Nearly all of Paul's letters include encouragement or a blessing before he gets to constructive criticism. [1 Thessalonians 5:11](#) reads, "Therefore encourage one another and **build one another up**, just as you are doing." Other examples are [Ephesians 4:12](#), [Ephesians 4:29](#), and [Romans 15:2](#).

"Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered."

[Proverbs 11:25](#)

These scriptures turned my faith into action. After the Kairos weekend, I wrote two personal notes to two men on the Virginia Conference UMM Cabinet thanking them for their service, citing specific examples, and sharing how glad I was to be their brother in Christ -- really more than encouragement, *a blessing*. Both responded, grateful for my kind words. Of particular note, one said, "Not necessary, but greatly appreciated." That's how I think we should feel about serving the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, I encourage you to take the time to build up your team. That includes your leadership: our Bishop, her staff, your District Superintendents, your pastors, and your lay leaders. Men, I exhort you to regularly encourage all your brothers and sisters, because "Whoever brings blessing will be enriched." Praise God!

Happy New Year,

Andrew

Andrew Kissell

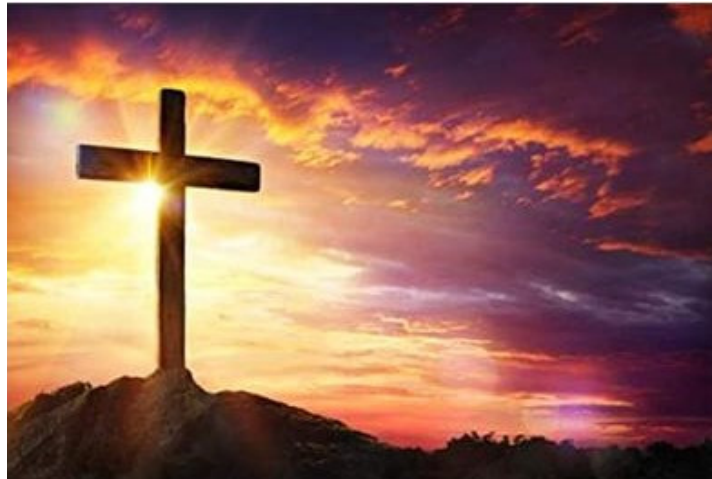
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Note: At the Southeastern Jurisdictional UMM meeting in November, Andrew Kissell was elected to serve as President of the SEJ UMM for the 2020-2024 term starting in July. Please congratulate and encourage Andrew as he prepares for this new responsibility.

Tri-District Retreat at Camp Overlook | January 3-4, 2020

Jump Start the New Year at Camp Overlook



In the life of the church we are constantly striving to reach new people in new ways. Often there is the call for young people. Come and join Rev. Josh Orndorff at the Tri-District Retreat at [Camp Overlook](#) on **Friday-Saturday, January 3-4, 2020**. He will lead and inspire us to understand and connect with Millennial and Gen Z'ers so we can form lasting relationships to further the Kingdom of God.

An ordained elder in the Virginia Annual Conference, Josh serves as the chaplain of Randolph-Macon Academy in Front Royal where he leads chapel services, teaches religion, and coaches soccer.

The Tri-District Retreat is a joint partnership with the Staunton, Harrisonburg, and Winchester Districts UMMen and the Virginia Conference UMM. United Methodist Men across the Virginia Conference are invited to attend this only conference-wide retreat for men in 2020.

*Friday, Jan. 3
Check-in 6:00pm
Supper 6:30pm*

*Saturday, Jan. 4
Closing at 2:00pm*

Please register [online](#) now, or mail the registration form in the [brochure](#). The deadline for registration is **December 27, 2019**.

For more information, contact [Steve Cunningham](#).

Register Me Now!

General Commission on United Methodist Men

Reflections | Christmas Greetings



***Reflections by agency officers and staff of the
General Commission on UM Men***

912

[Click here](#) to view the full newsletter with expanded articles.

Note to Readers: Click on names below to view contributors' photos.

Meet at the manger

Bishop Gary Mueller, vice president of the commission, says, "A huge gulf has opened between those who are more conservative and those who are more liberal that mimics the polarization gripping our nation." He asks progressives, traditionalists, and those somewhere in-between to meet at the manger this Christmas, an act that can bind us together through the Christ child.

My wish for anti-freeze

Gil Hanke, top staff executive of the commission, says church leaders tell him their congregations seem to be frozen in place. Gil advises them to re-discover the Advent Anti-Freeze that can reheat their faith. "The stories of Christmas can provide the anti-freeze of welcome and invitation to action amid challenges."

Keep your eyes on the prize

Steven Scheid, director of the Center for Scouting Ministries, recalls a revised game of baseball he played as a sixth grader. Instead of a bat, the children used a tennis racket which made the ball easy to hit. All they had to do is keep their eye on the ball. He encourages us to swing for the fences with our eyes fixed on Christ.

A New Year with new hope

Rev. Dr. Rick Vance, director of the Center for Men's Ministry, advises us to establish realistic goals for the New Year. The goals should be important to us and to the ministry to which God has called us. Rick urges to find others to whom we will be accountable and not to throw in the towel when we experience setbacks.

Ringing the bell and asking questions

Steve Nailor, president of the National Association of Conference Presidents of UM Men, expresses gratitude for the opportunity to ring a bell for the Salvation Army; the outreach of that organization reminds him of the important ministry of UM Men. He notes support for this ministry appears to be waning and he suggests questions for us to answer.

In the stands -- or in the game?

Mark Lubbock, a Louisiana-based staff member, notes the difference between being a player in a game and a fan in the bleachers. It's fine to be people in the stands or people in the pew, but observers need to get in the game. Jesus doesn't want followers. He wants people who do what He does. We should apply God's Word to our daily lives.

Give thanks to God

Jim Boesch, a Florida-based staff member, observes that our busy lives have detracted us from making Thanksgiving a day to express our gratitude to God. "If you missed the thankfulness side of turkey day, the reading of God's Word may remind you of why you should give thanks," says Jim. He provides several passages of Scripture and a prayer to help us along.

Words to Live By . . .

Christmas Greetings in Music



George Frideric Handel's ***Messiah***

Debut: 1742 in Dublin, Ireland

**Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,
and they shall call His name Emmanuel, "God with
us".**

Part I, Number 8, Isaiah 7:14 (NKJV)

Merry Christmas
