

Advocate

A festive Christmas scene featuring a cuckoo clock, candy canes, and various ornaments. The cuckoo clock is a small, white and red wooden house with a green roof and a white clock face. A small blue bird is visible in the window. To the left of the clock is a large, white and red striped candy cane. The background is filled with green pine branches, red and green ornaments, and a small white star. The entire scene is set against a dark green background.

Memories of
Christmases past

Connecting with the



Virginia Advocate

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

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

Phone: 1-800-768-6040 or

804-521-1100

Fax: 804-521-1174

E-mail: advocate@vaumc.orgWebsite: www.vaumc.orgDetailed guidelines for the following
available upon request.

Subscriptions

Print subscriptions are \$20/one year and \$30/two years. Special bulk rate for five or more copies going to a single address is \$13 each for one year. For both printed copy and online access, subscriptions are \$25/year and \$35/two years. For online only, cost is \$10/year and \$15/two years. Subscribe online at www.vaumc.org, under "Resources>Publications."

Deadlines

The Advocate is published once a month. The deadline to submit news and ad copy for the January 2019 issue is November 23. For more information on future deadlines, contact the Advocate office or visit the website.

Advertising/Tributes

Rates for advertising and tributes are available upon request.

Local Church News

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

Letters

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

©2018 Virginia Advocate

USPS 660-740 ISSN 0891-5598

Published monthly by Virginia United Methodist Communications, an agency of the Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. Periodical postage paid at Glen Allen, Va., and at additional mailing offices. The Virginia United Methodist Advocate is owned by Virginia United Methodist Communications.

POSTMASTER: Send changes of address to Virginia United Methodist Advocate, P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058. Editorial and business offices are located at 10330 Staples Mill Rd., Glen Allen, Va. Office hours are 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

PILLOW TALK



Madeline Pillow

Editor

Something about Christmas just warms the soul. It is the balm to even the most wicked of Scrooges. Whether it's the food or buying the perfect present for someone, there's a lot of love to go around. We all seem more willing and open to welcome the stranger as we remember the one who was born in a lowly manger.

I personally have so many fond Christmas memories, from dinners with both sets of my grandparents to movie marathons. (Sorry that Patrick and I made you sit through the extended *The Fellowship of the Ring* movie, Dad!)

The memories that cling the hardest though are the quiet moments.

- ❖ Sitting under the Christmas tree on the first night it is lit and watching our cats gaze in wonder at the lights above.
- ❖ The quiet of a snowfall, the chilly cold on your face.
- ❖ Sharing memories and laughter with my family.
- ❖ Singing carols acapella out of our old book of carols.

Throughout this issue, you will read about some warm Christmas memories from our bishop to people around the conference. I hope you will remember your own special memories of this time of year and spread it around to those you meet!

Madeline C. Pillow

Warm,
quiet
moments



TABLE OF CONTENTS



SECTIONS

- 4-6 **Commentary**
- 7-8 **World News**
- 9-11 **Equipping for Ministry**
- 12-13 **Technology Tips**
- 14 **Local Church News**
- 15 **Events**
- 30-31 **Living the Word**
- 32 **Clergy & Diaconal**
- 34 **From the Bishop**
- 35 **One Last Word**

FEATURE

- 16-29 **Stories of Christmas past**

STORIES

- 4 Being a good Christian, citizen at UM Day
- 7 Court: One Church Plan largely constitutional
- 9 Animated Wesleys make Methodist history fun
- 12 Embrace technology to make meaningful family connections



Scan this code to go to the
conference website:
www.vaumc.org

The *Virginia Advocate* Staff

Madeline Pillow | Editor, Director of Communications

Forrest White | News Associate

Cathryn Huff | Graphic Designer

Pam Culler | Administrative Secretary

Virginia Board of Communications: Jill Gaynor, president. The *Virginia United Methodist Advocate* uses the services of United Methodist Communications and United Methodist News Service. The reporting of news regarding any person or event, or the placement of any advertisement within these pages, does not constitute endorsement by the *Virginia Advocate* or any entity of The United Methodist Church. Opinions of writers are solely those of the authors and not necessarily those of this publication.

COMMENTARY

UM Day: Being a good citizen and Christian

By Barbara Lewis

Ivoted, now what? Have you ever wondered how you can be a good citizen and a good Christian? Have you ever wondered how you can have a significant part in government without running for office?

Attending UM Day at the General Assembly is a great first step in finding out what is next and how to make a difference in our state and country's government. As part of the day, you are partnered with guides who are already involved in tracking legislation before the legislature and who can help you understand how our state government works. You will also be provided with a variety of tools to help talk with your legislators and to influence what becomes law.

The morning time will include training in advocacy, a highlight of issues of interest that are part of the legislative docket, time at the Capitol to meet with legislators, time for tours, and a discussion and answer time. The afternoon session will



Senator Glen H. Sturtevant Jr. with attendees on UM Day.

include some hands-on activities.

This year, the UM Day organizers will be facilitating visits between our participants and their state senators and state delegates by scheduling appointments ahead of time for the morning of January 31. We will divide into groups led by guides based on legislative districts. We will be following what legislation is introduced for consideration this year, and providing you with information on some of the key issues. You will have an opportunity to discuss with, ask questions of your representatives and to hear their viewpoint. Your guide will be helping to lead that conversation, but will also encourage participants to speak as well. You will have time as a group before the meeting to plan out

your conversations and which topics you might wish to address.

As Christians, we have a responsibility to share our faith and our beliefs. Our government should reflect our basic values and should uplift our citizens. As citizens, we should be making sure that our laws are fair and help those who cannot help themselves. As United Methodists we hope our state reflects our beliefs and our Social Principles.

When we meet with our legislators, they notice and they listen. They like to engage in conversations that help them better understand the issues present in the proposed legislation and why the people of their districts are concerned about those issues. Meeting with our legislators, calling their offices and sending them letters are some



Letters to the Editor are printed on a space-available basis. Letters may be emailed to MadelinePillow@vaumc.org by the first of the month.

COMMENTARY

of the ways in which we can help them do their jobs. Knowing how to find out about what the current issues are, the pros and cons of the issues and where the bills are in the process will be part of the focus of our morning time on January 31. We will also be providing you with tools to use beyond that day to continue working to help the people who are most vulnerable and our state to be the best it can be.

Register now for the low cost of \$30 before December 28 by going to www.vaumc.org, choosing the conference calendar page for January 31 or by going to eiseverywhere.com/umday2019. 🍷

— The Rev. Barbara Lewis is pastor at Greenwood-Laurel Park in the Richmond District.

Are we reluctant to use the term “disciple?”

The mission of The United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, yet at no time in the baptism and membership ceremonies in our hymnal do we declare someone to be a disciple or ask them to claim to be.

Why is this? Why are we reluctant to use this term? Why are we comfortable with “member,” “follower,” and “apprentice,” but not “disciple?”

These questions were raised because our pastor, the Rev. David Ford, showed our church council a video of a talk he had heard at a meeting of pastors in Nashville in 2009. The speaker, the Rev. Paul Borden, an American Baptist living in the Pacific Northwest, reported that his denomination had turned from a graying, dying church into a vibrant, growing church, even planting churches outside its jurisdiction. This change came about because all church energy was focused on making disciples, and a person was declared a “disciple” at

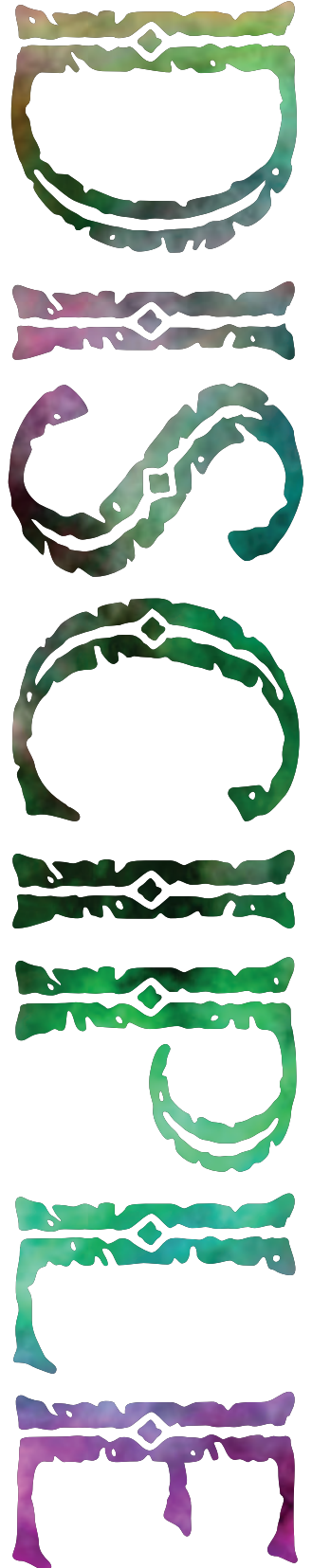
baptism.

This video energized our church council, and we had a workshop to develop a plan of action, and some of us embarked on a period of self-study and reflection. One of us, Tom Hassler, looked in the *Book of Discipline* to see what it said about being a disciple, but to his amazement, the word “disciple” was not in the index; so he had to search for paragraphs that included that word. Later, he submitted a petition to the 2012 General Conference asking that “disciple” be added to the next *Book of Discipline* index and recommended supporting paragraphs. The petition failed or was not considered. Four years later, the Rev. Carol Bookwalter, Ron Hardman and Hassler submitted the same petition to the 2016 General Conference, and again it failed or was not considered.

Beginning in 2010, Hassler asked members of other Christian denominations about disciple-making. Here are three responses:

1. After attending a funeral at an Episcopal church, he asked the senior priest about

(Con't. on next page: “DISCIPLE.”)





COMMENTARY

(“DISCIPLE” cont. from page 5.)

disciple-making, and the answer without hesitation was that a person became a disciple of Jesus at baptism. Tom asked: “What about babies?” He said, “Them too. When I walk the baby down the aisle, everyone is happy and smiles, and that begins the baby’s ministry.”

2. Tom asked “the most Catholic person he knew” — he teaches Latin to young priests — the same question. His answer was that a Catholic

becomes a disciple of Jesus at baptism, and in fact, a grandson had just been baptized and was declared a disciple.

3. Asking the pastor at Duck, NC UMC what he thought our denomination should do in this regard, resulted in the pastor saying that it would be better if confirmands and newly baptized adults declared themselves to be disciples rather than being told they were.

We have come to believe that every person who publicly acknowledges being a disciple of Jesus will become a better witness for Christ as led by the Holy Spirit. With that in mind, we petitioned the 2016 General Conference to add some words in our hymnal that would make it clear that becoming a disciple of Jesus was a part of baptism. This petition was referred to the Board of Discipleship. We have not been contacted. And so, our denomination continues to want to make disciples of Jesus, yet we have no idea if and when this happens.

Do you know if there are any disciples of

Jesus in your church? Try this: ask your friends in Sunday school, small group or church committee these questions:

1. Are you a disciple of Jesus?
2. If yes, when did this happen?
3. If no, do you want to be a disciple of Jesus?

Their answers will enlighten you. ☞

– The Rev. Carol Bookwalter, York River District; Ron Hardman, Williamsburg UMC, York River District; Tom Hassler, New Town UMC, York River District



Merry Christmas

& HAPPY NEW YEAR

CERTIFICATE RATES!

6 mos.	2.30%	36 mos.	3.30%
12 mos.	3.00%	48 mos.	3.40%
24 mos.	3.20%	60 mos.	4.00%

Savings Certificate available at 1.70%
Learn more at vaumdevco.org!

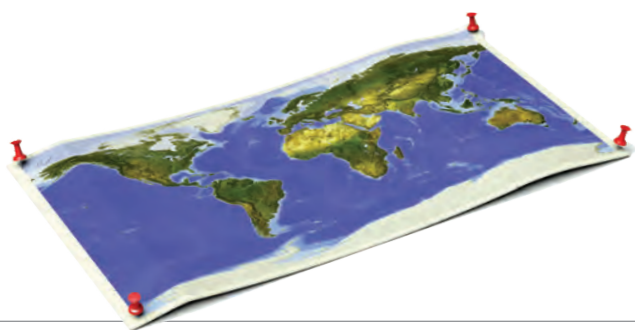


Virginia United Methodist Development Company, LLC

Contact us today!

804-521-1150 | vaumdevco.org

** Minimum investment of \$1000*



The United Methodist connection in THE WORLD

Court: One Church Plan largely constitutional

By Linda Bloom

Originally published on
Oct. 26, 2018

A review of possible plans for the future direction of The United Methodist Church found the One Church Plan to be largely constitutional, said a decision released Oct. 26 by the denomination's top court.

In Decision 1366, which was unanimous, the United Methodist Judicial Council found more problems in the Traditional Plan petitions that would need to be addressed before that plan could pass a constitutional test.

Since another legislative proposal — the Connectional Conference Plan — contains proposed constitutional changes required for implementation, the court ruled it has no authority to scrutinize the plan at this time.

Next February, a special session of General Conference, the denomination's top legislative body, will meet in St. Louis to consider these three legislative proposals from a report by the

Commission on a Way Forward, as well as any other petitions considered "in harmony" with the call for a special General Conference.

The commission is an advisory body that was appointed by the Council of Bishops following General Conference 2016 in hopes of finding a way to overcome fundamental disagreements within the church about homosexuality.

The Council of Bishops had asked Judicial Council for a declaratory decision on the constitutionality of the plans in the Way Forward Commission report — One

Church, Traditional and Connectional Conference plans.

"The task of the Judicial Council is to pass upon the constitutionality of the legislative petitions without expressing an opinion as to their merits or expediency," the decision said. "It is up to the General Conference to determine the wisdom of each plan."

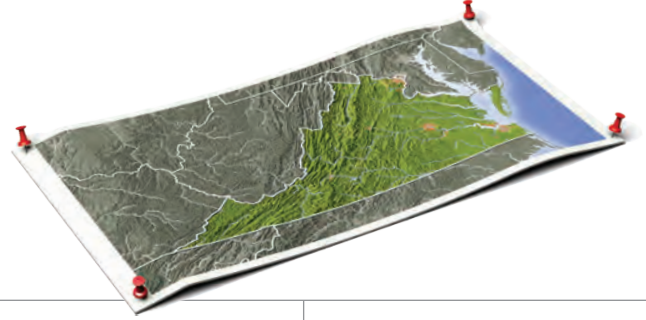
But the top court's 87-page decision did point to issues with a number of the 17 petitions in the Traditional Plan and a few of the petitions in the One Church Plan.

(Con't. on next page: "COURT")

(Below) Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey addresses the United Methodist Judicial Council meeting in Zurich. The council ruled Oct. 26 that the One Church Plan is largely constitutional, but found problems with the Traditional Plan. Photo by Diane Degnan, UMC.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



("COURT" con't from previous page)

The ruling on the Traditional Plan focused on due process and the principle of legality. That principle "means that all individuals and entities are equally bound by Church law," the decision said, and the law was to be applied fairly at all levels of the connection.

The Traditional Plan would impose mandatory penalties on those who do not adhere to church law that prohibits its self-avowed practicing homosexuals from serving as clergy and clergy from officiating at same-sex weddings. The One Church Plan would remove that language from the *Book of Discipline*, the denomination's lawbook.

"Clergy persons whose credentials and conference membership are at stake have the right to know what to expect when they choose a course of action or take a particular stance on ordination, marriage and human sexuality," the decision said.

"To pass constitutional muster, any proposed legislation affecting clergy rights must define with sufficient clarity and specificity the standards to guide future

actions of all concerned persons and entities."

In addition, while General Conference can require that the *Book of Discipline* be upheld in its entirety and impose sanctions for non-compliance, it cannot selectively choose certain standards "for enhanced application and certification."

"Marriage and sexuality are but two among numerous standards candidates must meet to be commissioned or ordained," the decision said. It noted that other criteria that should be part of a thorough examination include "being committed to social justice, racial and gender equity (and) personal and financial integrity."

Of the 17 petitions contained in the Traditional Plan, Judicial Council found that Petitions 2, 3 and 4 were unconstitutional because they deny a bishop's right to fair and due process since other bishops would be among those making a final decision. Those petitions deal with setting up a panel and a process that could place a bishop on involuntary leave or require a bishop to retire.

"The Council of Bishops was not designed to function as an inquisitorial court responsible

for enforcing doctrinal purity among its members," the court noted in its summary.

Petitions 6, 7, 8 and 9 of the Traditional Plan require certification for standards related only to self-avowed practicing homosexuals and such selective and partial application of church law violates the principle of legality, making those petitions unconstitutional, Judicial Council said.

Some parts of Petition 10, which establishes a comprehensive system "to ensure compliance," also were found unconstitutional, along with the second sentence on the issue of just resolution in Petition 14.

In its ruling on the One Church Plan, Judicial Council pointed out that the principle of connectionalism in The United Methodist Church "permits contextualization and differentiation on account of geographic, social and cultural variations and makes room for diversity of beliefs and theological perspectives but does not require uniformity of moral-ethical standards regarding ordination, marriage and human sexuality."

General Conference's legislative power includes the authority

to "adopt a uniform, standardized or non-uniform differentiated theological statement," the decision said.

The constitution also assigns to General Conference "the legislative function to set standards related to certification, commissioning, ordination and marriage," along with the administrative responsibility to apply them to annual conferences, local churches and pastors.

"The legislative branch of the Church is constitutionally free to set the standards for entrance into the ministry wherever and whenever it sees fit," the court said in its ruling. The court added that "the annual conference may enact additional requirements that are not in conflict with the letter or intent of the minimum standards set by the General Conference."

Judicial Council found the 17 petitions in the One Church Plan to be constitutional, except for one individual sentence each in Petitions 4, 8 and 13. 📌

— Linda Bloom is the assistant news editor for United Methodist News Service (UMNS) and is based in New York.



EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY

Animated Wesleys make Methodist history fun

By Natalie Bannon

How do you take the founders of United Methodism, the original Bible Moths, out of mothballs and make learning about them fun, engaging and relevant for both young and old, digital natives and digital newbies? One need only look at the popularity of primetime cartoons and animated blockbuster movies for an answer: make them animated!

Animation has been used for everything from explaining scientific principles to marketing products and has a unique ability to engage audiences of all ages, convey complex ideas simply and address sensitive issues.

Fran Coode Walsh, director of member communications at United Methodist Communications, said she loves to visit the United Methodist archives at Drew University, a place she frequents to find more of the stories preserved there. So when she discovered comic books featuring some of



the founding fathers of Methodism collected by the General Commission on Archives and History, her wheels started turning: Why not use animation to make United Methodist history relevant to a young and digitally-savvy audience?

Walsh, an experienced TV and video producer, said she knows it's important to be continually innovative in telling the stories of The United Methodist Church. "We needed to make it relevant

and packaged in a way that's appealing to the eyes and ears of young people, as well as providing a fresh way to engage all of our audiences, no matter their age," she says.

Walsh said she knew that meant creating something that was both mobile- and social media-friendly. The result is a short animated video series featuring the likenesses of the Wesley Bros, a weekly web comic by the Rev.

(Con't. on next page: "CARTOON.")

EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY



(“CARTOON” con’t from previous page)

Charlie Baber. The series explores the history of the church with John and Charles Wesley as modern-day animated characters.

“I have a history in youth ministry, so my job has always been to take something complex and explain it to a teenager in a way that matters to their heart and their life,” said Rev. Baber in a recent United Methodist podcast. “I always loved comics and graphic novels because they helped visually describe things in a way that’s different from describing them with words.”

“I loved the look of Charlie’s young Wesleys, and wanted people to think of them as young men who were

so committed to their faith they put it all on the line,” said Walsh.

Walsh wrote a script and, with Baber’s permission, worked with animator Jonathan Richter to bring the Wesley Brothers characters to life. The result? A series of three 1-minute animated episodes called “The Wesleys Take the

“Levity is very effective when challenging assumptions about our histories and the people that occupy them, and I feel that the medium does this particularly well.”

— Jonathan Richter, animator

Web,” also available as one 3-minute video.

The videos look at how John and Charles Wesley might have used social media and smartphones to share the church’s message,

while incorporating history, facts, trivia and, of course, a little humor.

“It’s capturing the spirit of the comic in that it’s modern language and modern stuff they’re talking about,” said Baber, who’s been doing the comics for five years. “Hopefully, in a way that reminds people that these are people like us. And that means that we can make a difference today.”

“The nature of animation, especially depicting a re-imagining of church fathers, is disarming and, at the same time, gives the viewer permission to approach a subject matter through a different lens,” said animator Richter.

Walsh and Richter collaborated on the series for about six weeks.

“Jonathan and I went back and forth about what they might put on the wall or what hidden jokes they would do,” said Walsh. “And then when he brought it back to me, it was so much bigger and better than I could have imagined ... like, I made a joke about potluck recipes, and they made the Jell-O jiggle. They just thought of things to make it a more entertaining and richer experience for

The team that created “The Wesleys Take the Web” gathered at United Methodist Communications in June 2018. Front row (left to right): Fran Coode Walsh, script writer and producer; Henry Haggard, voice of John Wesley; the Rev. Charlie Baber, creator of theWesleyBros.com characters. Back row (left to right): Josh Childs, voice of Charles Wesley; Jonathan Richter, animator.



EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY



the viewer," she said.

It's those humorous details that grab the viewers' attention, making the animation an especially effective teaching tool.

"Levity is very effective when challenging assumptions about our histories and the people that occupy them, and I feel that the medium does this particularly well," said Richter. "Further, the shorter length format creates a more casual stage for their 'teachable moments.'"

Those teachable moments are exactly what United Methodist Communications hopes local churches and groups will get from this series.

"Everywhere you sit and talk about what it means to be United Methodist, we're hoping it's accessible," said Walsh. This includes confirmation classes, new member classes and Sunday school groups. There are even some discussion questions to start a conversation. "The Wesleys Take the Web" is available for viewing and download on YouTube and UMC.org/wesleybros.

This isn't United Methodist Communications' first foray into an animated history of the denomination. In 1984, they produced "Clay-ride: A Gallop Through

United Methodist History," a stop-motion clay animation that has been extremely popular through the years.

The global communication agency has also used animation to take on more serious topics, working in partnership with Chocolate Moose Media and iheed to create videos on preventing Ebola, and again with Chocolate Moose to raise awareness of the plight of displaced refugees.

Learn more at www.umcom.org.

— Natalie Bannon is a public relations professional, freelance writer and former public relations associate at United Methodist Communications.

A panel, "Get to Work," from the WesleyBros.com cartoon by the Rev. Charlie Baber.

TECHNOLOGY TIPS



Embrace technology to make meaningful family connections



By Tricia Brown

You've heard it before. You may have even said it. Technology is destroying our families. But is it really? According to some research, networked families are reporting that technology is helping them "connect and coordinate their lives" and bringing about "shared moments of exploration and entertainment." Since Internet and smartphone usage is more popular than ever, here are a few ways to use technology to bring families closer.

Keep in contact

In 2015, the Ericsson Consumer Lab studied the impact of communication technology on families and said, "The ability to have continuous contact throughout the day with other family members increases the feeling of closeness and happiness." Families who participated in the study claimed that technology helps them "communicate more,

know each other better, and ... organize practicalities/logistics during the week more easily."

Bringing generations together like never before, technology now offers instant communication regardless of distance. No longer are we confined to landlines or "snail mail." Families today use social media apps like Twitter and Facebook Messenger to keep in touch. Teens can text to let parents know when they have arrived. College students can Gchat or instant message with their families. Children can Facetime or Skype with grandparents who live across the country or across the world. With services such as WhatsApp and Fring, gone are the days of expensive long-distance fees. Don't worry if the older generation of your family doesn't seem keen on learning these "new tricks." With a little prompting and patience, you can easily bridge the digital divide and connect seniors to technology as well. Staying in touch has never been easier!

Bring back game night

Remember the days when families sat around the dining room table playing board games? Well, those days aren't gone. Today, families can use gaming systems, smartphones and tablets to have fun together. You will find apps for traditional games like Scrabble as well as new word-based games.

While many of these games can be played individually, families can also pair off and compete against each other.

In addition, lots of great mobile games for group play are available. Party games like Heads Up! (Android, iOS), Reverse Charades (Android, iOS) and Party Doodles offer tons of family fun. Don't worry if you aren't technologically skilled. Many of these games are simple to play. For example, Heads Up! is a pop-culture charades game played with one mobile device among a group.

TECHNOLOGY TIPS

- ❖ Once the app is loaded, whoever is “it” places the device against his or her forehead.
- ❖ The device will display a word that “it” cannot see.
- ❖ Everyone else tries shouting clues to make “it” guess the word.
- ❖ Once “it” guesses the word, she can nod her head downward to advance to the next word.
- ❖ If “it” cannot guess a word, he or she tilts his or her head backward to skip the word.
- ❖ “It” continues until his or her time has elapsed. Then another player takes a turn as “it.”
- ❖ The object of the game is to see which player can guess the most words.

Don't forget “traditional” gaming systems. The Wii, X-box, Playstation and other gaming devices have no age limit. Whether your family is into dancing, sports, fitness or adventure, active gaming can provide a great way to share a few laughs and get a little exercise.

Host a family movie night

Families no longer have to wait a week to see their special television show or plan a special trip to the movie rental store to pick up that new flick. If everyone suddenly finds a free night at home, schedule an impromptu family movie night. Netflix, Amazon, iTunes and Hulu offer a variety of services for family entertainment without leaving your front door. In addition, Pureflix.com offers faith-based entertainment alternatives. So, throw a bag of popcorn in the microwave, gather the family around the TV and enjoy a movie night.

Collect (and share) family memories

Today, more than ever before, it's easy to collect and share memories. Facebook and other forms of social media have opened a new door for sharing special and everyday events with our friends and family. Sites like Flickr and Google Photos offer ways to organize and share photos without the expense and hassle of printing. YouTube, Vimeo and Ustream offer more

ways that family members can participate in each other's lives — even when they are miles apart. Grandpa can record a video of himself reading a bedtime story to his granddaughter who lives hundreds of miles away. Mom can watch her son taking his first steps, even though she is deployed overseas. In most instances, it's a matter of simply taking the picture or video with your mobile device and uploading it to the service you use. Instructions on how to upload a video to YouTube or uploading to Vimeo are easy to find online.

If you're more traditional and still prefer framed pictures, you may want to consider giving a digital frame to your loved ones. Traditionally, these types of frames feature a slideshow of photographs that have been uploaded to the device via a USB connection or are displayed via a memory card. However, newer digital frames support the use of Bluetooth, cellular and other wireless technology to share files. Some wifi-enabled frames can even load images from the Internet via email or photo-sharing sites. Some can even share

files with one another. With so many options, you may want to do a little research on how to buy a digital photo frame in order to determine which one is best for your family.

Grow spiritually

Perhaps one of the most inventive ways to use technology is to help your family grow closer in your spiritual walks. Beyond simply texting your child a daily Bible verse, you may discover many spiritual tools available online to access via mobile phones and tablets. The United Methodist Church has many discipleship resources that parents can use to enhance their children's faith. Many Sunday school curricula, such as the UMC Deep Blue Kids Curriculum, now offer extra features for parents to use at home, including apps, mobile-friendly videos and games that can be used to reinforce Sunday's lessons. In addition, many churches post daily devotionals and other resources. In fact, you can even use the Internet to find free or low-cost books, articles and other information

(Con't. on page 15: “TECHNOLOGY.”)

DISCIPLES HELPING TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD



◀ Epworth and Halesford United Methodist churches in the Danville District sponsored an event featuring foods from nine countries at its first ever International Tasting on Aug. 11, 2018. Foods from countries, including Greece, Mexico, Poland, Jamaica, Thailand, Italy, Trinidad, India and the United States were available for sampling during the event.



▼ Embrace 2018! was the first gathering of the Virginia clergywomen in 30 years. Over the course of two days at the end of September, over 200 clergywomen worshipped, studied and were part of community. They also engaged in hands-on missions, participated in a Talent/No Talent Show and listened to panel discussions on change and growth within their ministry contexts. Dr. Hi Rho Park was the keynote speaker from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.





EVENTS

("TECHNOLOGY," cont. from page 13.)

on spiritual topics to discuss with your family.

Technology has benefits, but technology also has risks. Parents should take every precaution to keep kids safe from the dangers online. Since nothing can take the place of face-to-face time with your family, you also should consider how much time should be spent on social media. But this fact remains. Technology doesn't have to draw us apart. If used wisely, it can, in fact, help us create more meaningful connections. 📧

– Tricia Brown has been a freelance writer and editor for more than 20 years, ghost-writing and editing for individuals as well as for health, education and religious organizations.

This article was written for United Methodist Communications.

DECEMBER

Conference center closed for Christmas holiday

Dec. 21-26, Glen Allen

The conference center of the Virginia Conference will close at 1 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 21 in observance of the Christmas holiday and will remain closed through Wednesday, Dec. 26.

JANUARY

Conference center closed for New Year's Day observance

Jan. 1, 2019, Glen Allen

The conference center of the Virginia Conference will be closed on Tuesday, Jan. 1, 2019 in observance of New Year's Day.

Conference center closed for MLK Day observance

Jan. 21, 2019, Glen Allen

The conference center of the Virginia Conference will be closed on Monday, Jan. 21, 2019 in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day observance.

United Methodist Day at General Assembly

Jan. 31, 2019, Richmond

Ever wanted to know how to create real change in our state government? Want to know more about real issues facing our legislature? United Methodist Day at the General Assembly is the place for you! This is your opportunity to help faith communities become empowered to serve as missionaries of justice, as well as the more traditional missionaries of mercy. A briefing for the event will be held on Wednesday,

Jan. 30 at 7:30 p.m. Learn more about the event on pgs. 4-5 of this issue.

Special Session of General Conference

Feb. 23-26, 2019, St. Louis, MO

The Council of Bishops has called a Special Session of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church to be held February 23-26, 2019 in St. Louis, Missouri. The purpose will be to receive and act on a report from the Commission on a Way Forward based on the recommendations of the Council of Bishops. The 32-member Commission was authorized by General Conference 2016 and appointed by the Council of Bishops to examine paragraphs in *The Book of Discipline* concerning human sexuality and exploring options to strengthen the unity of the church. You can learn more at www.umc.org/topics/general-conference-2019-special-session and get Virginia resources at www.vaumc.org/GC2019. 📧

The *Advocate* magazine publishing schedule requires that information be compiled sooner than the month for which it is published. For events you are interested in, please contact those listed for the events as points of contact for the most up-to-date information and for questions.

Memories of Chri



Christmas past



This feature shares stories from around the conference of warm Christmas memories or spiritual insights of the Christmas season.

If you didn't submit a memory to this issue, take a moment to think of your Christmases past. What fuzzy feelings come to the surface in this moment of reflection? What recollections bring the tear to the eye?

A very Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to you and yours from the Advocate and conference Communications office.



It's a girl!

By Forrest White

At 4:38 on Christmas morning 1992, I threw open the door to our guest room, woke my mom and said, "Somebody's coming to town, and it ain't Santa."

Less than 10 minutes had passed since I was startled out of fitful sleep to find my wife, Desda, bent over at the end of our bed.

Snooping for presents? Nope.

Hiding some of mine? Uh, no.

Moaning in pain? Yes!

This was it, the moment we had been waiting for since she took the home pregnancy test so many months ago, called me at work and said, "Maybe you should come home for lunch today."

Morning hadn't broken.

Her water had.

We knew what to do next ...

Panic!

Within seconds, my entire body was shaking like a freezing construction worker pulling jackhammer duty during an earthquake.

As recent Lamaze graduates, we knew we had to do more than panic. We had to start timing contractions. Back then at least, you didn't call the doctor until the contractions are coming every five minutes for an hour.

After five minutes, Desda was starting her fourth contraction.

When told of this, her doctor on call skipped the medical terminology and chose these words, which, according to Desda, were uttered quite professionally, "Jump in the car and boogie."

At 4:52, with our Golden Retriever Jester striking a familiar pose – paws on the fence, punctured volleyball in his mouth, tailing whipping up a breeze — we left our home bound for the hospital.

We lived in Charleston, SC, at the time, more specifically on James Island, meaning we had to cross both the Ashley and Cooper Rivers to get to the hospital where her OB-GYN practice delivered babies.

"It's not much farther now, sweetie," I said, oh, a few hundred yards out of the driveway.

When your wife is having one continuous contraction, with her head rammed against the door in the backseat, you may be able to share a comforting word or two, but you're really thinking things like:

"This baby is going to be born on the Cooper River Bridge."

"I don't know nothing 'bout birthin' babies!!!"

"Aiiiiiieeeee!!!"

An eternity of shrieks and more than a few ignored red lights later, we arrived at the emergency room around 5:10.

Still with child, Desda had a look on her face even worse than the one you get when you stomp your toe really hard on the sofa leg, then turn around too fast and stomp it on the coffee table.

In the birthing room 15 minutes later she was calling for an epidural, a giant numbing shot in the back. Problem was, an IV has to be flowing for a while first. The nurse barely had time to stick a vein.

Her doctor kept saying, "This baby is going to be here by 6 o'clock."

I thought she was joking.

After all, we were Lamaze graduates. We had enough provisions packed to survive, say, three weeks on Gilligan's Island.

At 5:45, Desda got the command to start pushing. I supported her head and pulled her left knee while a nurse pulled her right.

One good push and the baby's head appeared.

Eyes wide, mouth open, I'm thinking, "It didn't happen this fast in Lamaze class even when the tape was fast forwarding."

"Here comes another contraction," the doctor said. "Push, girl!"

She did and ... Whoosh!

"It's a baby girl," the doc said at 5:48, seconds before wishing she could clone Desda.

A ... baby ... girl.

Haley Alyxandra White stole our hearts the moment they placed her in her mommy's arms.





Until that moment, my best Christmas surprise ever came a month after my 16th birthday when the keys to a used Toyota fell out of my stocking.

Little Haley made her TV debut that Christmas night on the local news, sporting a red stocking cap.

Meanwhile, Desda was thrust into legend status among not only the hospital nurses but our family and friends as well.

Two pushes. Nothing to block the pain. No drugs to wear off. No stitches.

The doctor even told her she could go home later that day if we had special Christmas plans.

She didn't feel like a legend.

"I feel like a Pez dispenser," I overheard her saying.

Though they didn't come on a Christmas Day our son Austin and daughter Kerrigan joined our Christmas baby Haley along the way, our precious gifts, the loves of our life together. 🍀

— Forrest White is news associate for the conference Communications office.



Angel in the Dump

By the Rev. Benjamin Pratt

Any home gardener knows that an unseasonable warm snap in January will wreak havoc on perennials and spring bulbs. So, one winter I put "mulch the beds" on my to-do list and drove to the dump, the best source of fresh mulch in our area. It's also, in mid January, a green and brown monument to the Christmas just past. I am not Catholic, nor was my grandmother, although she always insisted that she once saw the Virgin Mary appear at

the foot of her bed. So, I must have a special spiritual eye for glimpses of ...

Well, here is a poem I wrote when I returned home after a remarkable, grace-filled moment in that vast dump site:

*Like children,
Snowdrops, daffodils and crocuses
Need protection from
January warmth that betrays
A bitter cold to come.
Day after warm day, the sun seduces their
Green tendrils to grow taller.*

*A trip to the dump for mulch to blanket
These naïve thrivers reaps a surprise.
Christmas trees that recently displayed the
Joyous lights celebrating the Nativity
Now are piled like matchsticks awaiting the grinder.
They have no memory of the joy they pretended
Nor the innocence they invoked.*

*A bright color imbedded in crushed branches lured
me to one tree.
Tucked amidst still-fragrant boughs —
Green paper cone scotch-taped for body,
Red rough-cut wings,
White circle for a face —
A handcrafted angel.*

*And deeper I peered, the crayon words:
'Angle Mary protekt us from guns'.*

*A child's prayer discarded with this tree.
Maybe by mistake?
Snagged in the branches as they went.
Now, an Angel in the Dump,
A plea for all the innocents
Whom we discard from our memories,
From our prayers
So quickly.*

*I replaced the boughs around her.
Tucked her in.*

*Echoed the prayer:
Protekt us all from guns. 🍀*

— Printed in *Short Stuff from a Tall Guy*, by the Rev. Dr. Benjamin Pratt, retired pastor; 2015, Read The Spirit Books.



Magnified emotions

By the Rev. Tom Lester

We had many memorable Christmases from the time Mom lost the instructions to cook the ham loaf to when she was sick with flu and couldn't be Mom. I'll always remember the Christmas dad forgot to open the flue on the chimney and burned the gift wrapping paper. I remember the bags of fresh fruit Santa Claus left us under the tree. There was the time we thought cat tracks in the snow on the edge of the raised brick flower bed in front of the picture window were reindeer tracks. And the Christmas when Dad was away on snow duty (required of Virginia Department of Highways employees) due to a heavy snow that blanketed Southwest Virginia (c. 1966). I remember the Christmas parades in Bristol VA/TN (I marched in several with my high school band) and visiting Santa Claus in the toy department at Sears Roebuck and Co.

But the Christmas that probably had the strongest claim on my mind and heart was the first Christmas my sister was on call as a nurse at Bristol Memorial Hospital. We waited for her to get home to begin our Christmas Eve family time. When she arrived, she told us what happened just before she left to come home. As she wished her shift and the oncoming shift "Merry Christmas," a "code" [heart attack] came into the cardiac unit with a nurse straddling the patient and administering chest compressions for cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Unfortunately, the patient died and cast a pall over the Christmas wishes in the unit. My sister carried that pall home to us. Suddenly we were aware that Christmas is special but not immune to the pain and sorrow of life. I think of that night every Christmas and pray for those whose Advent celebration of hope and life is interrupted by pain and sorrow — magnified by the highly emotional impact of the season. ❧

— The Rev. Tom Lester is pastor of Washington Street UMC in Petersburg.



Simple things

By Desiree Flora

When I was growing up in the '60s and '70s my family went to church on Christmas Eve for the early service that was for children. We hurried home for treats and a drink. This was a special occasion. We would gather around a candle while my dad read the Christmas story from the Bible. When I was about 11 or 12 we started exchanging names for Christmas Eve. There were seven children and our parents. We at first could only spend one dollar for a gift. We had to think hard about what we could get for that. When we were teenagers we raised the amount to \$5. We were always so excited to see who had our name and what we got. We sang Christmas carols and laughed and were silly. Those days are gone now. We all have families of our own, even grandchildren. Not often are we all together for the holidays. I miss those days. We didn't have much except love, joy and laughter. We were so happy. ❧



Heartfelt Holidays

By the Rev. John Stelzl

Like most folks who grew up in the church, I have fond memories of Christmas that include not only my family, but my church family as well. I recall the good-natured ribbing that our Sunday school superintendent endured each year, as he set up a cedar Christmas tree that was always the same shape and height and smelled wonderful. I remember the weeks of practices that would lead up to the annual Christmas program and how, each year, musty bath robes and curtain ties would be brought forth from somewhere deep within the church closet to be transformed into shepherds' robes and wise men's belts. There were Christmas projects like churchwide candy making and ornament creation. (Helpful tip: homemade clay uses lots of salt....don't eat it.)

But three Christmases stand out from all the rest – Christmas 1984, 1990 and 2006. Actually Christmas 1984 began for me just a few days before Halloween. I came home from school and found my dad on the family room floor in the middle of cardiac arrest. He spent the next several weeks in the hospital, with recurring cardiac episodes and eventually quadruple bypass surgery. During that time, family, friends and church folks brought food to our home, cut firewood, took care of the farm animals (on our working/commercial farm), visited, prayed and sent cards. Dad was not able to come home for Thanksgiving, but he did come home by mid-December. He was too weak to help bake "German Bread" (a family tradition of sweet yeast bread with dried fruit), but we had him home for Christmas. By spring of 1985 he was able to once again bring a special anthem song for Sunday morning worship time.

Through the years dad's health would bounce around between good and not so good. As the 1990s rolled around, his health was in a steady decline, and he was in need of a heart transplant. Throughout the fall of 1990 he was in and out of the hospital. He spent most of December in a hospital bed. We brought a small cedar tree from the farm and decorated it for him, thinking it would be his

last Christmas with us. Again, all through this time, church family and friends prayed, visited and sent cards. At about three in the morning on December 24, our home phone rang. A heart donor match had been found. Before we made the hour-long drive to the hospital, I fed hay to our cattle. The tractor's muffler was gone and it was quite loud, alerting our neighbors that something was up. I called the girl who was to be my wife and along with my mom we went to the hospital. We waited for an eternity until the doctor emerged and said everything was fine. We returned home and stopped at the store for a few items. Remember this was 1990 and cell phones with their instant communication were yet to be. As we stood in the checkout line, friends and neighbors gathered around and already knew our good news and rejoiced with us. Much later, after he had recovered, dad said that he could feel folks praying for him!

I suppose Christmas has always been a heart-warming time for those who embrace it. But for our family it was — and is — definitely so, especially when dad came home to a huge painted plywood sign, on the front lawn with a heart on it which read, "Welcome Home, Louie," and a bushel basket filled with Christmas and get-well cards!

Dad battled heart disease for 19 years before dying in August 2002. All those wonderful church family and friends filled our church to overflowing with their presence and love! However, our season of Christmas miracles was far from over. Several years passed and we were expecting the birth of our second child. My wife was past the due date for the birth of our daughter. As a distraction from her extreme discomfort, we made a trip to Belle Grove (a local historical mansion) and listened to live Christmas music. A gentleman played the guitar and a lady played the recorder as we sang Christmas carols together alongside complete strangers. It was one of those times when you could feel the peace of God in your heart and all around. The quiet magic of that evening has been a fond memory that we talk about to this day. After that wonderful evening of being surrounded by music, carolers and beautiful live decorations, the days passed swiftly (for me — I'm not so sure

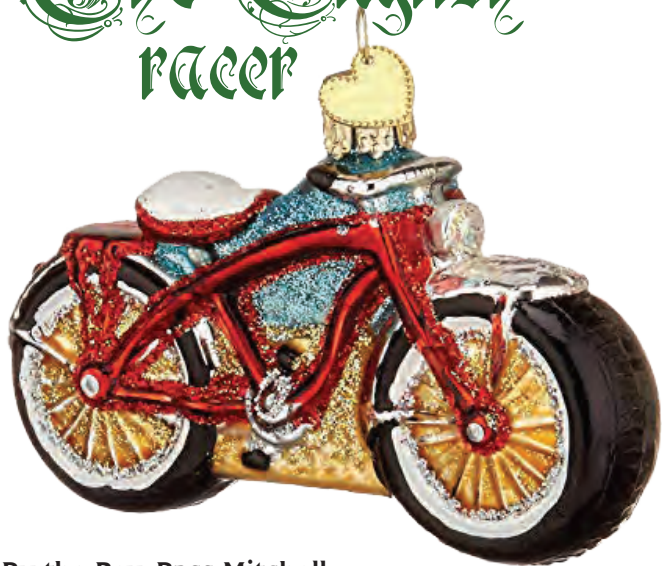


about my wife), and our daughter was born on Dec. 22. Momma and baby girl came home to a home all decorated for Christmas on Christmas Eve!

If you were to ask me if I have Christmas memories I'd have to answer, "I sure do!" The custom is to give the birthday person love and gifts, but I have to admit that the blessings God has given to me and my family on Jesus' birthday, and all other days, make anything I could give back pale in comparison. Thank you Lord for blessings and wonderful memories.....Happy Birthday Jesus! 🍷

— The Rev. John Stelzl is pastor of John Wesley and Bethel UMC in the Winchester District.

The English racer



By the Rev. Bass Mitchell

It was in 1967, when I was 12 years old. The year before, at Christmas, my best friend Donald got an English racer bike. It was the most beautiful bike I had ever seen. It had everything — you could change the gears, the brakes were on the handle bars (how cool was that?!) and it had shiny black paint with white stripes like lightning bolts. Every day he rode it to school, flaunting it before us all as we stood turning green with envy — and no one more so than me.

So, you guessed it. When the next Christmas came along — for months before it in fact — I dropped hint after hint that all I wanted for Christmas was an

English racer bike. I found pictures of it in a catalog, which I "accidentally" left open to that page. And when that didn't seem to work, I even drew pictures in art class at school of me riding on it in utter joy and brought them home to show. Just to make sure the point got across, I wrote a caption on each one, something real subtle like, "Bass, riding his new English Racer, which he got for Christmas." But nothing was having the desired effect. Maybe part of it was that my brother and sisters were doing pretty much the same thing. You know, having brothers and sisters is a real pain sometimes. But they had about as much luck with Mom and Dad as I had that Christmas.

I understood the reason for our failure to communicate with Mom and Dad. Kids notice stuff, you know. They are much more in the know than parents might think. And so I had heard and seen Mom and Dad whispering to one another. I knew that times were tough. Mom stayed at home to take care of five children, while Dad was a carpenter. Money was tight. We were fortunate in that we had a roof over our heads, and we never went hungry or unclothed, but there just wasn't much left over for Christmas. Certainly there wasn't an extra \$70 dollars for getting me an English racer. Do you know how much money that was in 1967 for a poor carpenter with five kids?

Though I did my best to understand and accept reality, it still hurt, especially when I thought about or saw Donald on his bike. His dad was rather well off and operated a store in town. And Donald was an only child!

So, I had resigned myself to the brutal truth — I would not be getting an English racer that Christmas or most likely any other one. I would have to enjoy it vicariously through watching Donald on his English racer or maybe begging him to let me ride it, which he promised to do but never had. But he did have someone take a picture of him on it and he gave a copy to me. What a thoughtful guy!

Finally, it was Christmas morning. Usually we kids got up early, having barely closed our eyes all night. Our rooms were upstairs. We met on the steps and walked sadly down them that year. In the past we had raced down, barely touching a step! This morning each step creaked beneath us as we made our way to what would surely be the worst Christmas ever.

I can still recall it like it was yesterday. I could hardly believe my eyes — for there, glimmering in the



Christmas tree lights, was a brand new English racer! And there, too, were the presents my siblings had wanted, but I barely took notice. In a flash, I had the bike out the door and was zooming down the sidewalk! Oh, you can't imagine the feeling. I didn't even put on a coat!

I rode by Donald's house several times and even saw him peering through the window at me once, which delighted me to no end. I'd have to get a picture of me on the bike to give him! I zipped all around town, the streets mostly empty on Christmas morning. I waved at the neighborhood kids out in their yards playing with their toys. Some had bikes, too, but none as nice as mine, something they were well aware of judging from their jealous stares. Maybe I'd give them pictures too.

Only later, when I returned, my cheeks stinging from the cold and hands numb, did I begin to think some thoughts like, "How? Who? But I just knew I wouldn't get it. The money just wasn't there. Did a rich relative die and leave us money? But we didn't have any rich relatives that I knew of. Did Mom and Dad rob a bank? Maybe they sold one of the sibs — after all, we had enough to spare. I counted them and they were all there."

Now I really considered letting it go, you know, not asking any questions and just accepting my good fortune. But I couldn't. I got Mom alone in the kitchen and with much prodding I found out how all of this had happened, though she was reluctant to tell me.

She asked if I had noticed something about Dad. I thought about it and realized, that for some time leading up to Christmas, Dad hadn't been at home as much as usual, but I had not thought much about it. My mind had been on the English racer

"Where was he all that time?" I asked Mom that Christmas morning.

She told me that he worked at his regular job during the day for the last couple of months and then went to another one at night. In fact, he was working for Donald's father, in his store and at his home. Dad, you see, had traded his time and labor to get my siblings and me the things we so wanted for Christmas. Then I remembered noticing just how tired Dad had been looking for the last few weeks. It...and it all came together...

I suddenly felt overwhelmed with emotions, guilt mainly, for wanting that bike so much and acting so

gloomy knowing I couldn't get it.

But that's not what I felt most. No. Most of all I felt loved. That English racer bike took on a whole new meaning for me. If I thought it was awesomely beautiful before, that was nothing compared to how it looked now.

I turned and saw my Dad walk into the room that Christmas morning, still in his pajamas, unshaven, yawning and stretching, thankful no doubt for one day he didn't have to work. I ran and threw my arms around him and hugged him with all my strength, unable to say anything, but finding, as he smiled down at me, that no words were necessary.

Every Christmas now, I think about my Dad, who has gone on to the with the Lord. I think about that Christmas and what he sacrificed, what he gave for me. I have found that remembering this helps me as much as anything I do to prepare for the real meaning of Christmas, that time when our Heavenly Father gave the very best for all of us. Amen. 📖

— The Rev. Bass Mitchell is pastor at Manor Memorial in New Market.



By the Rev. Jeane Dunkum

My favorite Christmas memory was when I was probably about 10 years old. I grew up in northeast Kansas and went to a little Methodist church in Lancaster. I walked to and from church and it was probably half a mile or so. One Christmas Eve, we had just had the special service. As I was walking home I remember standing under a street lamp, seeing the stars in that Kansas sky, being surrounded by snow and just knowing that God was with me. It was a very holy, precious moment. 📖

— The Rev. Jeane Dunkum is pastor of Lafayette UMC, Roanoke District.



Scotch pine tree

By Doris Page

When we were kids, we'd go pick out the Christmas tree as a family. It had to be a Scotch Pine since that was what Mom wanted.

So we searched the lot until we found the Scotch Pines. Then, after testing the tree trunk to see if it was straight, Mom would stand beside the tree to test for the right height. The tree had to be just a little taller than she was, and, compensating for our tree stand, the tree would be exactly the right height. It worked every time!

Of course, over the years, Mom's height diminished but the tree still turned out to be the right height using this formula! I am convinced it was some kind of special thing that only mothers can do! 🍷

Sowing seeds of faith... "tacky lights"

By the Rev. Larry Davies

For me, Christmas used to start with lights — lots of lights. What can I say? I grew up in Virginia Beach, home of the "Tacky Light Tour." At the beach we like to say: "Brighter lights on the outside mean brighter, happier families inside." If true — our family has been deliriously happy!

One year, I purchased a control box to coordinate the flashing lights with popular Christmas carols. If

you came by our house you saw a cascade of lights blinking merrily in rhythm with the music. Cool! However, many would say, "Tacky! Very Tacky!"

People who know me shake their heads, laugh and say, "That's Larry." Others, also shake their heads and walk away wondering if this preacher needs professional help.

I wondered if they were right until I read about someone who displays over 40,000 lights around his house starting in July. July? In addition he purchased wildly expensive equipment and literally choreographs a show synchronizing the lights to holiday music. Their display attracts thousands of visitors from all over the area who tune their car radios to an FM station that plays the same music and drive slowly by to watch the lights dance to the tunes.

"Why do you do it?" the reporter asked.

I really appreciated his reply: "I love standing outside the house and talking to people. It's turned into a ministry. People open up and talk about everything."

Speaking of lights, the Wise Men found the manger by following the light of an unusual star and Jesus himself said to the disciples: "You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house." (Matthew 5:14-15)

Admittedly, I don't think the Wise Men followed 40,000 Christmas lights and I doubt Jesus was thinking about tacky Christmas lights when he said, "You are the light of the world."

But... sometimes we are called to let our light shine brightly so people can see who we are, what we believe and the amazing God of grace we serve. In the midst of sharing laughs about my tacky lights I often receive an opportunity to talk about my faith in God. Funny but true.





Of course, there are many other ways to be a light.

- ★ Providing presents for a needy family at Christmas.
- ★ Seeking opportunities to be nicer to others at work.
- ★ Becoming more involved in your local church.
- ★ Hosting a Bible study at your house.

We are called by Jesus to be the light of the world. What we do and say makes a difference in people's lives whether it's helping someone in need, sharing a laugh or spending time in prayer.

Speaking of lights, maybe if I start in July of next year I can create my own tacky light tour. I'll purchase a new sound board, buy a gigantic manger scene, put a star on the roof – (Groan!) ❄

– The Rev. Larry Davies is a retired elder in the Virginia Conference.

Unexpected grace

By the Rev. Ned Alderman

Here's what happened to me as a Navy chaplain in Iraq in 2008.

In 2008, I was serving as a Navy chaplain in Iraq with a battalion of 400 sailors. Soon after we arrived, my commanding officer (CO) asked me to arrange for each of our sailors to receive a Christmas gift with their name on it. My religious programs specialist and I were able to arrange this, with support from home including three Virginia Conference churches — Baylake, my home church; Cheriton; and Travis Chapel, which I had served. It was a lot of work, and we were prepared to give out half the gifts on Christmas Eve and half on Christmas morning, with everyone opening their gifts together. At the last minute, everything went wrong. Some of the gifts were locked in storage and we couldn't find the key. Others were taken to a compound against instructions we had given. It was such a debacle that my CO said, "I wouldn't want to see this happen again," which is something you never want to

hear from your CO.

We had services almost around the clock on Christmas Day, the first a lessons and carols service that I had organized. I sat there in a daze and went to bed and woke up in the same way. I went to my office and called home. I was so dispirited that I told my mother I didn't even want to open the gifts that collected on my desk. Then a man appeared at my doorway. He was a translator — a Muslim — who came to the chapel just to wish me a Merry Christmas. I was floored, but in the best way possible. That act of grace meant the world to me, and although the translator knew the Bible better than some of our sailors, it was a real surprise. ❄

– The Rev. Ned Alderman is pastor at Epworth UMC in Virginia Beach.



A Christmas visitor

By the Rev. Leah DeLong

Because my "culinary challenged" sister-in-law insisted on preparing a Christmas feast for the whole family, my children begged for Mom's home cooking and convinced me to have a special dinner at home on Christmas Eve. Early in the day I was busy preparing the meal, but I ran out of eggs. The easiest thing for me to do was to drive two miles to Linden to buy eggs at the little corner store. Sure, I would have to pay double the price, but I would save a lot of time by not driving to Front



Royal. Besides, it was snowing.

About a mile from home I passed a small figure standing along the side of the road, all bundled up and carrying a huge backpack covered with white snowflakes. We often see Appalachian Trail hikers along that stretch of road but never on Christmas Eve! And never when the ground was covered by several inches of snow. I turned around and went back to find a petite woman, almost as if she was expecting me.

I offered her a ride. She said she had to go to Front Royal to pick up a package of supplies at the post office. In an instant I decided to buy eggs in Front Royal, and off we went. During the drive I discovered that my passenger was Margaret Rose, a teacher at a nursing school in Scotland who always went on an international hike during the semester break. This year she was hiking a section of the Appalachian Trail in Virginia.

Margaret Rose did not get good news at the post office. There was no package. It was Friday and the post office would be closed until Monday. Margaret Rose asked me to take her to a local store to get a few supplies, enough to tide her over until she got her package. She intended to return to the trail where I found her, walk to a shelter a few miles away and hunker down there for the weekend.

I was not very happy with her plan. I reminded her that it was Christmas Eve, that it was snowing and that Monday was three days away. It took some convincing, but she finally agreed to come home with me. I told her that we were having a big Christmas dinner a day early and there would be plenty of food for one more. She would have to sleep on the couch, but it would be warm, and she would not have to spend Christmas alone.

The rest of the family took care of entertaining our guest while I prepared the meal — a turkey with all the fixings! And I mean ALL the fixings! We sat around our big dining room table and enjoyed the feast. Our guest, little Margaret Rose, who couldn't have stood more than five feet on her tiptoes, ate and ate and ate! I never saw a human being — even a big hungry farmer after a long day in the fields — eat as much food as Margaret Rose! She filled up her plate at least three times — and that was before dessert!

After dinner we went to the Christmas Eve



service at our home church. Margaret Rose was a Presbyterian but seemed comfortable surrounded by United Methodists. We went back home, got the kids settled in bed and took care of last-minute Christmas preparations. The next morning brought the delightful chaos of opening gifts, followed by a traditional home-cooked breakfast of scrambled eggs, bacon, fried potatoes, toast and juice. Again, Margaret Rose ate heartily and came back for seconds and thirds. She sat in the back seat with the children as we drove to Burke to spend Christmas with my in-laws. And yes, when the meal was served, Margaret Rose filled her plate and went back for more.

The words that best describe my response to our three days with Margaret Rose would be “perplexed amazement.” I was perplexed and amazed at a person who would leave home and family at Christmas to hike in a foreign country in the dead of winter all by herself and have a heartier appetite than a half dozen growing boys.

I took her to the post office Monday morning where she retrieved her package and then drove back to the place I found her along the Appalachian Trail. When I returned home, I found on the dining room table the small gift we gave her Christmas morning.

Throughout her visit I kept thinking of Hebrews 13:2 — “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.” I have to wonder if indeed we did entertain an angel without knowing it. I suppose only God and Margaret Rose know for sure! 🍷

— The Rev. Leah DeLong is pastor of Cool Spring in Middletown.



Barbara Sadler recalls Christmas at the orphanage

Barbara Sadler and two of her brothers were residents at United Methodist Family Services (UMFS) in 1945-1957, when it was still an orphanage. "At Christmas, when they could, they would place us with our family, relatives or a Methodist family in the conference," Barbara recalled. "However, there were always some children who stayed at the orphanage through the holidays." After Barbara left UMFS, she and her late husband, Alex, opened their home during the holidays to children living at UMFS. It was just one of the many ways the Sadlers have supported the agency through the years. 🍷

This is the season for UMFS to celebrate foster families

Joy fills the room, the smiles and laughter speak volumes and, at the end of the evening, hugs abound and misty eyes twinkle under strands of glowing Christmas lights. United Methodist Family Services Treatment Foster Care (TFC) program's annual Christmas party for foster families is one of many examples of how UMFS provides unwavering support to the families it serves. The Christmas party is perhaps TFC's most highly anticipated and well-attended event of the year. Foster

families recognize it as a chance to reconnect with the teams that helped bring their families together. TFC staff recognize the Christmas party as an opportunity to celebrate the foster parents and foster children with whom they have built deep relationships. "Foster families are so special," said Amber Bumbry, UMFS resource parent trainer. "The children and parents work incredibly hard so that they can create a family. To be able to shower them with love, especially during the holidays, is just an absolute pleasure." 🍷



The Birth of Jesus

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them,

“Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

“Glory to God in the

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

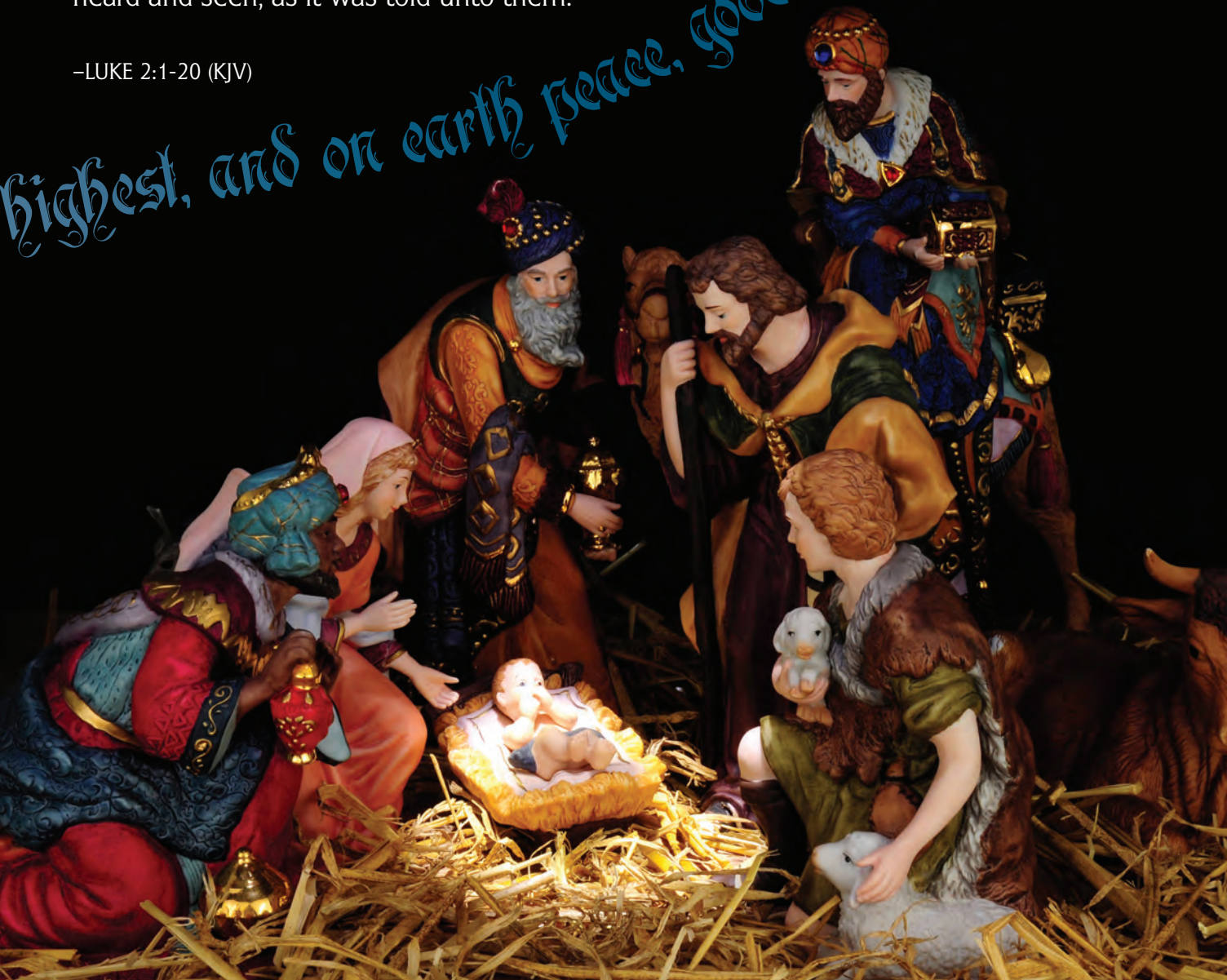
And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

—LUKE 2:1-20 (KJV)

highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men."



LIVING THE WORD



The Rev. Elizabeth Wright Taylor has served churches in Northern Virginia, Fredericksburg, Staunton and Hampton Roads. Along the way, she has had the privilege of meeting many saints quietly doing good. She retired to Virginia Beach with husband, Walter, and their Chessie, Maggie.

December 2, 2018

The more excellent way

1 Corinthians 12-14

Key Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13

Long ago, the wind carried frosty moans from humankind to The Holy One. The joyless sounds of fear, hopelessness and sadness brought deep pain to the Great Heart. God mused, "Why can't they remember for longer than a generation how they are loved? I sent them prophets, claimed them as mine, and gave them a beautiful land with enough for all. I gave them just 10 laws to guide their lives. Yet those who were to teach and lead have twisted the laws for their own enrichment. The poor are oppressed. Rulers are selfish, arrogant and callous. Creation's wonders intended to reveal me are taken for granted as hearts harden. Human ears no longer hear songs of praise from the creatures or see joy in the flowers." Tears began to roll down the Holy face.

The Word spoke, "Let me try once more. Send me with a face and voice like theirs. Maybe if they walk with Us, see Us do justice, share mercy and live humbly among them, they will learn."

And so, they planned and prepared.

As the time to leave drew near, the Holy One drew forth the word and said, "You are now my son. These humans are difficult creatures. You will be born as they are, and grow up with parents I have chosen for you. Your name will be Jesus. You will be our gift to them. Not all will accept you. You will be adored and hated; believed and scorned. You will know the best of these humans and the worst. I will be with you through it all, loving you and awaiting your return when your human time is finished. Those that you nurture will carry on for you. You will live in them and through them. We will touch their spirit with our spirit and show the more excellent way... Love. Go in peace, my son. Offer hope and spread joy."

December 9, 2018

Beautiful Feet

Romans 8-10

Key Verse: Romans 10:14-17

Several months ago, my 96-year-old mother had her first pedicure. Wearing sandals to church, she was delighted when people commented on her "pretty feet." Mine are forever ugly. Thanks be to God, both pretty and ugly feet can be beautiful in God's sight. It's what we do with them that matters!

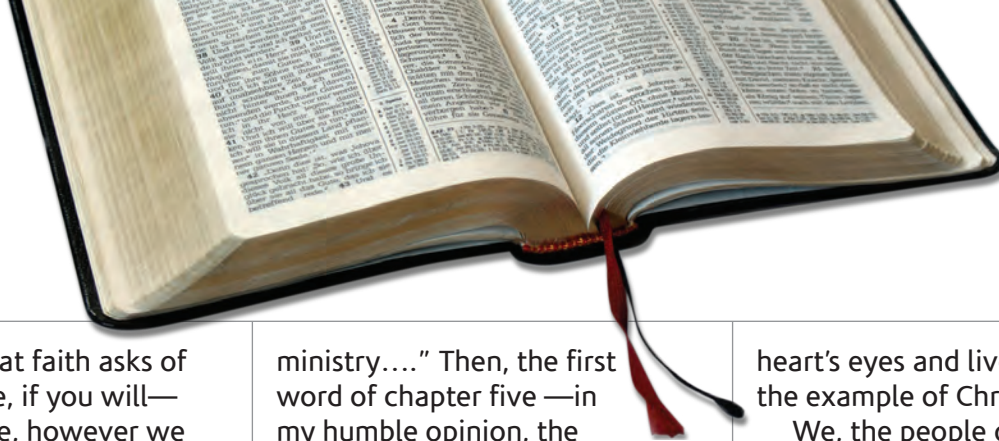
We are living in a time that desperately needs good news. I write these two weeks before mid-term elections. The political situation is even uglier than the 50s with its lists of suspected communists or the 60s with assassinations and race riots. I have hoped, prayed and, prayerfully, lived since then for a country and world that would learn that all who call God, Abba, are God's children...that the scriptural

'All' is inclusive—no more slave or free, male or female, young or old.

In parallel, my United Methodist Church is being challenged in ways that shake the solid foundation of this fifth generation Methodist preacher. In February we will find if we can move forward for Christ "united."

When I am unsettled, the living word and hymns feed my faith and ground me in hope. Romans 8 affirms whose we are and how much we are loved. Two hymns give me courage: "The Church's One Foundation" and "How Firm a Foundation." The first hymn speaks to the UMC crisis, the second to my personal spiritual crisis caused by grief over the above two realities of this time. Where are the "beautiful feet" bringing good news? Look around. Train your eyes to see. Take lessons.

Remember, your beautiful feet were made for walkin'... into chaos, bringing peace; toward the needy, offering hope; with "neighbors," sharing Christ's love ...just because. Why? That's what Christ



did. And, it's what faith asks of us—our purpose, if you will—wherever we are, however we can, as long as there is breath in us. In so doing, joy will follow. Thanks be to God!

December 16, 2018

Three important words

Ephesians 1-6

Key Verse: Ephesians 1:17-19; 3:20-4:3

“So that” and “therefore” are three of the most important words in Scripture. These signal important lessons that the writers expect readers to learn. We, as we study and ponder, are expected to stop and read again what led up to these words and what comes after them. Henry Riley would often say, “When you see ‘therefore,’ look around and see what it’s there for!”

Since Jeremiah, God has expected our hearts enlightened by increased knowledge of whose we are and why. (31:33-34) In Ephesians, we learn beyond any doubt that the church is the body of Christ, (1:22-23); we are “... a holy temple...built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.” In Chapter three, Paul prays for the church in Ephesus and, through the power of the living word, for us—Christ’s followers today. Continuing our study, we hit a “therefore” in 4:1, finding in that chapter how we are to live with each other, “making every effort to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” We learn that each is given grace and different gifts “to equip the saints for the work of

ministry....” Then, the first word of chapter five—in my humble opinion, the most important “therefore” in all of the living word—we read: Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

My hope this Advent is that all Christians will actually strive, with Christ’s help, to fully be imitators of God. The example to the world would be immeasurable. As the eyes of our hearts open to Christ’s love, people would see that love in our eyes and actions. Christ’s Body alive—Hope for the world!

December 23, 2018

Have faith and persevere

Hebrews 11-13

Key Verse: Hebrews 11:1-2; 12:1-2; 14-15a; 13:1-6

Tomorrow night, Christians around the world celebrate Christ’s birth. We, you and I, pastors and laity, are the church’s shepherds. Will we open our sleepy eyes and see heaven’s excitement at this new coming? Will we be enlivened to run and see...to go and tell this new thing that has happened? Or, will we slightly shift our position, get more comfortable and go back to sleep...certain it has all been just a dream? A nice dream, yes, but totally impractical.

Sisters and brothers, this is God’s hope, that we will receive the Holy Gift with humility and gratitude and allow Christ into our lives to transform our priorities so that we might see with

heart’s eyes and live following the example of Christ.

We, the people of the church, are Christ’s body, each piece uniquely crafted to fit together perfectly...especially created for this time, this place. What do we look like? Are we joined like a wooden puzzle block, impossible to figure out, hoarding its treasures? Or, are we more like a beautiful water pitcher pouring God’s grace generously into a thirsty world? (12:15)

December 30, 2018

Love gifts

Revelation 12-18

Key Verse: Revelation 13:9-10

Revelation! And seven chapters! In that time, wars, persecutions, plagues and destruction. Reading the papers and listening to the news today, I hear of wars, persecutions, plagues, destruction and I wonder, will the heavenly gifts offered by the holy birth—hope, love, joy and peace—ever find fulfillment in this world? As always, the living word brings good news. Today, it is Ch. 13: 10c, “Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.”

Ah ha! An epiphany moment! Always, hold tightly to the truth and endure. Years ago, diagnosed with my first cancer, I heard God ask, “Do you believe what you preach?” I admit to pondering that question a while. Finally, I was able to answer with assur-

(Con’t on page 32: “LIVING WORD”.)

The Living Word devotions will coincide with the 2018 Bible Reading Challenge from Bishop Lewis. Find the December schedule on pg. 34. Find all 2018 readings at www.vaumc.org.

CLERGY & DIACONAL



("LIVING WORD" con't from previous page.)

DEATHS



The Rev. Rita A. Callis of Richmond, died Oct. 5, 2018. She served as a United Methodist minister for 40 years,

beginning with her first church in Northumberland County and her most recent appointment at Lakeside UMC in Henrico. She also served as superintendent for the Farmville District. Lovingly referred to as "Rev. Rita," she devoted her life to the church and to her community through teaching, counseling and pastoral care.



The Rev. Tracy R. Bair, 70, died Oct. 14, 2018, in Oklahoma. He served Liberty UMC Bealton before moving to

Missouri to serve a UMC there.



The Rev. Carl Evans Cosslett, 84, of Colonial Heights, died Sept. 30, 2018. He was Pastor Emeritus of Trinity UMC

Chesterfield at the time of his death.

Sally Easter, mother of the Rev. John Hall, pastor of Bethel UMC, died on Oct. 19. The memorial service will be at a later date.

Frank Fender, 78, of Leesburg, died Oct. 19, 2018. He is survived by this wife, the Rev. Judy Fender, retired deacon.

Jenny Aledia, sister of Deaconess Emma Samson, Resurrection UMC in Chesapeake, died Oct. 18.

Rachel Littleton Jones, 101, of Roanoke, died Oct. 17, 2018. Her late husband, Dr. George Wesley Jones, was a Virginia Conference pastor.

Jacquelyn Grace Moberly, 89, died Oct. 10, 2018. Her son, the Rev. Bill Moberly, is a pastor at St. Matthew's UMC in Annandale.

Frances Haller Jones, 94, of Virginia Beach, died Oct. 9, 2018. She is survived by her son, the Rev. Dr. Steve Jones, retired.

Betty Fisher Goodson, 90, of South Hill, died Oct. 5, 2018. She was the widow of the Rev. A.D. Goodson.

Susan Dieterich Holland, 74, of Appomattox, died Sept. 25. She was a former part-time local pastor in the Virginia Conference. 🍷

Notice: The *Advocate*, due to the increasing number of entries for this section each month, will only publish death notices for individuals rather than full obituaries. To have additional information published, please contact the *Advocate* office at advocate@vaumc.org or mail to c/o Communications Office, P.O. Box 5606 Glen Allen, VA 23058-5606. The Communications Office receives obituaries from a number of sources, but to ensure we receive a particular notice, please contact us with copy.

ance, "Absolutely!" From that time to this, the answer is the same, "Absolutely!" God's gifts to me then were the assurance of faith and the strength to endure.

When I retired, Walt and I took the great westward land trip. It was planned to last three weeks. It lasted six. Walt says that was because I asked him to stop every 10 minutes to take a picture! All along the way, great rays of blessings appeared, in strangers, in the ever changing landscape, in the peace found in each other. In northwest California, we pulled off the highway to find a small town for lunch. Walt, always fascinated by ancient Greek, suddenly exclaimed loudly, "EUREKA! Wow! I have found it!" Both of us laughed as we entered the town of Eureka, CA.

I am so glad I read into Ch. 19. There, in verse one, is "After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, 'Hallelujah!'" Hallelujah is my favorite expression of joy!

This Epiphany, look for eureka and hallelujah moments. Claim them! Celebrate! Give thanks! They are love gifts from our God who hasn't given up on us, yet! 🍷

The Virginia United Methodist

Advocate

EQUIPS
CONNECTS
INFORMS



**Consider
a gift
subscription
to The
Virginia
Advocate!**

For your pastor, staff, lay leaders,
neighbors, church friends, family,
Sunday school teachers...

www.vaumc.org/advocate
or call the Advocate office at:
1-800-768-6040, ext. 110
or (804) 521-1110

**Need a book? A Bible?
A music CD?**

**Shop Online
At Your
Virginia
Conference
Online Bookstore!**

Save 20% on most items and
Gain 5% back for Virginia Conference

Go to the Virginia Conference Web site, <www.vaumc.org>
and click, "Resources >> Cokesbury Virtual Bookstore."

* 5% return offer does not apply to curriculum, approved
online downloads, or official denominational items.

Powered by
Cokesbury.com

Pew Upholstering & Refinishing
Reversible Pew Cushions
New Pews • Carpeting
Complete Renovations

<www.churchinteriors.com>

1-800-289-7397

Church Interiors Inc.

The Nation's Leading Church Renovation Specialists.
High Point, North Carolina

Lewis & Hitchcock, Inc.

Pipe Organ Builders Since 1915

11561 Edmonston Rd, Beltsville, MD 20705

Phone: 1-800-952-PIPE (7473)

Fax: (301) 931-2378

Get a bus and peace of mind.

Choose from our great selection
of buses You'll enjoy peace of mind
knowing service is available
on site at your church.

**Sonny
Merryman inc.**

VIRGINIA'S
BUS COMPANY

sonnymerryman.com

(800) 533-1006



Call for a free demonstration.

SALES AND SERVICE: CENTRAL VIRGINIA • HAMPTON ROADS • NOVA

FROM THE BISHOP



My fondest Christmas memory

My fondest memory every Christmas happened on Christmas Eve in the

Lewis household. This special night was the time we gathered around the kitchen table to help my mother finish cooking her famous fruitcake in order to leave a slice for Santa. I must admit I was never an avid eater of mom's fruitcake, but I couldn't let her know that secret. I didn't really like all the fruit ingredients but I loved the nuts and the aroma that lingered throughout the night.

When I was young, my mother would pour a little wine over the cake; so the cake wouldn't dry out. My siblings and I would sneak a sip when she was not looking. Little did we know that's why ALL of a sudden we would be deliriously sleepy. I'm not really sure if Mom knew we were sipping her wine, or if she used it as a method to send us to bed early. Only thing I remember is that one by one we would venture off to our rooms and wait in anticipation for Christmas morning! 🍷



Bishop's Bible Challenge readings for December

December 1	1 Corinthians 9-11
December 2	1 Corinthians 12-14
December 3	1 Corinthians 15-16
December 4	2 Corinthians 1-4
December 5	2 Corinthians 5-9
December 6	2 Corinthians 10-13
December 7	Acts 20:1-3, Romans 1-3
December 8	Romans 4-7
December 9	Romans 8-10
December 10	Romans 11-13
December 11	Romans 14-16
December 12	Acts 20:4-23:35
December 13	Acts 24-26
December 14	Acts 27-28
December 15	Colossians 1-4, Philemon 1
December 16	Ephesians 1-6
December 17	Philippians 1-4
December 18	1 Timothy 1-6
December 19	Titus 1-3
December 20	1 Peter 1-5
December 21	Hebrews 1-6
December 22	Hebrews 7-10
December 23	Hebrews 11-13
December 24	2 Timothy 1-4
December 25	2 Peter 1-3, Jude 1
December 26	1 John 1-5
December 27	2 John 1, 3 John 1
December 28	Revelation 1-5
December 29	Revelation 6-11
December 30	Revelation 12-18
December 31	Revelation 19-22



ONE LAST WORD

1. Everyone dies.
2. Everyone has the same amount of hours in a day.

Each day, about 50-70 billion cells are made and die in your body, your mind will process thousands of thoughts, you will encounter new and familiar faces. You have the opportunity to choose to get out of bed in the morning, go to work and have a good experience while living. Some days are better than others, some are longer, but no matter what, today is the most important day of your life. You alone have the

power to influence someone's life for better or for worse.


We believe we have time. We'll always have more time to procrastinate, to put it off until tomorrow. Although tomorrow was never a guarantee. Until you breathe, you alone have the power to do something with your life every day. Then comes death.

Death will never have victory over you. The Apostle Paul spells this out in his letter to the Romans by saying "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39). Ultimately, death will lose its sting when this life is over.

Understanding and accepting that time is limited, ask yourself: Starting right now, what can I do in 1,000 days? What about 5,000? 10,000?

This article is not supposed to be a depressing statement to remind you of certain death. On the contrary, I wrote this in hopes that you would celebrate your mortality by owning each day. Make a legacy. Make your memorial the kind where people aspire to live a life full of growth, excitement, and love. Enjoy your family, fall in love, travel.

When did time ever solve anything? You are the catalyst for change in your life, community and generation.

How many days old are you today? What will you do with the remaining days you have? 

— Paul Gomez is the Manager, Hispanic/Latino Seeker Communications at United Methodist Communications. This article was posted on the Rethink Church website. Read the full article at www.rethinkchurch.org.

The most important day

By Paul Gomez

We count days as small fractions of our lives. It can be easy to take them for granted. Each night we close our eyes to sleep we make a promise with our subconscious to believe that we'll wake up again. Days are guaranteed in a world where social media memories only count the years, but what's in a day?

A few weeks ago, we had a birthday celebration for a fellow coworker. She found her desk covered in decorations in honor of her special day, organized by other early-rising coworkers. While we were slicing into a delicious cake, I noticed a blue poster hung up on her wall. It read "18,250 Days Old." I pulled out my phone and Googled my age in days. I had just turned 7,680 days old that afternoon. Thoughts ran through my head at hundreds of miles per hour. 'What have I done with my life?' 'What will I do with it?'

When I see the length of my life in days, I grow nervous that I have not yet lived enough. I have a list of things I still want to do, such as getting married, starting a family and leaving a lasting legacy of the life I lived.

Aside from all the various differences people have, every single one of us only has two things completely in common:

"I don't want to be another statistic."

– MARK, FOSTER CARE YOUTH

THE NATIONAL STATISTICS FOR YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE ARE GRIM:

50%

don't complete
high school by age 18

91%

don't graduate
from college

MARK WAS SLATED to become one of those statistics. With the imprisonment of his father and the death of his mother, he had a rough childhood. He entered foster care at age nine and was shuffled between several foster homes and a residential facility. He was struggling and falling behind in school.

Then in 2014, Mark entered the UMFS Treatment Foster Care program. UMFS matched Mark with a loving foster family, and provided the entire family with unwavering support. As a result, Mark was able to catch up in school and graduate with honors. This fall, Mark became the first person in his family to attend college.

There are 5,330 children like Mark in foster care in Virginia. Don't let them become statistics. Help us provide the support they need to succeed in life.

Donate online at umfs.org/donate



3900 West Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23230
development@umfs.org
804.254.9450