

Advocate

Songs
OF THE
Advent
AND
Christmas
SEASONS



Connecting with the



VirginiaAdvocate

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the Virginia Conference of
The United Methodist Church

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PILLOW TALK



Madeline Pillow
Editor

The watcher of ants and other jobs

When was the last time you slowed down just to watch the world around you? I don't do it as often as I used to, but it can be exactly what we need in the midst of a stressful day or month.

In my backyard recently, I sat beside one of the trees. I felt the breeze and warm filtering sunlight through the leaves above. I smelled fall in the air. I breathed in and out. Then the real magic happened. I started noticing the ants diligently working. One walking over a leaf here. Two walking together there. I heard the birds rustling above me in the trees. Several crows were defending their nest from a hawk as they spun around each other in a circle. A squirrel performed quick leaps on the fence; headed back to its nest with an acorn in tow.

It got me to thinking.

Who knows if there has been any wisdom in my "Pillow Talk" editorials these last four years, but I would leave you here in our last issue considering that we need people. We need all sorts of people. We need diversity. We need different cultures. We need different points of view. Different doesn't have to be wrong or scary.

We need the people who are willing to watch ants (notice details) and we need the people who can see the bigger picture like an astronaut watching the happenings of Earth from afar. Which person are you? Are you somewhere in between? We need you too!

In this divisive time in our church and in our world, be open to the ways that God can bring healing and how you can be transformed to bring change to the world. Here's a hint, God will most likely do this work through us, through people. Let's be open to the ways God is leading us to change and calling us to be change agents.

In the *Advocate Remembered* section this month, we reprinted a thought from an *Advocate* in the 1890s: What if the former times were better than these? You did not help make them.

Something we know is that things change and people change. We can make this concept less scary and daunting by keeping Christ at the forefront and working to be Christians who show His love and light.

On a final note, it has been my great honor to edit this publication for the last four years. I am thankful for those who have come before me and the work they have done as faithful people of God. I am also grateful for our tremendous staff whose love and talent for this shone through every issue. I am grateful for you, dear readers. Thank you for joining us on this journey. 🍷

Madeline

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COMMENTARY

Faith and trust on UMVIM trip to Tangier Island

By Janie Nuttall

WHEN THE UNITED METHODIST VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION (UMVIM) TEAM LEADER sends an email requesting you to join the mission team and needs tools to help with projects as well as goodwill ambassadors (who aren't able to construct, or even climb a ladder) are needed, how do you answer the call? Is it faith or trust that gives you the answer?

When I first answered Sam NeSmith with a "yes" to the trip to Tangier Island from Sept. 30 to Oct. 5, I told Sam a few restrictions I had: I'm not allowed to climb a ladder, sleep on the top bunk or sleep on a floor air mattress. Sam took the time to meet

with me and explain that I would not be the only goodwill ambassador and that I would have a bottom bunk.

I trusted Sam and knew of his many UMVIM trips (his total, he thinks, is 112 or 113). I also had faith that God had made it possible for me to travel with my daughter in July to Tangier Island (after five or six decades since my only other visit) and then the next day I received Sam's invitation. I saw it as a God-email.

I met Sam at 0-Dark-thirty on Sept. 30 and rode with him and his trailer of supplies to Reedville, Va., where all the team met to load up supplies and board the Sharon Kay II to travel across the Chesapeake Bay.

Captain Conner Andrews was our seasoned pilot for our journey to and fro. The team of 14 (eight women and six men) consisted of many who had been on previous mission teams with Sam. I just followed instructions and watched this group of like-minded folk as they unloaded the boat onto a truck and then unloaded the truck.

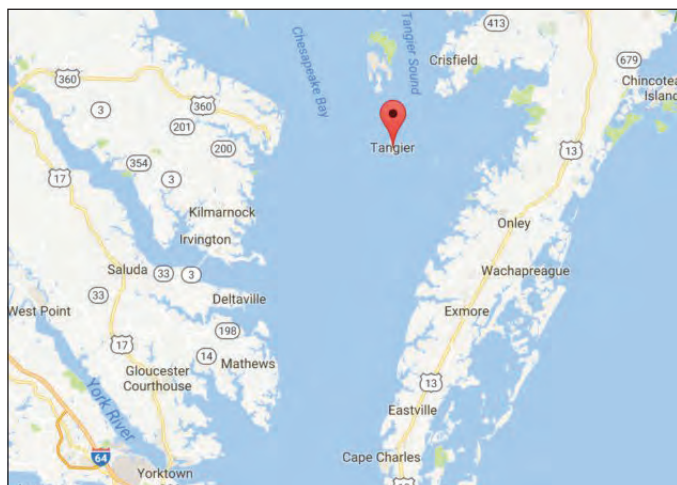
After moving my gear into the lower bunk (Sam's promise fulfilled),

the team met together for lunch. Our culinary angel, Miss Shirley, was an expert for these teams. At the table, we later introduced ourselves and began the process of becoming a community.

Sam had requested each of us to ask someone for a devotion for us to share that week. The reading of these devotions was random, and later in that week, one of the devotions was on 'Faith or Trust' which seemed to touch each of us. When a community can discuss their faith and trust, we all were thankful for this open discussion and sharing.

Our team was so thankful for the open hearts, minds, and doors of those who had been welcoming the UMVIM teams since 2012. Pastor Nona Allen, the new pastor of Swain Memorial UMC, led the Tuesday morning Ladies' Bible Study, the Wednesday night worship service, and even stayed with us on the dock early Saturday morning while waiting for Capt. Andrews to arrive and then lead us in prayer.

Sam's special angel, Billy Brown, was with us for those six days. Billy is a joy and I shared with him that by day



two I was finally able to understand him since I read lips to help my hearing. I needed that extra day for my accent to be in sync with Billy's. It was a wonderful experience to hear about several who went to visit their friends on different parts of the island. I was blessed to make new friends, Katie Jean Parks and Robert Parks whose son, Robert Parks Jr. was previous district superintendent when I served on Virginia Conference Board of Laity. On my first morning's visit, Miss Katie called Bob so I could speak with him briefly since he has a two-charge appointment. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting one of their daughters and a retired school employee who now serves as a visiting nurse for the residents. I told Miss Katie that I had already planned to return in 2020 so I could visit my new good friend again.

So next time a message from a UMVIM leader comes by email or personally, please take the time to discern if you can hear God's call and place your faith and trust for your response. 🍷

—Janie Nuttall is a certified Lay Speaker and member of Bon Air UMC in Richmond.



COMMENTARY

The church with the pumpkins

By Bill Pike

RIGHT ON TIME, on the morning of Saturday, September 28, the long tractor trailer pulled into the front drive of Trinity UMC in Henrico. Our youth leader, Bryce Miller, directed the driver to park the rig parallel to Forest Avenue.

Soon, a flurry of human activity would swarm the truck to unload a shipment of pumpkins and seasonal gourds from New Mexico.

The driver, Tony, from neighboring

Hanover County, shared the route that had taken him west across America. He made a few delivery stops before heading to an Indian reservation in New Mexico to pick up our annual order of pumpkins.

Tony explained in admiring detail how he drives his truck into a field. A conveyor belt is properly placed inside the trailer. Exactly 24 men from the tribal council carefully load the pumpkins on a bed of straw layered on the floor of the trailer. Tony said it took about two hours to load.

Interestingly, it took our multiple generational group of volunteers a little over two hours to unload the truck too. These volunteers were a human conveyor belt.

They were aided only by a forklift. This mechanical Hercules was used to unload several large crates of smaller pumpkins. Staged on tough wooden pallets, the forklift operator in a matter of minutes had the crates off the truck and positioned on our front lawn. Supplied by Trinity member, Mike Hildebrand, the forklift was a real back saver.

Unloading the pump-

kins is tough work. The process is a good workout. Clearly, it is a satisfying feeling when the last pumpkin is carried out. But the last chore of the unloading—cleaning out the straw from the trailer is no fun.

Occasionally, I am asked where I attend church. I state our church's name, its location, and then the person who asked makes the following association—"Oh, you're the church with the pumpkins." And, I reply, "Yes, we are the church with the pumpkins."

"Oh, you're the church with the pumpkins," forms many questions in my mind. Does that association mean we are a one dimensional church? I hope not.

Selling the pumpkins every fall has two dimensions. The proceeds from the sale benefit our middle and high school students on spring and summer mission trips. Additionally, our agreement with the Indian council in New Mexico is an economic booster for their community.

Churches always have been interesting places. Whether they can continue to survive in what appears



COMMENTARY

to be an unfavorable climate for growth lies in the layers of their dimensions.

The world has changed around churches. Try as we might to recognize this, I'm not sure if we realize how much the world has changed.

For example, the truck driver who delivered our pumpkins uses an app on his phone to find pickup and delivery jobs that meet his criteria and rate of compensation. In a similar manner, people search for churches today by checking out apps and websites.

I have a friend who has his private pilot's license. He is also a certified trainer for the type of plane he flies.

One training exercise for beginning pilots involves working through an emergency while flying. My friend trains prospective pilots to aviate, navigate, and communicate.

Fly the plane, know your location and assess your options, and communicate immediately what you are experiencing to air traffic controllers or the nearest control tower. In other words that pilot must rapidly adapt to the emergency conditions. Failure to do so could



mean a tragedy.

Without question, the future for churches hinges on their capacity to adapt. Adapting can mean lots of things. But at the very least, this means asking lots of difficult questions.

Ultimately, the answer to those questions will be grounded in another question—are churches willing to change?

Change can be both simple and difficult.

I suspect the most difficult part for a church contemplating significant changes will be managing the civility of its leadership and its congregation toward

each other as they work through the process.

In this process, churches must keep in front of them—Romans 12:10: “Love one another with mutual affection.”

As the church figures out if it can adapt, will loving and respecting each other be easy? No.

But, if churches don't, they won't be hanging around by their fingernails any longer.

And, “Oh, you're the church with the pumpkins,” will be gone in a slow, painful, agonizing blink. 🍂

—Bill Pike is the director of operations at Trinity UMC in Henrico.

Advocate Memories



In March 2019, it was announced that The Virginia United Methodist Advocate magazine was coming to an end after almost 200 years of publication. The magazine has gone through many changes over the years from name (it all started with the Methodist Christian Sentinel) to format to frequency of publication. In the final issues of this publication, you will find history about the magazine, memories of past issues and words from the magazine's former and present staff. Thank you for being a part of this journey, Advocate readers.

Fair winds and following seas.

Snippets

As we have been sharing more information about the Advocates from the 1890s that were recently donated to our office, we invite you to take a time to the past and enjoy some more of the thoughts and ideas uncovered in these issues.

1890s Words of Wisdom

- ❖ Opportunities never fly behind us.
- ❖ So what if the former times were better than these? You did not help make them.
- ❖ A brave man is one who dares to be inconsistent with himself so that he may be consistent with the truth.

Hints for Hanging pictures:

There are certain rules regarding the hanging of pictures that one can safely follow. Give dark and gloomy subjects the lightest place and the light, bright ones may hang in some gloomy corner. Give the lowest position to that picture which, having the most details or figures, appears to a better advantage if in direct

line of vision. Study the effect of the light upon a picture before you hang it. In the case of photographs let the frames be only light or enameled words or gold leaf. A new fashion in the case of a very large picture is to hang it by two wires straight up from the sides of the picture, each fastened on a separate hook. The fashionable medallion picture and water colours framed in brocade have a wire drawn tightly across the back at the center which is caught on a small screw in the wall so that no wire is shown in the hanging.





A Correction of Errors

Advocate editor sets the record straight

Don't's for Parents:

- ❖ Don't neglect a slight ailment.
.....
- ❖ Don't be afraid to warn your children to avoid bad associates.
.....
- ❖ Don't forget to set the example of being a good citizen.
.....
- ❖ Don't let children stay out of school for trivial reasons.

by Madeline Pillow

As I have been exploring these 1890 *Advocates*, I have enjoyed feeling lost in another world and I have also been comforted in seeing similarities between the here and now.

One of those comforts is realizing that there have always been conflicts! Even *Advocate* editors are not immune to that. On April 18, 1895, *Advocate* editor Dr. John Lafferty printed a special edition of the *Advocate* to set the record straight against the claims of a former *Advocate* editor.

Let's just say that Dr. Lafferty goes on a seven-page "rant" to clear his name; I imagine that he would have loved to use the social media platform Twitter if he were alive today.

Lafferty begins his case by stating that for 20 years, by unanimous vote at conference, that his work at the *Advocate* had been called the best conference organ; he notes that this is not "partial praise of a friend, but the decree of the gestates Synod of the South."

(Con't. on page 14: "LAFFERTY.")



Brenda Capen (right) with *Advocate* editor and director of communications, Madeline Pillow.

Becoming intentional over 37 years of working on the *Advocate*

by Brenda Capen

I STARTED MY FIRST POSITION WITH VIRGINIA UNITED METHODIST COMMUNICATIONS as the associate editor of the *Virginia Advocate* in 1983. There is a shelf in the communications storage room that holds bound copies of the *Virginia Advocate* from that time. As I looked at the stack of books on those shelves, I realized that it also reflected a journey that my life has taken me on — with no original intention on my part — with The United Methodist Church.

I grew up in the Episcopal Church and knew virtually nothing about The United Methodist Church when I was hired to begin work with the Virginia Conference. I had a degree in mass communications from Virginia Commonwealth University. It was one of my college professors who recommended that I apply for the position. Dr. James D. Righter and Bishop R. Kern Eutsler (who was then council director) took a chance on me, and almost 37

years later... I'm still here!

And that was not my intention.

I was 23 at the time, and I thought that working for the church as an associate editor for a year or two would be a good solid position to put on a resume and then I would move on. I do remember feeling overwhelmed at first with the press deadlines every other Tuesday. I left the United Methodist Center on Broad Street in tears one day when I thought I couldn't handle the pressures of another issue. I was determined to start looking for another job. I felt like an imposter working for the church. But God sent the Rev. Peter Vaughn out to the parking lot that day and he convinced me it would get better. And it did. Peter's wife, Carole, would later become another boss and mentor for me in the *Advocate* office. (Was that God working in mysterious ways?)

A number of years later, I thought I should get serious again about

finding another career path, and I actually accepted another position and celebrated my last day on the job with a limo ride to lunch with coworkers. When I arrived back to the office to pack up, God put the Rev. Joe Carson Jr., then council director, in the path of my good intentions. The Rev. Carson called me to his office to discuss some "opportunities," and he convinced me to stay.

And that was not my intention.

The Rev. Al Horton arrived as editor and breathed some new life into the *Advocate* with design and theme-focused issues. It felt right to be working on the *Advocate* and sharing stories from around the conference.

Are you seeing a pattern here? I could divulge so many paths and so many people that have been placed on my life journey.

God, is that you interfering with my intentions? God, have you set that path before me and introduced this "cloud of witnesses" to bring me closer to you?

Even though I moved to website and database work for the conference in 2002, I would still assist with proofreading the *Advocate*. It was still a good way for ME to know what was happening around me locally, nationally and globally.

My bosses, coworkers, the clergy, the laity — all the people who I have been privileged to meet through the years because of my “job” — have shaped my journey of faith. From Jim Righter to Madeline Pillow and everyone in between, what a journey it has been.

The stories, the news, the social justice issues, the good, the bad and the ugly, and the bring-tears-to-my-eyes-victories I have seen come across my desk because I work for

Capen is new associate editor

With this issue of the *Virginia Advocate*, Ms. Brenda Capen joins the staff of United Methodist Communications as an associate editor.

Ms. Capen is a recent graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University with a bachelor's degree in journalism.



The Rev. David F. Jarvis II presents the gift from United Methodist Communications, Inc., at the farewell reception for Mrs. Dixon.

She comes to this first career position with highest recommendations.

Mrs. Joyce Dixon has accepted a career advancement to a new position, editing publications for a pharmaceutical firm in Richmond.

At the farewell reception in the United Methodist Building Jan. 7, Bishop Blackburn praised Dixon for seven years of dedicated service to the annual conference.

“The conference owes Joyce Dixon a great debt,” said Dr. James D. Righter, editor. “I could not have made such a smooth transition from ministry to this position without her training and support.”

The Rev. David F. Jarvis II, chairperson of the *Virginia Advocate* committee of United Methodist Communications, presented a gift in appreciation of her and her fine work as associate editor.



Ms. Brenda Capen continues detailed work of editing that goes each issue of the *Virginia Advocate* newsmagazine.

the church have shaped my journey of faith. And the *Virginia United Methodist Advocate* has been a constant companion.

I knew the day would come when it would be “put to bed.” I haven’t known my life without working on the *Advocate* in one way or another for all

these many years. It has helped put a roof over my head and food in my stomach and God in my heart. The faithful subscribers are mourning this loss, and so am I. It’s been like a friend that has worried me to death at times but at the end you still love it.

The communications office will continue to

find new and effective ways to communicate with United Methodists throughout the Virginia Conference. Even though the church is in the midst of some turbulent times, I HOPE I have finally learned I need to rely on God to help direct my good intentions. 🍀





("LAFFERTY," cont. from pg.11.)

So what was this accusation that Lafferty had to clear his name from? It appears that the the son and son-in-law of former editor Dr. Bennett claimed he had paid off the old debts of the publication and that Lafferty had benefitted from prosperity under the *Advocate's* rise under Dr. Bennett.

Lafferty is not taking this claim lying down:

"If an individual charges that an editor so endorsed has committed in the official organ of his Church repeated acts of moral delinquency stretching through years, 'stabbing in the back,' 'prancing as a ghoul on the graves of the dead,' 'falsifying,' robbing the dead of their honors, and so on, he raises the yellow flag over the Conference itself as an infected body. He infects every member as a moral leper, condoning sin and lauding the sinner."

Lafferty claims that the paper was in critical condition when he took it over and that the paper gained more in

two years after he began than in the eight years previously. He takes time to state Bennett's case that was printed in another paper in the conference.

Lafferty states that Bennett, as part of taking ownership of the magazine, had a condition under this purchase to assume and hold himself responsible for the present and past indebtedness of the publication. As far as his part, Lafferty shares that:

"I have only to say that whatever sum Dr. Bennett paid to extinguish the debts against the Advocate, I refunded to him certainly two dollars for every one he paid. It may be ten dollars for one. It is possible a hundred dollars for one. Be it that I paid for the journal its fair value. He sold it to me (what cost him nothing at the outset) for a sum sufficient to pay all of the debts he ever paid, and leave him a large surplus."

(As a footnote, Lafferty listed this particular point under the heading 'Idiot or Loyal Son'; a reminder for readers of October's issue that

quite trenchant!)

In reading through this, I am reminded that communication was so very different for the time. In this day and age, this spat would be acted out in a Twitter or Facebook post and picked up by other media, possibly. But at this time, readers most likely read attentively to the particulars of this case for seven pages. But how could readers not be enthralled in this drama, when Lafferty calls out the son and son-in-law for their misunderstanding of language:

"Is it not a surprise that these critical and college men do not know the singular form the plural in their mother tongue? 'Agreeable to the parties' means mutually agreeable—agreeable to both...Ignorance of the rudiments of their native speech has put these two Princeton linguists in sorry plight." ❄




EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY

Best Practices: Church Finances

As with any business, churches can find themselves vulnerable to situations such as embezzlement and fraud if proper procedures are not put in place to safeguard funds. Churches find themselves vulnerable when it comes to handling of finances because of:

- ❖ poor internal controls and financial oversight
- ❖ trusting and forgiving environment
- ❖ lack of criminal background checks

Amongst other things, churches should ensure there are internal controls to safeguard their funds. 

May the peace and joy that Christmas brings always be with you and your family.

Merry Christmas



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CONFERENCE TREASURER'S OFFICE

INTERNAL CONTROLS

Related to Church Finances

RECEIPT OF FUNDS

Collections should be taken straight from church to bank. Church Financial Secretary oversees scheduling and training of count teams. Secretary cannot also serve as Treasurer.

DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS

Vouchers are approved by authorized person before Treasurer pays bill. Bank reconciliation and credit card statements should be reviewed by independent person monthly.

FINANCIAL REPORTING

Treasurer reports an income statement with budget comparison, balance sheet and designated/restricted funds to Finance Committee. Finance Committee provides reports to Church Council.

CREDIT CARDS

Trustees authorize credit cards and limits. Receipts should be submitted to Treasurer. Finance Committee established policies and procedures. Treasurer should not have a credit card, unless approved/reviewed by someone else each month.

AUDIT AND INSURANCE

Finance Committee schedules at least 2 independent persons to perform annual audit. Audit is reported at Charge Conference.

Trustees should annually review Insurance policy to protect assets of the church.

CONTACT CONFERENCE TREASURER'S OFFICE AT 804-521-1100.

LEARN MORE WITH GUIDELINES BOOKLET: "FINANCE: HANDLING GOD'S MONEY IN THE CHURCH" AVAILABLE AT WWW.COKESBURY.COM

O Sing, All Ye

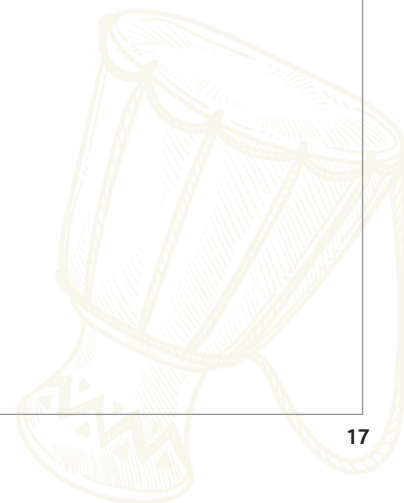


Faithful



In this season of Advent and Christmas, we all have those songs that we can't wait to hear or sing because we enjoy the melody, it brings back memories or its gets us into the mood and mindset of the season.

For our feature this month, we asked readers to share with us the songs that have meaning for them in this season of the church, and we also hear from a pastor and musician who shares about music and music in the seasons of Advent and Christmas (be on the lookout for a corresponding video in our conference newsletter, the e-Advocate, and on our conference social media channels.





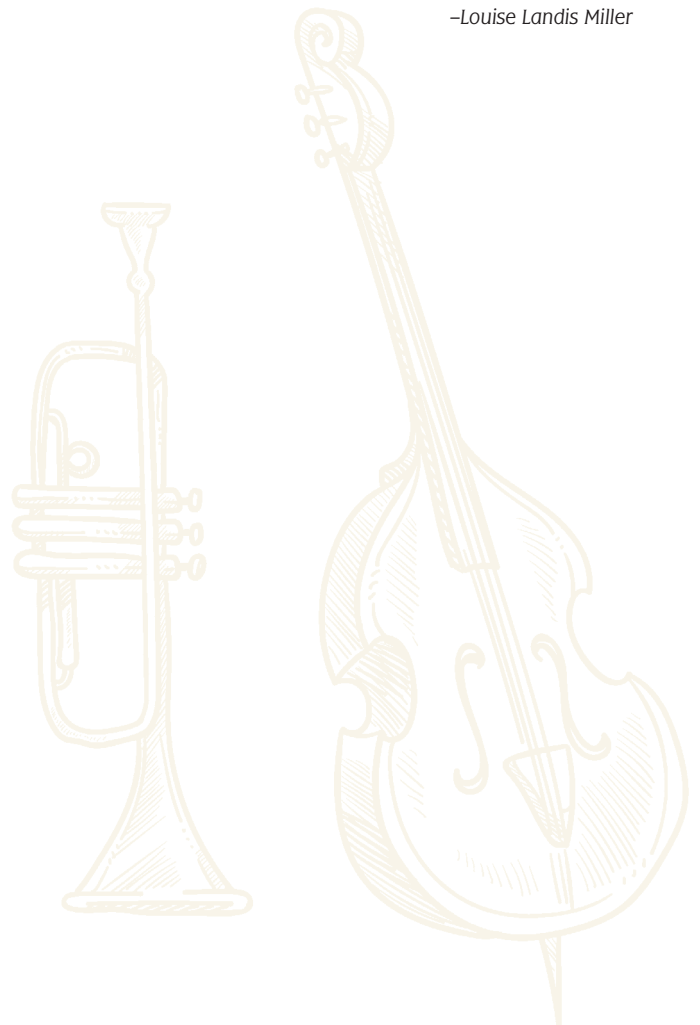
Songs OF THE Advent AND Christmas SEASONS



From 1950 until 1960, my dad served Washington Street Methodist Church on Washington Street in Alexandria. This was before we became “United” and before there was the “beltway.”

Our Christmas Eve Service was at 11 p.m. and by the latter half of the 1950s, the sanctuary was packed. Some folks were in very casual dress, and others were very dressed up, having come from fancy parties. Our contralto soloist was Amanda Hoeft, originally from Germany. At the stroke of midnight, she sang “Silent Night,” a cappella, in German. With the lights off and the candle-light bright, we all knew then that Christmas had surely come again. I will add that there were many sniffles heard in the congregation. When we were there, I was between 10 and 20 years old. Needless to say it was something I’ll always remember.

—Louise Landis Miller





When I think of Christmas, my first thoughts are of the many Christmas Eve services I attended through the years. I remember my family and I singing, “Angels We Have Heard on High” in the fourth pew from the front on the left side of Cameron UMC, in Alexandria.

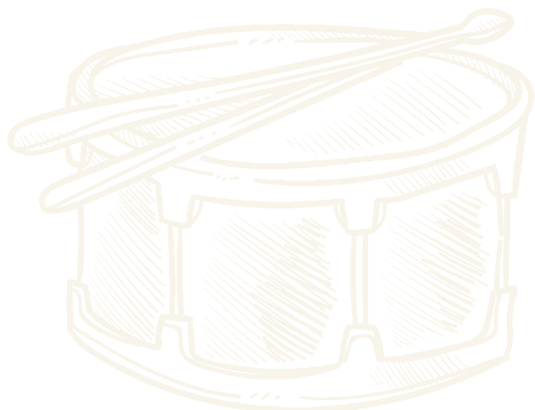
For years this hymn brought smiles and fun, as my family and I sang the beautiful “Gloria in excelsis Deo!” refrain.

I remember competing against my dad and brother to see who could make it through the four measures without a breath. My dad couldn’t really sing on tune, but he sang with mighty reverence and gusto. We smiled as we sang. We experienced the mystery of the season together through this very song. The sanctuary was always so magical that time of year, with the poinsettia’s, the Nativity on the altar and the Chrismon tree all aglow.

What I have found, is that through the years — as I have moved from child, to youth, to young adult, to clergy — this hymn brings me back to the root of Christmas. The birth story of Jesus Christ. I remember the year, I sang not from the pew as a lay person, but as a pastor, looking out upon my family... There they were smiling at me, and singing “Gloria” with so much zeal. Looking at them, I realized that this is Christmas. The family together. The song of Christ in our hearts and the love of a church family surrounding us.

“Come to Bethlehem and see Christ whose birth the angels sing; come, adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King. Gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, in excelsis Deo!”

-The Rev. Dawn-Marie Singleton



It was about 1970. I sang in a boys and men’s choir at my home church as a teenager. There was a tradition of starting the 11 p.m. Christmas Eve Service with the choir in the back of the church.

The opening hymn was always “Once in Royal David’s City,” the first verse was always unaccompanied and sung by a treble soloist (a boy whose voice had not changed yet). There I was, I was chosen that year to begin one of the most important celebrations of the year. The prelude ended; the congregation was asked to rise. I was trembling but out of my mouth came praise to God, on pitch, and clear as ever, but only by the grace of God.

-The Rev. Tom Durrance





I tend to be a snob when it comes to what I listen to around the holidays. Working in professional radio for many years, I have grown weary of much the pop Christmas music that is on the radio and in many retail stores. I tend to favor sacred classical music as it brings the season into focus.

One in particular is Morten Lauridsen's "O Magnum Mysterium." This contemporary piece is based on an ancient Christmas prayer. The words are simple but the soaring arrangement offers dynamics that speak directly to my heart. If there is music in heaven, this is what it might sound like.

Latin text

*O magnum mysterium,
et admirabile sacramentum,
ut animalia viderent Dominum natum,
iacentem in praeseptio!
Beata Virgo, cujus viscera
meruerunt portare
Dominum Iesum Christum.
Alleluia!*

English translation

*O great mystery,
and wonderful sacrament,
that animals should see the newborn Lord,
lying in a manger!
Blessed is the virgin whose womb
was worthy to bear
the Lord, Jesus Christ.
Alleluia!*

You can hear/view this at www.youtube.com/watch?v=7KvrbYZB2vY

Also, I am partial to the haunting Gaelic tune and text of the Wexford Carol. While there are several excellent versions available, I am drawn to the angelic voice of Alison Krauss along with Yo Yo Ma's mournful cello, with the field drum and bagpipe bringing everything together as the song builds. You can hear/view this at, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yxDZjg_lgoc. The libretto offers this translation of the original Irish:

Good people all, this Christmas time,
Consider well and bear in mind
What our good God for us has done
In sending his beloved son
With Mary holy we should pray,
To God with love this Christmas Day
In Bethlehem upon that morn,
There was a blessed Messiah born.
The night before that happy tide,
The noble Virgin and her guide
Were long time seeking up and down
To find a lodging in the town.
But mark how all things came to pass
From every door repelled, alas,
As was foretold, their refuge all
Was but a humble ox's stall.
Near Bethlehem did shepherds keep
Their flocks of lambs and feeding sheep
To whom God's angels did appear
Which put the shepherds in great fear
Prepare and go, the angels said
To Bethlehem, be not afraid
For there you'll find, this happy morn
A princely babe, sweet Jesus, born.
With thankful heart and joyful mind
The shepherds went the babe to find
And as God's angel had foretold
They did our Saviour Christ behold
Within a manger he was laid
And by his side the virgin maid
Attending on the Lord of Life
Who came on earth to end all strife.
There were three wise men from afar
Directed by a glorious star
And on they wandered night and day
Until they came where Jesus lay
And when they came unto that place
Where our beloved Messiah lay
They humbly cast them at his feet
With gifts of gold and incense sweet.

-The Rev. Morris Fleischer



My favorite Christmas songs:

“O Holy Night”

“Angels from the Realms of Glory”

“Silent Night”

“Little Drummer Boy”

“Somewhere in My Memory”
from “Home Alone”

-Sharon Lovering

I grew up in my church and both of my parents sang in the choir while my older brother and I sat in the front pew. The most special night was the midnight service on Christmas Eve. My mom was a soloist and she sang “O Holy Night” at our midnight Christmas Eve service. It was a magical night and a magical song. On one particular night when I was 8, she sang the song and we came out after church to a midnight sky filled with stars. It was indeed a holy night. Each Christmas, whenever I hear that song, it transports me back to my childhood when my mother sang that beautiful song to herald the birth of Christ.

-Cathy Bonneville Hix





My mother started teaching me to play the piano as soon as I could sit upright and still on the piano bench. I was raised in a military family, and we moved nearly every year. My mother had three main priorities in getting settled in our annual new home: put up curtains, find a church and find a piano teacher for my brother and me.

Looking back, I am amazed that during only one short year in each assignment, my mother always managed to become the church organist or the children's choir director, or sign us up for bell choir, or at the very least, she always sang in the choir. My Saturday afternoons were sometimes spent sitting in a church pew drawing pictures on the backs of attendance cards while she practiced her organ music for the next day in a mostly-darkened sanctuary. My nights were spent falling asleep to the sound of her practicing piano in our living room as she worked toward her masters of piano performance.

From Arizona to Kansas to Stuttgart, Germany, every Christmas season was full of pageant rehearsals, piano recitals and the soft sounds of the "Ray Conniff Singers" in our home from my parents' reel-to-reel. Our lives were full of music.

When I was around 10 years old, my mother found a couple of four hands piano duets that she decided we would play together in the Christmas recital. They were Appalachian Christmas tunes arranged by John Jacob Niles — "I Wonder as I Wander" and "Jesus, Jesus, Rest Your Head." They were so unlike any of the cheerful Christmas carols we sang around the piano or the hymns we sang in church — they were almost hauntingly beautiful. I practiced my two hands-worth more than I'd ever practiced anything (and like any kid, I hated to practice.) But I knew that my performance as the lead melody was critical to her more complicated accompaniment. And there was a tricky page turn on one of them that I was responsible for that made me nervous!

To this day, 45 years later, we have trotted out those two dog-eared pieces of sheet music whenever we've been together at Christmas. Mom even packs them in her suitcase if we're not going to be at her home. My father — who claimed that his only musical talent was to "play the radio" and not fall asleep during the many symphony performances my mother dragged him to — would sit listening with his eyes closed, quietly "conducting" with his hand as his form of participation in this annual tradition.

We will miss Dad's audience this Christmas, but his passing this summer has magnified the importance of sharing traditions like this with our loved ones every chance we get. And I smile when I think he might actually be humming along in TUNE from his heavenly vantage point this year, surprising himself most of all!

-Cathryn Huff, graphic designer for the Virginia Conference



We spoke with the Rev. Drew Willson, pastor and musician, about music and singing especially during the Advent and Christmas seasons.

Q: Why is music important in a worship setting?

To me music is really important in a worship setting. One is that it's beautiful. We don't do this very often, for people to sing together. In fact, it's a pretty weird thing for people to sing together. It happens, I think, only at 7th inning stretches in baseball games, people sing, "Take Me Out to the Ballgame." For church people to gather and sing together is extraordinary. It's a powerful, motivating thing for a faith community.

Another thing is it's embodied. We use our bodies. I don't know if people realize just how physical it is to sing, but when we sing we are using our resonant selves. We're using our lungs. We're often standing. We're using muscles that maybe we haven't been using during the week. So bodies are important.

It's also our birthright. It's something that we inherit as Methodists. It has been said that Methodists sing their theology. Unfortunately, I don't know that that's very true anymore. We don't always sing some of our best Wesleyan hymns. We also don't always sing, period. In church when the people do offer up their song it's something that's claiming who we are, a deep part of who we are, as Methodists and as Christians.

Singing together builds us up as a community. It's an act that draws the people together. It's a prayerful act that binds people in ways that other things can't. It's a vulnerable thing to do. It's a courageous thing to do. It gives people the opportunity to be bound in an act of singing.

Q: How do you prepare as a musician and a pastor for this time of year?

Both with Advent and Christmas you start backwards. Begin by looking at Christmas and thinking 'This year, what is it about this story that speaks into this world and into this congregation?' So for instance, at Christmas, if the great news is light into the darkness then to work backwards from there

into Advent and to talk about our darkness, to confess our darkness, and to look forward to light.

Q: What are your thoughts on reimagining old hymns in a new way?

To me the most important thought about music when it comes to the congregation gathered for worship is that the congregation has to be enabled to sing. This is something that we have from way, way back in our tradition. The Psalms tell us the people gather and offer these songs together. Then the question becomes how do we do that, how do we enable the congregation to sing a new thing or to sing an old thing.

The Wesleys were brilliant at this. They had access to all of these familiar tunes and then Charles Wesley would write tons of text. He wrote over 9,000 hymn texts and poems in his life. But how do you make those things accessible? If you're giving it a new tune every time it's a disaster for the people you want to teach it to. So we have the gift of metrical index in the hymnal. We just also have the gift of familiar songs and folk melodies that are accessible, they're singable. So that's the question I take to that task. If there's a text that we want to sing, if there's an opportunity to do something new, how can we possibly make that as accessible as we can. We do it with familiar songs or we do it with a familiar text but give it a different tune just to keep all of that movement fresh.

Q: What is your favorite Advent song?

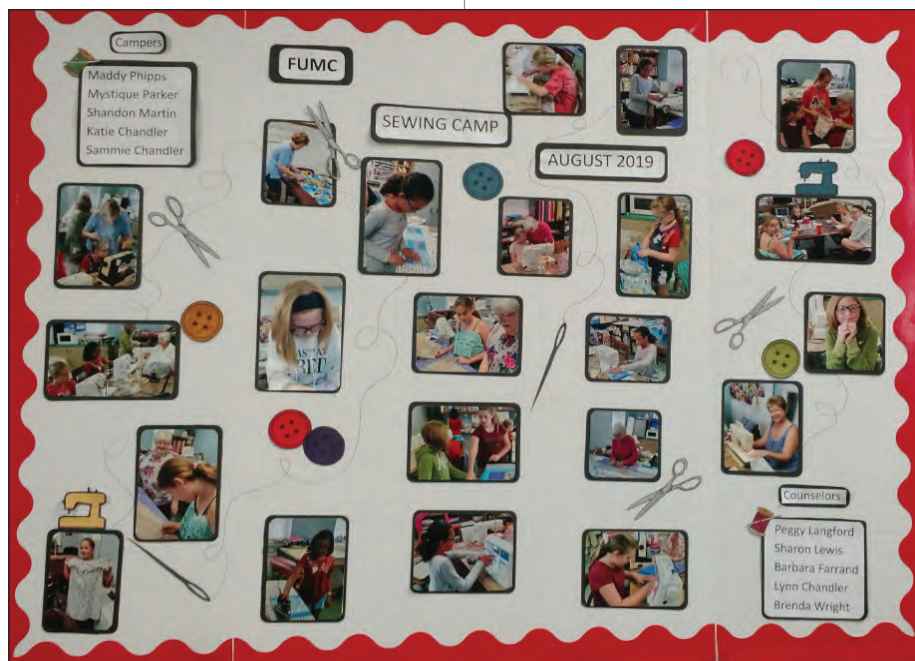
There is a song that's in the hymnal, that is my favorite Advent song to sing. In fact, it's such a favorite, we just sang it this past week (in October). It's "People Look East." The tune brings out just how excited of a season it is. It's excited about hospitality, about preparation, about the coming of the divine into this world. That thrills me to no end.

Q: What are your thoughts on singing Christmas songs in December?

In the church there's a tension about when you start singing Christmas songs in the midst of December. I

(Con't. on page 29: "SONGS.")

DISCIPLES HELPING TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD



▲ **First UMC (FUMC) in Hampton, Va.** held their “Sewing Camp” for ages 12 and up on July 9 - Aug. 27. This year was the fifth year FUMC had held the Sewing Camp that is taught by a group of women from the congregation.

▼ **West Point UMC (WPUMC) in West Point, Va.** celebrated its 150th anniversary on Sept. 15, 2019. It was a day of celebration highlighted by a sermon from visiting pastor the Rev. Christy Haga Turner, who grew up in WPUMC. Five former pastors returned for



this special day, joining the current pastor, the Rev. Jeongin Kim. Pictured are the pastors and families: Front: Glenda Rumburg, Dana Meriwether; Middle: MJ Kim, Rev. Christy Haga Turner, Rev. Gordon Meriwether, Elaine Layman; Back: Matthew Kim, Rev. Jeongin Kim, Rev. Reginald Rumburg, Beth Casey, Rev. Carlton Casey, Rev. James Cooke, Elizabeth Cooke, Rev. Anthony Layman.



▲ Reading is fundamental to a child's academic career and their future careers. One teacher in Buckingham is making sure that even those students who can't afford new books has been providing her student with a new book each month of the school year to foster their love of books and learning. Denise Gormus Bryant is a 3rd grade teacher and organist at **Browns Chapel UMC in Dillwyn, Va.** and thanks to generous donors, last year she was able to purchase 1,995 books from the Buckingham community and beyond. 📖



Midlothian's Mt. Pisgah to celebrate 175th anniversary in 2020

by Mary Ellin Arch Scarberry

MT. PISGAH UMC HAS BEEN THROUGH A LOT. Once, the church sank into a coal pit. Another time, it burned to the ground. But the church survived — and thrived.

Next year Mt. Pisgah — believed to be the oldest Methodist church in Midlothian — will celebrate its 175th anniversary.

The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported in 1937: “[T]here appears to be little doubt” Mt. Pisgah should be recognized as the “first Methodist church at Midlothian” based on “gaining information from the oldest citizens of this section of Chesterfield County.”

The first known minister was the Rev. William Edward Allen, a circuit rider who served the church in 1860. But the church formed decades earlier. Mt. Pisgah's preserved history notes that miners, “by 1840 ... may have been responsible for the Wesleyan Chapel, a probable forerunner of Mount Pisgah,” noting: “The first meetings of Mount Pisgah Church were probably under the trees on a tract of land, Falling Creek Hill, near the intersection of Old Buckingham Road and Route 60.” Today's Mt. Pisgah (the abbreviation is now pre-

ferred) sits nearby.

Church history notes: “On May 30, 1845, Nicholas Mills, president of the Old English Coal Company, donated this property to the church. Benjamin Horner, trustee, received the deed. Sometime after May 30, 1845, the original church was built on this site.” This date is recognized by Mt. Pisgah as its founding day.

The first church was a 20- by 40-foot frame building set on a foundation of local stone: “Services were held in this building until 1877, when a serious cave-in of the ground under the church, perhaps from a mine tunnel, caused the congregation to abandon the building.”

A new church was built and served until 1925, when a connecting education building was added. Three days before its dedication, on July 10, 1925, everything burned in a fire ignited, it's believed, by “spontaneous combustion from oil-soaked rags” used to finish new floors.

To make matters worse, insurance had lapsed, leaving no coverage, plus \$9,000 of debt. Despite these dire straits, rebuilding began immediately, backed by bake sales, suppers, donations, and the sale of commemorative bricks. The rebuilt church opened two years later.

Rapid growth followed. A choir formed in the 1950s; by 1995 there were six vocal and five handbell choirs totaling 211 members.

Sunday School attendance also skyrocketed, from 41 in 1926 to 835 in 1995. Desperate for space, Mt. Pisgah completed an education building in 1963, opened its current sanctuary (an octagonal brick structure seating 350) in 1983, bought a frame house in 1988 for classrooms, and extended and renovated the education building in 1995-96. In 2008, the Christian Family Life Center opened, providing gathering space for the entire congregation, activity areas for a thriving preschool, and event space for community functions.

Membership has grown and fluctuated over the years. Total membership reported for 2018 was 1,165. Today's Mt. Pisgah, led by the Rev. Bob Cooper, offers children's and youth programs, an array of Bible studies, and three Sunday services including a contemporary service with a praise band. Mt. Pisgah's ministries and community outreach include Scouting, Upward sports, a pastoral counseling practice, and a mother-of-preschoolers program, as well as a local annual Day of Service and mission opportunities around Richmond, across Virginia, and beyond.

Planning for the milestone anniversary is under way.

Note: Mt. Pisgah's history has been preserved through the years by its various church historians, who cite eyewitness accounts and source documents dating as far back as 1882. 🍁

—Mary Ellin Arch Scarberry is the Communications Branch Steward and chief of the Anniversary Committee for Mt. Pisgah.

LIVING THE WORD



For 42 years, the Rev. John Peters served churches in the Virginia Conference. For the last six years, he has served as Executive director of the Association of Educational Institutions (AEI) representing the six Virginia Conference United Methodist schools. Since retirement, Peters is serving as a mentor to local pastors in Charlottesville and a trustee at Randolph Macon College. Peters and his wife Kay reside in Charlottesville.

December 1, 2019

1 Chronicles 15: 1-3, 14-16, 25-29

In 1993 a most remarkable event occurred in Africa. In the country once known as Rhodesia, during its period of Apartheid, a new nation, Zimbabwe, was born. There in Zimbabwe The United Methodist Church partnered with the nation to create Africa University. This was a unique opportunity for the church to work alongside an emerging nation to provide an exceptional school of higher learning coupled with the principles of faith.

How does one celebrate such an event that seems to point to the strong movement of the spirit? Patrick Matsikenyiri, a graduate of Shenandoah University and a frequent visitor to the Virginia Conference, gave remarkable leadership to that worship and celebration as the director of the Africa University Choir. There was glorious singing and dancing amid the playing of African instruments. The choir was dressed in beautiful, bright colors representative of their different lands and tribes. Bishops from across the world were present dressed in their episcopal regalia. Even the new President of Zimbabwe was there honoring this most auspicious occasion.

What does one do to appropriately honor such an inbreaking of God? In today's text, King David speaks of the carrying of the Ark of the Covenant in the midst of the people of Israel. The Ark represented the very presence of God. Note the celebration and worship described at this event. There was playing of trumpets and ram's horns. There was singing of choirs. There were the resounding cymbals, harps and lyres. The author of 1 Chronicles 15 tells us the seas roared, the fields exalted, and the trees sang.

How do we rightfully honor God through worship? Today's Scripture may well remind us of our church's worship at Easter, a time when we preachers try

to preach our very best sermon, a time when our choirs seek to offer their finest anthems, a time when we may have trumpets and kettle drums playing. Our churches may resonate with traditional, contemporary or gospel music, but to rightfully honor the presence of God like King David, we, too, ought to "pull out all the stops." No half-hearted acknowledgment will ever suffice when in the presence of the living God!

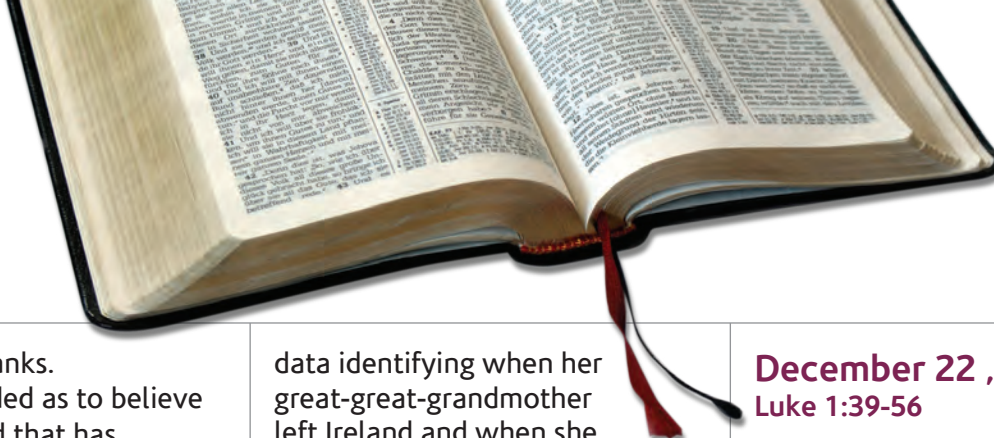
December 8, 2019

1 Chronicles 16: 7-36

In the Gospel of Luke chapter 17:11-19, we find the story of 10 lepers who come to Jesus seeking healing. Because of their horrific condition, their society treats them as if they are already dead. They cannot go into the temple. They can have no interaction with society. They are seen as unclean and an abomination. Jesus meets them on the road and has compassion on them and heals them. He sends them to the priests who will certify that they are healed, that the leprosy is gone!

After the 10 are healed and given new life only one returns to thank Jesus. This one was a Samaritan whose race was often hated by faithful Jews. All were healed, but only one expressed gratitude.

What does this story say to us? It was Shakespeare who wrote in King Lear, "how sharper than a serpent's tooth is a thankless child." The author of 1 Chronicles 16 reminds the nation of Israel of all God has done for them. This is the God who brought them out of slavery in Egypt. This is the God who provided manna in the wilderness and water from a rock. This is the God who brought them out of Babylonian captivity to rebuild Jerusalem. This is the God who was with them in battles against their enemies. We find in our text that King David reminded the people of all the many things God had done for them and urged



them to give thanks.

Are we so jaded as to believe that all the good that has occurred in our life is the result of our own doing? Do we fail to recognize the activity of the spirit on our behalf? The Scriptures are full of these amazing acts of God. In addition to the biblical stories we are invited to tell our own stories of God's saving mercies and never let a day pass without offering sincere thanks to God.

December 15, 2019 1 Chronicles 15: 1-3, 14-16, 23-29

Ancestry.com has become all the rage. The PBS television show has so many of us intrigued. If you want to find out about your ancestors, where you came from, those unknown in your family tree, all you have to do is place your saliva in a sealed envelope, send it along with a small fee and, presto! Your family history will be sent to you. Your DNA will be researched to find answers to questions about previous generations. It appears to be so simple.

Some years ago while traveling in Salt Lake City, Utah, we went to the Mormon Tabernacle. Very close by was the enormous Mormon library which was supposed to contain more genealogical records than nearly anywhere else in the world. My wife wanted information about a great-great-grandmother she believed had come from Ireland. Not only was she able to locate information about her relative, she was given the ship manifest

data identifying when her great-great-grandmother left Ireland and when she arrived in the United States. We were flabbergasted to receive so much unknown family history. We love to be able to fill in the blanks about past generations.

In today's Scripture reading, King David receives some news he probably was not anxious to hear. The prophet Nathan tells David that God has revealed to him that David will not build a temple for God. This must have been very disappointing for David. After all, he was Israel's greatest King. He was chosen by God while only a shepherd boy. He had great successes for God, so why should he not build the temple during his reign? Nathan informed David that David's family members who came after him would be the builders.

We love to know about our past, but what about our future? When my sons were born, my father sent them a letter about our family. He talked about faith, our connection to the church and our reading of the Bible. He believed, as do I, that it is critical to pass on this part of our family tradition.

Truthfully, we can do nothing about our past; however, we can influence the future. King David was told his future family would build the temple. That must have been reassuring for him. Will our children and grandchildren be engaged in building God's kingdom? By sharing the biblical stories of faith along with our own stories of faith we can plant the seeds of faith for the next generation.

December 22, 2019 Luke 1:39-56

Finally, on this the fourth Sunday of Advent, we have a familiar Advent/Christmas story. We have been waiting for this. It is the famous Magnificat—"the song of Mary." This text has been the inspiration for great musical composers. In more contemporary services we may have heard the song "Mary Did You Know?" This music elicits powerful emotions.

This story is at the very heart of the Christmas narrative. Luke's Gospel reminds us that Mary was just a peasant girl, perhaps not older than 15 or 16. She is given the message from the angel Gabriel that she will bear the son of God. Out of all the women of the earth, she was chosen to be this vessel to deliver the Messiah. She speaks, "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my savior, for He has considered the lowly estate of his hand-maiden."

Mary has deep gratitude in her heart, but hers is a mixed blessing. She lives in a culture where a pregnancy out of wedlock could be disastrous. In fact, she could be in danger of being stoned to death. And, of course, she can't know the anguish of the cross her beloved son will have to endure. Nevertheless, her response to this news of the coming son of God is sheer joy. Her message is also

(Con't. on page 30: "LIVING WORD.")

The 2019 Living the Word devotions are from the *Standard Lesson Commentary* from Cokesbury. Note: you can follow the December readings for the 2019 Bible Challenge from Bishop Lewis on pg 30.

CLERGY & DIACONAL



DEATHS



The Rev. Ward L. Donat, 95, died September 25, 2019, in Roanoke, Va. He served as pastor at these churches:

Collinsville, Providence-Woodland, Mt. Carmel, Beverly Street, and Woodlawn in Roanoke; Beulah in Richmond; Thalia and St. John's in Norfolk; and Wesley in Vienna. He also served as Roanoke District superintendent before retiring in 1989.



The Rev. Dr. James Norfleet Earley, II, 65, died October 11, 2019, in Poquoson. Jim served the Virginia

Conference of The United Methodist Church for 45 years. During his ministry he served Good Hope, Chesapeake; Harrelson-Carmel, N. Georgia Conference; St. Mark, Portsmouth; Centenary, Chase City; Tabernacle, Virginia Beach; Bruen Chapel, Fairfax County; Lincolnia, Alexandria; Nimmo, Virginia Beach; Park Place, Norfolk; Walker Chapel, Arlington; Tabernacle, Poquoson.

Emily Ann Brothers, 87, of Assawoman, wife of George Brothers, died October 20, 2019 in Newport News. She was a retired elementary school teacher and retired as an associate member in The United Methodist Church.

Linda Crandall Worthington, 87, of Chevy Chase, Md., died October 20, 2019. Her daughter, the Rev. Judy Worthington, is pastor of Warwick Memorial UMC, York River District.

Nancy Bracey, 88, of Norfolk, Va., died October 11, 2019. She was a former Norfolk District secretary.

The Rev. Dr. James Norfleet Earley, II, 65, died October 11, 2019, in Poquoson. Jim served the Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church for 45 years. During his ministry he served Good Hope, Chesapeake; Harrelson-Carmel, N. Georgia Conference; St. Mark, Portsmouth; Centenary, Chase City; Tabernacle, Virginia Beach; Bruen Chapel, Fairfax County; Lincolnia, Alexandria; Nimmo, Virginia Beach; Park Place, Norfolk; Walker Chapel, Arlington; Tabernacle, Poquoson.

Reba Edwards, 90, died October 9, 2019 in Eden. Va. Her son is the **Rev. Bob Edwards**, retired.

Kenneth David Argenbright, 88, of Waynesboro, Va., died October 8, 2019. He served The United Methodist Church as the founding minister of the former Wayne Hills Methodist Church in Waynesboro and then became a Minister of Christian Education at Community United Methodist Church and Arlington Forest United Methodist Church, as well as at churches in South Carolina and Texas.

Steven Charles Lambert, 72, died October 7, 2019, in Natchez, Miss. After retiring from private practice, Steve served as the United Methodist Church's General

Counsel in Nashville, Tenn. His served as a board member and chairman of the board of Wesley Theological Seminary and the board of Ferrum College.

Hazel Hunt, 88, of Danville, Va., died October 5, 2019. She was the widow of **the Rev. Dana Hunt**, who served churches in the Virginia Conference and in North Carolina.

Patrick Neal Cline, 55, of Broadway, Va., died October 4, 2019. He was the husband of the **Rev. Debra Cline**, pastor of the Singers Glen Charge, Harrisonburg District.

Patricia Ann Honaker Talbott, 84, of Mt. Salon, Va., died September 23, 2019. Her son is the **Rev. Bob Talbott**, associate pastor of Asbury UMC, Harrisonburg; her daughter-in-law, the **Rev. Carrie Talbott**, is pastor of St. James UMC, Pleasant Valley.

Gary Lindsey, 69, of Woodbridge, Va., died Sept. 19, 2019. He was the husband of **Myra Lindsey**, editor of the Virginia United Methodist Historical Society Heritage.

Dorothy Ricketts Barbour, 102, died August 13, 2019, in Huntsville, Ala. She served as a diaconal minister and deaconess in the Virginia Conference. Her son is the **Rev. William A. Ricketts**, a retired elder in the Virginia Conference. 🌸



("SONGS," cont. from page 23.)

think it's important to acknowledge that because we're not simply acting like we're waiting for Jesus to be born, that's not the meaning of Advent, Christ has already been born. So it's ok to sing Christmas hymns. But wait some. Songs like "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" can then build to "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming" or "O Little Town of Bethlehem;" these songs have Advent feelings, have Advent expressions in them, so it's ok to bring those out, just be thoughtful about how you do it.

Q: What makes singing beautiful?

People sometimes mistake beautiful singing as what an individual does; whereas it's the act of singing together that's so beautiful. That's what we're committed to doing in the life of the church. People say, 'Oh you wouldn't want to hear me sing.' Yes, we would. Absolutely we want to hear you sing and God wants to hear you sing because it's beautiful when we do this thing together and that's what church is all about. 🎵

-The Rev. Drew Willson is pastor of Boulevard UMC and minister with young adults at Centenary UMC in Richmond.



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("LIVING WORD," cont. from page 27.)

quite revolutionary.

When the troops of General Cornwallis were stunningly defeated at Yorktown by the Continental Army of George Washington, the British band played the tune "The World Turned Upside Down." How appropriate, for who could have imagined that the greatest army in the world would be defeated by the upstart colonies!

Likewise, God entering the world in human form turned our world upside down. Hear again Luke's Gospel (chapter 1: 51-53): "He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty."

The coming of the Christ changes everything. Jesus, who was with God even in creation, has taken on our lowly estate. He has come to be with us in joys and sorrows, in triumphs and tragedies. The rich, the powerful, the kings of the earth will not have the last word. That word will be spoken by God's son, Jesus. Hear the words of Mary's relative Elizabeth "Why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" The spirit revealed the incarnation to Elizabeth and she, too, understands God's incredible inbreaking in sending Jesus.

Luke's Gospel has often been called the Gospel of the women because of the key leadership women play in Luke's stories. Some religious traditions have

sought to make Mary almost God-like or part of the Trinity. That may be a stretch for many of us. Perhaps we can find no better description of her than what is written in Luke 1:38. When Gabriel announces that she will bear the son of God she replies, "I am the handmaiden of the Lord let it be to me according to your word." Mary was incredibly faithful and obedient. Mary's witness to us is to faithfully fulfill the will of God. Go and do likewise!

December 29, 2019

1 Chronicles 17: 16-23

On this last Sunday of the year, David's message is clear. "There is no God like you." David proclaims the absolute singularity of God who has made Israel his people forever. Perhaps we recall the contemporary worship song "Shout to The Lord" that speaks of how we should praise this one God. The good news is that through Christ we, like Israel, have been made his people too! 📖

Bishop's Bible Challenge readings for DECEMBER

Dec. 1	2 Chron. 25-27; Lk. 9:37-62
Dec. 2	2 Chron. 28-29; Lk. 10:1-24
Dec. 3	2 Chron. 30-31; Lk. 10:25-42
Dec. 4	2 Chron. 32-33; Lk. 11:1-28
Dec. 5	2 Chron. 34-36; Lk. 11:29-54
Dec. 6	Esth. 1-2; Lk. 12:1-31
Dec. 7	Esth. 3-5; Lk. 12:32-59
Dec. 8	Esth. 6-8; Lk. 13:1-22
Dec. 9	Esth. 9-10; Lk. 13:23-35
Dec. 10	Hagg. 1-2; Lk. 14:1-24
Dec. 11	Josh. 1-3; Lk. 14:25-35
Dec. 12	Josh. 4-6; Lk. 15:1-10
Dec. 13	Josh. 7-9; Lk. 15:11-32
Dec. 14	Josh. 10-12; Lk. 16
Dec. 15	Josh. 13-15; Lk. 17:1-19
Dec. 16	Josh. 16-18; Lk. 17:20-37
Dec. 17	Josh. 19-21; Lk. 18:1-23
Dec. 18	Josh. 22-24; Lk. 18:24-43
Dec. 19	Neh. 1-3; Lk. 19:1-27
Dec. 20	Neh. 4-6; Lk. 19:28-48
Dec. 21	Neh. 7-9; Lk. 20:1-26
Dec. 22	Neh. 10-11; Lk. 20:27-47
Dec. 23	Neh. 12-13; Lk. 21:1-19
Dec. 24	Micah 1-3; Lk. 21:20-38
Dec. 25	Micah 4-5; Lk. 22:1-20
Dec. 26	Micah 6-7; Lk. 22:21-46
Dec. 27	Zech. 1-4; Lk. 22:47-71
Dec. 28	Zech. 5-8; Lk. 23:1-25
Dec. 29	Zech. 9-12; Lk. 23:26-56
Dec. 30	Zech. 13-14; Lk. 24:1-35
Dec. 31	Mal. 1-4; Lk. 24:36-53

ONE LAST WORD



“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



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