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Advocate

The Virginia United Methodist

December 2013

125 years
of Deaconesses
& Home Missioners



FROM THE EDITOR



Neill Caldwell
Editor

Real-life
super-
heroes



"Fannie Canfield, Isabelle Reeves and Evelyn Keeler were three young women of Chicago. Among the first students of the Chicago Training School for City, Home and Foreign Missions, ... these three women and their ministry of house visits in the city's immigrant neighborhoods mark the beginning of a movement that continues today. On May 18, 1888, the all-male General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church approved the establishment of the office of deaconess. ..."

So begins a video about this year's 125th anniversary of the start of the United Methodist deaconess tradition, including home missionaries and home missionaries. Those first three women were consecrated as the first deaconesses. Word spread quickly about this new ministry, and within 20 years the office was well established and growing.

These are servant ministers, set apart for a special role. While they remain lay members of their local churches and their annual conferences, they receive professional training before they can be consecrated and appointed to full-time ministries of love, service and social justice.

Deaconesses are lay women whose diverse forms of service strive to fulfill the mandate of Christ to alleviate suffering, eradicate injustice and all that robs life of dignity and worth, facilitate the development of full human potential and share in building global community.

Home missionaries are lay men who share the same call to ministry. Established by the 2004 General Conference, this office provides men with an office that is equal and similar to that of a deaconess. Home missionaries, originally an office of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, made similar commitments to a lifetime of servant ministry. While it is no longer possible to become a home missionary, the church values those who have served or continue to serve in this capacity.

Our own Olma Garibay, a deaconess at Resurrection UMC in Chesapeake, was featured in *Response* magazine earlier this year. "She primarily works with children and youth in this community, answering her calling to help young people grow and achieve their full potential. The community is predominantly Filipino-American, where the youth face issues of generational and cultural gaps, often leading to a crisis of identity. She helps young people get a better understanding of issues related to culture, heritage and faith, which can be challenging," the article read.

"I face resistance in ministry, especially when I teach about social issues like poverty, immigration and peace and reconciliation," she told the magazine. Garibay is also working on completing her Master's in Education at Eastern Mennonite University. It's indicative of the amazingly full lives that these servants of the church lead today.

You can learn more about the deaconess movement on two websites: www.dhmumc.org and www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/programs/deaconesses.

Neill Caldwell

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Connecting with the



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Deadlines

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Advertising/Tributes

Rates for advertising and tributes are available upon request.

Local Church News

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

Letters

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

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On the cover: Sybil Perrell is commissioned as a deaconess by Bishop Bruce Ough in Tampa, Fla., during 2012 General Conference. UMNS photo by Paul Jeffrey. **Above:** A group photo at the Deaconess Training Institute in Great Britain, 1910.

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Reaching more people during Advent

by Tom Berlin and
Lovett Weems

Advent is a prime season with rich potential for engaging church members and new people. There is arguably no time in the year when people are more interested in what the church is offering than during Advent. What attracts many to church this time of year is the realization that the church shares this season in a way that has greater meaning and integrity than their local shopping mall or holiday show in the theater. Whether with a gathering of neighbors singing carols in a small country church, or with a large choir and organ in a tall steeple sanctuary, the church understands how to celebrate Advent and Christmas.

A group of church members at the church Tom serves discussed Advent and Christmas and shared what the church could do to make the season more meaningful. One of the themes that became clear was music. People said that while they appreciated sermons throughout the year, the message of Advent and Christmas was often best conveyed in song. They shared that some of their best memories of the season were found in singing at local community events. While they loved the hymns of the church, they wished that Advent could include a service of singing similar to what they found at the "Christmas sing-a-long" at the nearby park amphitheater.

Some pastors find it inappropriate to sing Christmas carols during Advent. The tradition of the church is to sing songs that reflect Advent as a time of preparation, and not break into the celebration of Christ's birth before the time. The problem with this thinking is that the surrounding culture of the United States does not follow the lead of the church, and this culture now leads the way for the experience of the season. Radio stations in most major markets now start playing non-stop Christmas music not after Thanksgiving, as they did in past years, but after Halloween!

Churches that refuse to sing Christmas carols until December 24 are in danger of being the only venue where such music is not sung during December. The church, therefore, becomes a place people may avoid, since the experience of hearing and singing this music is offered abundantly elsewhere. What is lost is the sacred nature of the music. When choirs appear at the local mall, they mix "Joy to the World" with "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer." Soon, the message of the sacred is so blended with the secular that it has no power and certainly no significance for worship.

Hearing this desire to sing the music of the season, the leaders of the weekly 5:00 p.m. service in the church Tom serves reformatted worship for the first week of Advent as a time to sing the carols of the season. This service was held immediately following an event where families made their own Advent logs and shared supper. The usual worship attendance of 150 swelled to over 500 persons as the sanctuary filled with joyful music. 📖

-The Rev. Tom Berlin is senior pastor of Floris UMC in Hernon. Lovett Weems Jr. is director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership. They are authors of the new book Overflow: Increase Worship Attendance and Bear More Fruit (Abingdon Press, 2013), which is available from Cokesbury and Amazon. See more at: www.churchleadership.com/leadingideas

1,000 Miracles and counting

By Larry Jent

Just over five years ago I coasted into my driveway after a long motorcycle ride. I had been a delegate to General Conference in Fort Worth, Texas – and the Harley helped clear my head after those days of frenetic meetings.

The next morning my wife, Barbara, could not speak. Melanoma had attacked her brain and the swelling was critical. The cancer had marched all the way through her body and was threatening her life.

The weeks ahead were a blur of tests, diagnoses, and surgery. The prognosis was grim: a 1 percent chance of living a year. If we made it through 12 months, the odds of five-year survival were much better: 5 percent.

More treatments were recommended – some very experimental. So far, the cancer had recurred no matter what we tried. Barbara asked the oncologist how long we should keep playing this game of life and death Whack-a-Mole.

He said something profound: "Our statistics are

very good at telling us what will happen to a group of 1,000 people in your situation – how many will live, how many will die. What they cannot tell us is which group you will be in."

That made so much sense to us! Even if the odds are 1 in 1,000 it just doesn't matter. All that matters is whether you are the one! That is up to God, not statisticians, not clinics, not tests, not procedures.

That is where you came in. Throughout our ordeal you bathed us in prayer. Constantly. Incessantly. Literally around the world, people were praying for us. To this day people I barely know will greet me – not with, "Hello," but with, "How's Barbara?" It seemed everyone in the Virginia Conference was praying for us by name.

It was miraculous. It still is.

When you face 1 percent odds, every day is a miracle. It's been five years since her last surgery – five years since any sign of cancer. We're getting close to 2,000 miracles, and counting. Every one of you is part of that miraculous story.

The news is not all good. Everyone we have met along the way who was struggling with advanced melanoma has fallen to this killer. And living with the painful aftermath of a debilitating disease can be much more difficult than battling the demon in the first place.

Nevertheless, our story has brought hope to every melanoma patient we have met. Cancer is not the deciding factor. Statistics cannot rule our fate. We live as those who know how to die, and we will die as those who go forth to live. God is in control, and prayer is the ultimate power.

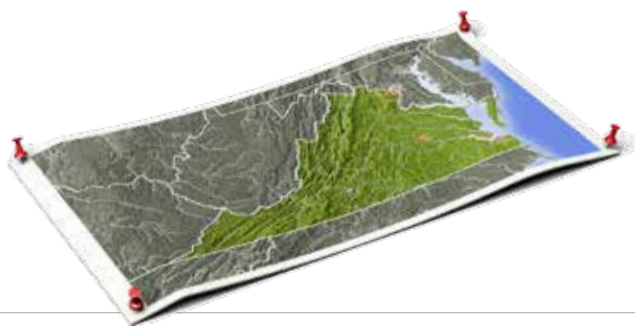
So the next time someone feels all hope is lost, tell them about Barbara Jent. Tell them about the power of prayer. Tell them you're praying for them. Tell them God is still in control.

That just might be the only miracle we really need. 📖

-The Rev. Larry Jent is the pastor at Fishersville UMC.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



40 Virginia clergy accompany Bishop Cho to Korea

By Sarah Calvert



A group of Virginia clergy including the Rev. Rachel Gilmore (foreground) help feed the hungry in the Di-al community in Korea.



On Easter morning, 1885, missionaries Henry Appenzeller and his wife, Elisa, arrived in Korea, determined to spread Methodism in Korea and make disciples for Christ for the transformation of the world. From their fruitful missionary lives and by the work of the Holy Spirit, today's Korea has an abundant, prayer-filled and Spirit-blessed Methodist Church. The inheritors of the work of these Christian missionaries included not just the Korean people but also a group of United Methodist clergy from Virginia on a Spiritual Pilgrimage led by Bishop Young Jin Cho in late October.

It is not an easy trip to get to Korea; early missionaries spent months in travel, and our 40 pilgrims had to endure a 14-hour plane ride from Dulles airport to Incheon, South Ko-

rea. Upon arrival, we were treated to nothing less than radical hospitality from our local sponsors, Bupyeong Methodist Church and their Senior Pastor, Rev. Hong Eun-Pa. Applauding staff and lay leaders, incredible meals, gifts, music concerts and outpourings of love and prayer became our new normal for the entire week of the trip. Many of our hosts mentioned they were sharing their gratitude toward Americans – for our missionaries as well as for our military and rebuilding assistance during and after the Korean war.

Bishop Cho asked the Virginia pilgrims to experience the prayer practices, church planting and growth strategies, missions activities, and global impact of the Korean Methodist Churches during our pilgrimage. In our incredibly busy six days, we visited churches, missions, historical sites and missionary-founded universities and hospitals. We experienced worship, musical programs, mission work, prayers, discipleship programs, university lectures, a missionary cemetery tour (where Appenzeller and his wife are memorialized) and the gifts of testimony and sharing.

Significant to our experience was a daily 5 a.m. prayer service. I was afraid I would be too tired to participate fully, but by the end of the week I looked forward to the upbeat music,

pounding rhythms, short meditations and intense 30-minute prayer time that ended the services.

Our hosts practiced the Korean prayer form known as Tongsong Kido, where everyone prays out loud at the same time in this case for 30 or more minutes. These worship and prayer practices inspired me and challenged me; I could see the commitment and formation they encouraged. Korean pastors we learned from mentioned these early morning prayer times as essential to the building and growth of their churches and ministries. Many of us were convicted to translate this to our own lives and churches, so you might see some in our conference start to add early morning prayers!

In addition to our host church, Bupyeong, we visited Sontan Gipeun Church (Joyful Church), Church of Heaven's Gate, Doonsan First Church, Jesus Village Church and Centennial Memorial Church. Each had a slightly different focus and specialty, but all believed prayer and the intercession of the Holy Spirit were essential elements to their success. Some showed us discipleship programs that moved people from a seeker to deeply committed Christian over the course of a few years. Some reached young adults and teenagers and some were in ministry to foreign work-

ers and multi-racial families. All had something to say to our Virginia churches, and we were very grateful to be taught by so many gifted pastors and churches.

We pilgrims also found ourselves making friends across districts and among clergy we may not have known before this trip as we wrestled with interpreting this pilgrimage into our own lives as well as the lives of those we serve.

One visit was to Jesus Village Church, where the community had consisted of bars, brothels and gambling places. By training Christian disciples, the church transformed the community around them into a safe place for families to live with a music school for the young people, businesses for employment, preschools and nursing homes.

In the Da-il community in Bapfor, founding pastor Rev. Choi shared the story of his "miracle under the bridge" begun by feeding noodle soup to one elderly epileptic man who hadn't eaten in four days. Soon

he was feeding a crowd hidden from the weather under an overpass. When we visited, he was in a new feeding center, had built a hospital with thousands of small donations and was expanding his feeding and medical programs to Africa and other parts of Asia. We were able to briefly assist in helping with some of the homeless, and there were not a few tears and hugs.

We attended a lecture by a university professor who spoke on the significant challenges that face the Korean Protestant churches. The loss of membership, influence and trust were similar between the Korean and American churches, and we realized the importance of helping each other across culture and nation for the building of the Kingdom. We pilgrims also found ourselves making friends across districts and among clergy we may not have known before this trip as we wrestled with interpreting this pilgrimage into our own lives as well as the lives of those we serve.

Reaching out, building up and sending forth, we pilgrims were grateful to experience this on a global scale on our trip. We thank Bishop Cho and all our Korean hosts for a life-changing and community-challenging pilgrimage to Korea.

-The Rev. Sarah Calvert is currently on Sabbatical and lives in Locust Grove.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Rev. B Failes is wide awake for the daily 5 a.m. prayer service at Bepyeong Korean Methodist church.



Virginia clergy on a walking tour of the Jesus Village community, where the church transformed the entire area around it.



Tammy Estep, Bishop Cho, Hong Eun-Pa, host pastor from Bepyeong church, and Bob Parks at the Appenzeller Memorial.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Berlin challenges United Methodist Men to have courage



Rev. Tom Berlin, lead pastor at Floris UMC, speaks to the United Methodist Men's spiritual retreat at Blackstone.

Below, men from different parts of the conference greet each other. Left: Dan Dietz (left) and Richard Derring. Right: Wayne Callis (left) and Todd Hoar.

The Rev. Tom Berlin told United Methodist men gathered at Blackstone for their annual spiritual retreat that the majority our churches are not flourishing because we lack courage.

"The good news is that we are no longer in denial (about our losses)," said Berlin, senior pastor at Floris UMC in Herndon. "But we are not focused on our commitments. ... If you can't be committed to God you can't be a true disciple."

Berlin reminded the large crowd gathered for the weekend retreat that we live in an era of anxiety and fear, and that culture is especially present in churches that are losing members.

"Stop blaming the conference, stop blaming the

bishop, the D.S., stop blaming everyone," he said. "We even blame God: 'where are the miracles like in the good old days?' You can play the blame game, but that's a limited time offer. We have to resist blame if we want to get out of the fear and anxiety."

Berlin spoke in several sessions of the retreat, held Nov. 1-3, on the subject of courage in the church, using text from Judges 6 in the Old Testament, the Gospel of Luke and Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth.

"We need courage and boldness in The United Methodist Church," Berlin said. "God believes in you more than you believe in God. Remember in Romans Chapter 8 where it says 'If God is for us who can be against us?'"



"I've served every size church in the Virginia Conference, starting with a two-point charge with 30 in worship to a large membership church today, and it's not about numbers. Eighty percent of what we do (well, at Floris) is our work in the local community. ... Don't ask God to bless what you're doing, do what God is blessing."

Berlin also gave some advice for those who are unsatisfied with their current church experience. "If you have a problem with your church, with your pastor, at least have the decency to sit down and talk with them about it."

-Neill Caldwell



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

Virginia Conference communicators earn 10 awards in annual competition

The Virginia Conference Communications staff received 10 honors at the Oct. 26 awards banquet that was a part of the annual meeting of the United Methodist Association of Communicators, held Oct. 23-27 in Chicago.

Conference Graphic Designer Cathryn Wooton won top prize in several categories: first place in Visual Design Print or Electronic for her work on the Virginia United Methodist Advocate magazine; first in Artwork for her April 2013 Advocate cover for "What It Means to Be United Methodist" (depicting a "Cross and Flame casserole"); first in Logos/Branding for her new set of Virginia Conference logos; and Publicity/Advertising Single Piece for the conference 2013 Ministries With Young People

Resource Guide.

Wooton also won a Best in Class award of excellence for Visual Design.

Director of Communications Linda Rhodes won first place in the Photography category for her photo of Bishop Young Jin Cho at the July 2012 Consecration Service held at Lake Junaluska, N.C. The photo was the cover of the September 2012 Advocate magazine that featured the story of Bishop Cho's faith journey as he began his episcopal term.

Advocate Editor Neill Caldwell won a first place prize for Writing, in the Blog Division, for his daily record of the conference's first UVMIM team trip to Cambodia in January 2013.

The video produced by Caldwell and Rhodes about the Cambodia mission trip

and shown during 2013 Annual Conference won second place in the Videos category.

The Advocate magazine was selected for second place in the Print/Magazine category, and the 2013-2014 Mission Opportunities booklet – produced jointly with the conference Mission office – was second in the Print/Special Publications category.

Seven people from the Virginia Conference, including Board of Communications Chair the Rev. Bill McClung, attended the 41st annual gathering of the denomination's communicators.

Caldwell was elected to a second two-year term as the organization's president, and Rhodes serves as the group's treasurer.



Pastors from two districts get together to talk about conflict resolution

About 40 clergy from the York River and Fredericksburg Districts recently gathered at Camp Pianka-tank for a retreat to discuss the book "Difficult Conversations."

We did "role play" based upon actual conflict situations submitted by participants (like space use, controversial conversations and misunderstandings) that occur regularly in the church. First, we did the role play by acting out the conversations as they usually go with an "us" vs. "them" approach, then role-played the same issues using tools from the book.

Fredericksburg District clergy Seonyoung Kim, Pat Tony, Mina Sumpter, Carla Stearns and Mike Reaves, as

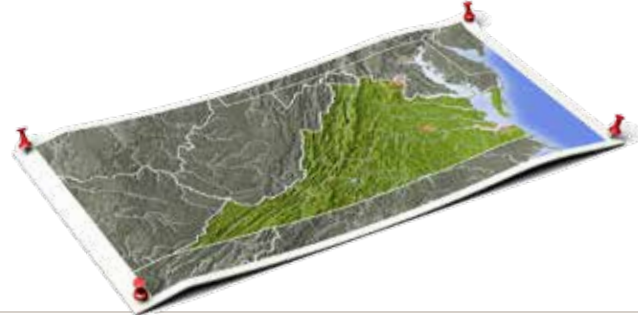
well as District Superintendent Ted Smith, had all received training at Conflict Boot Camp a year ago. They acted as the facilitators and were able to share how it had worked for them in their congregations.

Facilitators shared how they used the tools:

- ❖ **When a misunderstanding occurred they knew how to recognize and affirm all of the individuals involved and acknowledge the mistake that had occurred. These steps short-circuited the argument and allowed it to be resolved without hard feelings.**
- ❖ **A lay group used the book as a tool by going over each chapter and learned how to resolve differences without anger and division.**

-Rev. Teresa Smith, New Hope UMC

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Foundation can help you multiply your gifts

God has a way of multiplying gifts to make a bigger impact. In Jesus' day, there was a large crowd gathered to hear Him teach, but a crisis arose at meal time. All the disciples could find was a boy with his lunch of five loaves and two fish. When Jesus distributed the food, it fed the 5,000 – and there were 12 baskets full left over!

In a recent newsletter, the Virginia United Methodist Foundation shared how some donors could multiply gifts through a tax-wise approach to giving directly from their IRA. This is not

an opportunity for every IRA investor, but is limited to those who are 70½ and are required to take their annual 'RMD' ('required minimum distribution'). For the person who has been a conscientious IRA investor and where their account has grown in value, this is a tax-free gift of appreciation within their retirement account. For others, it may be equal to the annual required distribution. The benefit is that the charity receives the full amount – and nothing is withheld for future tax liability.

The Foundation office has assisted donors in different churches with making this planned gift option – and making a significant impact on their local church. In one church, the Finance chair told Planned Giving Officer Steve Clark that it was the largest single gift that church has ever received. In another church, a portion was being used to meet a current capital improvement need – and the balance was set aside in their investment account with the Foundation for future needs.

Qualified charitable distributions from IRAs may be

made through Dec. 31, and may be any amount up to \$100,000. The distribution must be to a qualified 501c3 charity – like your church.

Likely there are others in our churches who have the capacity to make an immediate impact on the future ministry of the church by making a similar gift.

The benefits of charitable giving with stock

If you are like most individuals, the value of your stock and other investments has grown over the years. Perhaps you are entering your retirement years and wondering how you can turn your highly appreciated asset into extra income. Or you may desire to make a gift of stock to fulfill your pledge. You may also be concerned about the mounting capital gains taxes due. If you sell your stock in today's market, you will forfeit a portion of the proceeds to taxes. In short, you need a way to sell or gift your stock and avoid capital gains.

If you identify with any of these situations, the solution is a charitable stock plan. A variety of charitable plans can help you achieve your goals for tax savings – and even provide income.

The Foundation can provide helpful solutions that accomplish goals of securing more income and avoid

capital gains tax while providing a charitable gift to your local church.

Is your church benefiting from rising stock market?

Recently the U.S. financial markets, as measured by the Dow and S&P, moved ahead to new record highs as Fed Chair Ben Bernanke announced QE3 will remain intact.

Unemployment is still high and inflation is projected to run below the Feds longer-term objectives. The Foundation's Balanced Portfolio is up 6.08% and Stock Pool is up 11.3%.

If your church or ministry has funds sitting idle or you have received a bequest or sold a parsonage or have other funds to steward, contact the Foundation. Establishing a new account, adding funds, or even taking out funds to use is easy. We would be glad to explore the options or even meet with a church committee to explore possible options.

The Foundation follows the Social Principles (Book of Discipline ¶716) in our investment offerings, so you can also rest assured in knowing that besides a track record of competitive results your investment also upholds church values.

For more information, contact Foundation President Dave Thompson at (804) 521-1122, or Steven Clark at (804) 521-1120. ☞



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

Beth Downs announces retirement effective July 1



The Rev. Beth Downs

The Rev. Beth Downs, conference director of Clergy Excellence, has submitted her request to retire at the end of this conference year.

"With deep gratitude and mixed feelings I have

received her letter requesting retirement," said Bishop Young Jin Cho in a statement. "During her 34 years of service under appointment to The United Methodist Church, Rev. Downs has been a very effective educator, minister and a leader for our church. Especially in her 16 years of ministry as director of Ministerial Services (later the director of the Center for Clergy Excellence), she has made a tremendous contribution to recruiting, guiding and developing clergy leadership. She has fixed, strengthened and truly sought the excellence of clergy leadership. She has never been complacent and continued

her effort for innovation and improvement of the ministry of the Board of Ordained Ministry not only for the Virginia Conference but also for our denomination. We will greatly miss her. I think all of the clergy and laity in the Virginia Conference will join me in expressing our thanks to her and best wishes for her new journey."

Downs is an ordained deacon in full connection. Following graduation from Salem College in Winston-Salem, N.C., she received a Master's Degree in Christian Education from Duke Divinity School. In 1975 she was consecrated as a deaconess in The United Methodist Church. Then following the 1976 General Conference, she became a diaconal minister. When the 1996 General Conference established the Order of

Deacon, Beth was ordained a deacon in 1998.

She has served in a variety of ministry settings since graduating from seminary in 1973, primarily in youth ministry and Christian education in the local church. Prior to moving to Virginia in 1983, she served in the North Carolina Conference, the Missouri East Conference, and the Baltimore-Washington Conference. She served as conference director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries in the former Baltimore Conference. In Virginia, she served on the staff at Welborne UMC for four years and at Reveille UMC for eight years, prior to accepting her current position in July 1998.

She has three sons and two daughters-in-law – Robert and Lori, William and Julia, and Matthew. ☞

Wesley Seminary dedicates new residence hall

By Amy Shelton

Where and with whom future pastors live during their seminary education impacts their ministries. The spiritual formation that occurs in a dormitory can shape a church leader's work for the rest of his or her career. This is why Wesley Theological Seminary built a new residence hall this year. In October, the seminary held a dedication ceremony to celebrate this milestone.

Supporters, students, staff and faculty celebrated the new dorm with Scripture readings, prayers and words of dedication. With the help of more than 20 people, Wesley's President David McAllister-Wilson and Board of Governors Chair the Rev. Tom Berlin of Floris UMC cut the ribbon to ceremoniously open the new 76-bed facility.

Wesley carefully planned this new facility to foster community and spiritual growth. Every floor has shared gathering space for students – meeting rooms, study rooms, a prayer room or a music room. There are four communal

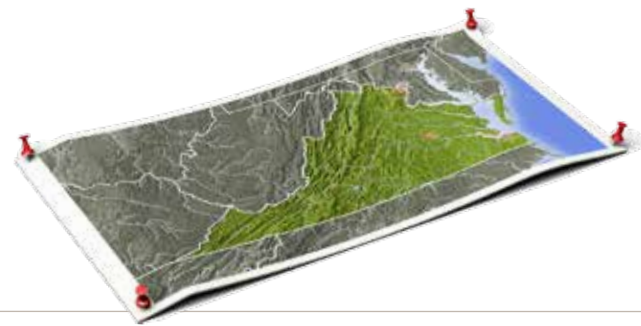
kitchens, eating areas and lounges in this, the first new building on Wesley's campus in more than 50 years. Students are able to personalize their private and semi-private rooms, which adjoin suite-style bathrooms.

This new residence hall is the culmination of years of planning and fund development and a year of construction. The energy for the building is provided as part of a wind-power cooperative; the school is completing the process for LEED certification at the Silver or Gold level. ☞



The Rev. Tom Berlin and others watch as Wesley Seminary President Dr. David McAllister-Wilson cuts the ribbon on the new residence hall.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Bethlehem UMC team goes to Hungary to lead children's camp



The team from Bethlehem UMC gathers with their Hungarian hosts for a group photo.

By Larry Broomall

During the summer, the Rev. David Lord and eight members of Bethlehem UMC of Moneta, visited Obuda UMC in Budapest, Hungary, and participated in an "In Mission Together" adventure. During the time in Hungary, the team assisted Szeged UMC with its summer children's camp.

Each day of the camp began with a snack for the children followed by the entire group assembling for prayers and singing. The Bethlehem group acted out a parable each day for the group and then taught a Christian song in English. The entire group next divided into age-related groups and each studied and discussed lessons related to the parable presented that day. The groups re-

convened to walk to lunch. Upon return to the church everyone worked on crafts related to the Bible with the older children helping the younger. At day's end, the entire group met to sing and pray prior to departure for their homes or homes away from home. Team members share their experiences and thoughts of this mission trip below.

"What a wonderful blessing it was to meet and get to know members of our partner church, Szeged UMC in Hungary," said Lord. "It was a true privilege to join them and experience God at work in and through their congregation. Our time with them has strengthened our connection and called us to intentional prayer for them and their ministry as they pray for our ministry and us. In this way and in oth-

ers, we truly can partner to become the church that God calls us to be.

"So much about this trip was incredibly positive and meaningful! Prior to going, my growing impression had been that we were viewing the visit and the relationship with Szeged UMC as a mission outreach. Concurrently, leaders of the Szeged church were reaching out to us and were acting in ways that encouraged a true partnership of equals as brothers and sisters in Christ," Lord added.

"As we arrived and met more and more leaders and members of the Szeged church, it was clear that they consistently embraced each of us with Christ's open arms and hearts," Lord continued. "They reinforced my belief that 'people are people' and Christ's love knows no boundaries;

not geographic, nor ethnic, nor language, nor any other potential human impediment."


"As I reflect back on the Szeged mission trip I see warm, loving, accepting people of all ages sharing God's love with each other and with us," said Donna Broomall. "I also hear lots of laughter, especially kind laughter at our team's parable presentations and our poor singing attempts."

"Szeged UMC has been in mission to others for many, many years," said team member Deb Broadwater. "Their ministry to the Roma children and families has set a high standard in my heart. The generosity and love that was shown by our sister church family at Szeged UMC has given me new hope and inspiration to serve others as they so very lovingly served each of us at Bethlehem UMC."

Margaret Davis called

the mission "nothing short of amazing. ... Each day we shared in the love, fellowship, prayer and worship of this congregation. Of the several songs that we taught the children, their favorite was 'Our God is an Awesome God.' I sure felt the love of our awesome God that week. The members of Szeged UMC were like family to me."

"My sense is that our team members will never be the same because of this experience," Lord said. "The Holy Spirit has used our time with Szeged UMC to transform our lives and to commit ourselves to sharing the love of Christ with others in a greater way. I believe we will continue to see great things come from this partnership."

The message for the camp was "Jezus Valto-zast Hoz" or, "Jesus Brings Changes." It is true. 

-Larry Broomall was the Bethlehem team leader.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

James River team returns to extend relationship with Roma

By Ken and Linda Carty

The James River District recently sent a mission team that was small but passionate about the Roma – also known as gypsies – to Alsozscola, Hungary. This was the third year that we sent a mission team as a result of the "In Mission Together" partnership between Hungary and the district to work with the Roma.

The team connected with those in the community as we were able to stay in the parsonage of the church right in the Roma community. We were invited into their homes for coffee and cakes. The connection this year was a bonding like never before, as we walked in the community, talked and sang with the children, and enjoyed the smiles on their faces letting us know how happy they were that we were there.

During an altar call, droves of people came forward to accept Christ for the first time, to re-dedicate their lives to Christ, and to pray for their community and loved ones. Many prayed to be released from addictions and for the peace of loved ones.

The Roma are truly living examples of how to live a life for Jesus – they truly put others' needs before their own. Their generosity is accompanied by huge smiles on their faces in spite of the suffering and persecution they continue to face on a daily basis.

The Rev. Lilla Lakatos, a Hungarian Methodist pastor, started a blog at <http://szivemtagranyitom.blogspot.hu/>. 

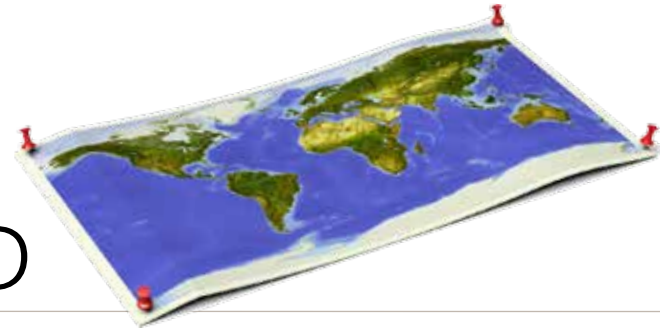
-Linda and Ken Carty led the study on the Roma people at the 2013 Mission Encounter.



Rev. Monty Raney on the daily walk through the village prior to evening worship with Deborah, Ramona and Petr, a Hungarian translator.



Vicki Brewer, the James River District team leader, is joined by the Roma children while strolling through the village.



2016 General Conference to see fewer delegates attend

By Heather Hahn

The 2016 General Conference in Portland, Ore., will have about 15 percent fewer delegates than recent gatherings of The United Methodist Church's top lawmaking body.

The Commission on the 2016 General Conference voted 14 to 2 to set the target number of delegates at 850. That number is not exact. It could vary by a few people either direction to meet representation requirements under church law.

General Conference, which meets for nearly two weeks every four years, has lawmaking authority "over all matters distinctly connective." Half of the delegates are lay, and half are clergy. It is the only body that can officially speak for

the global denomination of about 12 million professing members.

Since the merger that created The United Methodist Church in 1968, the number of delegates at each General Conference has remained closer to 1,000.

The secretary of the General Conference, Rev. L. Fitzgerald Reist, released a list of numbers of delegates by annual conferences.

The Virginia Conference will have 22 delegates to General Conference, which is down four from 2012.

The number of delegates per annual conference is calculated based on the requirement for one lay and one clergy delegate for each annual conference, with additional delegates assigned according to a formula that considers the total clergy and lay membership per conference.

"The reduced number of delegates did not result in significant changes in the proportionate representation of delegates from individual jurisdictions and central conferences," said Reist, who has served as the secretary since his election in 2004.

Thirty percent of delegates in 2016 will be from Africa, 58.3 percent from the U.S., 4.6 percent from Europe and 5.8 percent from the Philippines, with the remainder from the Concordat churches.

Benefits of downsizing

The reduction will save the church around \$600,000, Sara Hotchkiss, General Conference business manager, told the commission. Before the vote, the projected costs for the 2016 General Conference were more than \$10 million.

More significantly, the reduction in delegates begins to smooth the way for The United Methodist Church to hold its first General Conference outside the United States, said Reist. That move could happen as early as 2024.

"At the present time, there is no one willing to host us because of what is involved in moving General Conference outside the United States," he told the commission. "One of the changes that will probably need to be made is in the size of the delegation. I think it would be a mistake to move outside the United States and reduce the size of the delegation at the same time."

Minneapolis, Minn. will be the site of the 2020 General Conference, tentatively set for May 5-15, 2020. Minneapolis is in the Minnesota Conference.

A question of representation

In addressing the question of representation, Reist pointed out that the United States has a population of more than 300 mil-

lion people, and yet relies on a federal legislature that is slightly more than half the size of the typical General Conference.

The commission's vote came after discussion that touched on stewardship of the denomination's resources, the need for adequate representation and the balance of power in the denomination.

"Part of our goal is to move incrementally, but our intention is to move toward a smaller General Conference," said Judi Kenaston, the commission's chair and conference secretary of the West Virginia Conference.

The denomination's

constitution sets a range of 600 to 1,000 delegates and a ratio for representation based on an annual conference's membership. Each annual and missionary conference is allowed to send at least one lay and one clergy delegate. Annual conferences elect their delegates.

A proposed constitutional amendment to increase the minimum to 800 delegates got majority support at the 2012 General Conference, but fell short of the required two-thirds of the vote.

The 2012 General Conference had 988 delegates from around the globe. It cost about \$8.4 million.

Fixed costs remain

Hotchkiss pointed out that some fixed costs for General Conference would remain or increase no matter how steeply the number of delegates decreased. Such costs include interpreters in multiple languages. For example, the 2012 General Conference voted to require that General Conference materials must now be translated into Kiswahili.

A number of United Methodists have denounced the 2012 gathering as the "do-nothing" General Conference. The Judicial Council – the denomination's top court

– overturned an effort to restructure the church's general agencies and overturned other legislation to eliminate guaranteed security of appointments for ordained elders in good standing. The wider General Conference ran out of time before it could consider a number of petitions approved by legislative committees.

As permitted by the 2012 General Conference, some annual conferences plan to elect their delegates next year. Others will wait until 2015.

-Heather Hahn is a reporter for United Methodist News Service. Additional reporting by Diane Degnan.

'Therefore, Go' chosen as 2016 theme



The Commission on the 2016 General Conference, also approved the theme for the gathering in downtown Portland, Ore.

The theme will be "Therefore, Go" from Christ's Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20. The same passage also serves as inspiration for the denomination's mission "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." It also has the advantage of being easily translated into multiple languages.



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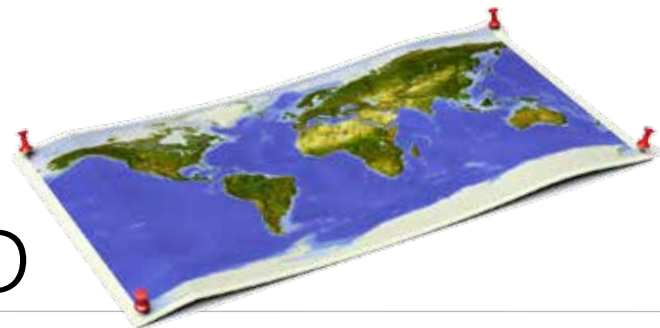
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Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD



Council of Bishops take action against Bishop Talbert

By Diane Degnan

Following the action of a retired bishop to conduct a same-gender ceremony in violation of church law, the United Methodist Council of Bishops took a series of actions to address the issue during their annual meeting at Lake Junaluska, N.C.

The Council requested that Bishop Rosemarie Wenner, president of the Council, and Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett of the North Alabama Conference file a complaint regarding Bishop Melvin Talbert's action, for "undermining the ministry of a colleague and conducting a ceremony to celebrate the marriage of a same gender couple."

"When there are violations of the *Book of Discipline*, a response is required," the bishops said.

"The Council of Bishops had an honest conversation on this issue and the situation and prayerfully discerned and adopted the statement. I hope this statement will help our churches to continue to focus on our mission, making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

Virginia Bishop Young Jin Cho.



Retired Bishop Melvin Talbert (right) performed the wedding of Bobby Prince and Joe Openshaw in Alabama.

The Council also voted to initiate a task force to lead conversations about human sexuality, race and gender in a global perspective. The goal of this effort is to come to a shared theological understanding amid diverse opinions in the church about these issues.

These actions followed days of prayerful discernment and conversation about the action it would take after retired Bishop Melvin Talbert conducted a ceremony on Oct. 26 celebrating the marriage of a same-gender couple in Center Point, Ala. – a chargeable offense for United Methodist clergy.

Church law says that, "Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our

ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches."

Both the presiding bishop of the North Alabama area where the ceremony took place, Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett, and the Executive Committee of the Council had requested that Bishop Talbert not perform the ceremony.

Under church law, the College of Bishops – which is constituted of the bishops in a jurisdictional or central conference – has authority and accountability for processing complaints against a bishop who serves (or served) in that area, which would be the Western Jurisdiction in this instance.

Earlier this week in the President's Address, Bishop Wenner acknowledged there is diversity of opinion



about many issues in the church. "We have to lead together although we are not one minded. We do not need to hide that we are diverse," she said. In the address, she also noted, "Serious conflicts have to be brought to the tables where leaders are present," an acknowledgment that supports the plan for further discussion of the issue through a task force.

In a statement, the Council said that when followers of Christ and people of conscience hold conflicting views, honest and respectful conversation and prayer are needed throughout the church. The Council expressed pastoral care and concern for all people.

-Diane Degnan for United Methodist Communications

Church responds to massive storm in Philippines

By Linda Bloom

Just days after Super Typhoon Haiyan flattened part of the Philippines, relief was beginning to trickle in to survivors.

United Methodists were among those starting to provide emergency supplies while assessing damages from the powerful Nov. 8 storm, known as Typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines, that made direct hits on several islands. Much of the early attention centered on Tacloban, a Leyte Island city of 200,000 that was destroyed.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) announced a \$97,000 grant to provide emergency food, water and water purification tablets to 7,500 individuals (or 1,500 families) in Tacloban City. The funding also will help local UMCOR staff build capacity to meet emergency needs.

The Rev. Jack Amick, UMCOR's executive for international disaster response, has been consulting with Ciony Eduarte, UMCOR Philippines Head of Mission, and traveled to the UMCOR Philippines office to work with field staff, partners and needs assessment.

Filipino-American United Methodist Churches, including Resurrection UMC in Virginia Beach, are busy raising funds for typhoon relief and other recent disasters in the Philippines.

The three active United Methodist bishops in the Philippines and at least two retired bishops were attending the denomination's Council of Bishops meeting at Lake Junaluska, N.C. Bishops Pedro Torio, Ciriaco Francisco, and Rudy Juan shared their appreciation for the prayers and support that church members offered.

Bishop Juan said, "I believe that with help from The United Methodist Church worldwide, from countries that support the Philippines, we'll rise above this and we'll be able to move on. Because we are a global church, when one part of the world suffers, the other members of

the connection will help. Because of our connection, there's so much help. And thank you so much."

Hundreds of United Methodist families live in the affected area, said Francisco. He leads the Davao Episcopal Area in central Philippines, which encompasses the islands devastated by the typhoon. "They need food, water, shelter and, of course, the prayers of the people," he said.

The Rev. Iris Picardeal-Perana, a United Methodist pastor in Tacloban who was missing after the storm, had been in contact with Pastor Ruby Bongolan. In a text message, Pastor Iris said: "We are OK here in Leyte but our situation is difficult."

Hardest hit was the Visayas Philippines Conference, where six of 28 local United Methodist churches were heavily affected. There was no immediate report of loss of life among church

members.

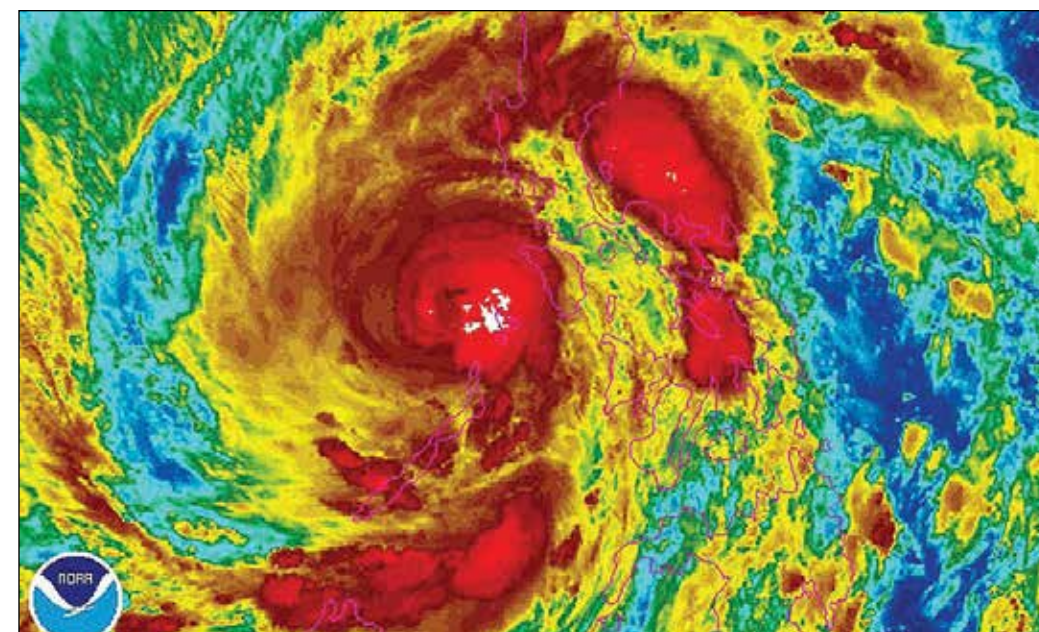
With internet service down and power not expected to resume soon, communication with the affected area remains spotty and church-related reports are coming in via text messages. Several local church buildings in Leyte, Panay, Aklan and Capiz were damaged, according to reports, and homes of church members destroyed.

Retired Philippines Bishop Daniel Arichea Jr. said the broader United Methodist connection "is very important" to providing needed aid.

Support UMCOR's relief and recovery work in the Philippines by contributing to International Disaster Response, Advance #982450.

-Linda Bloom for United Methodist News Service

A satellite image measures the power of Typhoon Haiyan as it churns across the Philippines. NOAA photo.



Deaconesses and home missionaries



Deaconesses at a 1923 meeting (top) and joined by their male Home Missioner counterparts in 2012.



By Olma Garibay

During this past year, the offices of Deaconesses, Home Missioners and Home Missionaries of The United Methodist Church have celebrated 125 years of love, justice and service.

Deaconesses, who are lay women, and home missionaries, who are lay men, have responded to God's call and are commissioned by The United Methodist Church to a full-time vocation in service with those who are marginalized and in need in the world today. The Deaconess movement began with cutting-edge urban ministries with immigrants, the sick and the poor. Currently, deaconesses and home missionaries are engaged in various helping ministries such as prison ministry, immigration, health care, education, homelessness, women and children, youth and families, senior adults and peace with justice, just to name a few. This laity ministry traces its roots from Phoebe, a deaconess in the church at Cenchrea (Romans 16:1).

Deaconesses and Home Missioners form a covenant community committed to make Jesus known in the fullness of his mission, which mandate that his followers:

- ❖ **Alleviate suffering;**
- ❖ **Eradicate causes of injustice and all that robs life of dignity and worth;**
- ❖ **Facilitate the development of full human potential; and share in building global community through the church universal**

-The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2008, ¶1314.1

In 1885, Lucy Rider Meyer was inspired by the deaconess movement in Germany and established the Chicago Training School, the first training school for deaconesses in the United States. It was in the spring of 1888 when The Methodist Episcopal Church created the office of deaconess at General Conference. The Rock River Annual Conference (now Northern Illinois) consecrated the first deaconesses in October 1888.

In 2004, General Conference voted to establish Home Missioners, providing an opportunity for lay men to serve in a life-time relationship in The United Methodist Church that is equivalent to Deaconess.

Today, deaconesses and home missionaries engage in emerging and innovative ministries. The 10-year vision for the movement is to be "a prophetic voice for love, justice and service so that all may experience abundant life."

Becky Dodson Louter, executive secretary for the Office of Deaconess, Home Missioner and Home Missionary, emphasized the inclusiveness of deaconess and home missionary ministries, saying, "We are showing how we can be a diverse church and united in our diversity. God calls us to serve all. We are living out that call to be out in the world."

This year we celebrate the 125th anniversary with the theme "Love, Justice, and Service," echoing the ongoing commitment to cutting-edge ministries by deaconesses and home missionaries.

If you would like to learn more about Deaconess and Home missionary movement, or about the qualifications and steps to become a deaconess or home missionary, call the Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner at (212) 870-3850, or e-mail deaconess@unitedmethodistwomen.org. Or you can visit the website <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umw/programs/>.

Finally, I would like to share our motto: "I serve neither for gratitude nor reward but from gratitude and love; my reward is that I may serve." ☕

-Olma Garibay is a Deaconess in Virginia Beach. This article was adapted from her talk at 2013 Annual Conference.

God does not call us to be the master

By Lisa Nichols

I'm not a master gardener, but I can work with our children and youths to grow food in our neighborhood. The preschool students started the first crop of sugar snap peas in early March, and we picked the peas a couple of weeks ago and tried them. The after-school students helped to plant tomato plants, pepper plants, and cucumber and squash seeds. Those plants have thrived on the rain and the warm weather, and we have peppers on the plants. I'm afraid to try them because we planted six different varieties and one of those was jalapeños! But we'll be eating the peppers off the vines because I could take my limited knowledge and share it with the students around me.

I'm not a naturalist, but I can share my love for the outdoors and little knowledge of plants and trees with the children and youths around me. Last year one of the favorite themed weeks was outdoor week. That was probably because we cooked our own hot dogs and got to make S'mores hot off the bonfire, but we also went hiking in one of the county parks. We noticed firsthand that we had coniferous trees and deciduous trees (pine trees and hardwoods). We discovered that sassafras trees have three different kinds of leaves and for "leaves of three, let them be." We were able to spend a couple of hours in God's creation because the teachers were willing to go with me on an adventure, and are planning to do that once a week this summer.

I'm not a master chef (by any means), but I can cook with the children and youths around me. The pre-school students spent considerable time in the kitchen this year, making cookies and brownies and cooking Thanksgiving Dinner for their families. The Venture Crew made spaghetti

and chocolate chip pancakes (not on the same day) and learned both how to work together and to cook from scratch. By giving them a chance to experiment, we learned that you can put too many chocolate chips in a pancake, and that canned is good, but homemade is better.

God does not call us to be experts before we share our gifts; God calls us to share our gifts. The group of United Methodist Women from the Richmond District who recently visited Henry Fork Service Center had probably never built a fence for cucumber vines, but by working together they accomplished their task.

From Romans 12: "If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously."

-Lisa Nichols is a Deaconess serving as a Church and Community Worker. She is the executive director of Henry Fork Service Center, a facility in Rocky Mount which provides Christian education, educational enrichment, recreation and the arts to more than 100 students throughout the year.

Deaconesses/Home Missionaries/Home Missioners in the Virginia Conference

Deaconesses:

Ann Farris
Leave of Absence
Lynchburg

Olma Garibay
Resurrection UMC
Virginia Beach
Multi-Ministry Director

Diane Hassell
Amelia Charge Outreach Ministries
Amelia
Director

Susan Lewandowski
transitioning return to active ministry
Spotsylvania

Pat Marks
Patmos Ministries
Washington, D.C.
Director

Elizabeth Nichols
Henry Fork Service Center
Rocky Mount
Executive Director/Church & Community Worker

Ludid Orozco
Annandale UMC Early Learning Program
Alexandria
Teacher

Brenda Romenius
St. John's UMC
Falls Church
Director of Christian Education

Home Missioners:

Haniel Garibay
Methodist Federation for Social Action
Washington, D.C.
Cross Cultural Common Witness Coordinator

Retired Home Missionaries:

Carol Burgett, Elkton

David Burgett, Elkton

Joanne Maughlin, Falls Church

Stanley Maughlin, Falls Church



Lisa Nichols with some of her K-1 students at their raised bed garden at the Henry Fork Service Center in Rocky Mount.

Deaconess profile: Lisa Nichols

Elizabeth (Lisa) Lamb Nichols is a deaconess serving as a Church and Community Worker as executive director of the Henry Fork Service Center in Rocky Mount. The Henry Fork Center provides Christian education, educational enrichment, recreation and experiences with the arts for more than 100 students throughout the year. The mission of the center is "making God's love visible in our community," Nichols said. "I have seen the staff and students work together to share God's love through words and actions. As the students learn the history of God's people, they are called to respond to God's love and invite others to join the journey." Henry Fork works with volunteers from Ferrum College and work teams from across the southeast. Work teams share Vacation Bible school with elementary and middle school students, work on building repairs and lawn care, and work to complete the children's activity building. Nichols previously served as the director of Programs for the St. Andrews Center and Executive Director of the St.

Elmo/Alton Park Partners in Tennessee. In those positions she directed after-school programs for Cub Scouts, ESOL high school students as well as more than 60 elementary students at the St. Andrews Center and South Chattanooga Recreation Center. A native of Bristol, Tenn., Lisa earned a B.A. degree in elementary education in 1980 from Emory and Henry. Lisa enjoys enabling student participation in outdoor activities. Students have hiked around downtown Chattanooga, on the Riverwalk and in Chickamauga Battlefield. They have learned about geology and physical science through hands-on activities at Cloudland Canyon and Red Clay State Parks. "I'm looking forward to exploring the Blue Ridge Parkway and southern Virginia with our Henry Fork students. We are planning field trips to area parks, lakes and recreation facilities for our elementary and middle school students," she said. Lisa and husband, Gary Nichols, have two daughters – Sara and Jessica. Lisa Nichols, Rocky Mount; E-mail: HenryForkCenter@cs.com. Missionary Code: #982953.

Set apart, lay people vow a life of service

By Linda Bloom

Sitting in a church pew one day, Laura Draughon Kirby realized she wanted to merge her work-related passions and talents for social justice with her religious commitment.

The *Book of Discipline* defines deaconesses, who are laywomen, and home missionaries, who are laymen, as “professionally trained persons who have been led by the Holy Spirit to devote their lives to Christlike service under the authority of the Church.”

A native of Atlanta and former Presbyterian, the 42-year-old Asheville, N.C., resident joined the denomination in 1993 when she married Lem Kirby, whose father was a clergy member of the North Carolina Conference. She and her husband, a physician, have three boys, ages 9, 12 and 14.

About four years ago, the same time she started work as development director for the Western North Carolina AIDS



United Methodist deaconess candidates during a commissioning service at the Interchurch Center chapel in New York. UMNS photo by Cassandra Zampini.

Project, Kirby attended a “discernment weekend” to learn more about the deaconess movement.

Participating in such an event is the first step toward commissioning, explained Becky Dodson Louter, the executive in charge of the Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner.

An applicant “must demonstrate they are in a ministry of love, justice and service,” she said. “They may serve in a church-related vocation ... or they

may serve in a helping profession.” Once an application is reviewed, “if it seems like it might be the right match, we invite them for interviews.”

Other requirements include the completion of several courses of study and a consultation with the bishop of the annual conference where the applicant resides.

Linda Bloom is a reporter for United Methodist News Service



Home Missioner profile: Bill Dudleson

After Bill Dudleson retired, he and his wife, Diana, grew more and more involved in their church in Arkansas. On a drive home from yet another church function, Bill says he told Diana, “I could do this all the time.” Now he does, as a United Methodist Home Missioner.

The Dudlesons had already made several trips to Honduras, where their son and daughter-in-law, both doctors, served as medical missionaries. No strangers to overseas living — Bill’s work had taken the family to Libya, Dubai, England, Scotland and Russia — they wondered whether they ought to look into longer-term overseas mission service.

But their pastor suggested they consider volunteering at the UMCOR Sager

Brown Depot in Baldwin, La. So, they spent a weekend there in spring 2005, then returned again in the wake of hurricanes Katrina and Rita that summer. They continue to serve the depot in the volunteer services unit, of which Bill is the director.

Reflecting on his decision to become a home missionary, Bill said, “In my situation, I put the cart before the horse,” referring to the life of service he assumed at Sager Brown long before he really knew anything about the lay vocations of home missionaries and deaconesses.

The Office of Home Missioner provides lay men with an opportunity to serve in a life-time relationship in The United Methodist Church. It was established at General Conference 2004 and is the male counterpart to the all-female Office of Deaconess founded in 1888.

Becoming a deaconess or home missionary

Deaconesses and home missionaries are approved through a process established by United Methodist Women, consecrated and commissioned by a bishop at settings approved by the board of directors of United Methodist Women. They shall have a continuing relationship to The United Methodist Church through United Methodist Women.

Deaconesses and home missionaries are available for service with any agency or program of The United Methodist Church. Deaconesses and home missionaries may also serve in United Methodist Church agencies or programs, provided that approval is given by United Methodist Women in consultation with the bishop in the receiving area. (¶1314.2, 2012 *Book of Discipline*)

Qualifications for the office of deaconess or home missionary

1. A call from God to lifetime, full-time mission-oriented service as part of the lay diaconate.
2. Membership in The United Methodist Church.

After intense training, both deaconesses and home missionaries identify positions for their service in a helping profession or church-related vocation that may or may not be compensated. Dudleson found his place at UMCOR Sager Brown.

“What I do now is really what I love to do,” said Bill.

The training and formation he received in the home missionary program will reinforce his work with Sager Brown volunteers, Bill said, helping them to perceive and embrace the deeper spiritual reality and relationships involved in their own acts of service assembling relief kits for people in need.

“A lot of people come down there and they’re ready to roll up their sleeves and make kits and work on houses, and they don’t always realize that this is also spiritual time.”

Linda Unger

3. The professional training, education, and/or certifications for the ministry to which one is called.
4. At the time of consecration and commissioning, position (compensated or noncompensated) in an approved appointment of love, justice and service. Appointments may be in a church-related vocation or helping profession. A deaconess or home missionary must hold local church membership in the annual conference in which she or he will be serving.
5. Continuation of the practice of discernment.
6. Biblical, theological, and sociological grounding in the prescribed core studies:
7. Old Testament
8. New Testament
9. Theology of Mission
10. History of The United Methodist Church
11. Polity and Doctrine of the United Methodist Church

Core studies may be taken at United Methodist institutions of higher learning or at colleges, universities, and/or seminaries that are approved by the University Senate of The United Methodist Church. Intensive courses (one- to two-week) and other alternative program options are available. Prior coursework may be reviewed for approval of the core studies. Limited financial assistance based on need is available for core study coursework.

1. Commitment to functioning through diverse forms of service directed toward the world to make Jesus Christ known in the fullness of his mission, which mandates that his followers:
2. Alleviate suffering.
3. Eradicate causes of injustice and all that robs life of dignity and worth.
4. Facilitate the development of full human potential.
5. Share in building global community through the church universal.

Application and candidacy process for deaconess and home missionary

1. Following a process of prayerful discern-

ment that may include participation in a deaconess or home missionary spiritual formation retreat, the inquirer completes the application for deaconess or home missionary. This form is available online through the United Methodist Women website or through the administrative staff of the Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner.

2. The application with references is processed by the administrative staff of the Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner for distribution to a review committee and shared for recommendation with the appropriate conference committee for mission service.
3. Upon the recommendation of the Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner review committee, the applicant is invited for staff interview and psychological interview and testing and participation in the Theology of Mission course. The applicant must be interviewed within two years of the first invitation.
4. If approved, the applicant moves to the candidacy stage, is matched with a mentor/coach and completes core studies with progress reviewed annually.
5. Upon completion or near completion of core studies, the candidate is invited to participate in the next scheduled preparation and training for consecration and commissioning.
6. A review of appointment is submitted by the administrative staff of the Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner to the appointing bishop for approval.
7. Upon successful completion of all requirements and approval of appointment, candidate is consecrated to the Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner and commissioned by a bishop at settings approved by the board of directors of United Methodist Women. Deaconesses and home missionaries have a continuing relationship to The United Methodist Church through United Methodist Women.
8. The approved appointment is fixed by the appointing bishop.

Purpose, Vision, Values and Emblem

More about the Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner

Our Purpose: Why we exist

The Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner of The United Methodist Church in the United States enables laity to respond to a vocational call to be Christ in the world through consecration for lifetime servant ministries of love, justice and service.

Our Vision for 2021

The Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner of The United Methodist Church is a prophetic voice for love, justice and service so that all may experience abundant life.

Our Emblem

The emblem of the Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner, a cross of equal arms encircled by a ring, symbolizes our covenant community and the lifetime relationship we share with The United Methodist Church. The design holds many layers of meaning. The cross with all arms of equal length represents the spread of Christianity in all four directions — North, South, East and West. The ring represents the global nature of the Gospel message as well as the inclusiveness of God's love.

As the deaconess movement grew out of missionary thought, our emblem connects our history with our call to servant ministry. Consecrated and commissioned deaconesses, home missionaries and home missionaries wear this emblem as an identifying mark of their relationship and full-time vocation in servant ministry.

Our Values

- Embodying the life-giving love of Christ.
- Commitment to a lifetime relationship in servant ministry in love, justice and service.
- Covenant community with one another.



Deaconess Diane Wood



Deaconess Martha Drummer, 1920, sent to Africa



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EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY



Strive for a **WOW!** first impression

By Tamara Williams

If you show up on a Sunday morning at Reading UMC and it happens to be raining, no worries. Before you can even open up your car or truck door, a friendly greeter will be standing there with an open umbrella to keep you dry as you get out of your vehicle. And on any day, regardless of the weather, you will not have to open the door into the church by yourself – no matter which entrance you choose – because a friendly greeter will be standing outside the door, ready to open it for you.

Could this be part of the reason that Reading UMC, a small-town, largely rural, old-fashioned bell-and-steeple kind of church located in the heart of Hillsdale County – a county that continues to struggle mightily with poverty, unemployment and under-employment, continues to steadily increase in worship attendance, membership and general participation in ministry and spiritual growth opportunities when so many other churches that are similar to it continue to decline? YES! I have no doubt about it.

Rev. Rick Ezell, pastor of First Baptist Church in Greer, S.C., would agree with me. Here is what he wrote in an article posted on the LifeWay website:

“First impressions

are lasting ones. Little hope of correcting a bad first impression is possible. Your first-time guests have some simple desires and basic needs. They decide very quickly if you can meet those criteria. The decision to return for a second visit is often made before your guests reach the front door.”

- ❖ **Are you creating the entire experience, beginning with the parking lot?**
- ❖ **Are you consciously working to remove barriers that make it difficult for guests to find their way around and to feel at home?**
- ❖ **Do newcomers have all the information they need without having to ask any embarrassing questions?**
- ❖ **Are greeters and ushers on the job, attending to details and anticipating needs?**
- ❖ **Does anything about your guests' first experience make them say “wow!”?**

“Your church may have a skillful preacher, and your church may have excellent small groups or the best children’s ministry in the community,” Ezell said. But first-time guests will never

know unless they make a second or third visit. Will they come back? It all depends on the impression you’re making. Make the right one the first time.”

Many of our churches – perhaps including yours – have a “Homecoming Sunday” or some special way of welcoming people and inviting them to return to regular participation when summertime ends. If you do, let me challenge you to truly consider AND RESPOND to those five points listed by Rev. Ezell above. Strive for excellence!

Here’s an idea: make an appointment – for some time other than a Sunday morning – with someone who has never been to your church before to walk around the entire facility, inside and out. In fact, make several appointments with several different people at several different times. Have them share with you their first impressions. Listen carefully. Write down what they say. Then go through the same process on a Sunday morning. Gain insight into how a “stranger” views your church.

Then change whatever can be changed for the sake of hospitality – to help a guest or newcomer have a very positive first impression. ☞

-The Rev. Tamara Williams is the Albion District Superintendent, Michigan Conference

LOCAL CHURCH NEWS



▲ In response to Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Assembly Adoption of Full Communion with The United Methodist Church, Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church of Martinsville, invited **Wesley Memorial UMC** to join in celebration of “Full Communion” on World Communion Sunday. “The worship service was a joyous celebration with combined choirs and congregations filled with spiritual music, preaching, worship and Holy Communion,” reports Wesley Memorial pastor the Rev. Steven Greer. “Also, both churches are currently joining together in an outreach ministry to the residential homes of adults with special need in our Martinsville community; and we are looking forward to joining together with other shared ministries and spiritual life activities in the future.”



▲ Members of **Market Street UMC, Winchester**, recently met in the Fellowship Hall of the church right after

the Sunday service to make sandwiches for a local mission project. With everyone working together, it only took about a half hour, and people were glad to receive the sandwiches. They were delivered to The Laurel Center, The Salvation Army, The Henry and William Evans Home, the Rescue Mission and Living Faith, which provides a meal every Sunday for those who need it, and CCAP, a local non-profit organization started by area churches to provide food and clothing for those in need.

Bishop Young Jin Cho participated in the 60th anniversary celebration at **St. Andrew’s UMC in Portsmouth**, Elizabeth River District, in September. The church grew out of Monumental Church in 1953. Pictured, from left, are Rev. Penny Cory and husband Richard, Rev. Harry Spear and wife Pat, Rev. Dr. Dan Phillips Abbott, Bishop Cho, Rev. Joseph Savinsky and wife Carolyn, and District Lay Leader Keith Willyard. ▼



Members of **Afton UMC in Ophelia**, Fredericksburg District, recently delivered supplies and monetary donations to The Haven, one of the church’s United Methodist Women mission projects and a shelter to victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse.

Epworth UMC of Aylett in King William County raised more than \$500 for Nothing but Nets. This was accomplished due to Epworth members Pat and Barbara Reed growing butter beans, shelling them and selling them to church family and other family and friends. Pat and Barbara also celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary recently. ▼



(Continued on pg. 28, “Local Church”)



...can become a very special home for retired United Methodist pastors and their spouses in the years to come.

The Retired Clergy Housing Corporation of the Virginia Conference maintains a program to provide retirement homes for eligible United Methodist pastors who need them.

This program has been made possible by the gift of homes and funds 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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LOCAL CHURCH NEWS

On Oct. 26, more than 80 volunteers showed up to bag 10,000 meals for Stop Hunger Now. After a slow start, the group got into a rhythm and in less than two hours the job was completed. This project was sponsored by the **United Methodist Men of Main Street UMC in Suffolk**.

In September, **Belview UMC** celebrated 40 years of ministry in the New River Valley. The church held a community gathering where children enjoyed a "Bounce House," face painting and pumpkin bowling, while adults tried

washer toss, corn hole and horseshoes. The New River Valley Boys provided music, as did the Faith Unshaken praise band from the Wesley Foundation at Virginia Tech. And there was food for everyone. More than 100 people attended this



event. On Sunday, the Mul-lins Family Gospel Singers provided a free concert (pictured), the Rev. Jim Jenkins, retired elder in the Holston Conference, preached the sermon, and a potluck lunch was held after worship. ▼

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EVENTS

DECEMBER

Singles Retreat
Dec. 6-8
Camp Overlook, Keezletown

Overlook Retreat and Camp Ministries will host a weekend retreat for those who have become "single" again through separation, divorce or the death of a spouse. A team of clergy and laity who have all experienced this trial will share brief presentations, small group reflections, and expressive worship to help you find the road to healing and wholeness. "Wounded Hearts - Healing Love" will be offered Friday evening through Sunday at 3 p.m. Cost of \$105 per person includes lodging, meals and program expenses. Register online at www.campoverlook.org or contact the office at (540) 2MY-CAMP or e-mail CampOverlook@gmail.com.

JANUARY

Candidacy Summit
Jan. 3-4
Blackstone Conference and Retreat Center

An event for considering or admitted candidates for ministry in the Virginia Conference. You must be a high school graduate to participate. All candidates are required to attend a Candidacy Summit prior to certification. Cost \$35. Prior to the Candidacy Summit, you need to complete a "Strengths Discovery" assessment. This assessment is completed on line at www.gallupstrengthscenter.com/Purchase/. Purchase the "Strengths Discovery Package." The cost to you is \$9.99. Please go to this site and complete the assessment prior to attending the Summit. Be sure to bring your results with you. For more information contact Beth Downs at BethDowns@vaumc.org or call 1-800-768-6040, ext. 127 or (804) 521-1127. (Another Candidacy Summit will be held July 18-19.)

Ministers' Convocation
Jan. 14-16
Blackstone Conference and Retreat Center

The theme of the 2014 training for clergy and church professionals will be "Breaking down the Walls: Transforming Conflict into Resolution." The keynote speakers will be Dr. Ellen Ott Marshall and Thomas W. Porter Jr. The preacher for convocation is Bishop Greg Palmer; Bishop Young Jin Cho will preach at the opening service. Register through the conference website, www.vaumc.org, under "Events." For more information, contact Beth Downs at BethDowns@vaumc.org or call 1-800-768-6040, ext. 127 or (804) 521-1127.

FEBRUARY

Large Church Leadership Training Day
Feb. 1
Woodlake UMC, Chesterfield

All size churches matter. There is no question. But, ministry styles are unique to church size. Therefore, we invite you to a day of training specifically designed for you as clergy, staff, or lay leadership within a large church. With solid and experienced speakers and workshops that are designed to be relevant and practical, this will be a day well spent for you and your congregation. You will network with congregations around your ministry area to discover new resources and inspiration to continue and multiply this vital ministry of the large congregation. Cost \$15 per person. To register visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org under "Events" and the date.

United Methodist Day at the General Assembly
Feb. 6
Bon Air UMC and the State Capitol

The 22nd annual United Methodist Day at the General Assembly is an opportunity to help faith communities become empowered to serve as missionaries of justice, as well as the more traditional missionaries of mercy. United Methodist Day and other avenues of faithful advocacy help us to look beyond mercy ministry to ask: "What causes this problem?" By joining together and establishing relationships with our elected officials, we empower members of our congregations to wonder, "How can I make a difference?" Participants will begin with breakfast at Bon Air UMC at 7 a.m. and then travel together by bus to the General Assembly. They will return for lunch and an opportunity to hear speakers. Cost is \$25; increases to \$35 after Jan. 12. Register at the conference website at www.vaumc.org under "Events" and the date.

Lay Servant Academy
Feb. 21-23
Blackstone Conference and Retreat Center

The Virginia Conference Lay Servant Academy will help laity as they encourage, equip and support others for deeper commitment to Christ and to faithful discipleship. For more information about the Academy or Lay Speaking/Servant Ministries, contact your district director of Lay Servant Ministries, or e-mail Johnnie Draughon, conference director of Lay Speaking Ministries, at johnnie.draughon@cox.net or David Bailey, Lay Servant Academy director, at dw.bailey@comcast.net.

Devotions from International Lesson Series

LIVING THE WORD



The Rev. Jarvis Bailey currently serves as pastor at Irvington UMC. As a bi-vocational minister, he also teaches business education at King George Middle School. He has a B.A. in Urban Studies from Virginia Tech, and an M.Div. from Duke Divinity School. He has written a book entitled: Three Minutes with God – A Weekly Devotional for Inspiration and Encouragement, which can be previewed at his website, www.jarvisbailey.com. Jarvis and his wife, Monica, have three adult children, Omari, Skyler and Matthew. He and Monica reside in Fredericksburg.

Dec. 1, 2013
Something about that name
Luke 1:26-40

I remember the experience my wife and I had naming our children. We enjoyed it, but it was serious business, too. As I recall, we started considering names well before the first child was even born. After all, the child would have to live with this name the rest of his or her life, and the right name could make all the difference in the world. You know the kind of name... like the real estate broker named Suzette Sales, who consistently earns “top producer” awards. And when she does, you say: “It figures – there’s just something about that name.”

Parents take great pride in naming their children. I know my wife and I did. We tried to give our children good names – names that had meaning, names they could bear with honor, ones that people would remember and perhaps even say, “there’s something about that name.”

In today’s Scripture lesson, we hear a really good story – the foretelling of Jesus’ birth. And for those who love stories, you understand that no good birth story is complete without the naming of the child. But this story is special, and so is the child that is to be born. So then, his name must be special, also. It must be one of which people can say, “There’s something about that name.”

The excitement builds as the angel Gabriel tells the Virgin Mary that she “will give birth to a son and that his name will be Jesus and that he will be great.” If you know the rest of the story – meaning how Jesus lived and died you will know that He did, in fact, “live up to His name,” that he becomes “great.” You will know that He was known by many other names, too – all profoundly important. But, as with my own children, the best name for me is the one they received at birth. In our story today, that name would be Jesus. You will know that at the very mention of the name Jesus, humanity is immediately exposed to divinity, and the miraculous is made possible. I like how Bill and Gloria Gaither put it: “Master, Savior, Jesus, like the fragrance after the rain/Let all heaven and earth proclaim/Kings and kingdoms will all pass away/ But there’s something about the name!”

Dec. 8, 2013
PTL, not OMG
Luke 1:46-56

I’m undoubtedly showing my age by sharing this, but I am completely fascinated with texting... probably because I have three children with whom I would not be able to communicate otherwise. In order to be fluent in my new method of communication, I had to learn the lingo. For instance, I now know that “BFF” means Best Friends Forever, and “LOL” means Laugh Out Loud.

Not only do I now text, but I also tweet. If you don’t know what that is, don’t worry about it, just know that the lingo is basically the same.

One phrase that is often used is “OMG” which means, “Oh My God.” This texting term is usually used in response to news that is shocking and unexpected.

In today’s scripture lesson, we read about Mary, who receives some unexpected news ... to which she could have responded OMG! Think about it – an angel appears before a lowly servant girl who is a virgin, with news that she will bear a child. And this child would be no ordinary child; this child would be the savior of the world. Mary had every reason to respond OMG!

In a leadership course that I teach, I often challenge participants to not focus on what happens to them, but rather, on how they respond to what happens to them. As we live, day by day, our future is potentially filled with all kinds of unexpected news – news of immense magnitude that could lead to major adjustments in our lives... news to which we would have every reason to respond OMG! But we could, also, choose an alternate response.

We could choose, as Mary did, to sing a song of praise. We could choose to respond like my friend David, who suffered physically handicapping hardships, but when asked about it chooses to respond “Amazing grace shall always be my song of praise.”

My favorite, though, is that of Mrs. Doolittle, whose response to overwhelming circumstances inspired one of the greatest hymns of the 20th century. When she was asked about her secret to contentment, even though she and her husband had faced crippling circumstances for many years, she replied, “His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me.” She responded as I hope we all can, “PTL (Praise the Lord) instead of OMG!

Dec. 15, 2013
What will he become?
Luke 1:57-58, 67-79

Before he became president, Barack Obama wrote a book titled: *Dreams from my Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*. During an interview he explained that both his father and his mother were captivated by the ideals and dreams of the ‘60s – dreams of a better society where there was peace and unity. Even though Obama did not really know his father, he felt like those dreams had been passed on to him, hence the title of his book.

I hope every father, and mother too, has dreams for their children. I know my wife and I do. We want them to be and do what makes them happy. But we also have our own hopes and dreams about what will become of them. I always dreamed that my children would be people who made a difference in the lives of others. Oh... and I dreamed, also, that they would be financially successful, because, after all, isn’t that part of the American dream, and besides – don’t all successful children take care of their parents? But I digress.

In today’s scripture lesson Elizabeth and Zechariah have become new parents. They and their family are excited, and the community is in a celebratory mood. There’s a lot going on in this story, as it is with any new birth. I’ll spare you all the details, but you should at least know that the child had not been given a name, and additionally Zechariah couldn’t even talk (and that’s another story). In the midst of all of this commotion, someone asks, “What will this child become?”

Zechariah is filled with the Holy Spirit and speaks the truth about his son’s future, even blesses it, saying: “you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people

by the forgiveness of their sins.” Wow, how wonderful is that – what more could a father dream of for his child?

But guess what? You and I have the same opportunity as Zechariah. Children are God’s gift to us. We, too, can “dedicate” our children in the “temple.” We can dream about our children’s future. And when God accomplishes God’s purposes in them, we, too, can bless God for what they have become.

Dec. 22, 2013
Just like Jesus
Luke 2:1-17

For the life of me, I could not figure out why that man would give away all his new furniture. After all he was in no financial condition to help anyone – he could barely help himself; and he had saved for several years to purchase that furniture. When I asked him about it he replied: “They needed it more than I did.” I shared that story with my wife, to which she replied: “When you think about it, that sounds just like him.”

Sometimes you know someone so well that when they do something, you immediately say: “That’s just like them.” Sometimes, though, it’s not quite that obvious. There are those times when someone you think you know, will do something that seems out of character, but once you’ve taken a step back and analyzed the situation – taken into account all that you know about the person – then and only then, can you say: “That’s just like them.”

The storyteller for today’s lesson, Luke, is in a similar situation. He knows the importance of Jesus’ birth. He knows that if any story is going to be remembered, it’s this one. He knows Jesus is the promised Messiah. He knows that Jesus came to seek and save that which is lost. He knows that

Jesus is and will forever be, Lord and Savior. And yet His birth is so uneventful... so ordinary... so not like the arrival of a king. In fact, Jesus’ birth is so unimpressive that Luke feels the need to include in his account, all sorts of memorable information like the fact that it was “while Quirinius was governor of Syria.”

Hopefully, you and I, also, know the story of Jesus well. So well, that we can, passionately, share it with others, proclaiming with the hymnologist: “I love to tell the story, twill be my theme in glory... the old, old, story, of Jesus and His love” – not because of what someone told us, but because of what we know of Jesus for ourselves. Hopefully, we will know Jesus, and His story so well, that even though his birth may seem ordinary to most, perhaps uneventful to more, we will know that our deliverer has come. And we will be able to say: “Think about it, isn’t that ‘just like Jesus.’”

Dec. 29, 2013
And the Best Supporting Actor goes to...?
Luke 2:25-38

I’m not a huge fan of the entertainment industry’s award programs like the Oscars. Although I do have a casual interest because my son is an aspiring actor, who I hope is successful – which means one day he may win an Oscar and I’ll get to attend the ceremony.

One of the Oscar categories that has always interested me, and I think one that is relevant to today’s lesson, is the Best Supporting Actor or Actress categories.

The supporting characters are not the stars; nonetheless they are vital to the outcome of the production. As with the stars, there can be no really great story without a great supporting cast. They are essential. Often when

(Continued on page 33: “Living Word”)

CLERGY & DIACONAL



Deaths



Raymond Sidney Kelley, 88, former local pastor, died Oct. 29, 2013, at his home in Ironto. He was a son of the late Raymond Ashler and Bertha

Stewart Kelley. He was a U.S. Army combat veteran of World War II and was wounded in Germany. He joined the ministry in 1963 and received his license to preach from Locust Grove Methodist Church. While pastoring the four-point Rich Valley Circuit in Smyth County he completed the Course of Study. Kelly held part-time and full-time appointments in the Virginia and Holston conferences, including the Botetourt Charge, Alleghany-Piedmont Charge, Rich Valley Circuit, Christiansburg Circuit, Pembroke Charge, New River Circuit, Mount Tabor and Mount Elbert. He was honored as the Virginia Conference "Rural Pastor of the Year" in 1978. Later he taught a Sunday School Class at White Memorial UMC in Shawsville. Survivors include his wife of 65 years, Joyce Moses Kelley.



The Rev. Roscoe Marvin White Jr., 95, an Elder in The United Methodist Church, died Oct. 23, 2013. White was a pastor in the Virginia Conference for 41 years, serving churches across Virginia, including St. Mark's in Hampton, Christ in Newport News, Bethany in Hampton, Charles Wesley in McLean, McKendree in Norfolk, Thrasher Memorial in Vinton, Epworth in Exmore, Herndon, Providence in Grafton, South Covington, Shenandoah, and Bishop Memorial in Rich-

mond. White was a graduate of Emory & Henry College in Emory and Candler School of Theology in Atlanta. He also studied a year at Bristol University in England. White also served as a police chaplain for the Newport News Police Department, as a minister of visitation for First UMC in Newport News and was a volunteer chaplain at Riverside Hospital. He was a third generation Methodist pastor and grandson of Bishop Collins. Survivors include his wife, Bettie Albert White, of Virginia Beach. He loved to sing the hymns of the church, and his last verbal communication was the singing of "Blessed Assurance."

Florence Bennett Allen died Oct. 28, 2013, in Charlottesville. She is survived by her husband of 64 years, **Norman K. Allen**, a retired diaconal minister in the Virginia Conference.

Gladys M. Kelly, 95, of Sutherland, died Oct. 6, 2013. She was the widow of the **Rev. Joseph A. Kelly**, and a member of Ocran UMC.

Ilene Kirton, mother of **Olivia Crichlow**, died Nov. 6, 2013. Olivia is the spouse of **the Rev. Winston Crichlow**, who serves Floral Hills UMC, Danville. Services were held in Barbados.

Suzanne Cruise McMahan, of Salem, died Oct. 16, 2013. She is survived by her husband of 58 years, **the Rev. William F. McMahan**, a retired clergy member of the Virginia Conference.

Keith Tune Nash, 85, of Midlothian, died Nov. 3, 2013. He was the father of **Karen Ramset**, the wife of **the Rev. Norman Ramsey**, Laurel Hill UMC, Richmond District.

Winifred W. "Winnie" Thomas, 85, of Onemo, died Oct. 25, 2013. She was the widow of **the Rev. William Alan Thomas**.

Charles Marvin Townsley, 88, of Stony Creek, died Sept. 16, 2013. His wife, **the Rev. Norma Jean Pegram Townsley**, is pastor of the Sussex Charge. He was a member of Corinth UMC at Ford.

Ethel Turner, 90, widow of **the Rev. Archer Rudder Turner Sr.**, died Nov. 8, 2013, in Norfolk.

Dorothy Wuergler, mother of Elaine Astin, died Nov. 7, 2013. Elaine is the spouse of **the Rev. Wes Astin**, retired Elder. Wuergler was a member at Epworth UMC in Moneta.

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("Living Word", continued from page 31)

a star receives an Academy Award he or she gives credit to those supporting cast members without whom their award-winning performance would not have been possible.

Today's movie (I mean lesson) is supposed be about Jesus being presented in the Temple – He's the star. However, in the script (I mean story) there are a number of important supporting players. Of course Mary and Joseph, mom and dad, as good parents should, are in attendance with their

son. There is an elder named Simeon present, also, who under the influence of the Holy Spirit adds a blessing to the occasion. And then there's Anna, who even in her old age thought the occasion was important enough that she should perform in her official capacity, as a prophet, and speak about the child's future.

Yes, today's lesson is about Jesus, and so was last week's, and the week before. In fact Jesus is star of the Bible and beyond. And yet, His life and ministry, as with ours, was enhanced, even made possible, by the support

of others. Perhaps Luke's telling of Jesus' presentation in the Temple, surrounded by an illustrious supporting cast, serves to remind us that no life is successful or complete without the involvement of others – those who love us, pray with and for us, counsel and guide us, and bless us. Perhaps this story serves to reveal the significance of role models and mentors in the life of a child, because even Jesus had them in His life. Better yet, perhaps this story is to inspire us to play the "best supporting" role possible, making a difference in a child's life. 🍀

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FROM THE BISHOP



We have the best room for you

May the grace and peace from our risen Lord be with you. It is already December, the last month of this year. Time really flies like a rocket (a rocket is faster than arrow). I cannot say thanks enough to God and to all of you when I reflect upon my ministry this year. God has been really good all the time. Without God's help and guidance, my ministry would not have been possible. All of your prayers and support have been a source of encouragement and joy for me in my ministry. Thank you very much.

The Pilgrimage for Spiritual Renewal to Korea (see story, pg. 6) went very well. Thirty-nine clergy from the Virginia Conference joined this journey and we had a great time. The truly radical hospitality of our hosting church (Bupyeong Methodist Church) was unbelievable, and the churches we visited

challenged and inspired us.

The daily schedule – which began with an early-morning prayer service at 5 a.m. each day – was tough and challenging, but all of us faithfully participated in this daily prayer service and all other programs. We learned the importance of mission and the lesson that vital ministry is built on strong prayer.

I am very glad to hear that the pastors who attended this pilgrimage are trying to implement what they learned and experienced on this journey. They try to pay more attention to their spiritual disciplines and to strengthening the spiritual foundation of their church's mission and ministries. Before we left Korea, we had a brief evaluation meeting. All of the pilgrims agreed that this journey had been very meaningful and had made a positive impact on their ministry. They also highly recommended having this pilgrimage every year. I will work with the hosting church and develop future pilgrimages as one of clergy leadership's development plans. This program will be effective in spreading the culture of prayer to our churches.

The Advent season begins on Dec. 1. During this season we remember and rejoice in the promise of Christ's coming, both in the flesh at Bethlehem and in glory at the end of history. We reaffirm that Jesus Christ who came to us about 2,000 years ago is coming now through the Holy Spirit and will come again for the consummation of history.

But this month is the busiest month of the year, and we tend not to pay serious attention to the true meaning of Christmas. We are too busy to pray and to meditate on the coming of Christ. We have too many things to do in this month. The busy situation of Bethlehem 2,000 years ago, which had no room for Jesus, will be the situation of our heart today. Are we not saying: "We too have no room for You?"

I would like to share a prayer written by Michel Quoist, titled "Lord, I Have

Time." This part of his prayer helps us to reflect on our life today, especially during this month of December:

Good-bye, Sir, excuse me,
I haven't time.
I will come back, I can't wait,
I haven't time.
I must end this letter –
I haven't time.
I'd love to help you,
but I haven't time.
I can't accept, having no time.
I can't think, I can't read, I'm
swamped, I haven't time.
I'd like to pray, but I haven't time...

And so all men (people) run after
time, Lord.
They pass through life running –
hurried, jostled, overburdened,
frantic, and they never get there.
They haven't time.
In spite of all their efforts they're
still short of time,
Of a great deal of time.
Lord, you must have made a mistake
in your calculations.
There is a big mistake somewhere.
The hours are too short,
The days are too short,
Our lives are too short...

I do not think our God has made a mistake. We are too busy to count our days and too busy to pray. In the last month of this year let us remember the true meaning of Christmas. Let us take a deep breath and have a time with our Lord. We need to say to the Lord, "Yes, Lord. We have a room, our best room for You." Our hearts and minds should be dedicated again as a manger where Jesus Christ is laid.

Have a joyful and meaningful Advent and Christmas season.

In our Lord,

Young A. Cho

Pilgrimage an exercise in trust

By Steve Jones

Recently I was blessed with the gift of being able to spend three weeks as a "peregrino" (pilgrim) on the Camino De Santiago in Spain. This pilgrimage was a part of my renewal and study leave. I traveled to Spain to join with countless others of all ages and nationalities in a walk that became a time of spiritual reflection, of instant friendship with fellow peregrinos, of gracious hospitality from the Spanish people, and of the incredible beauty of the countryside.

The Camino is a 1,000-year-old pilgrimage that extends for roughly 500 miles across northern Spain. Since the 9th century, Christians and others have walked along this route in order to visit the Cathedral in Santiago, which – according to tradition – is the burial site of St. James, the apostle. The Camino travels across the rural countryside, leading from small town to small town. The sign of a scallop shell is associated with St. James; thus, peregrinos follow a path marked with yellow arrows and scallop shells as they cross dry, dusty plains, visit towns and cities, even climb through high mountain ranges.

In most towns along this path, there are usually "albergues" or dormitories to host the peregrinos; simple meals are usually provided there or in local restaurants.

Like most peregrinos, I carried my clothes, sleeping bag and other essentials in my backpack. Each day, I walked between 12 and 18 miles; there were days when I walked alone for hours; other days, I found myself in conversation with people from all around the world. For the final days of my Camino journey, I was joined by my long-time friend and colleague,



the Rev. David Hindman, from Dun-can Memorial UMC in Ashland. David joined in these times of worship, reflection, conversation and laughter.

Since my return, I have been asked what I would say was the best part of this pilgrimage. I usually cannot answer with a single thought. For me, the Camino was a profoundly important time of renewal. Each day, my prayers and reflections were guided by evening times of Scripture study. The Camino was also an important lesson in the power of friendships that can be made with people across the barriers of county and language. At a typical meal, people from three or four different countries often sat around the dinner table, laughing and exchanging stories.

Finally, the Camino was an experience in simplicity and trust. It is challenging for a comfortable middle-class person to depend solely on the contents of a backpack for weeks. It is also a challenge for a calendar-driven person to set out each morning trusting that there will be food to eat and a place to sleep at the end of the day.

-The Rev. Steve Jones is superintendent of the Richmond District.

ONE LAST WORD



Tweets heard 'round the conference

Lisa McGehee @LisaMcGehee64
"Relief funds from @UMC_UMCOR on way to #Philippines. \$ is always the best donation after disaster

Society of St Andrew @societystandrew
Give generously on Dec. 3 #GivingTuesday and it will double! Healthy food for hungry neighbors. Society of St. Andrew www.endhunger.org

Thomas G. James @ThomasGJames
Really, Christmas decorations already? I didn't realize Thanksgiving had come and gone! (@ Starbucks)

Andrew Hudgins @andrew_hudgins
Shutting down Facebook, twitter, and gmail for the day so that I can get this exegesis paper on Colossians 1:11-20 out of the way.

Emily Stallings @emyh0pe
Writing my 'Gatsby' essay while watching the movie. Why not?

Lindsey Baynham @LMBaynham
had an awesome time at the @VAUMC jr high retreat at Eagle Eyrie with about 450 middle schoolers. #GodisGod #NeighborLove

Bert @bertcloud
I woke up this morning thinking that a disciple's life should look more like search and rescue rather than perch and ridicule.

HOPE

INSIDE
ALL
OF US

And the one who was seated on the throne said,
“See, I am making all things new.”

~Revelation 21:5:2

The United Methodist Family Services offering occurs once a year and helps support the children and families that use our services. Look for materials at your church during the month of December. To donate now, visit www.umfs.org



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