

'Mission Opportunities' guide inside



Virginia United Methodist

Advocate

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August 2011

2011 Annual Conference highlights



***"We envision faith communities
where all God's people are
welcomed at table, nurtured
and transformed to be
Christ to others in the world."***

— Virginia Conference Vision Statement

Inside This Issue

FEATURES:

2011 Virginia Annual Conference
Highlights 3-9


SPECIAL INSERT:

2011-2012 Mission Opportunities

SECTIONS:

Virginia	10
Upcoming Events	17
Nation & World	18
Local Church	24-25
Living the Word	26-27
Letters & Commentary	28-29
Clergy & Diaconal	30
Grace Notes	31

**ON THE COVER: Photos from 2011
Annual Conference in Roanoke by
Neill Caldwell. Bottom left photo by
Mike Hickox.**

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Being 'doers' of the Word



Neill Caldwell
Editor

Annual Conference has come and gone, a relief for those of us who have to plan and work during our huge annual gathering, but as usual, the time was well spent. Attending conference puts most of us in "recharge mode" for the coming church year.

It's hard to focus on just one or two highlights, but certainly everyone applauded and appreciated the job done by Bishop Tim Whitaker, who got the call from Bishop Kammerer without too many days before the start of the gathering because of her illness. Thanks to his generous spirit, Whitaker presided over his second full Annual Conference in less than three weeks, and did so with grace, humility and good humor.

I will long remember the music by Jim Bennett and the band he brought together for the occasion. When charged to provide music for 3,000 people, why not go with a handful of your favorite musicians, which is what Bennett did, and the sound was unique, inspiring and engaging. Jim's talent is appreciated wherever he goes, including the Virginia Conference center, where he plays for our Wednesday chapel services.

The preaching of Dr. Sam Wells was, in a word, "deep." Also "challenging," "convicting" and "powerful." He is one of those rare speakers who can hold the audience in the palm of their hand. The sermon during the Service for the Ordering of Ministry will hang with me for a long time; I can only imagine how meaningful it was for my sisters and brothers in the clergy. Global Ministries General Secretary Thomas Kemper, the Bible study leader who is a layperson from Germany, echoed Wells' themes of living out our lives as doers of the Word and not hearers only, of living our lives in the model of Christ.

Our own Alex Joyner and Tammy Estep, the latter also on short notice, also did excellent jobs from the pulpit.

There were other gems... one of my favorites was the address by young adult Charlie Harless to the Laity Session. While we were all thinking about balloting and logistics, Harless, a student at North Carolina State University who plans to follow in his father's footsteps and become a physician, gave a good lesson as to how every job can be a ministry. As he shadowed his father doing rounds in the hospital, he said he was "blown away" at how his dad treated the humanity of each patient with even more care than the person's physical ailment.

It was a perfect start to a conference built around the theme of mission, of being Christ to the world. This month the *Advocate*, in addition to revisiting the highlights of Annual Conference, offers our annual guide to conference mission initiatives. We hope that you, too, will be "doers" of the Word and use this section to identify the places where you want to represent the conference by offering the world Christ.

Neill Caldwell



Mission is the message

229th Virginia Annual Conference shines a spotlight on our mission work

Perhaps the highlight of 2011 Annual Conference came when its members sang and danced with a rainbow made of children during its mission celebration on June 16.

The Rev. Glenn Rowley, conference director of Mission and Global Justice, thanked all those who are a part of mission. "We are doers. All you need to do is walk around the exhibit hall and see what's going on."

The Special Events Center at the Civic Center was again full of displays related to the mission work of the conference and its individual congregations.

Rowley noted that Bishop Kammerer said, "God's mission is our mission." That is what the Annual Conference Planning Team picked up on for the theme of the mission celebration, along with the final words of the conference Mission Statement: "to be Christ to others in the world." Rowley pointed out three areas we need to hold before us — serving in humility, serving in transformation, and serving in justice. Children from the Henry Fork Service Center, the Community Outreach Ministry of Roanoke and visiting youngsters from the Shade and Fresh Water Project in Brazil marched to "Jesus Loves the Little Children" and sang songs in English and Portuguese.

Attendees raised pictures of mission work in their own local congregations. The pictures were put on display in the exhibit area.

Forty-three new conference "Mission Mentors," clergy and laity who are passionate about mission and available to speak at churches, were also commissioned. □



To date, \$175,932.15 has been collected for the Annual Conference Offering, which will support leadership development in Mozambique, Shade and Fresh Water programs in Brazil, Agape Christian Children's Community Center on the Eastern Shore, and Shalom Zone: Grace Ministries in Roanoke. Contributions may be sent to the conference Treasurer, P.O. Box 5605, Glen Allen, VA 23058.



(Top) Members of the group of young visitors from Brazil lead a song; (Middle) Michael Tipton, executive director of Project SPY, carries the banner at the start of the processional for the Mission Celebration; (At left) Wearing their purple tie-dyed T-shirts, children from the Henry Fork Service Center in southwest Virginia enjoy being the center of attention at the Civic Center in Roanoke.



Berlin, Cauffman to lead Virginia delegation

Delegates elected to 2012 General and Jurisdictional Conferences

The following are the Virginia Conference members elected to the 2008 General Conference and the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference, in order of election:

LAY DELEGATES

General Conference:

1. Shirley Cauffman
2. Darlene Amon
3. Ron Hardman
4. Jim Branscome
5. Nathaniel L. Bishop
6. Marshall Bailey
7. Martha Stokes
8. David Brown
9. Susie Wolf
10. Carol Gaston
11. Dot Ivey
12. Larry Burian
13. Gene Mims

Jurisdictional Conference:

1. Miran Kim
2. Rachel Hundley
3. Olivia Hinton
4. Ana Maria Lopez
5. Andrew Ware
6. Neill Caldwell
7. Andrew DiAntonio
8. Jacob Stephen Paysour
9. Willard Douglas
10. Janet Bracey
11. Larry Tubbs
12. Robert Orcutt
13. Sandra W. Baker

Alternates:

1. Rose Teague
2. Adam Jenkins
3. Carol Sanger
4. Kevin Sabo
5. Kenneth Bosley
6. Carl Moravitz
7. Louise Landis Miller
8. Cecelia Short
9. Iris Smith
10. Jonathan Greer

CLERGY DELEGATES

General Conference:

1. Tom Berlin
2. Beth Downs
3. Clarence Brown
4. J. Denise Honeycutt
5. Rhonda VanDyke Colby
6. Peter Moon
7. Tammy Estep
8. Marc Brown
9. Ted Smith
10. Amanda Garber
11. Kirk Nave
12. Young Jin Cho
13. Brenda Biler

Jurisdictional Conference:

1. Ileana Rosario
2. Keith Boyette
3. Youtha Hardman-Cromwell
4. Larry Jent
5. Lorenzo Hill
6. Phyllis Earley
7. Paulo Da Silva
8. Tommy Herndon Jr.
9. Stephen Hundley
10. Kristin Holbrook
11. Beth Givens
12. Jeff Mickle
13. Mary Beth Blinn

Alternates:

1. David Ford
2. Mark Ogren
3. Steve Jones
4. George Freeman
5. Daniel Edward Elmore
6. Alex Joyner
7. Mark Miller
8. Susan Garrett
9. Frances Cooper
10. Ken Jackson

The Rev. Tom Berlin, senior pastor at Floris UMC, Arlington District, was the leading clergy vote-getter in balloting for delegates to 2012 General and Jurisdictional conferences. Berlin also led among clergy four years ago.

Elections were the prime function of this Annual Conference. The current and former conference Lay Leaders, Shirley Cauffman, Darlene Amon and Ron Hardman, were one-two-three in the lay balloting.

Virginia and North Georgia share the designation for largest U.S. delegation at General Conference with 13 clergy and 13 lay persons. An additional 13 are elected in each category for the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference next summer, plus 10 alternates.

The delegation held an organizational meeting in mid-July. □



(Top to bottom) Head Clergy Teller the Rev. Mike Nelson votes; the Rev. Tom Berlin speaks on the floor of conference; Willard Douglas talks to other laity at the 'meet & greet' for potential delegates.





'Favorite son' is late substitute for ailing bishop

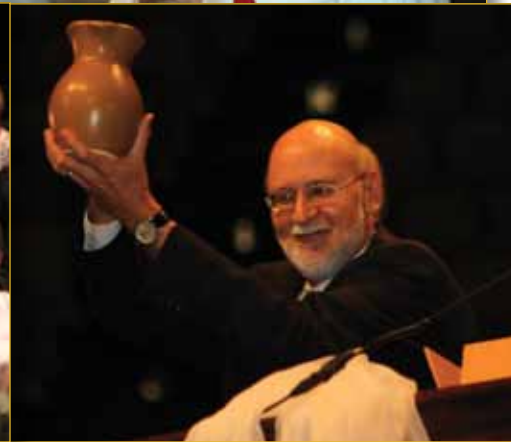
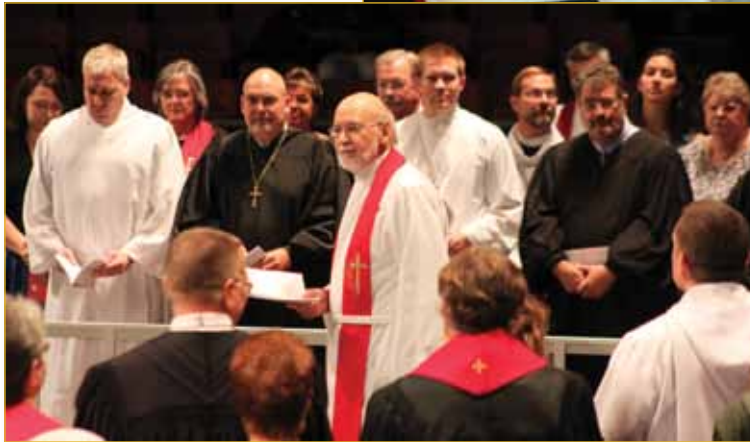
Just the week before Annual Conference, Bishop Charlene Kammerer was taken seriously ill after receiving a tainted vaccination for typhoid, part of her preparation for an upcoming trip to Mozambique. Just a few days before the start of the gathering in Roanoke, she called on Florida Bishop Tim Whitaker to preside at Virginia's Annual Conference. It proved to be a very comfortable fit as Whitaker led his second Annual Conference in three weeks with skill and good humor throughout.

Whitaker is also very familiar to Virginians. Although he was born and raised in Mississippi and ordained elder there in 1974, he transferred to the Virginia Conference in 1975. He was serving as superintendent of the Norfolk District when he was elected to the episcopacy on Feb. 27, 2001.

In the Virginia Conference, he served St. Peter's (1975-78); Franktown-Johnsons (1978-83); Farmville (1983-87), Mount Pisgah (Midlothian) (1987-93), Centenary (Richmond) (1993-97) and was appointed superintendent in Norfolk in 1997. He also served on several conference-level committees and boards.

Bishop Whitaker is married to Melba Jarvis and they have two grown sons, Scott and Eric. Bishop Whitaker has announced plans to retire in 2012 and will move to the Eastern Shore.

Near the end of conference, assistant to the bishop the Rev. Tom Joyce presented Whitaker a gift of pottery on behalf of Bishop Kammerer and in appreciation for leading Annual Conference. Bishop Whitaker said it had been an honor and a joy to renew relationships with members of the Virginia Conference. □



(Clockwise from top:) Bishop Whitaker blesses an audience member at the close of the Service for the Ordering of Ministry; the bishop accepts a gift of pottery; Whitaker works through several rules questions with Rules Committee chair the Rev. Stephen Bray; and prepares to license a group of more than two dozen local pastors.

Speakers offer messages to inspire and motivate

At the Service of Remembrance, the **Rev. Alex Joyner**, pastor of Franktown UMC on the Eastern Shore, preached and said he has been a part of the Virginia Conference all his life and for years has heard how The United Methodist Church is dying, that something is fundamentally broken and needs to change. "I don't come to challenge that," Joyner said, "but come to sing a love song for all that will not die, for this church which has sustained the faith and hope of people like me."

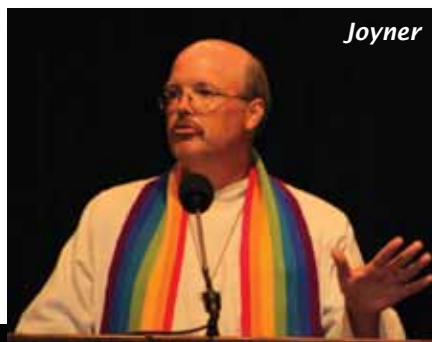
Joyner mentioned his personal memories of several of the people who were being remembered. "With each name that is read, a flood of memories will be there. These are people that we name that gave themselves in service to The United Methodist Church."

In his sermon during the Service for the Ordering of Ministry, the **Rev. Dr. Sam Wells**, Dean of Duke Chapel, said he didn't want to "spoil" the night of those being ordained, commissioned and licensed, but offered tough love, at one point asking "are you up for it?" and actually turned his back to give them a chance to sneak away. Wells reminded them that there would be people who would hate them because of Jesus. "Keep the ministry and lose Jesus; that will be the temptation every day of the rest of your life." But he also challenged them as believers to do, as Christ says in Matthew, Chapter 10, "greater works" than even the Master.

Wells also preached on disappointment and indifference faced by those persons doing Christian ministry, and the passive-aggressive behavior of many members of the typical congregation.

"Isn't this why pastors burn out?" Wells asked, "because we cannot get over the indifference. It's so debilitating." Wells encouraged everyone to not be discouraged, but to "shake it off" and "see what a God who makes all things new will do."

Wells told about a situation where a church was fighting about stained glass windows that did not match. At an-



Joyner



Wells



Kemper



Estep



Lindsey

other church it was a fight over a church

hall where two homeless men started sleeping. The woman who ran the classes in the hall was furious. These examples show how much time church conflict takes up. "Many of us resent that wasted time and grieve the waste of emotional energy. We can pretend there's no conflict, but Jesus says not to call it peace if it isn't. ... Will you impose a false peace? Or will you find healing?"

In his Bible study, General Secretary of the General Board of Global Ministries **Thomas Kemper** talked about United Methodist ministries around the world: in Haiti, where the church continues to help people rebuild their lives after the January 2010 earthquake; in Mongolia, where

the church has expanded a ministry that began with hospice care; in West Africa, where the church's "Imagine No Malaria" is going beyond distribution of life-saving bed nets; in Eastern Europe, with a ministry among the Roma (formerly Gypsy) people in Hungary and the Czech Republic; and in Southeast Asia, with Vietnamese and Laotian immigrants to the U.S. who got involved with United Methodist churches and wanted to return and share the gospel in their home countries.

Eastern Shore District Superintendent **Tammy Estep** preached for the closing worship service, filling in for Bishop Kammerer. As the **Rev. Michelle Lindsey** molded and shaped a clay jar on a pottery wheel in front of the pulpit, Estep talked about how God wants to mold and shape and reshape each one of us.

"God is at work in us to do extraordinary works of mission in Jesus' name. God's word is being made flesh in us — earthen vessels in the world. And that is not for our glory, but for the glory of God. God is always about creating new things — joys out of grief, love out of hate, justice out of injustice, and new life out of death. ... God is doing good things in and through us." □



2011 Clergy Retirements

Service Years

Tracy Roy Bair	15.00
Jerry Lee Bishop*	21.75
Stephen E. Bradley Jr.	21.75
James E. Burns	31.00
Elwood E. Carwile	6.00
Don VanDyke Colby	36.00
Cynthia Anne Corley	35.00
Glen C. Evans Jr.	37.00
William M. Finley III	37.00
George Howard Freeman	41.00
Robert Edwin Friend Jr.	34.00
Connie Gibbs-Morris	11.00
Leslie G. Goode	19.00
Gary W. Hartman*	6.00
William E. Hepler	4.00
John F. Hull	28.00
Steve Jackson Lewis	31.00
James R. Maddox	36.00
John T. Martin Jr.	41.00
James Andrew McClung*	41.75
Sam E. McPhail	24.00
Frederick L. Parish	37.00
John A. Plummer	20.00
John C. Price	32.00
Stephen A. Proctor	28.00
Rendell Ray Rozier	30.00
Patricia Lynn Shipley	25.00
James D. Siddons	20.00
Riley R. Smith Jr.	42.00
Daniel G. Spaugh	15.00
Charles E. Swadley	34.00
David R. Tanner	35.00
W. Douglas Tanner	35.50
Robert J. Thorne	29.00
C. David Torrence Jr.	35.00
Bruce D. Tuttle	30.00
William Nash Wade	40.00
Henry Douglas Watson*	43.25
Jerome F. Weigel	17.50
Richard T. Woodall	33.00

*Ad-interim

2011 Diaconal Minister Retiring

Shirley Annette Pomeroy	31.00
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2011 retirees



The music is what many people will best remember from Annual Conference 2011... Kudos to music director Jim Bennett and members of the conference band: Charles Arthur, Caleb Brown, Kevin Davis, Greg Jarrell, the Rev. Drew Willson and Denise Bennett. A list of music used is available on the conference Web site.



(Top) Jim Bennett leads the band, as Drew Willson (left) and Kevin Davis (inset) jam while Shirley Musik (with headphones) handles American Sign Language interpretation. (Above) Greg Jarrell added sax and other reed instruments.

Ordering of Ministry:

Licensed as local pastors: Lorrie Aikens, Robin BeMiller, Francis Paul Bertrand, Haden Dandridge Conrad, Wesley S. Corber, Joshua R. Davis, Carolyn J. Graves, Christy Gresham, Terry L. Hendricks, Keon Huh, Yun Chol Kim, Timothy Kirven, Chenda I. Lee, Larry A. Lehman, Anita E. Mays, Christa JoAnn Mercer, Lisa S. Meyers, Gary M. Monroe, Martha Anne Rose, Robert E. Rough, Jan V. Sickel, Keith Lee Vernon, Deborah D. Washer, Kamaron W. Wilds, Linda S. Young

Received as an associate member: Michael Thomas Davis

Commissioned as provisional members: Steven David Barbery, Richard Lee Barton, Matthew Joseph Benton, Andy Lindsey Brock, Larry John Cochran, Jennifer Dickison Coffey,

Mary K. Dadisman, Michael Andrew Dettmer, Shayne Victor Estes, David Andrew Forrest, Morgan Arthur Guyton, Marcia Klein Huntsman, Thomas Glenn James, Brian William Johnson, Sarah Dumas Locke, Jonathan Joseph Page, Gayle Diane Porias, James Adam Sowder, Dorothee E. Tripodi, William P. Walker.

Ordained as a deacon: Judith T. Hall

Ordained as an elder: Ji Hoon Choi, Alan Thomas Combs, Jennifer Lynn Day, Calvin Joel Griffin, Donald Andrew Jamison, Seungsoo Jun, Sara Porter Keeling, David Allen LeFon, Joel Marcus LeMon, Richard Lee Meiser Jr., Rebecca L. Minor, Carl L. Perez, Brenda Lee Pusso, Brandon Paul Robbins, Talmadge Joel Robinette, Robert G. Robinson, Brian D. Siegle, Thomas G. Tipton, Robert J. Weeks □

Resolution results

- 1: "Election of Additional Lay Members of Annual Conference," was approved.
- 2: "Certified Local Pastor," was not approved.
- 3: A "Call to United Methodists to Fast and Pray," was approved.
- 4: "Proxy Voting of Homebound Member for Church Conference," was not approved.
- 5 and 6 were referred back to the Council on Finance and Administration.
- 7: "The Mission of the Church," was not approved.
- 8: "Reporting of Votes of General Conference Delegates," was not approved.
- 9: "The Priority of Proclaiming Jesus Christ," was approved with amendments.
- 10: Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of Virginia Wesleyan College, was approved.
- 11: "Stop Wage Theft." A substitute motion calling for vigilant enforcement of existing laws to protect low-wage workers was approved.
- 12: "Support of '20/20: Visioning an AIDS-Free World.'" Board of Church and Society recommended deletion of committing Annual Conference plenary time. The maker of the resolution accepted the deletion. Resolution was approved.
- 13: "Effective and Constructive Peacemaking between Palestinians and Israelis," was approved as amended.
- 14: Referred to Board of Church & Society.
- 15: "Nominating Process for Clergy Delegates," was referred to Rules Committee.
- 16: "Mandatory Representation for General/Jurisdictional Conference Clergy Delegations," was withdrawn.
- 17: "Affirmation of the Statement of Counsel to the Church" urged a change in *The Book of Discipline* in regard to views on homosexuality and ordination of gays and lesbians. The resolution urged local churches to use the document and information provided by the General Board of Church and Society on "Human Sexuality" and "Combating Homophobia" to prayerfully study and reflect on homophobia in the church and society. Jim Wishmyer offered a substitute motion calling for a year of study with the Methodist Federation for Social Action and the Evangelical Fellowship of Virginia preparing a balanced bibliography of resources for local churches. The amendment was not approved. After a lengthy debate, Resolution 17 did not prevail.
- 18: Referred to Board of Church & Society.

Odds and ends

Kits received for the United Methodist Committee on Relief:

Health kits	27,827
School kits	15,353
Layette Kits	3,723
Sewing kits	648
Cleaning Buckets	944
Bedding kits	71
Birthing kits	5,249

A total of **53,815 kits** were collected. The conference also received contributions of \$31,235 for Kits thus far.

Other money collected included \$5,384 for **Youth Service Fund** and \$175,932.15 for **Conference Offering**, so far.

The "**All Things New**" capital campaign reported pledges of more than \$2.5 million. The effort has now been extended to local churches, and more than \$50,000 has been pledged since Pentecost Sunday.

The Cabinet presented the report of **new faith communities**.

• **Ebenezer UMC, Portsmouth District**, began a service called "Bread and Jam" that focuses on seekers and the unchurched. The Rev. Carl LeMon and the Rev. Brent Seusy are pastors.

• In the fall of 2009, a group within West Point UMC, **Rappahannock District**, launched "The Point" under the Rev. Betsy Basehore. This program has reached many young families in the community.

• Mount Olivet, **Lynchburg District**, closed in 2009, but the church's spirit has given new faith to a community that will be located in its facilities. The "Timberlake East" congregation has been formed under the leadership of the Rev. Rob Colwell, pastor of Timberlake UMC.

• "Worship and Praise" is a newly revitalized faith community in the **Richmond District** as a result of the merger between the Aldersgate congregation and Worship, Praise and Deliverance Church, a former nondenominational congregation. The Rev. Timothy Kirven has been appointed to serve this new faith community.

• The first new faith community in over 70 years in the **Farmville District** was planted in July. "Journey, a United Methodist Missional Faith Community," will respond to projected growth along the Route 360 corridor in Amelia. The Rev. Mike Davis is the pastor.



Ushers pass around buckets to collect the Conference Offering.



About 70 members of Jennifer Day's 'fan club' came in matching pink T-shirts to see her ordained as an elder.



The **5 Talent Academy** announced a fall event on evangelism Oct. 6 at Oak Grove UMC in Chesapeake. Stories of five growing churches within our own conference will be shared. For details, go to www.vaumc.org/5TAEEvent.

Jim Bergdoll, retiring president and executive director of the Virginia United Methodist Foundation, was honored. Ron Hardman of the Foundation's board expressed "heartfelt appreciation" for the decades of service Bergdoll has given to higher education and the Foundation. **Deal Tompkins**, who is coming to the Foundation from Emory and Henry College, was introduced as the new executive director of the Foundation.

In his report, the Rev. Cecil McFarland of the **Chaplain Service Prison Ministry of Virginia, Inc.**, said that the organization helps change thousands of lives with its prison ministry. Supporting Chaplain Service means we all will have better communities, he said. Later, following a suggestion from the floor to allow donations to be taken, a steady stream of people made their way to put a donation on the altar, a spontaneous collection which raised \$9,397 for Chaplain Services.

Membership stands at 335,275, down 3,806 from last year. Worship attendance and professions of faith are also down. But some good news: Apportionment receipts showed an increase of 1.2 percent for 2010.

The **Harry Denman Evangelism Award** is given to recognize the impact that individuals' lives and ministry have had on those around them. Each year a clergy, laity, and youth is recognized. This year's recipients were: Youth, **James Daniel Hiler** of Franktown UMC, Eastern Shore; Laity, **Louise Jennings** of Vision of Hope UMC, Harrisonburg District and director of Kingsway Prison and Family Outreach; and Clergy, **David Lagerveld**, pastor at McGaheysville UMC in the Harrisonburg District.

The Society of St. Andrew's annual "**Potato Drop**" saw more than 220 people bagging 39,500 pounds of sweet potatoes, which went out to 12 feeding agencies in Virginia and West Virginia. The potatoes will provide 118,000 servings of food for hungry people in the region. □



(Clockwise from top right): Judi Tracy leads the Franktown UMC choir; teller Matt Kronenburg collects ballots; Alys Hickcox (smiling) enjoys the Potato Drop; Rev. David Lagerveld (right) accepts the Denman Award; liturgical dancers Rev. Crystall Sygeel (left) and Jessi Bullard Young; a spontaneous offering for Chaplain Service; and the choir from the Ghana Wesley Mission congregation offers music.



Virginia

Richmond District welcomes new faith community

On Sunday, July 3, Worship and Praise United Methodist Church, a merged and renewed faith community, held its first worship service under the leadership of the Rev. Tim Kirven. Since 2006, the leaders of Worship, Praise, and Deliverance Church, a nondenominational African-American congregation, and Aldersgate United Methodist Church, a predominantly white congregation at 3006 E. Laburnum Ave. in Richmond, have been moving toward merger.

Aldersgate UMC stands in a long line of merged UM churches in the east end of Richmond. Hasher Memorial Methodist (1898) and St. Paul's Methodist (1910) joined with Maple Grove Methodist (1918) to form Wesley Memorial Methodist in 1944. Seventeen years later, in 1961, Wesley Memorial Methodist joined with Austen Avenue to form Aldersgate Methodist.

The relationship between Worship, Praise, and Deliverance Church and Aldersgate UMC began in the spring of 2006 when Rev. Kirven approached the Rev. Bill James of Aldersgate UMC. Kirven wanted to move his 6-year-old church from a storefront building to rented worship space. After approval by the church council, Aldersgate welcomed Kirven and his congregation, which held its Sunday worship at 12:30 p.m.

Services on Thanksgiving and Easter Sunrise were the first joint experiences. The changing demographics in East Richmond, with increases in black and Hispanic neighborhoods, had resulted in shrinking membership and attendance at Aldersgate. Key leaders in both churches saw the opportunity for a merged and renewed ministry. With guidance from Aldersgate's newest pastor, the Rev. Chris Weitzel, Kirven began studying the "connection" of The United Methodist Church and its

(Below) The Rev. Tim Kirven delivers his first sermon to the newly merged and renewed faith community's premier worship service (right). (Bottom) The church's welcoming new sign.



work in local, national and worldwide missions and ministries. Kirven also saw partnerships between laity and clergy on the Ashland District and Virginia Conference levels. He felt the Holy Spirit directing him to become a United Methodist pastor and bring his church into the United Methodist fold.

By July 1, 2010, the partnership between the two congregations moved forward. The Rev. Pete Falbo, a retired United Methodist pastor, was appointed to serve Aldersgate Church and become a mentor for Kirven. The two served the congregations together, with Falbo serving a sacramental role while Kirven did most of the preaching and pastoral care. Kirven also received theological mentoring from the Rev. Ira Andrews, retired dean of students and professor emeritus at Randolph-Macon College. Kirven thus completed the candidacy process and was approved as a certified candidate on the Ashland District in May.

Based on a previously approved merged church council and budget, the decision to complete the union with the name Worship and Praise UMC was



made in March. At the 2011 Virginia Annual Conference, Kirven was recognized as a licensed local pastor and was introduced as pastor of a new faith community during the report of the conference's Church Development Team. The team will support Worship and Praise UMC with a conference grant.

With the new 16-district reconfiguration, Worship and Praise UMC now calls the Richmond District home. The church has committed itself to making disciples of Jesus Christ as it joins with other United Methodist churches for the transformation of the world. □

— Mark Ogren, conference director of Congregational Development and Evangelism



Draughon certified as men's ministry specialist

Johnnie Draughon, a member of Community UMC in Virginia Beach and director of Lay Speaking Ministries for the Virginia Conference, has been certified as a men's ministry specialist by the General Commission on United Methodist Men.

In the 1960s, Draughon would have never guessed he would one day be placed in a role to help churches reach out to men. "I left home and bought totally into drugs, sex and the rock 'n' roll culture," he says. "For about 16 years my goal was to put as much distance between myself and Christians as I possibly could."

That attitude changed 30 years ago when Draughon met Marilyn, his future wife. "Through that relationship I realized that I had read scriptural texts from several religions and occult groups and had been extremely critical of Christians but had never read the Bible," says Draughon. "I read through the New Testament in about two weeks and then took nearly two years to struggle through the Old Testament. That was the beginning of an amazing journey of faith, including taking and leading DISCIPLE Bible studies, and walking and teaming in the Tidewater Emmaus Community."

Just prior to meeting his wife, Draughon was introduced to a group of United Methodist Men in Jefferson, N.C. "I was impressed with the incredible love these men had for each other while preparing a monthly breakfast for the church – and they were sober," he says. "I have been involved with United Methodist Men in some capacity ever since."

He has served as president of the local church and district units of United Methodist Men, and he is a member of the conference United Methodist Men's board. He also is a regular at Blackstone as a retreat leader.



Johnnie Draughon (center), receives his certification from the Rev. Milt Marks, pastor of Community UMC. At left is Draughon's wife, Marilyn.

Draughon became a certified lay speaker in 1993, and he has taught nine lay speaking courses and five mini-academies. He was appointed

conference Lay Speaking Ministries director in 2010, following seven years as a district director. He teaches an adult Sunday school class, leads a Wednesday evening worship service, and sings in the church and men's choirs.

Certification for the men's ministry specialist takes 12-18 months and is completed with the guidance of the Turner Center for Church Development at Vanderbilt Divinity School.

"Johnnie is well prepared and has great energy in working through his multiple connections in the Virginia Conference in an expanded role as a men's ministry specialist," said Gil Hanke, top staff executive of the General Commission on United Methodist Men and a Virginia native.

Members of local churches may contact Draughon at <johnnie.draughon@cox.net> or (757) 641-0444. □

Bob Stamps to be Dean of the Chapel at Asbury Seminary

Dr. Robert Stamps of Richmond, an elder in the Virginia Conference, has been named Dean of the Chapel at Asbury Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. He is an Asbury Theological Seminary alumnus (1968) and longtime Chaplain at Oral Roberts University (ORU) (1968-1981). Stamps has a Ph.D. in systematic theology from the University of Nottingham, with a special emphasis on the theology of the Eucharist. Stamps is the author of *The Sacrament of the Word Made Flesh: The Eucharistic Theology of Thomas F. Torrance*. He also is the author of many hymns. Stamps also will be serving for one year as an adjunct professor of worship in the School of Theology and Formation.

"Dr. Stamps is a noted academic in the area of Eucharistic theology and has 13 years experience serving as Dean of the Chapel at ORU in Oklahoma where he was an early mentor in my own life and formation," said Asbury President Timothy Tennent.

Stamps is currently on the faculty at the Samuel D. Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University, teaching United Methodist studies. He is a frequent conference speaker, and is known for his heart for students and his insightful preaching. He has taught courses in hymnology and worship as an adjunct professor at Asbury Seminary and at Howard School of Theology in Washington, D.C.

Bob Stamps, and his wife, Ellen, will be moving to Wilmore in the summer of 2011 and also serving as on-site mentors for married students in Kalas Village. Ellen Stamps, longtime companion of Dutch Christian Holocaust survivor and later missionary Corrie Ten Boom, has been recognized around the world as a great spokesperson for Christ and a mentor to women. □



Tiny church prospers in Fluvanna County

Sey's Chapel United Methodist Church is a pretty little country church in Fluvanna County that got so small in the mid-1990s — its Sunday attendance dwindled to three — that it was on the verge of closing.

But those members hung on and, with the help of others with ties to the church, they rallied to keep it open. Not only that, they raised an astounding \$250,000 over a dozen years and built a new, stand-alone fellowship hall that is an immense source of pride and, they hope, a way to attract new members and keep Seay's Chapel going indefinitely.

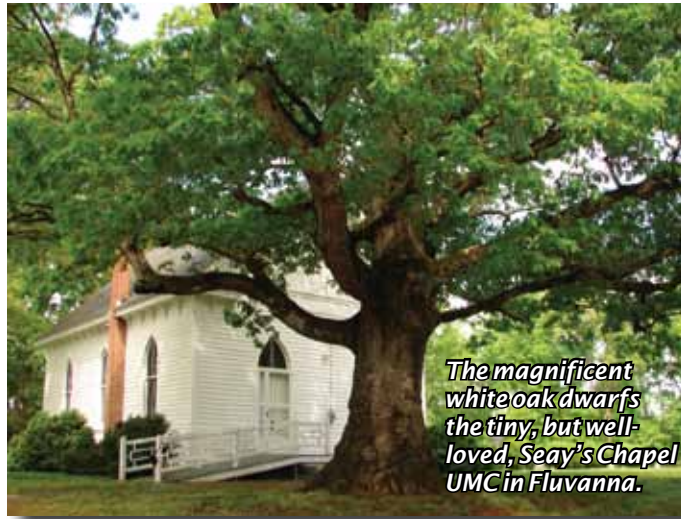
The church celebrated the grand opening of the sparkling new Miles-Bugg Memorial Fellowship Hall in May.

"The church means so much to me," said Shirley Wilkins, who grew up in Seay's Chapel and whose family has a long history with the church. She lives an hour away in Louisa County, but returned to the church and has been one of the leaders in keeping the church open.

"We have lost so many wonderful things from the past," she said. "If we lose all else, let it not be our little country churches. An abandoned church would be such a sad sight to behold."

You don't just stumble onto Seay's Chapel; you've got to want to get there. The church is in the southern part of Fluvanna, in the Shores community, between Bremono Bluff and Scottsville on state Route 640, just up a wooded hill from the James River and more than 20 miles south of the Zion Crossroads interchange of I-64 and U.S. 15. The roads leading to the church are paved but not striped as you travel through fields, farms and forests.

The one-room, white frame church was built in 1892 on land donated by Andrew Jackson Seay. Not too much has changed in the way the cozy sanctuary looks, except the original wood stove in the middle of the center pews



The magnificent white oak dwarfs the tiny, but well-loved, Seay's Chapel UMC in Fluvanna.

has been removed and electricity has been added, wired in by Wilkins' father in the 1940s. Outhouses were used until 1992, when a separate building with restroom was constructed. The magnificent white oak that dwarfs the front of the church — the Seay Oak, as members call it — predates the church by at least 50 and maybe 100 years. Generations of some church families have played in its shade.

At one time, Shores was a happening place, a little hub of commerce that developed because of the river, the Kanawha Canal and, later, the railroad. Shores had a train depot, a general store, a mill and a hotel. The church — like houses of worship all over America in places like Shores — served as a community gathering spot for neighbors to worship and catch up on the news.

But times changed, and with the end of passenger rail service in the 1950s and the coming of major highways, Shores — like lots of other small towns — suffered. Seay's Chapel, which had attracted 30 to 50 worshipers a week in its heyday, began to decline as members died or moved away. The Virginia Conference, which had always provided pastors on a part-time basis to Seay's Chapel, considered shutting down the church when there were more than enough fingers on one hand to count attendance on Sundays. That's when Wilkins, her husband, Thomas, and others realized how much they loved

the place and started coming back to Seay's Chapel, and the movement to save it was on.

"As someone who attended a small church growing up, the ties of people in rural communities with their church can be pretty remarkable," said the Rev. Conni LeFon, who grew up in Dinwiddie County and has served as pastor at Seay's Chapel since last summer.

"I've had people tell me when they come into church, they just don't see the people

who are there, they see their relatives who used to be there," LeFon said.

"When they look at the pews, they remember, 'My grandma sat here, my uncle sat there.' I think that's part of what makes a church so strong, even when it's small."

After stabilizing membership (attendance is now usually in the 20s when services are held on the first and third Sundays each month), the church commenced a fundraising effort to build a fellowship hall by selling cakes, cookbooks and hay bales (among other things) and securing generous donations from loyal supporters.

The hall, which will be used for Sunday school classes, wedding receptions and fellowship dinners, as well as all sorts of community events, is named for Raymond and Pauline Miles and Thomas and Dorothy Bugg, major benefactors of the project and long-time supporters of the church.

"A lot of people said, 'Why build a fellowship hall when you're so small?'" said Andy Sorrell, co-chair of the building committee and a Richmond-area native who infused youth into the membership when he joined the church with his wife, Kristen, and their son, Jack. "We think this is going to be something people will see and say, 'I'll drive 30 minutes to attend a church like this.' It's a special place." □

— Bill Louman, the Richmond Times-Dispatch. Reprinted with permission.

Arlington Temple UMC partners with art students next door to create inviting banners

by Cathy Abbott

In the spring of 2009, the leadership of Arlington Temple UMC, on Nash Street in Arlington, had done their best, but they were bone weary. “Could these dry bones live?” we asked ourselves as we debated whether to join the 5 Talent Academy. We were a small church of about 40-50 in worship on Sundays, and we’d been through a difficult decade. We had tried so many things to revitalize the church – even engaging in serious merger discussions in 2005. But nothing had stopped the long, long decline.

Could God do a new thing in us? Finally, one of our wise leaders said, “If we don’t do this, we will surely die.” So we took the plunge.

In the fall, the leadership met to discern our theme for our Charge Conference. A lay person said, “Maybe we’re like a mustard seed – we may appear to be small, but God can do great and powerful things in and through us!” A mustard seed! The image took root and spread throughout the work of the church. One team was working on a plan to renovate the exterior of the church. You see, we had a problem: People told us we had all the “external charm” of the Dominion Power substation next door. Then we heard they were getting a new exterior! We were in the midst of a community undergoing rapid and extensive redevelopment – just minutes from Washington, D.C., and Reagan National Airport, a community teaming with people and life. Arlington Temple wanted to play our part in making the community a more vital place to live, work and play, but our façade was outdated and nobody, absolutely nobody, could find our front door!

The main way we were known was as the “church above the gas station.”

Happily, we had built a relationship with the Art Institute (AIW) next door because they frequently rented space from us. Who better to design exterior banners for the church? They, too, liked the idea of partnering with us and our architect to do a “poor man’s” exterior renovation. When we met with the AIW

class, we asked, “What do you experience when you come into the church?” They said, “Energy, light, color and a sense of reverence.” “What do you experience when you walk towards the church entrance?” we asked. “Oh... it’s very... industrial, dark, gloomy, depressing.” Your job, we told them, is to make the outside of the church as inviting as the inside. We told the class of mostly young adults from all religious traditions and ethnicities about the mustard seed, about our extensive work with the homeless, about our hopes and dreams for the church through the 5 Talent process.

The students broke into four teams – each of which developed a different concept for the banners. Our exterior renovation team reviewed the proposals. The one that captured our imaginations employed the theme “Grow in your Faith.” Based on the parable of the mustard seed, the banners showed a small seed growing into a large tree. The back side displayed our 5 Talent aspirations: radical hospitality, risk-taking mission, passionate worship, extravagant generosity and intentional faith. Then, the AIW team developed a second set of banners showing the tree providing “rest for the birds of the air.” In addition to providing much needed color and energy, the banners conveyed our desire to fling open our doors to the community.

By March 2010, the banners were designed and we were excited. Our

long 15-month process was about to bear fruit! But then, we discovered we needed a “minor site plan amendment.” In Arlington, getting approval for new signage is an arduous and time-consuming process – and we were



(Inset) ‘Before’ photo shows how industrial and dark the Skywalk approach to the church was and how hard it was to find the entrance to the church, which was up the dark stairs hidden within the building. (Above) ‘After’ photo is Shelby Tanase from Bolivia, one of the art students who designed the set of colorful banners depicting ‘rest for the birds’ which now hangs at the entrance to the church.

rank amateurs! Frankly, we despaired at the delay and the additional work. We began the rounds of gaining community input and support; we even had to meet with the county Board members! The process was costly, time-consuming, and daunting, but (oddly enough) the church became more visible just by talking to so many people. At last, the board unanimously approved our banners last October. By May, our exterior renovation presented a “new face” of the “church above the gas station” to the community. □

— The Rev. Cathy Abbott is pastor at Arlington Temple UMC.

Floris mission team experiences sights and sounds of worship in Cuba

Recently a work team from Floris UMC (Arlington District) spent a week in Cuba, and team members wrote about their experiences in a blog on the church Web site. Here are some excerpts:

- “Manuel drove us from the airport, into Havana. We stepped off the church’s bus and I saw it: IGLESIA METODISTA en CUBA OFICINA NACIONAL. We were at the Methodist church; the cross and flame (logo) was right before me; and I had a feeling of safety and peace as I stepped through those doors. What I was soon to realize, again and again, was that the flame and cross is before me. And, what I will learn, again and again, is that the flame of the Holy Spirit is so alive in Cuba. The young Christians are raising their hands, saying ‘Here I am, Lord.’ They are full of joy; they are so welcoming of us. They are full of the Spirit and they want to share it.” — *Ed Federico*

- After a six-hour bus ride from Camp Canaan to Pilon and its Methodist church being built with funds that Floris UMC had donated as part of the Christmas Eve offering: “For now, Blanca holds services for the people near the structure under the stars, giving thanks to God for all things. What a blessing it will be to worship in the building. While Blanca wants us to return next year to celebrate its completion, we know it is unlikely that most of us will be able to be present. What we will know, however, is that because we are united in Christ, we can share in the celebration no matter where we are. We can stand anywhere and know in our hearts the joyful celebration to the Lord that will take place on that day.” — *Becky Kendall*

- “On Sunday we attended a church service at Casa de Dios in Pilon. It was very different from the church services we have in the United States, but it was also a refreshing experience. In the service, the children did dances and were active throughout

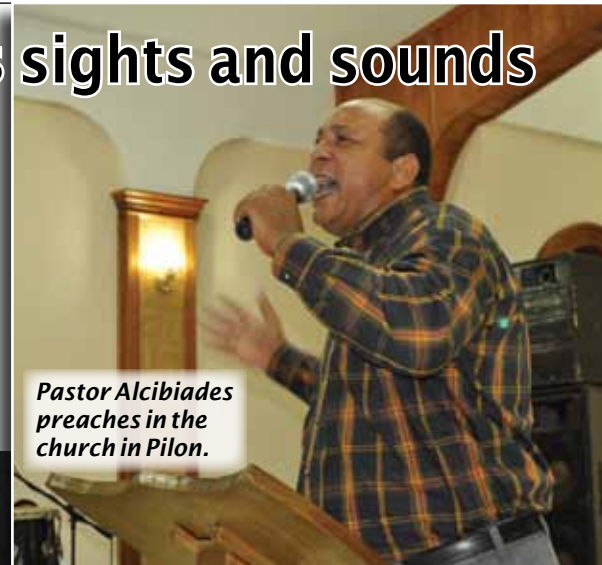
the service which was fun to see because they were so lively. The whole congregation was so involved in the service and would shout, clap, and dance. ... I think that it is also great that time is not an issue for them when they are worshipping. I feel that in the



The team mixes concrete by hand for the laying of tile around the church.

United States we are so engrossed in our schedules that we need our services to be an hour and no longer, but here they will worship for hours and not care. Towards the end of the service, Alcibiades (the pastor) asked the people if they wanted to go home or if they wanted to keep worshipping. That was so amazing to hear because it really shows that they will give up their schedules to continue to worship. It was also very interesting to see people fainting and shaking because they are so taken by the Spirit. ... It is very hard to describe how much of the Holy Spirit these people have here and trying to describe it does not even come close to giving them justice. It is such an eye-opening experience to see these people, and I can only hope that I will be able to take away an ounce of the faith that they have here.” — *Kate Gray*

- “Sunday means quite a bit of church attendance here in Cuba. This morning I was given the honor of teaching the adults of the church (about 40).



Pastor Alcibiades preaches in the church in Pilon.

Needless to say I was a bit nervous. Of course the Holy Spirit was alive and the lesson went well. We then all gathered together for worship. I’m sure, as others have explained, worship here is alive, loud, and spirited. What a way to start your day. ... Near the end of the service we were prayed for as a team. Surrounded by the congregation,

hands laid on us by the pastor, prayers came streaming forth from not only the pastor, but the people surrounding us as well. The experience was intense and it is hard to fully impart the feeling of love, connectedness, and power of the Spirit moving around us. *Gloria Dios, Bendiciones, Te Bendiga, Spiritu Sanctu*, were just a few of the words to be heard in the circle of escalating voices swirling around us. ... It is easy to come here and see the lack of what we have in the U.S. but to realize that they lack nothing from God. I’m trying to internalize a great irony; the freedom that they actually have in Christ and my bondage to my northern Virginia way of life. If I carry a fraction of their trust and faith, what a blessing that will be.” — *Bill Gray*

“It is our hope that while we are here we are able to open our hearts to the fresh wind of the spirit that seems to be blowing through the United Methodists in Cuba,” wrote Barbara Miner in summing up the trip. □

Reger Chapel UMC mission team gives – and receives – at Henderson Settlement

Sixteen members from Reger Chapel UMC in Stafford recently completed a very successful and multigenerational mission trip to Henderson Settlement in Frakes, Ky. Team members performed work ranging from construction to library services, along with participating in daily devotionals. Their June trip followed months of planning and successful fundraising at the church.

"I was a little apprehensive about how much I would be able to do, because I have no construction ability and that was the most-needed skill," said Debbie Todd. "I quickly discovered that there is a place for everyone to help and no job is too small."

Like many others from the Reger Chapel group, which included one teenager and more-seasoned members up to age 80, Todd never had been on a mission trip.

"It was one of the most rewarding experiences I have ever had," she added. "I would encourage everyone to do it. You will come home and look at your life and your place in the world differently."

Henderson Settlement itself regularly hosts volunteer work teams both on campus and in surrounding areas. At least eight other United Methodist churches from Virginia and dozens more from other states already have volunteered this year or are scheduled to do so.

The region needs every bit of such assistance. Frakes is located in coal country, in eastern Kentucky. Its mountains and lakes and farms are breathtaking, but there's nothing grand about the local economy. Poverty is the norm in that region, and unemployment is roughly 50 percent.

Henderson Settlement offers ministry and other support to area residents including food, clothing, day care and tutoring. The work camps are the biggest contribution, though, and they depend almost entirely on volunteers

from across the country as well as Canada.

Jeff Hackman, who led the Reger Chapel mission team, said he was struck by how effectively help may be offered in the absence of red tape. While interacting with some locals, "it occurred to me that Henderson Settlement was all that some of these people had, and where they went for help," said Hackman. "There are no government offices there, no paperwork to fill out, and no lines to stand in. This was The United Methodist Church going to where the people live and serving them."

Other team members emphasized that the 16-hour round trip and days spent at the settlement strengthened their faith. They also noted that the locals seemed genuinely appreciative of all the efforts made on their behalf, no matter how large or small the projects. With those things in mind, the Reger contingent enthusiastically recommended mission work.

"Henderson Settlement does an excellent job of displaying the love of Christ through service," said Bob Waugh. "There are many opportunities for the skilled and unskilled. The people are friendly, the accommodations are much better than expected and the food was good, too."

"Trips like these serve to build cohesiveness among team members," said Arlen Meline. "We went there to help others and, upon reflection, we probably benefitted ourselves more in the process."

Tink Moyer agreed. "This is a great opportunity to really practice John Wesley's Covenant and strengthen our relationship with our Lord and Savior," he said. "It is a great experience and you'll get as much out of it as the people you are helping."

Jack Brown described the week as



Team leader Jeff Hackman (left) works along with rising high school freshman Joseph Fravel.

"a very tangible way of doing God's work."

His wife, Eleanor Brown, added "You always get a lot more from volunteering anywhere than what you give."

Another husband-and-wife team on the trip, Bob and Barbara Hunt, said their favorite part of the experience was "getting to know other church members and feeling as if we are part of the larger Christian community."

Hackman commended the team members and encouraged others to give mission work a try.

"God blessed this effort and it all turned out well," he concluded. "We accomplished all our tasks and did some extra as well. Each and every one of the team members made my job easy."

"If anyone feels the least drawn to do mission work, I'd say without hesitation, sign up and take an active role. It's not all about construction. We had people working in the library, garden center, thrift store and food pantry. There truly is something for everyone."

Other team members were Lisa Fravel, Joseph Fravel, Pat Moyer, Janis Meline, Jim Atkinson, Larry Towne and Alana Frazier. □

NOTE: Henderson Settlement is a National Advance Special (see pg. 10 of the special Mission Opportunities insert in this Advocate) supported by the Virginia Conference Board of Global Ministries.

News in Brief

Renfro Trust grant applications due by Aug. 22

— Applications are now being accepted for grants from the Renfro Trust, a fund to support construction on new or existing United Methodist church buildings in rural areas within the Southeastern Jurisdiction. Completed applications must be sent to the Virginia Conference Office of Mission and Global Justice, P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058 no later than Aug. 22. For more information, call (804) 521-1144, or 1-800-768-6040, ext. 144, or e-mail mission@vaumc.org.

Volunteers needed for tornado recovery projects in Virginia

— United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) teams are needed for tornado recovery projects in Pulaski and Washington counties. Currently, there are several roof repair jobs and rebuilds ready to proceed. More projects will be added in the coming weeks. If you are interested in serving in this area of need, contact Julie Warren, Virginia Conference UMVIM coordinator, at (817) 975-9216 or <jwarren@woodlakeumc.org>.

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This program has been made possible by the gift of homes willed to the Corporation for this purpose. Other contributions come through the Covenant of Gratitude whose members contribute \$1.00 a year for each person ordained a commissioned probationer at the Virginia Annual Conference.

If you would like to consider willing your home to the Retired Clergy Housing Corporation of the Virginia Conference or if you would like to share through the Covenant of Gratitude, please mail in the coupon below with your name and address.



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Upcoming Events – for all ages!

AUGUST

LEAD: Training for youth leadership, Aug. 5–14. The Salvation Army in Roanoke. LEAD is the new leadership training event to replace the former YAC and VUMDYLA. District and local church youth councils are invited to select 3-5 youths who are willing to commit to this nine-day intensive experience and a covenant action plan to enact newly developed leadership skills in their districts and local communities upon return. For more information and to register online, visit the “Event Calendar” section at <www.vaumc.org>. **Registration deadline is Aug. 3.**

Festival of Wisdom and Grace Conference, Aug. 8–11. Lake Junaluska, N.C. Sponsored by the Southeastern Jurisdictional Association of Older Adults, the 2011 theme focuses on *One in the Spirit: Age to Age Conversations*, and features Dr. Leonard Sweet, Dr. Evelyn Laycock and senior research engineer Brian Jones for the professional track. Paul Saik and the Lake Junaluska Singers will provide music. The event includes worship, Bible study, seven workshops and fellowship. It is designed for older adults, as well as for persons working with older adults in their congregations. For more information, contact Pam Naplen, registrar/event management at (828) 454-6656 or <pnaplen@lakejunaluska.com> or register online at <<http://www.lakejunaluska.com/wisdom-and-grace/>>.

Middle School Mission Weekend 1, Aug. 19–21. Westview on the James, United Methodist camp in Goochland. A great opportunity to introduce your middle school students to mission and help them understand what it means to be the hands and feet of Christ. Throughout the weekend, middle school youth will put their faith into action as they serve the people of the local community through small home repairs and lawn care. These families do not have the financial and/or physical means to do such maintenance or

repairs to their homes, and the work of the middle school youth will help to keep these families safer, warmer and drier. Come and share God’s love with others through these amazing mission weekends. Become the Hands and Feet of Christ! Cost: \$115/participant. For more information and to register, visit the “Event Calendar” section at <www.vaumc.org>. **Registration deadline is Aug. 8.**

OCTOBER

Bishop’s Convocation on Immigration Issues, Oct. 1. Grace UMC in Manassas. A Bishop’s Convocation focusing on a faith-based response to the issues surrounding immigration will be held Saturday, Oct. 1. In her letter in the April 2010 *Virginia United Methodist Advocate*, Bishop Charlene Kammerer wrote: “Regardless of our political beliefs about immigration, the consistent message of Old and New Testament Scripture invites us to embrace the sojourner and stranger in our midst.” Plan to join Bishop Kammerer and the Commission on Ethnic Minority Concerns and Advocacy on Oct. 1. More information will be available soon.

5 Talent Academy Evangelism Teaching Event, Oct. 6, 9 a.m.–3 p.m. Oak Grove UMC, 472 N. Battlefield Blvd., Chesapeake 23320. A team of pastors and laity from several healthy, fruitful congregations across the Virginia Conference designed the 5 Talent Academy for all local United Methodist churches. The academy’s purpose is to help existing congregations grow in the fruitfulness and multiplication of ministries centering on worship, mission, discipleship, evangelism and stewardship. Everyone from the conference is welcome to attend this event. Featured speakers will come from Culpeper UMC, Wilderness Community UMC, Olive Branch UMC (York River District), Arlington Temple UMC and Floris UMC Hispanic Ministry. Registration fee is \$25. To register online, visit <www.vaumc.org>, click on “Events Calendar,” then the date.

Middle School Mission Weekend 2, Oct. 14–16. Westview on the James, United Methodist camp in Goochland. The second of two opportunities for middle school students to be involved in mission (see same information for Middle School Mission Weekend 1, Aug. 19–21 event listing on this page). **Registration deadline is Oct. 3.**

NOVEMBER

UMMen Spiritual Retreat, Nov. 4–6. Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center, Blackstone. All men are encouraged to attend this 34th Annual Virginia Conference spiritual retreat. Keynote speaker will be the Rev. Rob Renfroe, pastor of Adult Discipleship at The Woodlands UMC, an 8,500-member congregation just north of Houston, Texas. The retreat topic will be “MORE,” because there is more going on in this world than most men know, their mission is more important than they can imagine ... and what God desires to do through them is more powerful than they would ever dream. To download a registration form with costs and deadlines, visit the “Events Calendar” at <www.vaumc.org>. For more information, contact David Bean, vice president of Spiritual Life, by e-mail at <david_bean@vawp.uscourts.gov>, or by phone at (540) 718-2752 or visit the web at <www.vacumm.org>.

FEBRUARY 2012

United Methodist Day at General Assembly, Feb. 2. State Capitol, Richmond. This annual event is for all United Methodists concerned with issues before the Virginia General Assembly. Sponsored by the Virginia Conference Board of Church and Society, Conference Legislative Network and United Methodist Women, UM Day gives congregations a vehicle for reaching beyond themselves and introduces them to the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church in a meaningful way. More information will be available in the “Events” section of <www.vaumc.org> closer to the date.



Nation & World

Once more into the homosexuality breach

Lesbian elder's penalty takes different path

Talk to United Methodists of differing views about the church's homosexuality debate, and they will tell you the recent clergy trial of the Rev. Amy DeLong was just a prologue.

The real showdown will take place next year when General Conference, the denomination's top lawmaking assembly, meets. Yet, all say the trial may offer some clues to the discussions that will take place April 24-May 4, 2012, in Tampa, Fla.

"We are deeply divided, obviously," said the Rev. Keith Boyette, pastor at Wilderness UMC in the Virginia Conference and licensed lawyer who assisted the church's counsel in the case.

"Just as in society, what happens is we move from an attempt to dialogue to legislation, and when legislation doesn't work, we move to the courts," he added. "So, because we have not been able to resolve this debate in our mutual sharing, General Conference every four years has been called to legislate on it. While we have done that, it has created only more avenues of conflict."

Advocates of differing perspectives on homosexuality all agree that the DeLong case verdict, which was split, and the penalty, which marked a departure from previous cases, are indicative of the division.

DeLong, a clergy member for 14 years in the Wisconsin Conference, was charged with violating The United Methodist Church's ban on non-celibate, gay clergy and its prohibition against clergy officiating at same-sex unions. The trial began on June 21 and ended June 23 at Peace UMC in Kaukauna, Wis.



The Rev. Amy DeLong (right) gets a hug from the Rev. Janet Wolf after DeLong's church trial concluded. (UMNS photos by Mike DuBose)

A jury of 13 Wisconsin United Methodist clergy acquitted her of being a "self-avowed practicing homosexual" by a vote of 12-1. The same panel unanimously found her guilty of celebrating a same-gender union on Sept. 19, 2009. During the trial's penalty phase, DeLong refused to promise that she would never again perform such a union.

The trial court voted 9-4 to suspend DeLong from her ministerial functions for 20 days beginning July 1 and sentenced her to a more detailed process for a year after her suspension to "restore the broken clergy covenant relationship."

The church cannot appeal the verdict or penalty, said the Rev. Tom Lambrecht, the church's counsel in the case.

The trial court deliberated for

about seven hours before returning with a penalty.

Lambrecht and Boyette, representing the church in the case, had requested that DeLong be suspended indefinitely until she vowed in writing not to officiate at any more same-sex unions or until the church law is changed.

"I believe what the trial court was trying ... to do something that would restore every person, every part of the church with that penalty," Boyette said in noting that the jury deliberated for seven hours. "So they were very focused on restoration while at the same time seeking to uphold the (Book of) *Discipline*. I think that was very clear. I believe they worked very hard at that."

*(Continued on next page, **Penalty**)*

Penalty takes different path

(Continued from previous page)

Boyette is the chair of the board of Good News, an unofficial evangelical caucus that advocates maintaining the denomination's stand on homosexuality.

The Rev. Dan Dick, director of Connectional Ministries in the Wisconsin Conference, said the verdict indicates an ongoing tension in the denomination between what people discern as God's call and how people interpret *The Book of Discipline*, the denomination's law book.

He said he has not known anyone who has worked with DeLong in ministry who does not feel she has the gifts and graces of a pastor. Still, DeLong does not deny being a lesbian who has been together with her partner, Val Zellmer, for 16 years.

The Rev. Scott Campbell, DeLong's counsel, argued during the trial that church authorities had not proven DeLong engaged in prohibited sexual acts.

"What does a person have to actually confess in order for us to say this is in violation?" Dick wondered. "Dealing with the differing interpretations of what the language in the *Discipline* means is something we have not really done well for a long time."

One aspect in dispute is the way the denomination distinguishes between a person's sexual orientation and sexual behavior.

"The church does a very good job of disintegrating people and pretending that there is a difference between who you are and what you do," DeLong testified during the trial. "The word 'practicing' would never be used for a heterosexual person. It's just part of who they are."

The trial took place at a time that civil recognition of same-sex marriage is gaining wider acceptance in the United States. On June 24, the day after DeLong's trial, New York became the largest and most recent state to approve same-sex marriage, joining Massa-

chusetts, Iowa, Vermont, Connecticut, New Hampshire and the District of Columbia.

On May 20, Gallup reported for the first time that a majority of Americans – 53 percent – now support the legal recognition of same-sex marriage. That follows a series of other polls in recent months that also show majority support for such unions. At the same time, 30 states have constitutional amendments banning civil recognition of same-sex marriage.

Boyette said such polling data should not matter in determining the denomination's policies.

"The church stands over and against culture and society when culture and society is moving in a direction or persisting in practices that the church understands to be not biblical," he said. □

— Heather Hahn,
United Methodist News Service



The Rev. Keith Boyette, pastor at Wilderness UMC in Spotsylvania, arrives at Peace UMC in Kaukauna, Wis., for DeLong's church trial.

Actions taken during recent Annual Conferences

The topic of homosexuality surfaced at a number of Annual Conferences in June, and a number of United Methodist clergy around the United States have said they will defy the denomination's ban on officiating at same-sex unions.

Minnesota Conference

Seventy clergy signed a statement voicing their willingness to bless same-sex unions. There were about 450 clergy at the session.

Northern Illinois Conference

Clergy voted 178 to 76 to approve a resolution that recommends a maximum penalty of 24-hour suspension for clergy convicted of performing same-sex unions. Since that same session, more than 200 clergy – nearly a third of the conference's 696 clergy – signed a statement that they are willing to perform such unions. Civil unions just became legal in Illinois this month.

New York Conference

Members of the New York Conference, which encompasses New York City and Connecticut, also voted to send to General Conference five different "Marriage Equality" resolutions seeking amendments to *The Book of Discipline* to strike language referring to heterosexual marriage and to marriage between a man and woman, and to permit clergy to perform same-sex unions. The session also has proposed an amendment permitting the ordination of "self-avowed practicing homosexuals," and two separate amendments permitting clergy to perform same-sex unions without fear of reprisals.

Virginia Conference

Conference members narrowly defeated a resolution affirming the retired bishops' "Statement of Counsel to the Church," which urges a change in *The Book of Discipline* to allow the ordination of non-celibate gays and lesbians. □

Virginia's George Freeman retiring as head of World Methodist Council

The world was a “fragile” place when the Rev. George Freeman assumed staff leadership of the World Methodist Council a decade ago.

Less than two months after his election during the 2001 World Methodist Conference in Brighton, England, the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania suddenly made it difficult for church members to obtain visas and travel internationally. The unstable financial market had an impact on the council's budget.

“The fragile nature of the whole world and the fear that 9/11 put into people was also very painful,” he recalled.

Today, as Freeman, a 64-year-old elder from the United Methodist Virginia Conference, prepares to retire, the council's 74 members, representing more than 132 countries, have strengthened their bonds and are looking to the future.

United Methodist Bishop William Hutchinson, who is completing a five-year term in the council's presidium, believes Freeman has given “exceptional leadership” to the council.

“He has traveled tirelessly, he has led with a strong theological grounding, he has led with great openness to all communions of the Wesleyan family,” said the bishop, who leads the denomination's Louisiana Area.

Nominated to succeed Freeman in the general secretary position is the Rev. Ivan M. Abrahams, most recently the presiding bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, which covers six countries, including South Africa.

The election of Abrahams, the first top executive for the council to be selected from outside the United States, will take place just before the Aug. 4-8 World Methodist Conference meeting in Durban, South Africa.

One of the purposes of the council, Freeman explained, “is to be that place where the (Wesleyan) family can come together for accountability, for mutual support, for affirming each other, for the sharing of resources.”

Mutual support is particularly important for churches in countries like Bangladesh, where Methodists are a tiny minority. “The small-membership churches really enjoy being with the larger family because they feel a connection they don't feel at home,” he said.

In the last decade, new members joining the council have included the Methodist Church in Colombia, Methodist Church of Bangladesh, Wesleyan Methodist Church in New Zealand and the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Australia. Becoming part of the council, Freeman added, “gives them a status and a recognition outside of their own boundaries.”

Technological changes over the past decade – from e-mails to cell phones to Skype – have made communication easier with even the most remote members.

Beyond the Methodist/Wesleyan family, the council is known for its ongoing ecumenical dialogues with Roman Catholics, Anglicans and the Salvation Army. Dialogues with

the Orthodox and Baptist World Alliance are expected to resume in the near future.

Such connections are significant, Freeman pointed out, “because it gives us a greater understanding and awareness and appreciation of each other, and it helps strengthen the church all the way down to the grassroots level.”

During Freeman's tenure, the council in 2002 moved into a new headquarters building at Lake Junaluska, N.C., and updated the world Methodist museum there, which holds the largest collection of Wesleyan memorabilia in the world. The new building is modeled after the Wesley family rectory.

Freeman is particularly pleased with last year's renovation of the Susanna Wesley Garden at Lake Junaluska, which he called “a place of prayer and meditation and reflection” as well as a setting for marriage proposals, weddings and picnics.

The significance of the garden became even more apparent when a renovation of the chapel there revealed “prayers that people had written 30 years ago and put in the cracks of those walls,” he said.

The council has increasingly addressed “hot-button social issues” during recent years and Freeman credits Abrahams, his nominated successor, for that emphasis.

Abrahams has served as co-chair of the council's social and international affairs committee for the past decade. “He brings a strong South African social consciousness to this office,” Freeman added. “The people called Methodist want to weigh in on those kinds of issues and concerns.”

The 2011 conference in Durban, under the theme “Jesus Christ – for the Healing of the Nations,” marks the council's 20th world gathering. Although the venue was decided years earlier, Hutchinson called it a “wonderful coincidence” that the South African church will be present to celebrate the election of one of its own.

Freeman was born in Pulaski and was educated at Emory & Henry College and Candler School of Theology at Emory University. Ordained in the Virginia Conference in 1969, he has served as pastor of the Bonsack-Lithia and Woodlawn congregations (Roanoke District), at River Road UMC (Richmond District), and for six years as superintendent of the Charlottesville District. In 2002 Emory & Henry honored him with a Doctor of Divinity degree. He and his wife, Virginia, have two grown children. The Freemans will continue to live at Lake Junaluska in retirement. □



— Linda Bloom,
United Methodist News Service

Agency looking for a few (million) good men

The average Protestant church has 39 percent men and 61 percent women, according to a study of congregations in the United States.

Many congregations want to find ways to reach the 69 million men who don't attend any church.

"If your church has a United Methodist Men (UMMen) unit that meets, has fellowship and does some great work within the church, that is wonderful," said Gil Hanke, top staff executive for the Commission on United Methodist Men. "Don't throw away what is working for the 25 percent of the guys that are involved."

At the same time, Hanke advises churches to find ways to reach the 75 percent of men who are not interested in belonging to a UMMen's organization.

"Do something that provides the other 75 percent places to fit in," Hanke said. "Ask the pastor what his or her vision is for the men of the church and of the community, and then develop action steps that the men of the church can complete to bring all these men into relationships with Jesus Christ. We need the support of the pastor, but the men need to carry this forward."

The Commission on United Methodist Men has a historical commitment to scouting and civic youth ministry. Scouting has proven a successful way for people to join the church, resulting in the opportunity to introduce, nurture and strengthen a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Nearly one-half of the 371,400 scouts meeting weekly in 6,700 United Methodist churches are from unchurched families, but few churches do much to strengthen ties with these units.

The Rev. Bill Payne, a member of the Florida Conference, says that in 1986 he became pastor of a 90-member congregation that had only a passive relationship with a Cub pack and a Boy Scout troop.

"When vacancies occurred, I recruited a scoutmaster and cubmaster who were committed church members with a credible Christian witness," said Payne. He

served as the chaplain and encouraged other church members to volunteer as leaders. He also invited unchurched Boy Scouts to attend confirmation classes and earn "God and Church" awards.

Within three years, adults who entered the church through scouting ministries filled half the positions on the administrative council and Sunday morning attendance grew to 210.

The Commission on United Method-



Members of Korean UMC and McKendree UMC serve free meals to the homeless in downtown Nashville. (Photo by Ronny Perry)

ist Men is recruiting volunteers to help churches understand scouting as a ministry and provide churches with information about "God and Country" awards provided by St. Louis-based Programs of Religious Activities with Youth.

These scouting ministry specialists also provide information about various other programs to enrich youth ministries. At present, 113 people have volunteered for this position.

Men who might not accept an invitation to attend church are sometimes willing to spend a night with the homeless or work in a food pantry. They might be willing to help build a Habitat for Humanity house or participate in the Amachi program of Big Brothers-Big Sisters in which men become mentors of boys whose parent(s) are in prison. Surprisingly, some men who are reluctant to spend an hour in church will be willing to spend a week repairing tornado-damaged homes or building homes in a developing nation.

Equally surprising, some men who

won't join a men's Bible study may want to participate in the DISCIPLE Bible Outreach, a prison ministry that provides Bible study and practical help for inmates to re-enter society.

A few men may accept an invitation to a barbecue in which they are told about "Letters from Dad." Greg Vaughn, founder of the program based in Richardson, Texas, tells men how he had nothing meaningful to keep after his father died.

He encourages men to attend four training sessions in which they learn how to write lasting letters to their families.

"Letters from Dad" proved just the thing to revitalize the men's ministry at First UMC in Sugar Land, Texas.

The church threw a kickoff barbecue and drew 70 to 80 men, more than half of whom the Rev. Phil Grose, the church's associate pastor and director of men's ministry, said signed up for the letter-writing program. During the training sessions, the men learned to tap into their emotions and learned practical writing tips

to better express themselves.

After presenting the letters to their loved ones, the men shared their experiences with the group.

"When you get a group of men together, everyone tries to hold their emotions in, but we were all just bawling after a while," Grose said.

The Nashville-based commission has recruited men's ministry specialists to help local churches expand their ministries to men. Following interactive training experiences in the classroom and online, these volunteers are able to help churches provide spiritual growth opportunities for church members and ways to reach unchurched men.

Ministry to men can bring men into your church family, sometimes through the front door with worship, small groups and men's events or through the back door with mission projects, barbecues or scouting. Either way, it works. □

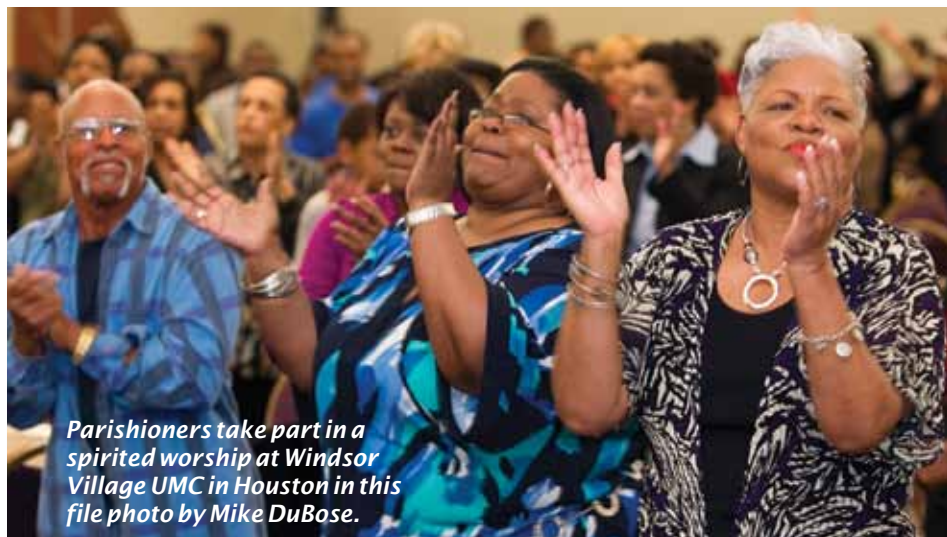
— Rich Peck, communications coordinator for the General Commission on UMMen

Bishop Schol, other leaders pushing forward with Vital Congregations Project

The Council of Bishops and the Connectional Table of The United Methodist Church have voiced support for the Vital Congregations Project, an effort led by Baltimore-Washington Bishop John Schol that will introduce a churchwide approach to employing metrics using common goals. The project has developed a 9-page planning guide for annual conferences and will develop a Web site, <www.umvitalcongregations.org>, with resources allowing churches to connect with each other.

This is among the first responses to the denomination's "Call to Action" report, which focuses on a study conducted by Towers and Watson research firm. As part of the study, they examined nearly 33,000 churches in the United States and discovered 5,000 of them showed healthy signs of vitality. The 16 factors they all have in common were labeled "drivers of vitality." These drivers center around small groups, lay empowerment, clergy effectiveness, varied worship styles and topical preaching. These are the things all United Methodist congregations can do right now to become more vital and strengthen the denomination, say members of the Call to Action Steering Team.

"We must change the church first before we transform the people as Jesus' disciples," Bishop Schol said. "The Vital Congregations Project will give conference leadership and local church



Parishioners take part in a spirited worship at Windsor Village UMC in Houston in this file photo by Mike DuBose.

leadership a method for addressing these two concerns identified by our denomination. According to the 'Call to Action' report, there is a call for bishops to be responsible for establishing a new culture of accountability across the church. Therefore, as disciples of Jesus Christ, we must equip and empower our clergy leaders to cast a vision for their congregations based upon faithful and regular worship and prayer (acts of piety), coupled with history, wisdom and study of their communities' needs (acts of mercy), so that the mission of the church may be fulfilled."

"We know that that there are vital congregations, and we know it's possible to have more," said Fred Miller, a consultant who has been guiding

the process.

The guide for congregations can be found at <www.bwcumc.org/sites/default/files/pdf/ctaplanning.pdf>. □

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Bishop Willimon says Alabama passes 'meanest immigration bill in the nation'

The North Alabama Conference recently held discussions in three cities to talk about the state's new immigration law, which its bishop calls the "meanest in the nation."

"I had seen no issue on which more religious groups were joined than this one, with the lead given by the Catholics and the rest of us joining in," wrote Bishop Will Willimon on the conference's Web site. "It's quite remarkable. A wide array of Alabama Christians have come together to challenge this new immigration law."

According to Bishop Willimon, clergy and church members have expressed concern about Alabama's new immigration law, HB 56, one of the toughest immigration policies in the nation. He said some of those concerned individuals mentioned encountering immigrants who were hesitant to seek aid from churches after severe storms because they feared reprisals from the government.

The new law would require schools and businesses to use the federal government's E-Verify system to check the legal status of students and em-



(Above) Participants from many faith communities march in Birmingham against Alabama's new immigration law. At right is the Rev. Marcus Singleton, pastor of St. Paul UMC.

ployees, allow police to arrest people suspected of being in the country illegally if they are stopped for another reason and make it illegal to shelter or transport illegal immigrants.

Willimon posted an open letter on June 13, criticizing the law and encouraging other United Methodist clergy to sign a letter to the governor and other officials.

"The bill is an embarrassment to our state and does not represent the spirit of hospitality of our churches,"

wrote Willimon. "While I'm confident that the bill will be overturned, I am proud that a number of our Methodists — those committed to evangelism and mission — are speaking up in the name of Christ to oppose this ill-conceived bill that does nothing to help our state and does great harm to our sisters and brothers." □

— Emily Snell, United Methodist Communications intern and senior at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn.

South Carolina Conference urges 'hospitality to all'

South Carolina Conference approved a resolution at its annual meeting in June that urges United Methodists to heed Leviticus 19:33 ("When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord, your God."), and to advocate for the comprehensive reform of the U.S. immigration system. The resolution criticizes legislation being considered in the state senate and encourages every United Methodist congregation to study the biblical basis of hospitality to all.

The resolution asserts that U.S. "immigration policy has not adapted adequately to changes to the global nature of the world."

It raises concern about S.C. Senate Bill 20 "that will create division in our communities, will continue to encourage racial discrimination, will bring economical hardship on our

state and in its passing says to the rest of our nation and the world that our state and our annual conference does not see our migrant brothers and sisters in Christ as equally valuable as ourselves in the sight of God."

The resolution also calls upon "all United Methodist congregations to welcome newly arriving people in their communities, to love them as we do ourselves, to treat them as children of God, to see in them the presence of the incarnated Jesus, and to show hospitality to all in our midst, believing that through their presence we are receiving the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ."

The South Carolina Hispanic/Latino Committee of The United Methodist Church submitted the resolution.

The resolution specifies that a copy of it be signed by South Carolina Bishop Mary Virginia Taylor and the secretary of the Annual Conference and be delivered to members of the South Carolina legislature. The resolution was passed on June 5. □





Local Church



▲ **Marshall UMC** hosted a "Worship on the Lawn" event for the Memorial Day weekend, taking Sunday morning worship outdoors and inviting the community. Holy Communion was celebrated, led by the Rev. Edna Moore. A picnic lunch followed the service.



▲ **Fairfields UMC** in Burgess held a Students' Award Service June 12, followed by a reception to honor recipients and their guests. The Covington/Hurst Educational Fund (CHEF), sponsored by Fairfields, granted awards to 11 area students to help them further their education. Five are continuing their studies as sophomores, juniors or seniors; five students are 2011 graduates of Northumberland County High School. All are attending various Virginia colleges and universities. One student is registered with the American Academy of Professional Coders. Pictured, from left: Sarah Duncan, Patrick Keyser, Nicole Masarro, Morgan Lewis, Jessica Weicht, Maegan Lewis, Gabriel Smith, Quinn Ellis, Aaron Appleby and Carson Klein; standing, the Rev. John Jones; seated, Frances Hurst, namesake of CHEF and longtime Northumberland County teacher. Not pictured, Tekeya Baker.

For revival services in the spring, the **Bellevue Charge**, Lynchburg District, invited the Rev. LeRoy and Peg Jones of the LeRoy Jones Evangelistic Ministries to bring hope and encouragement to the church. He serves as a general evangelist of The United Methodist Church and they live in Chatham. "Our charge was blessed by the ability of these two champions for God to use their talent and experience to promote our trust in Jesus Christ," said Brenda Dudley Hudson of Oakland UMC. "This was a great opportunity to make new friends and renew the faith of our charge."



▲ **Miles Memorial UMC** in Norfolk served as host for the final meeting of the Norfolk District Historical Society in May. Dr. Terry Lindvall of Virginia Wesleyan College was the speaker. The Rev. Reginald Potts was instrumental in forming this society in 1973 when he was pastor of Oaklette UMC and served as its first president. Elaine Yagen is the current president. When the society resumes in September, they will meet at McKendree UMC as the new Elizabeth River District Historical Society.

At Homecoming service, a history of **St. Matthias UMC** in Fredericksburg was shown on the newly installed projection system. Four former pastors participated in the service, which focused on giving thanks for the grace bestowed upon St. Matthias since its beginnings in a basement of a house on Jett Street in 1965. A note burning ceremony was held at the end of the service. Charter member Gordon Payne headed the committee which planned the celebration.



▲ **Pender UMC** recently presented a children's musical, "Once Upon a Parable," during all three worship services. The life of Jesus and message of salvation was told through musical renditions of many well-known parables from the mustard seed to the Good Samaritan. Most touching was the Passion narrative told through the singing of the Parable of the Vineyard.



◀ Youth Director Lyndsie Blakely of **Farmville UMC** led a three-day retreat for girls at a lake-side log cabin. The curriculum was based on the book *True Princess* by Erin Davis. In addition to Bible study, the young women canoed on the lake, enjoyed pedicures and facials, watched movies and played games. "Fusion" is Farmville UMC's youth group.



◀ The Rev. William N. Wade and his wife, Laura Ellen, stand in front of a quilt put together by the ladies of the **Loudoun Charge**, celebrating his 40 years of ministry. The quilt contains more than 250 signatures of members of his current charge, plus **Reliance** and **Crozet**, previous appointments. It was a surprise celebration for the Wades.



▲ **Emmaus UMC** of Stratford Hills, Richmond, offered joined hands of the Korean-speaking congregation and the English-speaking congregation to serve Haitian brothers and sisters in Port-au-Prince in June. The mission team of 12 members, including two pastors, worked on laying the foundations of a new home and medical care facility in scorching heat and rainy days. In this land of tears and devastation, all the team members were deeply touched by the powerful presence of the Lord who was working through the continual relief efforts of Christians worldwide and through the vital ministry of Haitian local churches.



◀ Members at **Bethia UMC**, James River District,

started a prayer shawl ministry in 2006 that has been a blessing to many people. They meet twice a month and pray over the shawls as they are being knitted or crocheted. Once they are complete, the shawls are placed on the altar rail for the congregation to lay hands on them in prayer during worship. To date, more than 600 shawls have been given out. There has been at least one sent to someone in every state in the U.S. and in numerous other countries. Pictured are (from left) Ellie Rose and Maxine Warner.

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Singing "Jesus is The Rock" with the Rev. Keary Kincannon (right) and the Rising Hope Band are (right to left) the Revs. Ken Jackson and Tuck Bowerfind, Del. Scott Surovell, Mount Vernon supervisor Gerry Hyland, Venisa McCormick and Thella Jacobs.

Rising Hope Mission Church launches yearlong celebration

Spiritual beacon for the homeless and needy of the Route 1 Corridor, Rising Hope Mission Church launched its 15th Anniversary Kick-off Celebration in June in a joyous, two-hour-long swirl of Christian rock music, emotional testimonials, sacred dance and with elected officials and area pastors expressing support and praise.

"If God could create a miracle to part the Red Sea, he could do the same on Route 1 and did," said Mary Baker, a longtime congregation member who saluted Rising Hope's pastor, the Rev. Keary Kincannon, as "one of God's shepherds."

Another founding member, Chuck Denton, recalled how Kincannon began his ministry in 1995 "out of the back of his station wagon" gathering 11 members who first met in the community room at Westford Housing Complex in 1996.

Original member Barbara Sharif recalled how Kincannon had written in an early flyer that "hope is rising on the Route 1 Corridor." The flyer led her to suggest naming the church "Rising Hope." "It was like the story of the mustard seed, the way it grew," she said. The church currently meets in a three-story building with a skylight-lit chapel, food pantry, clothes closet, dining hall, kitchen and offices.

Mount Vernon supervisor Gerry Hyland told how his visit on a freezing night with the homeless at the church's Hypothermia Shelter "told me everything about Rising Hope."

"What the state can do," commented Del. Scott Surovell, "and what the county can do, isn't enough. That's where you guys come in."

Ultimately, Rising Hope is a "beloved community," said Dr. Fred Smith, Professor of Urban Ministry at Wesley Theological Seminary. It is "ruled by love expressed in concrete acts" where "diversity is necessary to see the many faces of God" and "everyone's worth is affirmed."

And Bishop Charlene Kammerer wrote that "God has a special place in His kingdom for all who are in solidarity with the marginalized and those who live in conditions of poverty."

At the conclusion of the evening's festivities, Kincannon affirmed, "Together we are doing our best to manifest the ministry that Jesus started. This is a place where God's love is going to change lives."

The yearlong celebration of Rising Hope's 15th anniversary includes a dinner, dance and auction on Sept. 30 at the Mount Vernon Country Club, an evening of Christian comedy Oct. 23 with Scott Davis, and a concert in 2012.

— Ed Simmons Jr.



Living the Word



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:
Rev. Melody P. Tanner is pastor of the Guilford Charge in the Eastern Shore District. She received her Bachelor of Arts from Virginia Commonwealth University and her Master of Divinity from Wesley Theological Seminary. Melody enjoys playing guitar, watching and playing sports, traveling, and spending time with her husband, Jonathan, and rescue dog, Beamer.

August 7, 2011

Stirred, not shaken

Judges 13:1-8, 24-25

I was a junior in college with no major. As the choir was processing from the basement choir room to the chancel area one Sunday morning, my pastor asked me if I had come to any sort of resolution on the matter. I told him I still had no idea. We continued our conversation as I walked into the choir loft with the rest of the choir and he began to step up to the pulpit. The pastor turned to me and said, "When you are ready to acknowledge what God has been calling you to your entire life, come talk to me." To which I responded, "What do you mean?" He looked at my face and I knew that he knew that I knew...

Manoah's wife was barren, a sure sign that she was going to give birth to someone important in the love story between God and God's people displayed from Genesis to Revelation. The God who is constantly reaching out to us, seeking a relationship with us, sends an angel to share the news that Manoah's wife will bear a son. Manoah and his wife are to raise him to observe the Nazarite vow. The son does come and is named Samson. We are told that as Samson grew, God blessed him and the spirit of God "began to stir him" (Judges 13:25).

I, too, was "stirred" that morning as I talked with my pastor about God's will for my life. It was an overwhelming sensation that might never have taken place if it hadn't been for a pastor who took the time to notice a work that God had begun in me long before that day. It might never have taken place without parents who taught me to walk in Jesus' footsteps. It might never have taken place without a church family who offered me

opportunities to serve in leadership at a very young age.

Each and every one of us has gifts to be cultivated for the glory of God. Do we take the time to notice the gifts that God has bestowed on the people around us? Are we preparing others to take on leadership within the life of the church? Are we ready for God to use us as instruments to "stir"? □

August 14, 2011

Leap

Ruth 1:8-18

The Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel is a 17.6-mile connection between the Virginia Beach area and the Eastern Shore. Only on crystal clear days can one see from one end of the bridge to land on the other side. It takes a certain amount of faith as one begins to cross from one side to the other. It takes faith in the bridge's construction, the bridge's maintenance, and that it does, in fact, connect to the other side.

In the first chapter of Ruth, we meet a young woman who takes an incredible leap of faith. A widow, Naomi, has just lost her two sons who were married to Orpah and Ruth. As Naomi is traveling with these two women to her homeland, she decides to release them from any sort of obligation to her, allowing both to return to their families. Orpah returns home, but Ruth stays at Naomi's side saying, "Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16b).

Ruth makes a life-changing decision in this passage. She chooses to stay devoted to her mother-in-law, even when she is no longer obligated to do so. She chooses to become part of a community that she has never

met and knows not whether they will accept her. Ruth chooses to believe in a God that is not Lord over the land where she was born and raised. As much faith as it takes to cross a bridge when one can't see land on the other side, Ruth's commitment takes far more. Ruth is traveling towards a community that she hasn't met and committing to a God that she doesn't yet know.

It isn't always easy for us to step out into the unknown. We fear what we cannot yet see, touch, taste, smell or hear. We are leery of allowing ourselves to be vulnerable. It seems better to stay with what we know and that with which we are comfortable. It can be difficult to trust in a future that we cannot yet see. Ruth reminds us that having faith often requires us to take a leap. Ruth's leap is richly rewarded. God takes care of her.

What leaps of faith have you taken? What prevents you from taking a leap? Do you trust that God will take care of you? □

August 21, 2011

It's not fair!

Ruth 2:8-18

I have to admit it was a bit cruel. One Sunday morning during a children's message, I pulled out a bowl of different types of candy. The children immediately concluded that I was going to give each child a piece of candy. I explained to them that I would be giving all of the candy to one child and it was up to that child to decide what to do with it. I gave the candy to one child and asked her if she'd like to keep it all for herself or share it with everyone else. She decided to keep it for herself. The rest of the children began to protest. "It's not fair that she gets to keep all the candy to herself." "Why?" I asked, "It's her candy. She can do what she wants with it."

In the second chapter of Ruth, Boaz allows Ruth to benefit from a provision in Leviticus 19:9-10 that provides for the poor and the alien. Seeing all that Ruth has done for her

mother-in-law, Naomi, he instructs his workers to allow Ruth to glean from his fields. Boaz even provides food for Ruth at mealtime.

In this passage of Ruth, we see the faith and generosity of Boaz. He has been blessed with so much. He has worked hard for what he has. It would be easy for him to conclude that if he earned it, he should keep it all to himself. Boaz is a faithful man who chooses to follow the Levitical law. He sacrifices his own prosperity to provide for those less fortunate than himself.

Our natural inclination may be to keep what we have earned to ourselves. Sometimes we need to be reminded that all of our blessings are a gift from God. Part of being good stewards of God's blessings is providing for those less fortunate than ourselves.

In the end, the child I gave all the candy to decided to share with all the other children. Keeping all of the candy to herself might have been gratifying for a moment, but being generous to others is everlasting. Are we good stewards of God's blessings? Do we keep our earthly wealth, which is really God's wealth, to ourselves? Or, are we willing to provide for the needs of another? □

August 28, 2011

Taking a picture

Ruth 4:1-10

My in-laws recently returned from a church trip following the Apostle Paul's missionary journeys. One of the sites they visited along the way was the Sistine Chapel. This famous chapel is covered in beautiful art from the Renaissance period. Taking pictures of this artwork may seem enticing, but is forbidden for various reasons. My father-in-law stated that he really wanted to take pictures inside the Sistine Chapel, as others did, even though it was not permitted. However, he didn't want to set a bad example for others because he is a Christian.

Ruth 4:1-10 displays Boaz conduct-

ing a business transaction. He attempts to take ownership of a parcel of land, and with it, Ruth. He does so by following Jewish tradition and law. Boaz wants Ruth. Naomi wants Ruth to be with Boaz. Boaz could just take Ruth for himself, but he chooses to do the honorable and lawful thing. Boaz chooses to be righteous.

It is important for us, as the church, to set an example for others when it comes to ethical behavior. We can't say, "That's church. This is business." We can't pick and choose when we want to follow the rules anymore than we can pick and choose when we want to be a Christian. We are called to walk in Christ's footsteps, to set an example for others. When it comes to our business practices as a faith community, or as an individual who is part of a faith community, we must value adhering to ethical practices.

It must have been tempting, standing there admiring the beauty of the Sistine Chapel, to take a picture in order to remember the moment. The rule regarding no photography is there for a reason. There may be times when the United Methodist *Book of Discipline* seems like an ideal far from reality, but the guidelines are there for a reason. There may be times when it would seem easier for us to take the easy way out rather than follow ethical standards, but the rules are there for a reason. May we set an example for others as Boaz and Christ set the example for us.

Do we act ethically as a community of faith? Do we act ethically in our business practices as individuals who identify ourselves as Christians? Do we set a positive example before others? □

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Letters & Commentary

God uses us to form disciples

I want to try again to move the church to understand that we do not have the power to make disciples for Jesus Christ. When I mentioned this to a pastor that I highly respect, he said that it is understood that it is not our power that makes a disciple. But that is not good enough; we must name this power. In fact, one of our bishops said that this is the difference between a church and a non-church person. We name it. The [conference] Mission Statement as it is now does not name this power, which is the Holy Spirit.

Please read what Dr. Robert Hunt, director of Global Theological Education at Perkins School of Theology, Dallas, said on page 4 in the July issue of the *Virginia Advocate*, alluding to the "Call to Action report": "Nowhere in the document as a whole, is there any mention of the presence of the Holy Spirit, the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, or fidelity to the witness of Scripture and the traditional teaching of the church." I believe what Dr. Hunt is saying is that without the mentioning of the Holy Spirit there is no power for any fruit to come out of the "Call to Action" report.

We, too, will have no fruit in seeing a disciple of Jesus Christ being formed unless we understand that it is the local church that God uses to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Only God can do it. It is not our power, it is God's power that forms a disciple. Our [closing service at Annual Conference] preacher the Rev. Tammy Estep said this boldly in her preaching.

Maybe I didn't have the Mission Statement worded the way it should be. I will bring it back next year, but this time I will solicit help from some top theologians. One of which, I hope, will be Dr. Hunt. □

— Hilary "Pete" Costello,
pastor at Accotink UMC in Warrenton

Prison Ministry gets a boost from Annual Conference members

On Saturday, June 18, I gave a report to the Virginia Annual Conference and introduced a DVD about Chaplain Service Prison Ministry of Virginia that included comments from Bishop Charlene Kammerer, Dr. John Upton of the Baptist General Association of Virginia and Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell. I also asked the delegates (members) to pray for the chaplains, those whom the chaplains serve, and the victims of the crimes. I encouraged the members to read our report on page 94 of the *Book*

of Reports about the execution of Teresa Lewis, the first woman to be executed in Virginia since a black woman, Virginia Christian, was executed in 1912. The report describes the ministry of Chaplain Julie Perry, Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women, to Teresa.

I asked for financial support for our prison ministry because the grant for 2012 will be reduced from \$149,000 to \$119,500. I asked for people to volunteer to lead Disciple Bible Study in all the Virginia state prisons; it is a partnership between Disciple Bible Outreach Ministries, Inc., the Holston and the Virginia conferences, as well as United Methodist Men.

I also asked for volunteers for a re-entry program at a men's prison and a women's prison. This program is a partnership between Prison Fellowship, Chaplain Service, and the Department of Corrections.

I asked for volunteers for Kairos, a Christian ministry of all faiths that is in all three women's prisons and in eight men's prisons, including three in Greensville Correctional Center, under the leadership of Chaplain Paul Beighley, a retired member of the Virginia Conference.

On Sunday, June 19, the Rev. Greg West, chaplain at Virginia Wesleyan College, asked Bishop Tim Whitaker to allow the delegates (members) to give a spontaneous offering for Chaplain Service Prison Ministry of Virginia. Hundreds of people came to the altar to give their love offering for prison ministry in Virginia! The total amount of that offering was \$9,396.93. Praise God! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

For \$300 a year your church can have a prison ministry that ministers to 32,000 adults, 2,500 of whom are women, 700 are young men and 50 are young women. For more information, contact me at: Chaplain Service, 2317 Westwood Ave., Room 103-A, Richmond, VA 23230; or e-mail <chapservva3@aol.com>. □

— Cecil E. McFarland, President,
Chaplain Service Prison Ministry of Virginia

Just how 'open' are our doors?

I attended Virginia Annual Conference in Roanoke. As I listened to the speakers talk about "Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors." and "Snapshots of the Kingdom" and "Rethink Church," I thought of my daughter, Karen Mann. She is a 2001 graduate of Pfeiffer University majoring in Christian Education and Music and a 2004 graduate of Candler Theological Seminary at Emory University with a Master of Divinity. She was proud to be a United Methodist — she heard God calling her to devote her life to pastoring through chaplaincy. After much struggle, though, she had

to leave The United Methodist Church. You see, the doors, hearts and minds of the UM Church are no longer open to her. She has become an active member of the United Church of Christ (UCC).

Karen is a gay Christian. She and her partner married in 2007. They live in Georgia where their marriage is NOT recognized by the state law. Instead, they were married "in the eyes of God" by an ordained pastor at a UCC church.

I once asked Karen what Scriptures gave her solace as she struggled with her identity. Her answer was Romans 8:38-39 which says that [nothing] can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

As of the conclusion of the Virginia Annual Conference, the doors of The United Methodist Church in Virginia are not open to gay Christians. We, The United Methodist Church, continue to lose talented men and women that God is calling into ministry. We continue to force clergy men and women to suppress a part of their very being or to ultimately leave our denomination.

I noticed that the numbers of members in our United Methodist churches in Virginia have gone down. Unfortunately, it will continue to go down until we open our minds and hearts and realize that ALL are welcome in God's church. □

— Kittie Mann
Fredericksburg UMC

Ashland District ethnic minority history is highlighted

As the Virginia Conference leans into its new configuration of 16 districts, and old district names and boundaries disappear, we would do well to remember some of our history. Lost in the closing "celebration" of the Ashland District this spring was any mention of the reason for its creation, and of the legacy it leaves.

The Ashland District was "gerrymandered" into existence in 1972 to make room for the first ethnic minority district superintendent in Virginia Conference history. The late Rev. Godfrey Tate, an African-American pastor, was appointed to be the first Ashland superintendent, with the supposition that Ashland, the self-described "Center of the Universe" and home of Randolph-Macon College, would be welcoming to an ethnic minority superintendent. The hard truth was that the district trustees had difficulty purchasing a parsonage for the new superintendent, finally acquiring one in the Chamberlayne Heights area of Henrico County.

Godfrey was an excellent superintendent and quickly won the hearts and minds of Ashland District churches and their members. It was then a natural thing for the Ashland District, in 1990, to welcome the first Asian-American superintendent, the Rev. M.J. Kim.

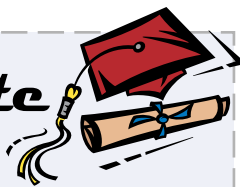
Now it is unremarkable for a Virginia bishop to appoint an ethnic minority pastor to the Cabinet. As the Ashland District fades into history, those who have served here can be thankful that Ashland's original mission has been fulfilled, and that the rest of the Virginia Conference has

followed Ashland's lead. I hope that the late Petersburg District, which was the home of the first female superintendent, the just-retired Rev. Cynthia Corley, owns a similar pride.

At the close of this year's Annual Conference, presiding Bishop Timothy Whitaker, no doubt reading from a prepared script, announced that the Ashland District was being renamed the Fredericksburg District. The 25 Ashland District congregations moving to the Richmond District beg to differ. Nevertheless, whether now in Fredericksburg or Richmond, the 60 churches of the Ashland District and their clergy past and present celebrate their incarnation of Open Hearts. Open Minds. and Open Doors. □

— The Rev. J. Brooke Willson,
pastor at Providence UMC in Quinton

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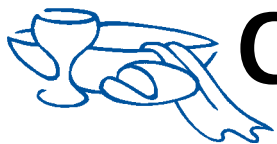
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Clergy & Diaconal

Deaths

The **Rev. Leighton Ernest Harrell Jr.**, 88, retired elder, died June 14, 2011. He began his ministerial career in 1946 at New Castle. He went on to direct the Wesley Foundation at Virginia Tech (VPI). He then was appointed pastor at Herndon, served as Army chaplain, taught at several universities, worked for the Veterans Administration, performed marriage and family counseling, and started a finance company. He retired in 1976. After moving back to Roanoke, he was named Pastor Emeritus at Grace UMC.

Survivors include his daughters, Leigh M. Williams and Lindy E. Harrell; and brothers, Stanley G. Harrell and Earl S. Harrell.

Jeffrey Leonard Morris Hendrix, husband of the Rev. M. Mochel H. Morris, died June 28, 2011. Mochel is pastor at Christ Crossman UMC, Arlington District.

Ruth Read Blackman, mother of Susan Davis and mother-in-law of the Rev. William A. "Bill" Davis Jr., died June 18, 2011. Bill is lead pastor of Bon Air UMC, Richmond.

Edythe Keithley Fowler, mother of the Rev. Tom Keithley, died June 17, 2011. Tom is pastor of Grace UMC (Middletown), Winchester District.

Anne Ward Cooper, mother of the Rev. Andy Brock, died July 11, 2011. Andy is pastor of Greenwood UMC, Winchester District.

Inez Casiano, wife of Robert W. Hardy (father of the Rev. Janine Howard), died June 28, 2011. Janine is the new superintendent of the Danville District.

Bennie Lee Robbins, father of the Rev. Gary L. Robbins, died June 30, 2011. Gary is pastor of Greene Memorial UMC in Roanoke.

2011-2012 Appointments corrections and changes from July issue noted

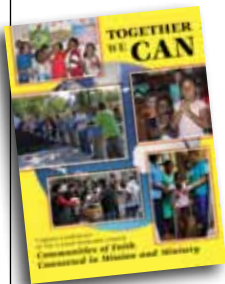
Note the following corrections and changes to the 2011-2012 Appointments listings on pgs. 6-15 in the July *Virginia Advocate*.

Under **a. Clergy** – Danville District, Danville, St. Luke's, add: Valerie L. White (2) PD – Minister of Discipleship and Evangelism.

Under **b. Extension Ministries and**

Other Appointments – Alexandria District, James A. Noseworthy, change title: from "Senior Assistant to the President" to "Vice President for Administration and External Programs"; – Richmond District, add: Lynda W. Harding (PD) – Volunteer Coordinator/Chaplain, Crossover Ministries (New Song). □

'Together We Can' is theme of 2011-2012 Mission Opportunities special insert



This year's annual *Mission Opportunities* special insert picks up on the theme of "Together We Can" which is the UMC's slogan being used with its interpretation of benevolences. "Benevolences" are monetary gifts to causes carrying

out the mission and program of the denomination. The insert also lists opportunities to help congregations grow through mission. □

Conference Center closes at 12:30 p.m. on summer Fridays

Conference offices in the Virginia United Methodist Center, located in Glen Allen, will close every Friday at 12:30 p.m., through Labor Day weekend. Offices will remain closed Monday, Sept. 5 in observance of Labor Day. Offices will reopen Tuesday, Sept. 6, for regular business hours of 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

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Annual Conference viewed from a sofa!



**Charlene Payne
Kammerer**
Bishop of the
Virginia Conference

Dear Friends,

I can still hardly believe I missed being with all of you at our recent Annual Conference! It was no fun being sick with a reaction from a typhoid shot. However, I realized three days before conference began that I would not physically be able to attend. My doctor ordered me to stay put at home and I was on bed rest.

Thus, I was able to view Annual Conference sessions from a sofa in our family room. First of all, I will always be grateful to my friend and colleague Bishop Tim Whitaker for coming to Virginia and presiding over the Annual Conference. I knew all would be well in his very capable hands. In addition, Bishop Whitaker knows and loves the Virginia Conference and wants the best for our mission and ministry.

My first commitment from the sofa was to be in constant prayer for every session, Bishop Whitaker, all the speakers and leaders and the delegates. I knew I could still offer the gift of prayer, even as I felt the healing prayers being sent my way.

The live streaming for any of us unable to be present in Roanoke was just terrific. I could see the platform, the speakers, the musicians, the preachers, the Bible study leader, the children from Brazil and the Henry Fork Center, the mission celebration worship, the special offering, all of it when I wanted to. I also could keep up with the election results for the upcoming General and Jurisdictional Conferences in 2012. I heard the speeches during the floor debates and rejoiced in the closing worship service which centered our new reality of living into a 16-district structure.

I have already shared some of my "observations from the sofa" with our director of Connectional Ministries and the chairperson of the Annual Conference Planning Committee. There were also technical and staging details I noticed that I would never have noticed had I been presiding. Hopefully, we will continue to perfect our planning and execution of Annual Conferences year by year.

I love Annual Conference. I am thankful I could be there from afar, and get a sofa perspective. I am already looking forward to next year and being back on the platform in your midst.

Charlene Kammerer

Charlene Kammerer

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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 (please no more than one item per issue). Color photos 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

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