



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Lessons from the
Prince of Peace 1

Book review:
*When the Center
Does Not Hold* 2

Remembering
those who have
passed 2

Greetings from
Bishop Haupt-
Johnson 3

2023 ARMS
Leadership Team
elected 3

What does the
Bible mean by
'peace'? 4



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Send news to:
Editors, *To ARMS!*
1200 Pulliam St.
N. Chesterfield,
Virginia 23235
or email:
alhorton@vaumc.org

Lessons from the Prince of Peace

by the Rev. Alvin J. Horton

In a world full of division and turmoil; when the Church seems to be coming apart at its seams; and families too often mirror the cavernous divides of politics and social discord; perhaps we would do well to consider what it means to find peace.

The Child of Bethlehem was considered the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of a Prince of Peace: "The wolf shall live with the lamb...the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them" (*Is. 11:6*).

Adult communities rose up that even barred children from living there.

And in Jesus' day? Christ had to remind his disciples that the kingdom of heaven actually belonged to children. So what do children bring to the table of understanding about peace?

Well, children are painfully honest. And they're sometimes selfish and sometimes quite selfless. They're messy and noisy, but more often than not, quite cute. They're vulnerable, and they long to love and be loved.



human, painfully honest giving of ourselves in love.

In a way, love is the price of peace. When Jesus said, "Do not think I have come to bring peace...but a sword" (*Matt. 10:34-39*) he was not calling his followers to take up arms; he was calling them to a kind of peace that the world has difficulty understanding. It is a painful, vulnerable, loving sacrifice of ourselves.

Children inherently know this kind of peace. They push and shove, fall down, and embrace. They laugh and cry. And they seem to accept all of these things in the children they play with.

When we look across our divisions we would do well to see people just like ourselves. After all, we're all just children. That's why it took a child to point us toward peace.

**A child has been born for us
...and he is named...
Prince of Peace.**

Isaiah 9:6

Perhaps we can learn something important from children.

When I was growing up, children were supposed to be seen and not heard. We ate at separate tables.

Maybe that's what peace is like. It's not the absence of conflict, or a forced tranquility like Pax Romana that requires the force of arms. Rather, it's a messy, sometimes loud, and always

How to Thrive in a Polarized World

A review of David Brubaker's newest book "When the Center Does Not Hold"

by the Rev. James C. Sprouse



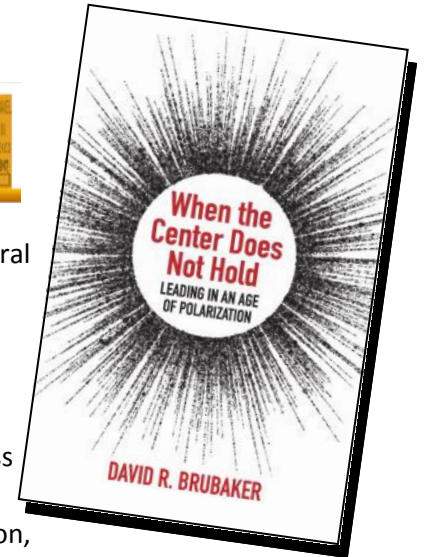
David R. Brubaker's book, *When the Center Does Not Hold*, addresses the challenge to those who would lead during the age of polarization. The stories of persons surviving sexual

governing board of the impacted denomination, he needed to address the rage and anger he experienced regarding the leaders' treatment of the survivors. Writing the book helped

communities. The general topics addressing polarization are:

- ♦ understanding it,
- ♦ leadership,
- ♦ communication across the divide,
- ♦ trauma and connection,
- ♦ weathering it and resilience,
- ♦ transformation, and
- ♦ the need for love that transforms.

His primary hope is that the book "will contribute to the growing body of knowledge and practices regarding how our increasingly diverse human communities might not merely coexist but thrive together."



"Many forces conspire to drive us apart. Building the capacity to stay together despite our differences will require personal, organizational, communal, and societal transformation. Perhaps the greatest transformation that will be needed is in our capacity to love."

Well worth the read for clergy and lay leadership.

Jim Sprouse



abuse drove him to focus on the needs of the victims over against the needs of an institution to protect its reputation.

Brubaker says that following a meeting with the

him focus on the critical issue that polarization is our natural response.

When the Center Does Not Hold provides seven portraits of polarization in our increasingly diverse

In Memoriam



Remembering those who have died since our last report in August 2022

Retired Clergy

Hannah Glisson (03/17/44) RL	Sept. 20, 2022
Jack D. Pruitt (05/31/31) RA	Oct. 10, 2022
Herbert G. Hobbs (04/17/34) RE	Oct. 28, 2022
Steven D. Parker (10/02/44) RA	Nov. 11, 2022
Bonnie Reiss (04/01/31) RE	Nov. 17, 2022

Spouses of Retired Clergy

Carla K. Russell (Rev. Robert Russell)	Oct. 1, 2022
Nancy Thornton (Rev. Harold Thornton)	Oct. 21, 2022
Elaine Layman (Rev. Tony Layman)	Nov. 23, 2022

Widows/Widowers of Deceased Clergy

Delia Jennings (Rev. Thomas Jennings)*	Dec. 2, 2021
Katherine W. Webster (Rev. William O. Webster)	Sept. 20, 2022
Jacqueline Fuss (Rev. Harold Fuss)	Oct. 5, 2022
Rebecca Perry (Rev. Charles Perry)	Oct. 13, 2022
Frances King (Rev. J. Skelton King)	Oct. 16, 2022
Daphne Jackson (Rev. Thomas Jackson)	Oct. 21, 2022
Lorraine Felder (Rev. D Deleon Felder)	Nov. 1, 2022
Mary Catherine Ebert (Rev. Douglas G. Ebert)	Nov. 22, 2022
Evelyn Louise Lake Kirby (Rev. Harold Kirby)	Dec. 2, 2022

*Not reported earlier

Guides on the Way

Finding peace from the people and experiences God provides

by *Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson*

As one of my first official functions, I am honored to greet the retired clergy and spouses of the Virginia Annual Conference! I have been blessed by the wisdom, experience, and insights of retired clergy and their spouses throughout my ministry.

I have fond memories of my first appointment as an associate at First United Methodist, Lakeland, Florida, a church that had seven-two retired clergy connected with it during my tenure there! Many asked if that group intimidated me, but I found them to be quite the opposite—supportive and encouraging.

It gives me peace to know that God has prepared and equipped me for what I will encounter among you. Even better, I know that God will place wise and experienced folks like you in my path to be my guides as I chart new territory...

When I reflect upon what gives me a sense of peace, I focus on the final words of wisdom one of those gifted and faithful retired pastors, Dr. Gene Parks, gave to me as we

said farewell and I left to take my first solo appointment:

“Sue, you will never fully understand the appointments the Cabinet gives you. Some of them will be good, and some of them will seem crazy. Some may be the absolutely wrong placement, but God will still use them. When you get to be my age, you’ll look back at your string of appointments and they will begin to make sense, for you’ll see how God prepared you in each chapter for a chapter yet to come. Trust that you are being prepared along the way for wherever you end up in ministry.”

I think of Gene today as I pack up and ready myself for ministry as your bishop in Virginia. It gives me peace to know that God has prepared



and equipped me for what I will encounter among you. Even better, I know that God will place wise and experienced folks like you in my path to be my guides as I chart new territory, as God put Gene in my path so many years ago.

I hope that you will take some time this season to reflect upon how God used each of your appointments to prepare you for challenges to come, and to give thanks for the companions on the journey God gave you to encourage you and teach you in the difficult times. I pray these reflections will give you the deep sense of peace they give me. God is certainly in charge and at work even when we don’t clearly perceive it.

Wishing you a blessed Advent, a joyous Christmas, and a healthy and fruitful 2023!

Bishop Sue

2023 ARMS Leadership Team Elected

At the October 12-13 ARMS Retreat, the following people were elected to serve as the Leadership Team for the coming year. If you have questions, or would like to offer suggestions, please contact Keith Mottley at keith.mottley@comcast.net or (540) 760-4376:

Co-Chairs:

Keith & Linda Mottley

Co-Vice Chairs:

Alexis & Mark Fathruckner

Co-Secretaries:

Judy & Larry Mann

Treasurer:

Susan Brack

Co-Past Chairs:

Steve & Susan Hassmer

Sunshine Correspondent:

Susan Hassmer

Newsletter Editor:

Al Horton

Retreat Registrars:

Harry & Gale Kennon

At-Large Members:

Ed & Marion Garrett ('23)

Hugh & Nancy Harris ('23)

Jim & Molly Sprouse ('23)

Larry & Nancy Tingle ('24)

Bobbie Kay Wash ('24)

Doug Paysor ('24)

Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson was assigned to the Virginia Conference at the 2022 Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference on November 4 and will begin her work in Virginia on January 1, 2023. She was elected to the episcopacy in 2016 and has been serving the North Georgia Conference.



Return Address:
1200 Pulliam Street
North Chesterfield, VA 23235

Board of Pensions & Health Benefits

Virginia Annual Conference

P.O. Box 5606

Glen Allen, Virginia 23058

Phone: 800-768-1100

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Rev. Susan Brack,
Treasurer
128 Glenwood Cir.
South Hill, VA
23970

Make check payable to "Virginia Conference UMC" with "ARMS donation" in memo line.

What does the Bible mean by 'peace'?

The United Methodist Council of Bishops, in their 1986 statement "In Defense of Creation," described the biblical foundation of peace:

"At the heart of the Old Testament is the testimony to shalom, that marvelous Hebrew word that means peace. **But the peace that is shalom is not negative or one-dimensional. It is much more than the absence of war.** Shalom is positive peace: harmony, wholeness, health, and well-being in all human relationships. It is the natural state of humanity as birthed by God. It is harmony between humanity and all of God's good creation...

The bishops explained, "Paul's letters announce that Jesus Christ is "our peace." It is Christ who "broke down the barrier of hatred that divided us," creating one humanity, overcoming enmity, so making peace (*Ephesians 2:14-19*)."

United Methodists recognize that "God's earth is aching for peace. Domestic strife, interpersonal violence and abuse, civil conflict, ethnic and racial clashes, religious schism and interfaith rivalry, terrorist attacks, wars between nations, and threatened use of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons—all of these prevent us from achieving God's shalom."

"The Bible makes justice the inseparable companion of peace (*Is. 32:17; James 3:18*).

Both point to right and sustainable relationships in human society, the vitality of our connections with the earth...

When we pray for peace and offer one another the peace of Christ, we become channels of God's never-ending peace that reorders the world toward wholeness...

Excerpted from "Ask The UMC." For more answered questions, go to www.umc.org and click on the link "Who We Are," then "Ask The UMC-FAQs."