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The Virginia United Methodist

April 2013

# Advocate



What  
does it  
mean  
to be  
United  
Methodist?

Connecting with the



Virginia Advocate

The official magazine of  
the Virginia Conference of  
The United Methodist Church

# FROM THE EDITOR



Neill Caldwell  
Editor

## Pass that casserole

**I know you're wondering...** What's that on my *Advocate* cover? A casserole? (Specifically, a green bean casserole with those crunchy fried onion thingies on top.) I thought long and hard about an image for our cover this month on what it means to be United Methodist. The Bible? A bishop's stole? Chalice and paten? The *Book of Discipline*? The Hymnal? A John Wesley bobblehead?

All of those would be fitting, but the humble casserole seems perfect. It stems from a joke my wife loves to tell: An elementary school teacher told her students that she wanted them to bring in something that represented their religion for "Show and Tell" the following day. (Obviously this is an old joke if they can talk about religion in school.) So the next morning the students took turns talking about what they had brought. Mary Catherine said "I'm Catholic, and I brought a rosary, which we use in our prayer time." Isaac, a young Jewish boy, held up a Star of David and said, "This symbol has been important to our people for thousands of years."

Finally it was Donna's turn.

"I'm a United Methodist, so I brought a casserole."

Why do we associate food with our denomination? Well, for one thing, we love to eat! One of my earliest memories is going to the annual fall bazaar at my grandmother's Methodist church, where you could buy ham biscuits, cheese straws and all manner of amazing desserts. It doesn't take much for us to organize a meal. Some of our best interaction and fellowship time is done across the table at a potluck, or a covered dish, where we also welcome strangers, invite the hungry and homeless, share grief with families after funerals and celebrate happy occasions like weddings.


Study after study has confirmed what we've known all along: sharing meals makes us better connected to one another.

It's also biblical... Notice how Jesus always seems to be eating, even inviting himself to dinner. (Good thing Jesus and the disciples walked everywhere.) I'm not sure how Christ would react to macaroni and cheese, biscuits and gravy or other comfort foods that pile on the pounds. I think all of us are looking for ways to eat healthier, even when we gather around the table at a church function.

But the casserole is still the staple of most United Methodist meals. So I send a "thank you" to our talented graphic designer, Cathryn Wootton, who took my weird idea and made it a weekend kitchen project. It turned out pretty well, I think.

Of course food is not the only thing I associate with being a United Methodist. I married into the denomination at age 38, so you might say I came late to the party. But while my current faith and my previous church are very similar in their beliefs, I generally feel more comfortable with Methodist theology, especially that God's grace is available to all.

You can read John Wesley's essay "The Character of a Methodist" at [www.umcmmission.org/Find-Resources/Global-Praise---Worship-and-Spiritual-Growth/The-Wesleys-and-Their-Times/The-Character-of-a-Methodist](http://www.umcmmission.org/Find-Resources/Global-Praise---Worship-and-Spiritual-Growth/The-Wesleys-and-Their-Times/The-Character-of-a-Methodist). It's a long web address and a long essay, but interesting reading.

Say, while you're having dessert. 



P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058

Phone: 1-800-768-6040 or

804-521-1100

Fax: 804-521-1173

E-mail: [advocate@vaumc.org](mailto:advocate@vaumc.org)

Website: [www.vaumc.org](http://www.vaumc.org)

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### Subscriptions

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### Deadlines

The *Advocate* is published once a month. The deadline to submit news and ad copy for May 2013 issue is April 1. For more information on future deadlines, contact the *Advocate* office or visit the website.

### Advertising/Tributes

Rates for advertising and tributes are available upon request.

### Local Church News

Items should be typed (preferably sent via e-mail) or printed legibly, no more than 100 words, and of conference-wide interest. Complete names of individuals, churches and districts should be included. Because of space limitations, the Local Church section prohibits news items related to church members' birthdays (of less than 100 years), wedding anniversaries, receptions for moving and/or retiring pastors, photos of traditional Christmas trees or Easter trees/crosses, and any item over two months old. Color photos are encouraged. Photos returned only if submitted with a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Photos included on a space available basis. The editor reserves the right to edit all copy or refuse publication.

### Letters

Letters to the Editor are printed on a space-available basis. Letters should be limited to 150 words for space reasons. The *Advocate* will not print letters addressing a topic beyond two months of the publication of that issue. The *Advocate* editor reserves the right to edit all letters.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS



## SECTIONS

- 4-5 Letters & Commentary
- 10-17 Virginia
- 24 Local Church
- 25 Events
- 26-29 Nation & World
- 30-31 Living the Word
- 32 Clergy & Diaconal
- 34 From the Bishop
- 35 One Last Word



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## SPECIAL SECTION

- 6-9 Annual Conference schedule and details

## FEATURE

- 18-22 What does it mean to be United Methodist?

## NEWS

- 10 Shenandoah's Tracy Fitzsimmons stresses Wesleyan values
- 11 Young missionary from Virginia works on immigration issues
- 12 Wellness ministry to reward spiritual health
- 13 Conference adopting new logo
- 14 In celebration of the small church
- 26 S.C. Conference communicator living on Stop Hunger Now packets
- 28 North Carolina Conference keeping superintendents in the field

### The *Virginia Advocate* Staff

Linda S. Rhodes | Virginia Conference Director of Communications

Neill M. Caldwell | Editor

Cathryn Huff Wooton | Graphic Designer

Peggy Cribbs | Administrative Secretary

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# LETTERS



## PSALM 46

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,

though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.

God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.

Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts.

The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth.

He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.

He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

## Evolving the image of Christianity

In David G. Myers' essay titled "The Church's Future in a Gay-Supportive Age," published last fall in the *Perspectives* journal [www.perspectivesjournal.org], the author writes: "The church's widely perceived anti-gay stance harms its outreach. From their analysis of the increasing number of religious 'Nones' (those who pick "none of the above" when asked to identify their religion), researchers Robert Putnam and David Campbell have discerned that 'intolerance of homosexuality' is proving to be the single strongest factor in alienating today's youth and young adults from the church. This suggests that an anti-gay religious posture is having an unintended anti-evangelism effect that wounds the church. ... When the Barna Group polled Americans age 16-29 on what 'words best describe Christianity,' the top response was 'anti-homosexual.'"

It is crucial that every United Methodist be asking God in their daily one-hour prayer time what we can do, what God will use, to change the image young folks have of Christianity.

Hilary "Pete" Costello Jr.,  
Warrenton

## "Top 10 Reasons" bottom of the list

By what authority did Dr. Ben Witherington write "The Top 10 Reasons to be

United Methodist"? I was disappointed to read this list and found it distasteful. Why did he feel he had to put down other faith practices to build up United Methodists? And where was the grace, love, forgiveness, scripture, tradition, experience and reason in all this?

Surely we could come up with better reasons and emphasize less frivolous or "catchy" fundamentals on which to base a choice of denomination. If nothing else, a committee or commission could undertake this exercise.

Far too much space was given to (Witherington's) effort.

Sherer Luck,  
Ashland

## Wingfield to work at GBHEM

I thought *Advocate* readers would be interested to know that the Rev. Myron Wingfield has been selected as Assistant General Secretary for Clergy Life with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry in Nashville, Tenn. His position will involve designing and implementing resources and training for bishops, district superintendents and clergy families, and he will be responsible for training new superintendents and directors of Connectional Ministry. He was serving as the South District Superintendent in the California-Pacific Conference, and from 2006-2012 he was San Diego District Superintendent. Myron's first ap-

pointment was in Fluvanna County here in the Virginia Conference. After graduation from Emory & Henry, and before going to Candler (School of Theology), he served for a year as a local pastor. In school he met a student from California and when they graduated, they went to her home conference.

Myron's father, the Rev. Arthur Wingfield, is a retired elder in our conference, having served faithfully in various areas of Virginia, and now living in Roanoke with his wife, Willie.

The Rev. Bob McAden,  
Roanoke

## Psalm 46 offers healing and hope

Using Psalm 46 with the articles on facing fear (*Advocate*, December 2012), reminds me of my experience during the late '80s at the Ronald McDonald House in Roanoke. Sponsors had opened the Ronald McDonald House to anyone facing hospitalization and their families. Each week had several persons present who were having cancer treatments, radiation and surgery. As a bi-weekly evening worship leader, I would read Psalm 46, ask all to share the mountains falling into the sea in their lives, and then to reflect on how they could be still, open to the God who is with us in healing and hope.

The Rev. Dr. Bill Olewiler,  
Charlottesville District

# COMMENTARY

## Why I choose The United Methodist Church

By Bishop  
Hope Morgan Ward

**W**e love because God first loved us. In a profound sense, I choose The United Methodist Church because God in Christ chose The United Methodist Church for me!

I choose The United Methodist Church, full of hope that we will live in ever-increasing fruitfulness through Christ in the world. Our calling is always to turn outward, to experience the Living Christ at the place where the mission of the church meets the world.

Bishop Francis Asbury told the frontier Methodists in America, "Take the resources from the center to the circumference." This is the challenge for us today, in every place where United Methodists are present.

God is active at the margins. We meet Christ in the face of those who are sick or anxious or fearful, who are young or elderly, who are searching or hungry. I choose The United Methodist Church because the heritage, the theology and the vision of our church turns us to face out into the world God loves.

When I was a child, growing up within the embrace of Parkers United Methodist Church, one of three rural churches on a pastoral charge in north-eastern North Carolina,



I learned from seasoned Christians that mission engagement is a means of grace. They, of course, learned it from their forebears who learned it from our spiritual parents, Suzannah and John and Charles Wesley.

At Christmas, we visited those who were elderly and those who were sick. In the fall, we visited homes, collecting money for children in need. In Sunday school and worship, we learned that God loves cheerful givers, that God honors hospitality and generosity. We learned that faith is empty without witness. I later learned about the terms "personal holiness" and "social holiness."

Our life was not perfect, of course. We were, however, headed toward the perfection that only God can give, the holiness that is a work of the Holy Spirit in us.

I am told that "all" was Charles Wesley's favorite word. I am convinced this

is true. My favorite Wesley hymn is witness to the resonant "all":

"Love divine, all  
loves excelling, joy  
of heaven to earth  
come down.

Fix in us thy humble  
dwelling, all thy  
faithful mercies  
crown.

Jesus, thou art all  
compassion, pure  
unbounded love  
thou art!

Visit us with thy sal-  
vation, enter every  
trembling heart!"

"All" and "every" – favorite Wesleyan words – are favorite biblical words. God will not stop until this entire creation is renewed and redeemed.

I choose the UMC again in this moment. We are the people who embrace God's "all." We are the people who answer with confidence the question, "Who is Jesus?" We sing, with joy, "Jesus, thou art all compassion, pure unbounded love thou art!" And we pray, "Visit us with thy salvation, enter every trembling heart!"

*-Bishop Hope Morgan Ward  
serves the North Carolina Confer-  
ence. She is the president of the  
General Board of Global Ministries  
and of JustPeace.*



# 2013 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

## SCHEDULE

This year's Annual Conference Session, like last year's, will again have a compacted schedule built to start and finish within a 48-hour period:

### Friday

Clergy and Laity Sessions start at 1 p.m. Afternoon session will begin at 3 p.m., conclude at 5 p.m. Evening worship will begin at 7:30 p.m. and conclude at approximately 9 p.m.

### Saturday

Morning session will begin at 8:15 a.m. with "Singing Our Faith" and will conclude at noon. Afternoon session will begin at 2 p.m. and conclude at 5 p.m. Evening session will begin at 7:30 and conclude at approximately 9 p.m.

### Sunday

The final session will begin at 8:15 a.m. with "Singing Our Faith" and conclude at noon at the close of worship.

Highlights will include the Service of Remembrance on Friday evening, the Service for the Ordering of Ministry Saturday evening, Bible study time on Saturday and Sunday morning with Dr. Steven Harper, recognition of retirees on Saturday at 2 p.m., and welcoming our partners from Cambodia during Saturday morning worship.



2013 Annual Conference will be held at the Hampton Roads Convention Center.

### Other important things to know:

- ❖ Registration will be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday. Those who need to register on Saturday can do so at the "Trouble Shooting" desk.
- ❖ The Society of St. Andrew Potato Drop will start at 5:30 a.m. on Saturday.
- ❖ There will not be a blood drive this year.
- ❖ Joanna Deitz will coordinate music for the Annual Conference.
- ❖ Bishop Cho will present an episcopal address.
- ❖ There will be voting on constitutional amendments.
- ❖ Cokesbury will again have a store in the display area.

- ❖ Life Touch representatives will be on hand to take clergy photos.
- ❖ The city of Hampton will staff a help desk throughout Annual Conference.

## HOUSING

Note: The 2013 Annual Conference session will take place June 21-23 at the Hampton Roads Convention Center, not the Hampton Coliseum. The Convention Center has a peaked roof line like a sailing ship and is to the left of the round Hampton Coliseum the conference has used many times before.

The housing letter for 2013 Annual Conference members (clergy and laity) was mailed on Feb. 13. The housing letter is avail-

able on the conference website at [www.vaumc.org/ncfilerepository/ac2013/2013HousingLetter.pdf](http://www.vaumc.org/ncfilerepository/ac2013/2013HousingLetter.pdf).

Enclosed with the letter is a list of area hotels and motels that have special rates for the conference.

The City of Hampton is providing free shuttle service from area motels and hotels to the Convention Center. Also enclosed with the letter are maps of both planned shuttle routes.

Camping information has also been posted on the conference website, [www.vaumc.org/ac2013](http://www.vaumc.org/ac2013) or directly at [www.vaumc.org/ncfilerepository/ac2013/Camping2013.pdf](http://www.vaumc.org/ncfilerepository/ac2013/Camping2013.pdf), or you may visit [www.hampton.gov/parks/](http://www.hampton.gov/parks/)

For more information, contact the Rev. Ed Merry at (757) 871-4696 or [EdHMerry@verizon.net](mailto:EdHMerry@verizon.net).

## PACKETS

In an effort to be good stewards of the environment and financial resources of the conference, the 2013 Annual Conference "promo packets" will again be virtual. Electronic copies of materials previously submitted in hard copy for the tote bag will be accepted – at no cost to the organizations submitting them – for inclusion in the Virtual Promo Packet, which will be posted on the conference website, [www.vaumc.org/ac2013](http://www.vaumc.org/ac2013). The Virtual Packet will be available for viewing on the conference website on June 1.

# JUNE 21-23 IN HAMPTON

Information for the Virtual Promo Packet needs to be submitted in pdf format to the office of Connectional Ministries via e-mail to [BevMyers@vaumc.org](mailto:BevMyers@vaumc.org) for approval by **May 3**.

Those organizations still wishing to disseminate their information in a hard-copy format may arrange for a display table at the Hampton Roads Convention Center by contacting Larry Brayton at [l.brayton@hotmail.com](mailto:l.brayton@hotmail.com) or (804) 517-0435. Display guidelines and a Display Request form are available on the Annual Conference page of the conference website.

## BANQUETS

If you are planning a banquet for this year's Annual Conference and would like to have your event listed in the Conference Banquet Schedule, forward the following information to Annual Conference Banquet Coordinator Michael Reaves at [reaves.michael.b@gmail.com](mailto:reaves.michael.b@gmail.com) or mail it to: Michael Reaves, c/o Fletcher's Chapel UMC, 8330 Fletcher's Chapel Rd., King George, VA 22485:

- 1) **Name of your group or gathering**
- 2) **Date and Time**
- 3) **Location**
- 4) **Contact Information for those who may want more information**

If you need assistance planning your banquet, please fill out the "Banquet Request Form" available on the conference website at

[www.vaumc.org/ac2013](http://www.vaumc.org/ac2013) as a Word document and a PDF file.

## CONFERENCE OFFERING

This year the Annual Conference Offering goal is \$200,000. Bishop Young Jin Cho is requesting funds to support four projects to help children:

**BRAZIL** – Shade and Fresh Water: \$50,000: In our long-term commitment to the children of Brazil through the Shade and Fresh Water ministry, these funds will provide support through training materials and start-up costs as the program continues to expand across the country.

**MOZAMBIQUE** – Janene Pennel Secondary School: \$50,000: The school needs to add classrooms and repair other buildings after a typhoon struck last year and flooding this year. The funds will support this vital educational ministry in partnership with the Mozambican Ministry of Education.

**CAMBODIA** – Mission with Children: \$50,000: The Methodist Mission in Cambodia is a church full of children and a new partnership of our conference. The funds will support developing Christian education materials, scholarships and other projects focused on growing the young church in Cambodia.

**VIRGINIA** – \$50,000: One Family "Una Familia" – Support for this new project of the Eastern Shore District

that seeks to build strong relationships between local churches and Hispanic communities by offering tutoring, Christian education and fellowship with children in impoverished areas on the shore. The Henry Fork Center – Project support for this ministry to children in the economically-depressed area of Franklin County. All God's Children – Project support for this vital ministry that provides camps for children from families with parents who are incarcerated.

"I ask that as we prayerfully gather for Annual Conference, we remember God's mission in our communities, our nation and the world," wrote Bishop Cho. "Your gift will touch the lives of many children and give them hope for their future. This will also be an opportunity to experience the joy of giving. Your prayerful and generous offering will be deeply appreciated."

For more information and a bulletin insert, go to [www.vaumc.org/ac2013](http://www.vaumc.org/ac2013).

## '4 CANS 4 CONFERENCE'

For the fifth year, each clergy and lay member of Annual Conference is encouraged to bring at least four cans of food or boxes of dry food to the Annual Conference session. This year, the "4 Cans 4 Conference" collection of food will go to the Peninsula Food Bank. Requested are: one can of



vegetables or fruit, one can of meat or fish, one can of soup or stew and one can with a pop-top.

For more information, contact the Rev. Jim Earley at [pastor@walkerchapel.org](mailto:pastor@walkerchapel.org) or (703) 538-5200.

## 'HOLY ROLLERS'

The "Holy Rollers" bicycle riders are a group of laity and clergy who annually ride to Annual Conference to promote the Conference Offering. This year's ride will begin in Chincoteague on Wednesday, June 19, and continues more than 200 miles to Hampton. The trip will include an overnight stay on Tangier Island.

Riders and supporters will meet for lunch on Friday, June 21, at 11:15 a.m. at a private dining room of the Hampton Olive Garden, located at 1049 Mercury Blvd. To place a reservation, contact the Rev. Bob Blinn at [robert.blinn@trinity-disputanta.org](mailto:robert.blinn@trinity-disputanta.org) or (804) 991-2252. 🚲

# 2013 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

## Kits for Conference

The 2013 Virginia Annual Conference kit collection is being conducted to replenish the United Methodist Committee On Relief (UMCOR) supply. UMCOR's Sager Brown Depot in Louisiana reports there is a need for all types of kits. Local churches are encouraged to collect items for any of the following most requested UMCOR kits and bring them to Annual Conference for delivery:

### SCHOOL KIT

- 1 pair blunt scissors – rounded tip only; no plastic scissors.
- 3 units of 8½ x 11 paper – no more than 250 sheets of paper total – consisting of any combination of spiral notebooks, top-bound pads or loose leaf paper (no more than 150 sheets can be loose leaf paper). No composition books.
- 1 hand-held pencil sharpener – must be at least one inch long – removed from packaging.
- 1 30-centimeter ruler hard or flexible – cartoon characters are acceptable, but no advertisements.
- 6 unsharpened pencils – no advertisements, religious, patriotic, military or camouflage symbols; cartoon characters are acceptable.
- 1 2 ½-inch eraser – no advertisements, religious, patriotic, military or camouflage symbols; cartoon characters are acceptable.
- 24-count box of crayons.
- 14"x16" cloth bag – homemade or purchased bags are both acceptable; heavy duty fabric only: denim, corduroy, drapery fabric etc. No advertisements, religious, patriotic, military or camouflage symbols. Closures are optional but must be buttons, snaps or Velcro sewn in middle of opening if used.

*Assembly: Place all loose items on top of paper. Turn items sideways and slide into the cloth bag. Fold over the top of the bag so loose items do not fall out.*

*Note: A pattern for the bag can be found at [www.umcor.org](http://www.umcor.org). Go to "How to Give" at the top of the page and scroll down to "Relief Supplies." Click on "Relief Supplies" and scroll down until you find the "School Kit" section. Click on "sewing patterns"*

### LAYETTE KIT

- 6 cloth diapers prefolded or plain diapers only – no disposable diapers.
- 2 shirts - undershirts or "one-sies."
- 2 washcloths – infant size only – no adult washcloths.
- 2 gowns or sleepers.
- 2 diaper pins – must have protective plastic closures – no regular safety pins.
- 1 sweater or jacket – open from the front, may be hand knitted, crocheted or sewn, hooded sweatshirts are acceptable.
- 2 receiving blankets - 30" x 30" or 32" x 32" sizes recommended – no crib blankets.

*Assembly: Lay one of the receiving blankets flat on a table. Set aside the diaper pins and place all remaining items on top of the blanket. Fold the blanket around the items and secure the bundle with the diaper pins. Please remove all packaging.*

### BIRTHING KIT

- 1 small bar soap – 1 oz. to 2 oz. size – do not remove from original packaging; small hotel bars are acceptable.
- 1 pair latex, surgical or thin rubber gloves – no kitchen or thick rubber work gloves. Gloves are not required to be sterile.

- 1 square yard of clear plastic sheeting – must be 4 mil. thick – plastic trash bags and shower curtains are not acceptable.
- 3 12-inch long pieces of cotton string – must be clean. Secure the pieces of string by bundling and tying them together. No yarn.
- 1 single edge razor blade – must be covered in paper or cardboard to keep it from causing injury; regular shaving razors are not acceptable.
- 2 receiving blankets – 30"x 30" or 32"x 32" size – no thermal or fleece blankets.
- 1 plastic bag – one gallon size, sealable bags only.

*Assembly: Fold the plastic sheeting and blankets so they will fit easily into the plastic bag. Lay the loose items on top of blankets and plastic sheeting. Slide all items into the plastic bag. Squeeze as much air out of the bag and then close it.*

### HEALTH KIT

- 1 hand towel – 15" x 25" to 17" x 27" – kitchen cleaning and micro-fiber towels not acceptable.
- 1 washcloth.
- 1 comb – needs to be sturdy – no pocket combs or picks, rat-tail combs and combs without handles are acceptable.
- 1 metal nail file or clipper – no emery boards.
- 6 adhesive bandages – ¾" to 1-inch size Band-aids.
- 1 bath size soap - 3 oz. and larger sizes only; all brands are acceptable. Do not remove from original packaging.
- 1 toothbrush - adult size only – do not remove from original packaging.
- 1 plastic bag – one gallon size, sealable bags only.
- \$1 to purchase toothpaste.

*Assembly: Lay out the hand towel flat on a table. Lay the washcloth flat in*

# JUNE 21-23 IN HAMPTON

the center of the hand towel. Place all remaining items on top of the wash cloth. Fold over the sides of the hand towel to cover all of the items. Fold over one end of the hand towel so that it covers all of the items. Grasp the bundle of items tightly and roll over the remainder of the hand towel tightly. Place the bundle in the plastic bag and seal the bag.

*Note: UMCOR is now purchasing toothpaste in bulk before shipping to ensure that the product does not expire. Do not put single dollar bills in each kit. Toothpaste money must be sent to the Virginia Conference Treasurer's office with shipping monies.* ☞



## Packing

All items included in kits must be new items. All emergency kits are carefully planned to make them usable in the greatest number of situations. Since strict rules often govern product entry into international countries, it is important that kits contain only the requested items — nothing more.

Do not include any personal notes, money or additional materials in the kits. These things must be removed and will delay the shipment. Kits should be packed in boxes with only one type of kit in each box, with the contents clearly written on the outside of the box.

Monetary donations include: \$1 per kit for processing and shipping; \$1 for UMCOR to purchase toothpaste for health kits.

If you prefer UMCOR to provide kits for you, include: \$12 for UMCOR to provide a health kit; \$11 for UMCOR to provide a school kit; \$35 for UMCOR to provide a baby/layette kit; \$8 for UMCOR to provide a birthing kit; \$55 for UMCOR to provide a cleaning bucket. If your church has already collected other types of kits, they will be accepted.

Send all monetary donations on one check, payable to "Virginia Conference UMC," earmarked for "Kits" and mail to: Treasurer, Virginia Conference, P.O. Box 5605, Glen Allen, VA 23058. Do not place checks inside the boxes. Your checks will be accepted any time prior to Annual Conference. Please make every effort to send your checks no later than **Aug. 31**. Remember, checks will not be accepted during Annual Conference.

*(Continued on pg. 23, "Conference Kit Packing")*

## What legacy will you leave?

The goal of planned giving is to help you plan your estate and charitable giving in a way that benefits you, your family, and charity. There are several ways you can make these planned gifts to UMFS and enjoy tax and income benefits.

To learn more about planned giving, contact the UMFS Development Office at 804-254-9450.



United Methodist Family Services • 3900 West Broad Street Richmond, VA 23230 • 804-254-9450 • [www.umfs.org](http://www.umfs.org)

# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



## Shenandoah president's Wesleyan values shape future leaders

The first words every student hears at convocation and the last words every student hears at graduation, according to Fitzsimmons, are Wesleyan theology: “Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.”

Dr. Tracy Fitzsimmons became Shenandoah University's 16th president in 2008.

By Ginny Underwood

**T**racy Fitzsimmons, the first woman to be president of United Methodist-related Shenandoah University in Winchester, is preparing students to change the world based on values espoused by Methodism's founder John Wesley.

Fitzsimmons shows how one United Methodist-related college president is using Wesleyan values to give students a foundation for their education and future.

When she stepped into the presidency of Shenandoah in 2008, her children were in diapers. Being a mother and closely involved in student life keep her grounded and focused on the goal of building future leaders, she said.

“We are here to form and transform young people,” said Fitzsimmons, who at 46 is one of the youngest college presidents in the commonwealth.

“My favorite semester every year is the fall when I teach. It's important for me to stay in touch with the students and remember why we do what we do,” she said.

Fitzsimmons earned an undergraduate degree in politics from Princeton University, magna cum laude, and a master's degree in Latin American studies and doctoral degree in political science from Stanford University. She was a tenured faculty member at the University of Redlands in California before joining Shenandoah in 2001 as dean of the College of Arts & Sciences. She later became vice president for academic affairs and, in 2006, senior vice president.

In addition to being president, she serves on Shenandoah's faculty as professor of political science. Her courses of study have ranged from development and disaster relief to world politics and poverty among global youth. She places great importance on giving students the opportunity to grow beyond campus boundaries.


Shenandoah has an enrollment of just more than 4,000, with about 2,290 undergraduate students.

The school offers a broad course of study to enhance spiritual and religious life and reflect its Wesleyan heritage, which dates back to its founding in 1875.

“Our programs are aligned with the values of The United Methodist Church,” said Fitzsimmons. She and her family belong to Reliance United Methodist Church in Winchester. “We encourage our students to do no harm, do good and practice their purpose with passion. They are able to live this out through community service such as feeding programs, volunteering and mission trips.”

She has personally led mission trips to Haiti in support of the College Catherine Flon, a K-12 school of 4,500 students in a suburb of Port-au-Prince. Shenandoah has pledged to help rebuild the school damaged by the devastating earthquake of 2010.

Fitzsimmons encourages students or families looking at colleges or universities to consider a United Methodist-related institution, where the college experience can strengthen the Wesleyan foundation formed in childhood.

“When parents or churches can't be there for college students, our United Methodist-related schools are,” she said. 

*-Ginny Underwood is a freelance writer and former executive director of United Methodist Communications.*



# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

## Young Virginia missionary works with immigration issues in Los Angeles

By Stephanie Kimec

I was born and raised in Chesterfield, growing up in The United Methodist church, and raised in a church that cared deeply for children and youth. In middle school I felt a call into ministry and mission and did various internships that helped to support my call. The churches I have been a part of have always been supportive of my call into ministry and have nurtured me in wonderful ways.

In the summer of 2011, I began my time as a US-2 Young Adult Missionary. The General Board of Global Ministries has two long-term missionary programs for young adults ages 20-30 to explore what it means to be in mission and ministry, the Mission Intern program, a global program, and the US-2 program, a domestic ministry program. I have colleagues across the world doing similar things, working with people to help spread God's love.

I was invited to serve with the Immigration Task Force of the California-Pacific Conference. A resolution was passed at their 2008 Annual Conference which created this task force. Part of the work of the task force includes Neighborhood Immigration Clinics, which provide free legal consultations to anyone with immigration questions, a Know Your Rights presentation and hospitality. These clinics are held at churches so the church is seen as a place that loves and cares for its neighbors. I also organize churches around being Immigrant Welcoming Congregations.

I have learned in my time in Los Angeles that I am a person of immense privilege. I did not grow up concerned about my parents being deported; I was not discriminated against because of the color of my skin or the languages I spoke. Growing up I knew I had more than others, but I did not know the proper ways to serve with people. During two of my summers in seminary I worked in Guatemala. Many of the women I met have husbands or fathers working in either the U.S. or cities trying to support the family. I was able to see how immigration affects families who are left in their home countries, families torn apart by poverty and global economic decisions.

Through my work I have been privileged to be invited into the sacred place where people share their life stories. My friend, Mariana, has shared with me her story, growing up in Mexico in a nice home with a family who sheltered her from their struggles. When her family became unable to pay for basic necessities her father traveled to the U.S. to try to find

work. She grew up without a father for much of her adolescence as he was trying to provide for his family. When she was 12 her family took a trip to the U.S., she thought just a vacation, but it ended up being indefinitely as her parents thought it would be best for the family to be reunited again and they could not afford to be apart. Her parents have continued to make sacrifices so she and her siblings can eat and can have opportunities no longer afforded to them in Mexico.

Her father is college educated, but now works very low-wage jobs because of his documentation status.

With my work here in L.A. around immigration, I am constantly reminded that I am called to be in relationship with people. I am called to love my brothers and sisters. From getting to know people, I find myself compelled to work with them to break the bonds that oppress them, to change laws that force their families to be separated, to change laws and minds so all are truly seen as equals – like the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther

King Jr. said for a world where all are seen and judged by the “content of their character and not the color of their skin.” We are called to build relationships with people who are like us and people whose lives have been different, who have faced different struggles and obstacles. It is in those sacred places where stories and lives are shared that we can begin to work with people to loose the bonds of injustice and bring to fruition the world God desires.

*- Stephanie Kimec is currently serving as a US-2 Missionary in Los Angeles.*



Stephanie Kimec

The Virginia United Methodist

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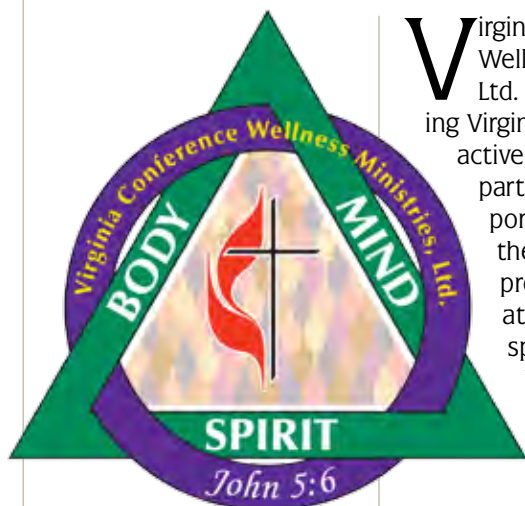
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# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



## Conference Wellness Ministries initiative to reward spiritual health



“No practice or behavior, no matter its potential value to the spiritual health and development of its practitioner, truly qualifies as a spiritual discipline if it is performed randomly or inconsistently.”

– Bishop Cho

Virginia Conference Wellness Ministries, Ltd. (VCWM) is offering Virginia Conference active health plan participants an opportunity to reduce their personal premiums while attending to their spiritual health.

Under the new Wellness 100 program, clergy and laity can earn wellness points for practicing the spiritual disciplines.

As Donald Yesukaitis, President of VCWM, notes, “From its inception, VCWM has grounded its ministry efforts in two important concepts: (1) wellness is wholistic (comprised of physical, mental/emotional, and spiritual health) and (2) no person can hope to achieve any significant level of true wellness unless they begin by attending to their spiritual health.”

The Rev. Charles Reynolds, executive director of VCWM, believes this opportunity is the natural result of combining VCWM’s philosophy with Bishop Young Jin Cho’s visional leadership.

“Providing health plan participants this opportunity complements and supports Bishop Cho’s call for the people of the Virginia

Conference to devote one hour per day to prayer,” Reynolds said. However, as Reynolds points out, not every spiritual practice is included in this discussion. While many behaviors are potentially of value to a Christian’s spiritual health, there are certain practices that should be understood as traditionally distinct; interestingly, notes Reynolds, all of these practices accord well with our Wesleyan heritage.

In his book *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard J. Foster defines spiritual disciplines as practices “central to experiential Christianity” and which, “in one form or another all of the devotional masters have affirmed” as necessary and beneficial to the Christian life. Using the 12 disciplines defined by Foster as a starting point, VCWM has selected 10 practices to qualify under the Wellness 100 plan. These are: prayer, fasting, participation in Christian retreats, working with a spiritual director, journaling, receiving Eucharist, study of the Scriptures, participation in covenant or accountability groups, acts of service, and Christian meditation.

Foster is quick to differentiate between Eastern meditation, “an attempt to empty the mind,” and Christian meditation, “an attempt to fill the mind [with Christ]. The two ideas are quite different.”

The Rev. Janine Howard, Danville District superintendent and member of the

VCWM Board of Directors, trusts that clergy will discern differences between activities associated with the practice of their vocation and their practice of the spiritual disciplines.

“There is a difference between a prayer offered during a hospital visit, or in a worship service, and prayer as a spiritual discipline,” Howard said. “A Christian may pray anywhere at any time, but prayer as a spiritual discipline is a very deliberate act.” Likewise, Howard notes, “There is a very different experience between time spent on a Christian retreat as a leader and as a participant.”

For Bishop Cho, there are three important hallmarks in the practice of the spiritual disciplines. “They must be practiced with consistency, with intentionality and prayerfully,” Cho said. “No practice or behavior, no matter its potential value to the spiritual health and development of its practitioner, truly qualifies as a spiritual discipline if it is performed randomly or inconsistently.”

Wellness 100 is an innovative attempt to reward health plan participants for attending to their spiritual well-being. The program is genuinely wholistic; it actively encourages and rewards care of body, mind and spirit. This is a significant change from other premium reduction opportunities, which historically have been based

# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

upon a strictly biomedical model. Taking such a bold and deliberate step clearly illustrates the vital connection seen between spiritual health and overall wellness.

"This incentive is VCWM's way of joining with the clergy and laity of the Virginia Conference on their journey toward wholeness," notes the Rev. Arthur Pressley, PhD, Professor of Psychology and Religion at

Drew Theological School and member of the VCWM Board of Directors.

Active health plan participants wishing to accrue points for the practice of the spiritual disciplines should submit their name, a list of spiritual disciplines practiced, and hours for each to [admin@vcwministries.org](mailto:admin@vcwministries.org) by the end of each month. Twenty hours per month are required to

earn wellness points.

For more information, visit the VCWM website at [www.VCWMministries.org](http://www.VCWMministries.org) or contact VCWM Program Director Lynn Rhein at [lynnrhein@vcwministries.org](mailto:lynnrhein@vcwministries.org) or (540) 946-6885.



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## Conference adopts new logo and branding

In February, the Common Table voted to adopt a new logo to represent the Virginia Conference. Designed by Cathryn Wooton, graphic designer in the conference Communications office, the logo is the first step in updating the visual branding of the conference.

The gradual roll-out of the new look will start with conference publications, stationery and mailings, and it will extend to signage, Annual Conference displays, and a complete website redesign, due later this year.

The new logo employs several elements that provide a "palette" of options as it is applied across formats and sub-logos:

- ❖ The font is called Corisande, which is already being used in the redesign of the *Advocate*.
- ❖ The stacked type in various colors will show up in other designs and layouts.
- ❖ The rectangular shape with rounded corners will be a common element.
- ❖ The "reversed-out" graphic (in this case the cross and flame) is the fourth menu item for future designs.

Any questions about usage may be directed to Cathryn Wooton at [CathrynWooton@vaumc.org](mailto:CathrynWooton@vaumc.org) or (804) 521-1112.



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# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



## Leadership team to help empower small church



By Bobby Thompson

I am very pleased to be a part of the Small Church Leadership Team (SCLT), which was asked by the Virginia Conference to consider various aspects of our smaller membership churches. Our objectives include developing a support structure to empower our congregations to reach their full potential in spreading the Gospel and making a difference in the name of Jesus.

We need to realize that small

churches (officially 149 members or less) are, in fact, a majority: Of approximately 1,184 churches in our conference, almost 1,000 – approximately 84 percent – are in this small church category. SCLT members believe we should celebrate the unique opportunities to serve God in a Christ-centered small congregation rather than worrying so much about the “if onlys” (if only we had more members, if only we could attract young families, if only we had more resources, etc.).

The Christ-centered small congregation is like family. We know and accept each other as we are, with love and compassion. We are genuinely concerned for each other's well-being, whether physical or spiritual. There is a real sense of community where everyone is valued and needed for the special gifts and talents that they possess. We welcome visitors and guests with open arms and celebrate those who want to continue in fellowship with us.

Small Christ-centered churches are made up of ordinary people with extraordinary potential. Consider Jesus' ministry. He spoke to crowds of all sizes, but his “small congregation” consisted of 12 followers who were ordinary people. With one exception, these 12 remained Christ-centered and were used by God to change the world.

I will quickly add that God values all believers whether in small or large congregations. We all have an important role to play in God's plan of salvation. Every size congregation brings special abilities and gifts to God for God's use as God sees fit. We just need to praise God in whatever situation we find ourselves and leave the rest to God.

You probably have noticed that I have used the same descriptive phrase several times, “the Christ-centered church.” To me this is critical regardless of the size of the congregation. If we are first and foremost

Christ-centered, whatever God has planned for us will happen. If God wants us to grow we will; if God wants us to minister to particular segments of the population, we will. This is because the Christ-centered church is prepared to accept God's will and is at peace in simply being a part of God's plan.

The SCLT has met twice to discern future direction and identify needs. At the core of its purpose is the desire to encourage pastors and lay leadership in our small membership churches. This work will initially be focused on congregational health and identity through the development of strong ministry plans and strengthening our understanding of The United Methodist Church connection. We will identify new ways to support one another and give thanks for the important role of small membership churches in our conference.

SCLT members believe there are many stories of successful ministries in the small churches of the Conference. We encourage you to share your stories as a way to celebrate God's work in your congregation and provide great examples that others may want to try. You can send your stories to Martha Stokes in the Center for Lay Leadership Excellence by e-mail at [marthastokes@vaumc.org](mailto:marthastokes@vaumc.org), or call **1-800-768-6040**, or **804-521-1100, ext. 154**.

We also invite those who will be attending this year's Annual Conference to stop by our display. Team members will be available to share information about the work of the group as well as resources focused on the small membership church.

You can also find out more by going to the section for the Center for Lay Leadership Excellence on the Virginia Conference website, [www.vaumc.org](http://www.vaumc.org).

*-Bobby Thompson is chair of the conference's Small Church Leadership Team and attends Maple Grove UMC, Danville District.*

# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



## Speaker encourages participants to find rest and replenishment in God

By Amy Shelton

The gospels show many examples of when Jesus Christ sought to rest and be replenished by God. Mindy Caliguire hears in these passages the grace of Jesus that understands our very human capacity even in deep relationship with God to disconnect and reconnect.

"The living, resurrected Christ knows our condition," Caliguire said while speaking at the 5 Talent Academy teaching session on Feb. 23. "He knows we have a propensity to disconnect then reconnect, again and again. I find great encouragement in that. I hope you do."

The event was live-streamed from Floris UMC in Herndon to five other locations around the conference.

Caliguire encouraged clergy and lay leaders to follow Christ's example and frequently seek renewal in God.

As the founder and president of Soul Care, Transformation Ministry director of Willow Creek Association and author of "Soul Care Resources," she has decades of experience in seeking God's renewing presence in her work.

"We get disconnected sometimes from God," she said. "Sometimes it's because a storm blows through, other times it is because life gets fast. Often when this happens, it's not an immediately noticeable change. A church leader can still preach, minister or counsel, but when we've disconnected from our source, then we dry up like a branch that has fallen from the tree."

This "soul neglect" happens when we've lost the sense of God being with us and for us. Symptoms of soul neglect include self-reliance, pride, anger, resentment, isolation, tiredness, fear, boredom, apathy and being overly critical of yourself and others. Caliguire explained that

anger and fear are normal and healthy human feelings. "It's when we become angry people, that we must worry," she said. "Fear can be healthy, but when we're consumed with panic and dread, then fear has become our master."

Soul health is the opposite of soul neglect. Caliguire explained what it's like to be closely connected with God, which includes feelings of contentment, grace, acceptance, joy, confidence, peace, humility, gratitude, enthusiasm, surrender and fruitfulness. "This is what the writers of the New Testament believed would be possible – if not normative – with Christ in our lives," she said.

"As we come into these times of connection, God's life force moves in us and remakes us into the character and likeness of Jesus," she said. "Over time we are reshaped. It is opening us up to deep, soul-level transformation where we're made new and increasingly see things as Jesus would see things."

Caliguire cautioned participants that "this is not about acting on knowledge of scripture or theology. This is about relying on God. It's about becoming a new person. There's more freedom and life in this deep connection with God. This is the miracle of transformation."

"God doesn't move into the human soul without being invited," Caliguire added. "The requirement for transformation is for us to be open and yielding."

Caliguire offered a four-step soul-health assessment for leaders: First, ask what are your current symptoms/evidence of your soul health and neglect? Next, ask how do you feel about your answers to the previous question? Third, ask what do you need from God? Finally, read Psalm 145:16-19 and see how it guides your prayers. ☞

*-Amy Shelton is a member of the conference  
Board of Communications*

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# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



## Hampton church experiences mission at home

### The Pastor

For a number of years, First UMC in Fox Hill has been in covenant partnership with Murtino church in Macedonia, and more generally, to the United Methodist Church in Macedonia through our covenant missionary, Carol Partridge. This relationship has netted a number of blessings, including a mission trip from here to Macedonia about five years ago, periodic e-mails and updates, and most recently, the chance to host Pavlina Manavska from the church in Strumica.

Upon noticing a single line in one of Carol's newsletters stating that a young woman from Macedonia was looking to come to the United States to work with a United Methodist church, our Mission chair, Woody Wilson, urged us to contact Partridge and begin the process to receive Pavlina.

We discovered that it was far more difficult for Pavlina to come to us than had we gone to Macedonia. She needed to leave some course work undone on her Bachelor's degree and had to prove that she would not be working for pay and would have insurance coverage before the Embassy would permit her to come to the United States. Macedonia is in such



**Pavlina Manavska from Macedonia became part of the family at First UMC Fox Hill.**

economic straits that a young person with a college degree visiting the U.S. is considered a risk as far as returning to Macedonia. We also discovered how important communication is across cultures and within our own congregation. However, by the time Pavlina flew into Newport News, every group, every committee, every work area and nearly every individual from our church had something in mind for her.

The experience worked well also because we had two key factors in our favor – our host family and the person we hosted. Bill and Ann Drummond stepped up to the plate just a couple of weeks before Pavlina arrived and promised to house her, and they did everything well. Not only did they cover the basics of housing, food and transportation, but they also took a keen interest in sharing their busy lives. For her part, Pavlina jumped into our church life ready to do anything. She sang with the choirs, helped with the youth, attended UMW and UMM, led Children's Time, went to meetings and participated in every aspect of our church's life.

The best part was how Pavlina shared her life and shared in our lives.

Together, we found Jesus in our midst, across culture, language and other human barriers. First Fox Hill is grateful for all the ways in which God blessed us through our covenant partnership, and we are dreaming of sending a team back to Macedonia not just to work, but also to be part of the lives of the people of Macedonia.

As Paul saw "the man from Macedonia" (Acts 16:9) in a vision calling for help years ago, we saw the face of Macedonia in one of her young women calling, "Let me come over and join my life with yours." Mission has more to do with life shared and blessed by Jesus than it does with work projects and jobs done. Pavlina reminded us all that the first job is to be human beings, redeemed and loved by God. Praise the Lord!

*-The Rev. Brian Sixby*

### The Student

I have always believed that there is no better way to help yourself than to serve others. Being a part of the FUMC Fox Hill and experiencing all its ministries helped me realize that there is a lot I can do.

With help from Carol Partridge (our missionary in Macedonia), the support of my pastor, Mihail Cekov, and my local church in Strumica, I found FUMC Fox Hill – the sister church to Murtino (a village around 15 minutes from my town) – would gladly received me as an intern for two months. I consider myself a person who can really adapt to all different situations and environments, but people from Fox Hill made that even easier with hospitality, understanding, helping and offering themselves completely.

On the first day I got the church schedule for the upcoming months, I was surprised by all the different activities taking place every day. A Stop Hunger Now meal-packing session and being able to be a part of a huge group of volunteers singing and



# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

dancing while working together was such a blessing. I am so thankful to the youth for taking me with them to the Eagle Eyrie High School Retreat. I had a chance to worship God with 700 young people and to be a small group leader, which really made my time even more special. I was so honored to be a guest at all the Circle gatherings, United Methodist Men, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, J-Unit, Potters Clay, Shepherd's Outreach, choir rehearsals and staff meetings. Experiencing different age groups and programs, sharing time together and hearing different life stories was part of the everyday program.

I have been asked what my biggest "wow" factors were: Ann's peanut brittle, banana pudding and pecan pie, Linda's sweet potato casserole, and Dick's pancakes. Obviously I loved the food, but there were greater things that made my time here special.

I got to experience a lot of traditional holidays. I learned about Veterans Day and celebrated Thanksgiving Day with two families. The Advent time was also special, preparing my heart for the birth of our Savior with such a lovely and caring people. I

never had a chance to actually miss my family because I found a charismatic and comfortable atmosphere that made me feel just like home. I have learned so many things and I have been refreshed, willing to learn more and to open my hands for serving because I can make a difference, too. I have been inspired with different ideas how I can share with my church back home.

Besides the church activities, I also learned needle work, about bluegrass, American recipes, American football, schools, "Spoons" and "Pass the Pigs." I was so thankful for the chance to participate in the puppet show with the youth and to actually record one in a studio in Macedonian language. I had the chance to experience Washington, D.C., and to be amazed by all the museums and attractions there. I was a part of the magic at Christmas town in Busch Gardens. Getting to know more about the area, visiting Norfolk, Richmond, Jamestown, Williamsburg and all the small places in between made my picture complete. I have learned more about American history, and my luggage was definitely heavier because of the books.

And to even talk about Yugoslavia

and Macedonia with people who have already been there was priceless. One day while Sue Hughes was showing me her album from around 10 years ago when she was in Strumica, I saw two pictures of me and my sister. Isn't that amazing?

It felt like I spent a year in Hampton because of the things I did. I am looking forward to seeing my family from FUMC Fox Hill again. I encourage everyone to experience such an exchange as I did, because we can learn so much from each other and we become greater witnesses of how good God is.

I express my greatest thanks to Pastor Brian Sixbey and his family, Ann and Bill Drummond, Kathy Fisher, Jess and Sue Hughes, Linda and Dick Poinsett, Josh McNutt and all others that did wonderful things for me sharing your time. I am so thankful and so blessed to be a member of The United Methodist Church.

-Pavlina Manavska

## The Hosts

With very few weeks left before Pavlina Manavska arrived in Hampton, there was a request at church for someone living close to the church to host her for her entire stay. My husband, Bill, and I had finally gotten to the stage in our lives of having a real guest room and we live three-tenths of a mile from church. I felt the tap, tap, tap on my head and heart, and talked my husband into a guarded commitment for a 22-year-old to stay with us during Thanksgiving and Christmas.

I supplied Pavlina with a small notebook and church calendar/newsletter. She wanted to experience everything at church and was willing to try anything, both activities and food. Pavlina's first day saw us at church for staff meeting. We were a little early, so we joined the prayer

(Continued on pg 23, "Macedonia")

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# What does it mean to



# be United Methodist?

**CHANGE  
THE WORLD**



By Susan Mundell Petrey

**M**y grandmother was born in 1880. At age 30 she married my grandfather, a stern, Southern Baptist, working-class man in Atlanta. The very first Sunday of their marriage, it is reported, he said something to the effect, “my wife goes to my church.” It happened to be communion Sunday and his Baptist pastor refused to serve his wife communion because she had been sprinkled, not dunked. The very next Sunday they attended her Methodist church. And, as they say, “the rest is history.”

The United Methodist Church means to me, “Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.” – a place “where all God’s people are welcomed at table, nurtured and transformed to be Christ to others in the world.”

I continue to be a United Methodist today by choice, in large part, because of our focus on reaching out to others in the world. I was raised up to “Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.” (John Wesley). I am proud to be a part of this Wesleyan tradition and to be called “United Methodist.”

*-Susan Mundell Petrey is the Richmond District administrative assistant and an active member at Chester UMC.*



By Daniel L. Garrett

In a personal way, to be United Methodist means to be grounded in a theology of grace. My maternal grandfather seven generations back, Bartholomew Smith, described this grace to his first son, Henry, on their farm north of Berryville. It was 1789, and Bartholomew had invited a young itinerant Methodist preacher, Jeptha More, to hold services in their home. Henry was much taken by the preaching but later began to doubt his own religious experience. His father, sensing Henry's struggle, spoke words that Henry recalled in his journals: "He explained to me that a sinner is justified by grace through faith, and through faith alone. While he was preaching faith to me, the glorious plan of salvation was opened to my mind, a plan so well suited to my condition. I believed with the heart unto righteousness, and stepped into the liberty of the children of God." (Rev. Henry Smith, "Recollections and Reflections of an Old Itinerant," 1854)

Henry Smith (1769-1862) went on to become one of those early Methodist circuit riders, ordained by Francis Asbury. He lived and preached the center of Wesleyan doctrine: a gracious God is "for us." I am a United Methodist because of this theology of grace.

My father, Bernard John Garrett, was ordained a Free Methodist preacher in 1941, the year I was born. He and my mother and both sets of grandparents, and aunts, uncles and cousins provided a family setting grounded in this Wesleyan expression of faith.

By the time I was in college I began to consciously choose the Wesleyan way for another reason. The influence of the Wesley Foundation at the University of Virginia opened to me a whole new way of being a Wesleyan Christian. It had to

do with the combination of heart and mind. I was drawn by the examples of the Wesley Foundation Director, the Rev. Emmitt Wilkerson, and fellow students and faculty who exhibited faithful, inquiring minds. I experienced much broader horizons for the life of faith. This was the era in the Methodist Student Movement in the late 50s/early '60s that Hillary Clinton often alludes to with reference to *Motive* magazine, a journal that inspired and captivated our interests in connecting our faith to the issues of our time.

Methodism's "practical divinity" keeps us grounded in a balance between faith and works. Because God is gracious, we are freed from having to earn any merit by our works, and hence, can respond freely with whatever gifts and graces God give us. That makes Methodism fun.

It was an exciting time to be a Methodist. Adding to our excitement was the fact that the Virginia Conference undertook an \$8 million program to strengthen campus ministries. Our church was committed to both heart and mind, and we students were greatly encouraged. If we were to translate that \$8 million into today's dollars, it would represent

a \$76 million commitment!

Further, to be a United Methodist means to be an ecumenical Christian. As I responded to a call to ordained ministry, I continued my theological preparation at Yale Divinity School. There I discovered a world Church and a growing appreciation of how Methodism fits into that larger picture. To come to a fuller understanding and appreciation of one's particular location in Christian reality, in company with so many ecumenical partners, has made all the difference in my life and ministry.

I love being a United Methodist and am grateful for the witness we make in the world, but that witness is but part of a greater whole. As a Wesleyan, I rejoice in our Anglican roots. How could it be otherwise for one who hopes to talk with John and Charles face-to-face someday? I rejoice in the communion of saints, in the catholic tradition, in the grounded theology of orthodoxy, and in the new worldwide expressions of Christian faith. But perhaps the real reason why I am an ecumenical Wesleyan is that I married a Lutheran student at Yale. That's another story...

To be a United Methodist means to find joy in an active faith. Methodism's "practical divinity" keeps us grounded in a balance between faith and works. Because God is gracious, we are freed from having to earn any merit by our works, and hence, can respond freely with whatever gifts and graces God give us. That makes Methodism fun. We have the built-in potential theologically to keep the proper balance between what God's grace does for us and in us.

I think that is what my ancestor, Rev. Henry Smith, claimed as "the liberty of children of God." ✠

*-The Rev. Dr. Dan Garrett is a retired member of the Virginia Conference who is an adjunct professor of Church Leadership at Shenandoah University.*



By Sarah Wastella

Some have asked me why I would want to be a part of a monolithic, institutionalized denomination like United Methodism. They wonder if I would be happier and more fulfilled in a cutting edge, anti-establishment Christian movement or some non-denominational local church, but that is to misunderstand the core of Methodism.

"Methodist" is not a qualifier. It is an identifier, not only of my theology and denomination, but also my belief in the fulfillment of the promise of redemption from sin for a purpose, one that I live out with every breath. Being United Methodist is not a membership card I carry, or a check box on a registration form. It is the outward name of the inward transformation I am undergoing where the faith of my heart is being integrated with the actions of my being.

Integration is integral to being a United Methodist. We were born out of the desire of the Wesley brothers and their companions at Oxford to unite their faith with their daily lives. From those humble but earnest beginnings United Methodism has emerged, and is emerging still, as this movement where people join together with the Holy Spirit to enact their faith.

Our being transformed by the grace of God should manifest itself in the transformation of the society around us as we work in it through both mission and ministry. I do not want to be a compartmentalized person. I desire unity of self and an authenticity in my life that not only reveals but testifies to my faith in the Lord. Just as United Methodism rejects the notion that we can hold certain theological doctrines to be true while living out another testimony of material secularism, I yearn to embody the discipleship Christ calls us to, and for which the world

cries out.

Gone are the days when many will tolerate one existence Monday through Saturday and a complete change of persona on Sunday. I want to be the person I am in worship on Sunday morning all week long. I want to be with others who have this same desire. I find them most consistently in The United Methodist Church. That is not to say that The United Methodist Church is perfect. I know better, but I give credit to and grant grace for those who have the desire, even when we fall short of that divine goal.

Being United Methodist is not a membership card I carry, or a check box on a registration form. It is the outward name of the inward transformation I am undergoing where the faith of my heart is being integrated with the actions of my being.


Nothing embodies United Methodism more than our doctrine and theology of grace. We are a people who grant grace because we were created, loved, and redeemed by the God of grace. Being a United Methodist is to be a physical presence of grace as we serve food to the hungry and give the thirsty something to drink. We provide clothes for the naked, and shelter for the homeless. We visit those who are sick at home and in the hospital. We care for those locked

away behind bars, and believe that even those condemned by society can find redemption through Christ.

United Methodists have received the Holy Scriptures, inherited this Church tradition into which we integrate our ability to reason and our personal experience. Sometimes this mixture of authorities results in greater confusion, but through the gathering of the Body of Christ, we seek to discover, and believe that we can discern, the will of God and the path Christ would have us undertake in his name. By the grace of God, we go on together, always seeking to share this glory and grace with others so that the Kingdom of God is not just a lofty ideal, but the reality of the world in which we live.

So, yes, I am a United Methodist, and grateful to be so. I know that the Church has its own transformation to experience as it, too, goes on to perfection through the love of God, but I want to be a part of that, in the midst of the good that is emerging, rather than abandon it for an easier more trendier Christianity.

United Methodism has taught me to love with wanton abandon. It has shown me what it means to be the presence of Christ for others. Nowhere else do I find this expectation that I will serve Christ with my actions, and not just the proclamations of my mouth. I want to continue that tradition while speaking its truths in my voice and embodying it in my form. In The United Methodist Church there is a place and a sacred space for that.

All of us gather at the table to share in this grace by which we live. United Methodism is about inviting others, being with them, and experiencing God together. Afterwards, we go back out into the world transformed and to transform it so that each day, little by little, the love expands and the grace grows. 

-The Rev. Sarah Wastella is an associate pastor at Larchmont UMC in Norfolk.



# Can I be a witness?

## What it means to me to be United Methodist


BY David Forrest

**W**hile there may be all sorts of things that go into being a United Methodist, there is one absolute essential: a life centered on Jesus Christ.

I've read that if you study the lives of great Christians down through the centuries, you will discover that they are all as different from one another as one snowflake is from another, except for one thing – they are all filled with love for Jesus above all. And if that is true of Christians in general, it must certainly be true of United Methodists in particular, if we are to be true to our Wesleyan roots.

John Wesley, one of the best-read men of the 18th century, had no use for ignorance. He insisted that his preachers read and educate themselves no matter how lowly their station in life had been at first. In fact, he used to brag that many of his preachers were better Greek scholars than the average Oxford or Cambridge graduate of that time!

And yet, after May 24, 1738, Wesley had no purpose for his existence other than to serve Christ – to offer Christ to all. He was passionately devoted to his Lord. In Wesley, learning and faith were completely united.

What does it mean to be a United Methodist? It means to be passionately devoted to knowing and serving Jesus Christ with mind and heart. 

*-The Rev. David Forrest, former missionary and district superintendent, is currently serving St.*

*Thomas UMC in Manassas.*

By Susie Wolf


**W**e had just moved to Springfield and had visited Messiah UMC, where Ray Chamberlain was the pastor. This felt like “home” to us. It was the place.

I'll never forget when we called my parents to tell them we had found a church. I told mother to sit down and she said, and I quote, “it's Methodist isn't it?” Don't laugh ... this was a big deal to a family that had always been United Presbyterian!

But back to Messiah... I remember the question Ray asked us as we joined with that congregation: “Do you intend to follow Christ in your lives?” This question meant all the world to us and we responded with a resounding YES!

One special thing to me in United Methodism is Wesley's Quadrilateral. If things in my life go with Reason, Experience, Scripture and Tradition then I “feel” right. At the very least I know I have made the right decisions for my life.

Another thing I really like is that we are all going on to perfection! No one is there yet and, to tell you the truth, I love growing and learning new things about myself each day and year.

And finally, I like that the laity are valued in our denomination. I have experienced having my opinion sought and my voice heard and those are humbling times. 

*-Susie Wolf is a member of Kenbridge UMC*

By Warren Harper


**Q**uite simply I am in ministry to others within the church and beyond its walls. The love of Jesus Christ leads my life of giving to others.

The hymn, “God Claims You” has these words: “We this day do all agree a child of God you'll always be. We your family love you so, we vow to help your faith to grow.”

My mother and father joined the Methodist Church in 1944. I became a member of the church in 1959. My family and my church family have nurtured me all these years and have loved me so, and my faith has grown. And is still growing, for I am on a journey.

That is what I love about The United Methodist Church: it allows me to minister to others every day. George E. Koehler writes these words: “The memory of Jesus' life of service to others, which inspires us to follow him in ministry. The assurance of God's gracious love for us, which empowers us to love others. The promise of God's coming reign on earth, which draws us into action directed towards this vision.”

All of these thoughts reflects who I am because of the freedom I have through Christ to minister to the people of God called Methodist.

The love of fellowship and the action created by listening to the word of God that drives us into mission together is why I am United Methodist. 

*-Warren R. Harper is the Virginia Conference Lay Leader and attends Wellspring UMC.*

# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



("Macedonia"), continued from pg. 17

shawl knitters across the hall. Pavlina learned to knit in five minutes! When we got home, I located a ball of colorful yarn in my stash for her to knit a simple scarf, which she finished in two weeks.

We introduced Pavlina to local bluegrass band gatherings at two Baptist churches her first week as well. She actually knew one of the tunes and sang in Macedonian. In her first eight days everyone she met was over 60. She had spoken Polish, German and Spanish during that time. Luckily her English is excellent, and we soon learned to quit talking so loud – my typical response when I think I might not be understood. We also quickly adjusted to meals together, or apart. She became a member of the household, doing her own laundry and making herself

comfortable in our kitchen fixing her own breakfast. She taught many of us at First Church to make 'pancakes' (crepes-style) with chocolate cream and bananas rolled up inside.

When she had time away from church activities, she joined in our family activities during the holidays, some of which must have bored her to death, but the food was interesting and different at each house. The peanut brittle my sister made disappeared in a hurry. We spent the last Saturday of her stay making a fresh batch so she could make it when she returned home. She managed to pack some for a snack on the plane and to take to her relatives on the next leg of her journey. I wonder if they ever got a taste?

Thank you, Lord, for blessing us with this wonderful new friend. ☕

-Ann Drummond

("Conference Kit Packing", continued from pg. 9)

Collection Point: At the Hampton Roads Convention Center parking lot, far northeast corner, off Pine Chapel Road. Look for the signs. Collection hours are Friday (June 21) from 9 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., and Saturday (June 22) from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Questions regarding kit contents should go to the conference Mission Office at 1-800-768-6040, ext. 144, or (804) 521-1144, or by e-mail to Mission@vaumc.org.

Questions about the kit collection site should be addressed to Kits for Conference coordinator, the Rev. Eric Vaudt, at (804) 815-0350, or by e-mail to ejvaudt67@gmail.com; or Dave Magruder at (804) 384-7798 or jdmagfam@gmail.com. ☕

# breakfast

## SAVE THE DATE!!! • JUNE 23, 2013

Please be our guest for a delicious, free breakfast at the Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church this June in Hampton.

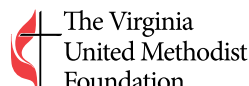
Sunday, June 23rd, 2013 • 7-8 a.m.  
Hampton Roads Convention Center

You must *pre-register* by May 20th to attend this free breakfast.  
Please email [bfooster@umfs.org](mailto:bfooster@umfs.org) or call (804) 254-9450.



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# LOCAL CHURCH NEWS



▲ Pastor Bob Ford of **Concord UMC in Chathan** offered ashes and blessings to the public via “drive-through” on Tight Squeeze Road on the morning of Ash Wednesday.



▲ **Farmville UMC**’s special needs ministry, called “Friendship Club,” meets two Sundays a month and follows a Sunday school curriculum designed for special needs adults. The group does crafts, studies the Bible, shares meals and fellowship. They also do mission work, recently stuffing 39 breast cancer pillows to share with local breast cancer patients.



▲ **Asbury UMC in Harrisonburg** will launch a mission project, “Out of the Building and into the ‘Burg,” June 24-30, deploying mission teams throughout the city

to address various projects to feed, shelter and comfort those in need in the community. This project is one meaningful way Asbury is celebrating outreach and heritage during its 225th anniversary year. Upcoming special events include a hymn sing and ice cream social on May 19 at 3 p.m., and Homecoming on Sept. 15. For more information, visit [www.asburyumc.cc](http://www.asburyumc.cc) or call (540) 434-2836. Pictured: Members of the Francis Asbury Class kick off the anniversary celebration in the choir loft during worship.



▲ **Mount Vernon UMC** celebrated its 125th anniversary with a special service led by Pastor David Craig. The theme for the service was “Honoring Our Elders,” which was supported by the presentation of a publication, “Autobiographies of Our Honored Elders,” based on interviews by members of the Nurture Committee to honor 13 current members. A letter was read by the church historian that was written on June 17, 1888, by Ellen Martin Barksdale, a charter member of Mount Vernon. Through the letter, Ellen gave an eyewitness account of the dedication service of Mount Vernon UMC 125 years ago on May 27, 1888. A presentation was made about the “common threads” that connect the small Methodist Society that formed the congregation of the James City Chapel in 1791 with the congregation of Mount Vernon UMC today. (Mount Vernon was founded in 1887 by a group of members of the James City Chapel.) The guest speaker was the Rev. Joe Carson, superintendent of the

York River District. The service was followed by a dinner in the fellowship hall provided by the Nurture Committee and church members.



▲ Mary Moorefield (in red jacket), a representative from the Henry Fork Service Center, receives “personal care packets” from the youth of **Fairview UMC in Danville** and **Miles Memorial UMC in Norfolk**. These packets were assembled by the youth as a service/mission project. Included in the picture are: Thomas Miller, Jordan Marstellar, Kaitlyn Sage, Ashley Hutter, Felecia Campbell, Courtney Miller, Brandi Beckleheimer, Blake Mitchell, Cayla Fuqua, Frank Madison, Gene Moorefield, Emma Johnston, Tammy Marstellar, Trudy Miller, Anne Madison and Pastor Kathleen Monge.



▲ **Warsaw UMC** recently held a mission project for the local women’s shelter in Warsaw called The Haven. Members donated 32 new pairs of pajamas and nightgowns for children and mothers who come to the shelter.



# EVENTS

## APRIL

### United Methodist Men's Roundtable

**April 6:** Good Shepherd UMC, Richmond

Bishop Young Jin Cho will be the keynote speaker for the Virginia Conference United Methodist Men (UMMen) Spring Roundtable. Facilitators will include Gil Hanke, General Secretary of the General Commission on United Methodist Men; the Rev. Brad Phillips, Elizabeth River District superintendent and clergy liaison to UMMen; the Rev. Larry Davies, Lynchburg District superintendent; and the Rev. Clarence Brown, pastor and former district superintendent. Visit the UMMEN website [www.vacumm.org/news](http://www.vacumm.org/news) to register.

### School for Children's Ministry

**April 13:** Bonsack UMC, Roanoke

The final School for Children's Ministry district event this year will be held from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. A \$10 registration fee includes lunch, workshops and networking. Registration deadline is April 10. Register online at: [www.vaumc.org/events](http://www.vaumc.org/events). For more information, contact Becky Tate at (804) 521-1139 or [beckytate@vaumc.org](mailto:beckytate@vaumc.org).

### Order of Elders' Retreat

**April 21-22:** Blackstone Conference Center

This annual retreat will be led by the Rev. Graham Standish, pastor of Calvin Presbyterian Church in Zelienople, Pa. He is the author of six books, including *In God's Presence: Encountering, Experiencing, and Embracing the Holy in Worship* (2010) and *Humble Leadership* (2007). He has also written numerous articles on spirituality, spiritual direction and spirituality in congregations. For more information, contact Beth Downs at [BethDowns@vaumc.org](mailto:BethDowns@vaumc.org), or call 1-800-768-6040 or (804) 521-1100. CEUs are being offered.

### UMVIM Team Leader Training

**April 13:** Floris UMC, Herndon

**April 20:** Concord UMC, Stony Creek

**May 11:** Herndon UMC; Foundry UMC, Virginia Beach

Team Leader Training is required for all first-time United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) team leaders. Each training session will be from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., with registration beginning at 8:45 a.m. A \$55 registration fee for each participant is payable at registration. Lunch will be provided. Continuing Education Units (0.5 units) will be provided for those needing CEU certification. Pre-registration is required by noon on the Monday before the event. For more information, contact the Center for Justice and Missional Excellence at 1-800-768-6040, ext. 144, or (804) 521-1144; Julie Warren, Virginia Conference UMVIM coordinator, at (817) 975-9216; or e-mail [umvim@vaumc.org](mailto:umvim@vaumc.org).

### Archives Dedication

**April 27:** Shenandoah University's Smith Library, Winchester  
Shenandoah University will dedicate the Gruver-Souders UB/EUB Archives on Saturday, April 27, at 4 p.m. The archives are located in the Alson H. Smith Jr. Library. Call 1-800-786-4802 for more information.

## MAY

### Bishop's Convocation on Prayer

**May 18:** Bon Air UMC, Richmond

Bishop Young Jin Cho has called for a Convocation on Prayer for Saturday, May 18, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Dr. Dwight Judy, professor emeritus of Spiritual Formation at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, will provide keynote address on "A Quiet Pentecost: Inviting the Spirit into Congregational Life." Five workshops will be offered on spiritual disciplines, personal prayer and contemplative prayer, and there will be times of worship and sharing. Cost of \$10 per person includes lunch. Visit the conference website, [www.vaumc.org](http://www.vaumc.org), under "Events," to register or for more information.

### Sojourn to Sacredness

**May 19-24:** Camp Bethel, Roanoke

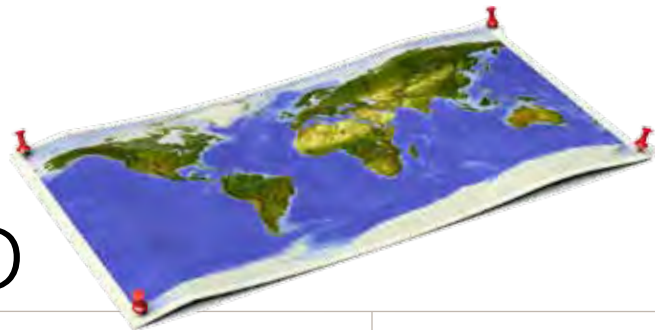
The theme of this year's Sojourn is "Feeding the Five Thousand...How About the Seven Billion?" which will examine issues of food as related to our faith that calls us to be good stewards of God's creation. The retreat will begin and end at Camp Bethel, with two days of backpacking in between. Cost is \$125. Participants must be between the ages of 18-35. For questions, contact the Rev. Pat Watkins at [caretakersofcreation@me.com](mailto:caretakersofcreation@me.com) or Becky Tate at [beckytate@vaumc.org](mailto:beckytate@vaumc.org).

### Licensing School

**May 23-31:** Virginia Wesleyan College, Norfolk

Licensing School is offered annually by the conference Board of Ordained Ministry as part of the process for persons to obtain a license to preach. It includes study in four practical areas: Worship and Preaching, Church Administration, Christian Education and Pastoral Care. For more information, contact Beth Downs at [BethDowns@vaumc.org](mailto:BethDowns@vaumc.org) or call 1-800-768-6040, ext. 127, or (804) 521-1127.

# Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD



## Conference communications director lives on Stop Hunger Now meal packets for Lent

By Jessica Connor

Some people give up chocolate or Facebook for Lent. Some vow renewed commitment to meditation, prayer or evangelism.

But a certain few, like Matt Brodie, embarked on a more extreme Lenten journey – one he hopes will help him better understand the plight of the hungry.

Brodie, Communications director for the South Carolina Conference, decided to give up the typical American approach to eating during the 40-day season of Lent. He lived only on the meal packets that the food-relief organization Stop Hunger Now provides to hungry people worldwide.

The packets contain six half-cup servings of a dehydrated rice/soy mixture fortified with 21 essential vitamins and nutrients.

Brodie, who is helping coordinate the Hunger Project for this year's South Carolina Annual Conference, was in a Stop Hunger Now awareness meeting in January when he felt God lay the Lenten call on his heart. He went to prayer, and soon he understood he is to live during Lent on the standard Stop Hunger Now meal packets, though he can supplement with a little egg and, two days a week, a chicken breast. If anyone offers him food, he is not to turn it down – a truly hungry person would never do so – but he should not seek it out. He also can only drink water.

"As a really big Diet Dr. Pepper fan, that might be the biggest sacrifice of all," Brodie said.

Brodie was used to consuming about 2,300 calories a day. The meals are 210 calories per serving, so during Lent he was getting just 630 calories a day, plus what he gets from the little egg and chicken he can consume.

Midway in his effort, Brodie was pushing through symptoms such as fatigue and caffeine-withdrawal headaches, not to mention getting used to eating far less food than usual. But while it was a challenge to live on so little, Brodie knows God wants him to understand what hungry people experience.

rience.

"Your typical person in America says, 'Oh, I'm starving,' because they haven't eaten in four hours, or they skipped dinner the night before," he said. "But you can't truly understand and relate to people who are chronically hungry if you have the mentality that anytime you're starting to feel hungry you can pull out a credit card and swing through a drive-thru."



Brodie never worried where his next meal would come from. Enough food on the table was never a concern. If he was hungry and on the road, he'd grab a burger from McDonald's.

Brodie is no stranger to encountering people in poverty. He has been to Africa on three mission trips, and he volunteered with the conference's Salkehatchie Summer Service Camp as a teen. But every time, the people he helped made sure the teams were well fed, even if it meant the families they stayed with survived on table scraps or a small bowl of rice.

"I've seen what real hunger looks like, but I've never experienced it," he said.

When he heard Bran-

**South Carolina Conference Communications Director Matt Brodie lived on Stop Hunger Now meal packets for the 40 days of Lent to better understand the plight of the hungry.**  
Photo by Jessica Connor



## Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD

don Faulkner, a Stop Hunger Now program manager, tell how four pastors decided to eat only the Stop Hunger Now meals for 40 days as part of a hunger awareness program, his world changed.

"I felt led to do this, divinely called," Brodie said. "It felt like a command."

The only doubts he had were the ones he put on himself: I don't really want to do this; I don't want to be that hungry.

"But then that doubt went away, and it was replaced with excitement about hearing God and following," he said. "When you can do that, it's exciting, even when it's something that is sacrificial in

nature."

In addition to fasting, Brodie is becoming more aware of the plight of the hungry by reading a daily hunger devotional from the Society of St. Andrew. He is also doing some private journaling and may pen a reflections column for the Advocate.

"I was planning to keep it quiet, but friends convinced me I could help others be more aware about hunger if I shared my story," Brodie said.

To learn more about Stop Hunger Now, visit [www.stophungernow.org](http://www.stophungernow.org).

*-Jessica Connor is editor of the South Carolina Advocate newspaper.*

### 'Sojourn to Sacredness' to focus on feeding the hungry

The 2013 "Sojourn to Sacredness" will examine issues of food as related to faith, understanding that God calls us to be good stewards of all creation. Come with open minds to experience new perspectives on organic farming, sustainable agriculture and factory farming.

This May 19-24 event is for young adults (age 18-35) of the Virginia Conference. The theme this year is "Feeding the Five Thousand... How About the Seven Billion?"

The Sojourn will begin and end at Camp Bethel, on Bethel Road in Fincastle, staying at the camp Sunday and Thursday nights. Monday and Tuesday nights will be spent on the Appalachian Trail, and Wednesday night on a farm.

Backpacking experience is not necessary, but participants will need to be able to hike up to 8 miles a day.

The cost is \$125; registration can be done online at: [www.vaumc.org/pages/events/sojourn-to-sacredness-2013](http://www.vaumc.org/pages/events/sojourn-to-sacredness-2013). The event is limited to 15 persons.

For more information, contact the Rev. Pat Watkins at [caretakersofcreation@me.com](mailto:caretakersofcreation@me.com) or (703) 323-4643.



SPRUNT LECTURES

May 1-3, 2013

## Why are Americans so religious and How did they get that way?

**Dr. E. Brooks Holifield**

Emeritus Professor of American Church History, Candler School of Theology

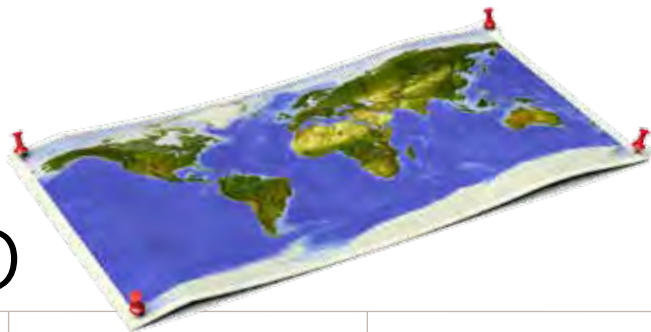
**PREACHERS** **Rev. Hoffman F. Brown, 3rd** (M.Div.'81), pastor, Wayland Baptist Church, Baltimore, MD, and **Rev. Teresa McRoberts** (M.Div.'06), associate pastor, Shady Grove United Methodist Church, Glen Allen, VA



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More information at [www.upsem.edu](http://www.upsem.edu)  
Lectures free and open to the public. Lunch reservations required.

# Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD



## North Carolina Conference experiment keeps superintendents in the field



By Vicki Brown

**W**hen the North Carolina Conference decided to sell district offices and parsonages in order to move the district superintendents completely into the field, the Rev. Linda Taylor took it one step further.

Taylor, who chaired the two-year task force that developed the new plan for district superintendents, decided to spend each week in a different bed and breakfast in one of the four quarters of her district.

"I really wanted to 'circuit ride' the district. And this lets me meet other people who are not United Methodists. I met a Swedish couple when they were staying at one of the B&B's and I told them all about the mission of The United Methodist Church. There are so many opportunities

to share the good news that you don't have sitting in an office," Taylor said.

The seven other superintendents have not made such extreme arrangements, but all are working in virtual offices, sharing documents electronically, keeping in touch with their assistant by cell phone, e-mail and texting. Armed with laptops and smart phones, they are on the road, in the churches and meeting with pastors and congregations. A receptionist answers the phones for all eight districts and transfers the calls to the DS's assistant, who decides if they can handle something or if the issue needs to be referred to the DS. There is a coordinated website with shared calendars.

"We wanted to recapture the presiding elder," Taylor said. "We want the DS to be a coach, mentor,

teacher, team builder and vision caster."

"Who knows where God is going to lead you because you're out there," Taylor said. For instance, she was able to be with the pastors of Rhems UMC in New Bern, N.C., as they worked with a Burmese population and outgrew their building. "I was really able to be there and support them. If I were tied up with administrative stuff, I wouldn't be able to do that."

Bishop Hope Morgan Ward was appointed the episcopal leader of the North Carolina Conference after the changes were made, but she fully supports the experiment.

"The virtual offices help us meet people in their own space, help us stay connected with people," Bishop Ward said. "We are embracing the new Disciplinary language of the DS as chief mission strategist. We believe it's good language."

"We want very much for our supervisors to be spiritual leaders as they are mission strategists," Ward said. "None of this is a quick fix for the church, but we think it is a promising path forward, and we are learning more as we get into it." Ward said most clergy in the annual conference seem to support the change – only two spoke against it – but one pastor asked for a Judicial Council ruling on whether the DSes were violating *The Book of Discipline* by delegating

duties that are disciplinary to their assistant. Ward said the assistant is not involved in appointment making or supervision.

The Judicial Council said they could not rule without clarification about the role and duties of the assistant and asked the conference to clarify the role of the assistant, which Ward said will be done.

The Rev. Greg Moore, pastor of All Saints UMC in Raleigh, said he believes the new system is taking the district superintendents back to their historic role of presiding elder. All Saints is a new church start that meets at Brier Creek Elementary School.

"I feel like they are more present ... I see my DS once a week. She prays for me and my church," Moore said. "It feels like more of a partnership."

The changes will save money, but Taylor said that is not the driving force. Funds from the sale of the parsonages were put into a fund to provide housing allowances for the DSes.

But pastors love the virtual office when it comes to charge conference, because they can do forms online and don't have to make multiple copies anymore. Taylor said all documents are secure and the tech staff creates multiple backups. 📌

-Vicki Brown, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

# Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD

## Church's immigration network is changing

By Kathy Gilbert

2013 might be “the” year for U.S. immigration reform, said Rob Rutland-Brown, new director of the United Methodist National Justice for Our Neighbors (NJFON).

Rutland-Brown becomes the director of the national office for the United Methodist network of legal clinics during a time when President Barack Obama has promised to make immigration reform a top priority.

On Jan. 28, a bipartisan group of U.S. senators made public a framework for immigration reform, including a pathway to citizenship for an estimated 11 million unauthorized immigrants.

JFON was founded by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) in 1999. In 2012, National Justice for Our Neighbors was formed as a separate corporation with UMCOR as sole member. UMCOR will continue to allocate funds to NJFON under the direction of a nine-member board of directors elected by UMCOR, said John Redmond, board chair.

United Methodist Justice for Our Neighbors clinics are currently operating in 12 states and Washington, D.C. Each clinic operates independently, and that will not change, Redmond said.

Along with a new director, a new central office will be located in the Washington, D.C., area, and three staff members, Danny Upton, Felicia Williams and Alice Mar, will be leaving.

Rutland-Brown has been executive director of Just Neighbors, a United Methodist immigration ministry in Virginia, for the past seven years.

Of Rutland-Brown, Bill Mefford said, “He is tremendous, I have nothing but the highest praise for him. There is no one better suited for the job.” Mefford is ex-officio of the NJFON board and executive with the

United Methodist Board of Church and Society, the denomination’s social advocacy agency.

Mefford also praised the work of Upton, Williams and Mar. “Their work has been amazing.”

Changes always bring anxiety, Redmond said. Some have expressed concern that new clinics will not get the financial and legal expertise the UMCOR-led office received in the past.

“We will still cover legal malpractice fees and make resources available for local clinics,” Redmond said.

“I am on both the West Michigan and the National JFON Boards and am very excited about the opportunities for JFON as we enter the new phase and our director begins at the end of January,” Kimberly Clarke, an attorney in Grand Rapids, Mich., said.

United Methodists held a conference call in January to plan for advocacy for immigration reform. Mefford told the 175 participants that the church’s legislative focus needs to be on creating a path to citizenship, reuniting families torn apart by deportation and protecting worker’s rights.

The need for free legal assistance for immigrants is always in demand

and is especially high since President Obama issued the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals act last year, said Gary Walters, regional JFON attorney in Iowa. The act allows young people who were brought to the U.S. before the age of 16 to apply for temporary residency without the fear of deportation while they complete their education or military service.

“Additionally, President Obama has also streamlined the visa processing waiver program by centralizing all waivers to a single office in the United States and allowing waivers to be processed before the interview at the U.S. embassies,” Walters said. “This will allow for quicker adjudication of the waivers and will remove the administrative burden of processing waivers and multiple interviews from the U.S. embassies. This change will be fully implemented in March 2013.”

Rutland-Brown said he has been impressed by the number of United Methodists who have a “real heart for this work.”

To learn more about The United Methodist Church and immigration, visit [www.umc.org/immigration](http://www.umc.org/immigration).

*-Kathy Gilbert is a reporter for  
United Methodist Communications*



People gather to sing hymns at the border fence separating Tijuana, Mexico, from San Diego, Calif. UMNS photo by Mike DuBose.

# Devotions from International Lesson Series

## LIVING THE WORD



*The Rev. Jacob Sahms has been the pastor at Blandford UMC for five years, and was ordained an elder in full connection in June 2012. He has a B.A. in Religion and English from the University of Richmond and an M.Div. from Asbury Theological Seminary. He has written for HollywoodJesus.com since 2004. Jacob, his wife, Joanne, and their two sons, Adam and Andrew, live in Midlothian.*

**April 7, 2013**

**'My Word Is My Bond'**

**Luke 24:36-53**

**I**n the movie "Hook", a grown-up Peter Pan tells his son, "My word is my bond," an English translation of an old maritime vow. Having succumbed to growing older and forgetting all of the lessons of his youth, old Peter must relearn how important trust, faith and sacrifice are. He must remember the promises he was made and which he made himself if he's to learn how to live again.

In our Scripture today, Jesus shows up in the midst of his friends and followers and... they're terrified! Many of them have not seen him since his body was taken down from the cross. Reason tells them that they will never see Jesus again. Regardless of what he told them prior to his death, their reason has overcome their faithful expectation. They have nothing to compare this to in their own lives or in history. But Jesus appears in their midst and tells them the same thing that the angels told the shepherds at Jesus' birth: "Peace." That seems like an ironic thing to tell a group of people who are terrified, but it might as well be translated, "you won't be scared if you remember."

Old Peter must remember in "Hook". He has to unlearn all of the "real world," grown-up things he has learned along the way, and relish in the magical world of Neverland. The disciples in the upper room need to remember what they heard promised in the Scriptures, and what Jesus told them would be fulfilled in his death and resurrection. He told them this would happen: that he would die, and rise again. They need to remember, and believe. They need to trust that his word is good, and that he's proven it before.

We find ourselves facing dangers, doubts and discouragement today, but we have the promises of the Old Testament fulfilled in Jesus. We know (or can know) that we are forgiven for our sins by a gracious God when we repent, and we have witnessed the movement of our God in our own lives.

We must embrace God's comforting peace, we must remember, and we must believe. God's word is always good, it is always a bond between us and God, and when we hold fast to it, we will be full participants in the kingdom of God.

**April 14, 2013**

**Is It In You?**

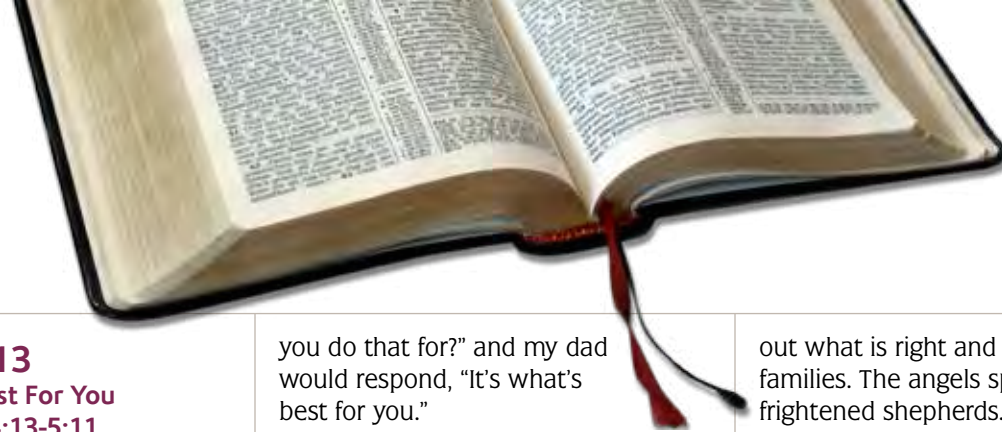
**Acts 2:1-13**

**I** remember playing basketball to the point of exhaustion in college (not FOR the college, of course) and being driven to the hospital for intravenous fluids. I had played past the point of common sense (surprise, surprise) and they were pumping fluids into me to try and get me going again. No amount of Gatorade was going to cut it that time, even with Gatorade's "Is It In You?" campaign pasted on bottles all around the gym. I was played out, empty, starving for fluid.

At Pentecost, we can see that "it," the Holy Spirit, was certainly in and on the apostles. The "sound like a violent wind" had filled the place and signs like "tongues of fire" rested on each of them. And their ability to communicate was enabled by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. They were FULL. We long to be filled like that but too often, we can also tell when the Holy Spirit is not quite pouring out of our overflowing souls. We know when we need a sudden burst of that "living water," or a more disciplined immersion in the Bible, something better than Gatorade to make us breathe in the grace of God and breathe out the power of the Holy Spirit.

A few years ago, the movie "Idiocracy" depicted a society that had become so enamored with Gatorade that it replaced all uses (bathing, drinking, irrigation) of water with Gatorade and... began to die. There is nothing as excellent as the real thing, whether it is the living water of Jesus or the presence of the Holy Spirit. And we KNOW that, but sometimes we fail to practice it. We need more of Christ, more of the Holy Spirit, and less of us, but we try to get by with a little more of what society values (structure, money, power) instead of embracing that eternal reservoir.

We are reminded again and again in the Bible that nothing compares to living a deep life in the comfort and relationship of God. Putting yourself in position to inherit the promise of the Spirit and the power of God in your own life requires faith, but when present, no one need ask, "Is it in you?" It is marked by the fruits of the Spirit, the life full of the ordinances of God, and a life that is anything but parched and empty.



## April 21, 2013

### That's What's Best For You I Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

Whether you think the world is actually doing worse than it was 50 years ago, or you simply think that our media over-exposure has caused us to be more aware, we have enough problems to go around. We have just celebrated Easter, but school shootings seem more and more frequent; our celebrations of health and success are often lit against a backdrop of worldwide hunger, sickness, natural disasters and poverty. And more often than we would like, someone asks, "why did God let this happen?" But if we see the sorrow in the world and we think that somehow God is happy about it or merely "okay" with it, we miss the point of the way that God created us, and what God longs for us to experience in our lives.

Thessalonians 5:9-11 is pretty clear on this point: God did not create us for suffering but for salvation and eternal relationship, and we are obligated to provide encouragement to one another. There is no denying wrath or suffering, even from God's perspective, but as it seems so often, our attitude and our response are what God is most concerned with. How we handle the suffering in our world, our responses to the pain, the frustration, the doubts, and the isolation of those around us, that is what God is focused on. That is what God wants us to grasp.

My dad was once the house parent for a dorm full of high school boys, and he provided wake-up calls armed with a one-note trumpet. You could hear it echoing through the halls on Sunday mornings as kids overslept and threatened to miss church. When they came stumbling down the hall, wiping sleep from their eyes while attempting to knot their ties, they would ask, "what did

you do that for?" and my dad would respond, "It's what's best for you."

Suffering wasn't God's first choice for our human experience, but God knows that how we respond shows what we're made of. God wants what is best for us, and growing toward perfection in relationships and grace, will prepare us best for an eternal relationship in heaven. So, build each other up, empowered and strengthened by the grace of God, for the tasks at hand and the troubles ahead. We cannot control what we'll face, but we can impact how we face it. Because that's what's best for us.

## April 28, 2013

### A New Hope 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3, 9-17


The Walt Disney Corp. has purchased Lucasfilm, including stories and characters like my childhood favorites E.T., Indiana Jones and "Star Wars". The good news is that the world of Luke, Leia, Han and Obi-Wan will be just as alive for my children as it was for me. The bad news is that I am not sure you can ever make anything quite as exciting as the original trilogy!

In that world, we see a great conflict between the villainous Empire and the Rebel Alliance in "Star Wars", a space age mash-up of the American Revolution and Vietnam. The brave and noble Jedi rise up to battle these dark forces, bringing light to the people who had been enslaved, and gathering a disparate people together. Some nations and individuals were on the fence; some gave up their idealism to join the more powerful, more popular Dark Side; some remained faithful even though it cost them much.

The world Jesus lived in was not much different. People live in fear of their oppressors and struggle to figure

out what is right and faithful for their families. The angels speak peace to frightened shepherds. Jesus speaks peace to his disciples before and after his resurrection. And the apostle Paul and the writers of the Epistles carry on that tradition of seeking peace in the midst of violence

Whatever imagery you want to use, the wars still rage around us, in the news and in our souls, as we seek to know God's purpose for our lives and experience peace in the midst of a fallen world. But our legacy is one of peace, promised by the prophets of old and fulfilled in the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross. And we live in that "now, and not yet," where Jesus has beaten death but his kingdom is not yet absolutely fulfilled. We live in that tension, but we can never forget the promise of Jesus, of peace, of hope, of now and forever.

Are we encouraging one another? Are we, like the Jedi, carrying our torches of light, hope and grace into the farthest reaches of our "galaxy" to places where people are hurting, doubting, isolated and confused? We have the marks of grace to share, and we have time while the battle rages to share that hope until the kingdom of God comes upon the earth. 

# CLERGY & DIACONAL



## Deaths



**The Rev. H. Eugene Baker** died Feb. 23, 2013. A West Virginia native, he was an ordained elder of the Evangelical United Brethren, which in 1968 became a partner

in The United Methodist Church. He served pastorates of the Churchville Charge, Staunton District; Manassas, Alexandria District; Reliance and Ridings Chapel, Winchester District; Lacey Springs, Harrisonburg District; Reveille, Richmond District; Luray, Harrisonburg District; Marsh Memorial, Moneta's Bethlehem, both in the Lynchburg District, and finally at Market Street UMC, Winchester District, prior to his June 1997 retirement. Baker served 42 years in the ministry.



**The Rev. Terry Jefferson Burley**, 97, of Pineville, N.C., died Feb. 26, 2013. He first served in the West Texas and Washington Conferences, then

joined the Virginia Conference in 1964 and served Augusta Street, Chestnut Grove, Lynchburg-Bedford, St. James in Hampton, Galloway, Galilee, Wesley Memorial in Richmond and Hadens Chapel before retirement in 1982. He also served with Charlottesville Urban Ministry.



**The Rev. Harry Long Kidd Jr.**, 87, of Lexington, Ky., died Feb. 19, 2013. Born in Vienna, Kidd was a U.S. Army World War II veteran who graduated

from Asbury College in Kentucky and Westminster Seminary in Maryland. He served in the Virginia Conference for 39 years before retiring from Franco- nia UMC in 1990.



**The Rev. Dr. Earl D. Martin** died Feb. 22, 2013. Martin was a graduate of Lynchburg College, Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary,

Northwestern University and Walden University. In 2004 he published "Mary McLeod Bethune: Matriarch of Black America." Martin served the Boonsboro Charge, White's, West Campbell Charge, Mount Hermon and New Bethel, all in the Lynchburg District. After teaching 12 years, he went to Bellamy in Gloucester and Aldersgate in Chesapeake, retiring in 1991. He also served churches in North Carolina and Illinois, and was instrumental in starting the Lynchburg/Central Virginia "Walk to Emmaus."



**The Rev. William Cecil Taylor, Jr.**, 86, of Strasburg, died Feb. 14, 2013. Born in Washington, D.C., Taylor was a graduate of Toledo University

and Drew Theological Seminary. His ministry of more than 50 years in The United Methodist Church included pastorates in New Jersey, Maryland, Ohio and Virginia before retiring in 1997.



**The Rev. Lesley Elton Trail**, 58, of Roanoke, died Feb. 28, 2013. Born in Roanoke, he was a graduate of Ferrum College and Asbury Theol-

ogy Seminary. In Virginia he served the Blue Ridge Charge and the Mount Crawford/Sidney Charge, Harrisonburg District; Appomattox Circuit, Lynchburg District; Lower, Rappahannock District; Southview, Roanoke District; and Main Street UMC, Lynchburg District.



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The Rev. James W. Joyner's mother, **Barbara Joyner**, died Feb. 10 in Georgia. Joyner is the pastor of Mount Clinton UMC.

**Lillian McGarr**, 79, of Bar Harbor, Me., died March 11, 2013. She was the mother of the **Rev. L. Raymond McGarr**, pastor of Epworth UMC in Exmore, Eastern Shore District.

**Verda P. Shumate** died March 10, 2013. She was the widow of **the Rev. Lawrence E. Pritchett**, who died in 1994.

## Births

The Rev. **Chuck and Sarah Cole** welcomed **Evalee Grace Cole**, born Feb. 20. She has two brothers, Charlie and Daniel, and a sister, Lily Mae. Cole serves the Mount Pleasant-South Covington Charge, Staunton District.

The Revs. **Jim and Courtney Joyner** welcomed a son, **Seth**, on Feb. 17. Jim Joyner is the pastor of Mount Clinton UMC, and Courtney Joyner is Minister of Music at New Hope UMC. Seth has two older brothers, Zachary and Hunter.

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# FROM THE BISHOP



## Is Jesus risen indeed?

**M**ay the joy and peace from our risen Lord be with you all.

Spring has come! April is a beautiful and joyful month. Flowers bloom, and trees are changing their clothes with green leaves. We see vital signs of new life and new beginning.

April is also the season of Easter. All Christians shout to the world: "Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!"

Yes, Christ is risen! Because Christ is risen, our Lord is still alive. We have never heard that Jesus died again after His resurrection. Because He lives, Christian faith is more than having knowledge about God. Being a Christian is more than becoming a better person. Being a Christian is more than being a member of a church. Being a Christian means having relationship with the risen Christ. Our mission is more than proclaiming that Jesus was

risen from the dead 2,000 years ago. We are called to witness that the risen Christ is still alive and leads our life and the church.

But, unfortunately, sometimes we ask ourselves if Christ is risen indeed in our own mission and ministry. Dr. Graham Standish, who will lead our upcoming Elders' Retreat in April, says in his book, *Becoming a Blessed Church*: "Many churches simply aren't open to God. They let the will, ego and purpose of the dominant voices in their congregation, whether the pastor's or that of a few strong members, drive the agenda. Instead of seeking God's call and purpose, they argue over who is right and wrong. Declining churches tend not to be open to God's presence. They worship, meet and engage in ministry and mission, but their sense is that God is in heaven, we are on earth, and all that matters is doing good deeds so that we can get into heaven.

"The congregants have no sense that Christ is in their midst, and that this presence of Christ can bless them and make their churches places of love. So they continue to engage in the practices of the church, but they do not expect an encounter with Christ. Finally, these churches have no awareness that God's grace and power can work in their midst. They have no awareness of the Holy Spirit. They are unaware of that when we become open to God, God's spirit flows through the church to make miracles happen (pg. 8)."

Is Christ risen indeed in our life and mission and ministries of our churches? It is important to believe that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. That is the foundation of our belief. But the risen Christ should be alive today in our life and ministries. I agree with Dr. Standish's diagnosis on declining churches. Many of us think that we are in charge of the church's mission and ministry and can turn the church around. We thought and

tried with this conviction for the past 40 years. Now, we know where we are and our reality.

I believe that the time has come to go back to our basics. This is the reason I say, "No spiritual vitality, no vital congregations!" and "Let Jesus Christ be the Lord!" Without the presence and guidance of the risen Lord, we will get the same result. Without rediscovering a vital relationship with the risen Christ, we will continue to decline and gradually die. Without honoring the Lordship of the risen Christ in our mission and ministries, the church will not move toward a new future.

We still have time and hope, because the risen Christ has never given up on us. If we rediscover our proud tradition of prayer and spiritual disciplines and humbly seek the face of the risen Christ, we can have a different future. Because Christ still lives, we can face our challenges. Because the risen Christ is still the Lord of our lives and our churches, we can dream a new dream. To Easter people, death is not the final destination, but the empty tomb.

In this joyful season of Easter, let us ask ourselves these questions: Is Jesus Christ risen indeed? Is He risen indeed in our mission and ministries? 🌸

In our Lord,

# ONE LAST WORD

## Thanks from Brooklyn, N.Y., for Hurricane Sandy help? Fugetaboutit!



Hurricane Sandy caused significant damage in the New York borough of Brooklyn on Oct. 29, 2012.

The Brooklyn, N.Y., Disaster Response Office recently received a boost for its Superstorm Sandy relief work from the Virginia Conference with the loan of one of their tool trailers.


"Not only were we the recipients of the loan," noted an entry on the New York Conference website, "but they were kind enough, through the efforts of the 'Disaster Pastor' Frank Jennings, to deliver it to us. Pastor Frank drove the RV that towed the trailer to our site office in Brooklyn in the early hours of the morning."

Jennings' own description of his trip was not quite as simple: "I left on a Sunday afternoon, picked up the trailer on the Eastern Shore and arrived at the church in Brooklyn at 12:30 a.m.," Jennings said. "I had pushed to get to New York before another snow storm arrived the next day. There was, of course, absolutely nowhere to park; especially for a 31-foot RV pulling a 16-foot trailer. I decided to drive down toward Coney Island to see some

of the damage-affected areas from Hurricane Sandy. At the end of Coney Island is 'Seagate,' a gated community with a guard posted 24 hours a day. So, at 1 a.m. I am asking this guard where to park so I can get some rest before delivering the trailer the next morning. 'Park right there on the street,' he said. And in an instant, God had provided for me an armed guard for a restful sleep and security for the trailer."

The Brooklyn Disaster Response Office reports that the trailer has been very useful to teams of volunteers coming to the area, including a team from Illinois and a team from Maryland.

"We would like to thank the Disaster Response Ministry from the Virginia Annual Conference for their show of support and collaboration in this aspect of our work," they continued on the website.

To read more about the New York Conference's disaster response work, go to <http://nyac.com/blogs/topic/10>. 



## Tweets heard 'round the conference

**Larry Davies @sowseeds**

"Most of us believe in trying to make other people happy only if they can be happy in ways which we approve."  
-Robert S. Lynd

**Keith Elgin @keithelgin**

I may or may not be wearing my sunglasses indoors while watching @NBAonTNT (but) @SHAQ's suit makes my eyes burn.

**Floris UMC @FlorisUMC**

Sometimes, the way we deal with our trials can be the turning point for the faith of those around us. #6Decisions

**Jason C. Stanley @jasoncstanley**

seeing a lot of churches post jobs for youth ministers and children's ministers. prayers for these churches

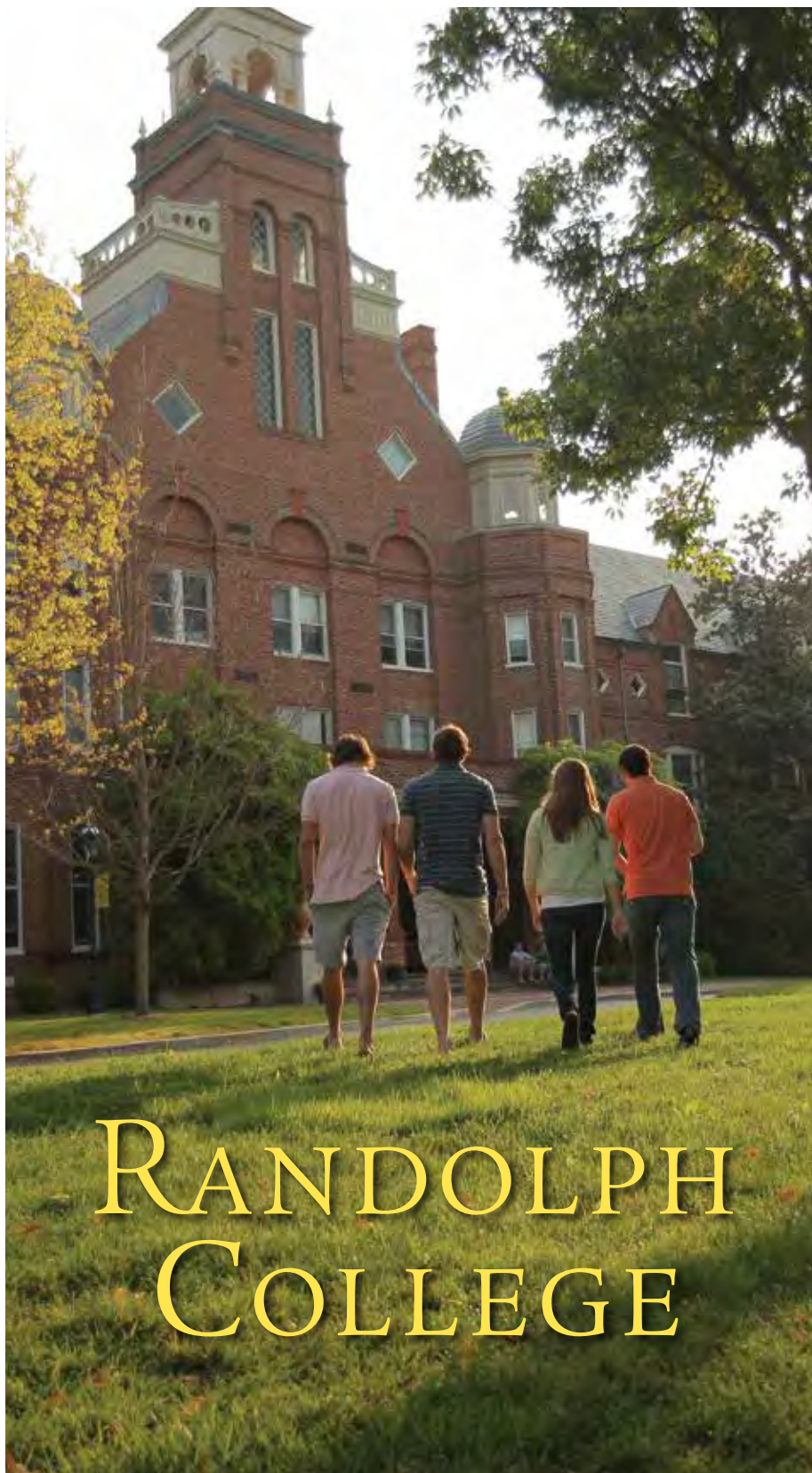
**Patti Money @pattimoney**

Apparently, the UMC could learn something from our Catholic brethren: they elected a Pope in fewer votes than we elect...anyone.

**andy braswell @andybraswell**

Really hope that the driver is a student. This is twice I've seen this in our parking lot @vu





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