

# Advocate



**UMCOR**  
provides hope  
and sustenance  
after Typhoon  
Haiyan slams  
the Philippines



# FROM THE EDITOR



Neill Caldwell  
Editor

Filipino  
friends need  
our help  
now



A few years ago I was lucky to be able to travel to the Philippines with members of the denomination's Judicial Council. We stayed at the historic old Hotel Manila – historic because it had been General MacArthur's headquarters during World War II.

Most of our time was spent inside the hotel in the capital, an incredibly busy city of 11 million people. But one day we ventured out into the countryside, boarding a rickety school bus to take us to Cabanatuan, north of Manila, to visit the home of one of the Judicial Council members. We also went to a Wesleyan university and the site of the prison camp where about 500 American POWs were rescued by a daring raid on Jan. 30, 1945. Our group also attended a session of one of the annual conferences in the Manila metro area, which happened to be meeting the same week we were there.

Our hosts treated us like visiting royalty. In fact, when we visited the American military cemetery in Manila, our van driver told the guard at the gate that we were "U.S. diplomats"... probably the only time in my life I will get that description! Again and again the Philippine locals talked about the long relationship between our two nations. The Philippines was a U.S. territory after our defeat of Spain in the Spanish-American War, and of course we were teammates in the war. Two huge American military bases – one for the Navy and one for the Air Force – used to provide many jobs for Filipinos before they were shut down a few years ago.

All this highlights the special relationship we have with the Philippines, a location where The United Methodist Church is very strong indeed. So when I began to hear about the damage caused by Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, my ears perked up. That nation is composed of 7,000 islands and is often hit by major storms. But Haiyan (called Yolanda by the Filipinos) may have been the largest, most powerful storm in history. It wiped those fragile islands in the central part of the country clean as if they were swept with a giant broom. The images have been amazing, the devastation complete.

So now United Methodists do what we do best. We respond with a relief agency that is second to none in the world. We organize and call on our connection to get supplies, funds and people-power where they need to go. We offer each person in a United Methodist pew the opportunity to give a donation knowing every penny of that donation will go to help people in need.

Lynne and I made a small contribution to the Advance for Haiyan relief as a way to honor all of those wonderful, friendly people I met on my visit to the Philippines. Maybe you also have special reasons to give to this disaster response, or the November tornadoes in the Midwest, or ongoing Hurricane Sandy relief efforts, or any of the many things that need our aid. Or maybe you give simply because it's the right thing to do. 🍀

Neill Caldwell

Connecting with the

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Items should be typed (preferably sent via e-mail) or printed legibly, no more than 100 words, and of conference-wide interest. Complete names of individuals, churches and districts should be included. Because of space limitations, the Local Church section prohibits news items related to church members' birthdays (of less than 100 years), wedding anniversaries, receptions for moving and/or retiring pastors, photos of traditional Christmas trees or Easter trees/crosses, and any item over two months old. 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.

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**On the cover:** A young boy leaves an UMCOR food distribution carrying food for his family following Typhoon Haiyan in Dagami, Philippines. Page 2: Survivors of Typhoon Haiyan receive emergency food supplies from the United Methodist Committee on Relief in Tacloban, Philippines. Above: Survivors of Typhoon Haiyan pick through debris piled up by the storm in Tacloban, Philippines looking for their lost possessions. UMNS photos by Mike DuBose.

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## Worship with a room full of bishops is once-in-a-lifetime opportunity

By George Riggins

Many months ago I decided that I would go to Lake Junaluska in November to earn a continuing education credit, as Dr. Jim Fleming led one of his “Experiencing the World of the Bible” seminars. Little did I know what a blessed and fortunate choice that would be. The seminar was very helpful and illuminating. But I also learned that the United Methodist Council of Bishops would be holding its annual meeting of the full Council, which includes bishops outside of the United States and retirees, at Lake Junaluska while I would be there. This amounted to what is likely a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity

Bishop Pete Torio from the Philippines leads a small group discussion during the Council of Bishops meeting at Lake Junaluska.  
UMNS photo by Kay Panovec



nity for me and for my wife.

She was able to attend two of the morning worship services of the Council while I was attending Dr. Fleming’s seminar. She raves about both of those experiences. Admittedly, it is very special to be passing the peace with bishops during a service of Holy Communion and to hear sermons from two different bishops on consecutive days!

Both of us were also able to attend the Tuesday afternoon plenary session. It featured a multimedia progress report on the Four Areas of Focus for the current quadrennium that was presented by Bishops Warner Brown and Sally Dyck. I wish that every United Methodist lay and clergy member could have been in that room to hear the very encouraging and inspirational report on what God has enabled us to do so far in each of the four areas. We heard stories from several church planters, including the Virginia Conference’s own Rev. Amanda Garber, on the exciting growth of new faith communities. We learned that the death rate due to malaria had been cut in half during the past six years, largely due to the efforts of The United Methodist Church’s “Imagine No Malaria” campaign and our partners in the Nothing But Nets ministry.

There was a palpable sense of excitement and gratitude in the room as table groups of bishops shared some of



The Rev. George Riggins

the highlights of three rounds of discussions between segments of the progress report. Bishop Bruce Ough also offered insightful comments at the end of the presentation.

Another moving moment near the end of the afternoon session was when the three active bishops in the Philippines were invited to come to the front for a session of prayer led by Bishop Greg Palmer. These three bishops had left the Philippines days earlier when the super typhoon struck their native land, and they were preparing to return to their people in the midst of all of the destruction. I cannot recall a more powerful time of prayer in all of my life.

I also had the opportunity to speak with several of the bishops individually, including Bishop Young Jin Cho, Bishop Charlene Kammerer, Bishop Robert Schnase and Bishop Tom Stockton. What a blessing!

I am grateful to be a United Methodist Christian. Yes, it is a challenging time for The United Methodist Church, but I am personally very encouraged! 🍀

—The Rev. George Riggins is pastor of Monroe UMC in the Lynchburg District.

## Is United Methodist Church just a majoritarian democracy?

By Morgan Guyton

Thomas Frank, the guy who wrote our textbook on United Methodist polity, has made a plea for UMC bishops not to put pastors on trial who conduct same-sex marriages (like the 50 who did so in November). I have been trying to lay low on this issue for awhile. My position has been to honor what the *Discipline* says for me to do while being obediently prophetic regarding God’s truth as I have encountered it. I was actually going to write a post stating that if pastors engage in civil disobedience, then the consequences are part of the witness. However, I realized as I read Frank’s plea that the paradigm I was applying to our gay wedding crisis is to presume that United Methodism is appropriately analogous to our broken secular democracy: a two-party majoritarian system with lobbyists, caucuses and hyperventilating pundits.

If the principles of majoritarian democracy are what is most sacrosanct about United Methodist polity, then for 50 Methodist pastors to stand to-

gether and bless a same-sex marriage after the General Conference decision of 2012 is basically analogous to the government shutdown. If the side that loses a vote disregards the outcome and sabotages the governing process, then there is no longer a basis for having a democracy together. As long as we’re accepting uncritically the principles of majoritarian democracy, I can understand why even United Methodist “moderates” are incredulously scandalized over the rebellion of their fellow pastors over gay marriage.

But the legitimate question Frank raises is whether an organization of pastors ought to behave like a secular democracy. He writes:

*The continuation of church trials is a disgrace to our heritage. It is divisive, bringing interference from interest groups outside the annual conference and introducing the language of “prosecution,” “defense team,” “conviction,” “judge,” and “jury” to our church as if we were all players in “Law and Order.” We are not considering criminal acts; we are deliberating about pastoral judgment.*

If you’ve accepted that The United Methodist Church is supposed to behave like a secular majoritarian democracy, then there’s nothing offensive about “legislation” or “prosecution” being the most important aspects

of our polity. But I would contend that if our connection really is nothing more than a legislative body in which two parties – Good News and the Reconciling Movement – duke it out for political power, then we deserve schism, independent of whether pastors get away with defying the *Book of Discipline* or not.

If we are a pastoral body and not merely a political entity, then the question of whether someone should be defrocked over marrying gay people is not so cut and dried. If I were involved in such a decision, I would be interested in whether the pastor’s decision to violate the *Discipline* was a matter of personal activism or a pastoral commitment to the community being served by the congregation. Was this act imposed on the pastor’s congregation in a way that wrecked community and destroyed discipleship, or was it the result of a prayerful discernment journey that the community took together?

I would want to hear what the pastor believes about what the Bible says in Leviticus 18, Romans 1, etc. Does he/she believe that the Bible condemns same-sex intimacy and says essentially screw the Bible? Or has he/she taken the Bible’s authority seriously through years of wrestling with a mind prayerfully open to God’s teaching before coming to an interpretation of scripture that doesn’t condemn homosexuality?

When the church defrocks pastors because of things like embezzlement or adultery, the pastor’s deed involves a serious betrayal of the community that can ruin the spiritual lives of congregation members for years to come. Such pastors are enough of a threat to the discipleship of congregation members that the tragic loss of their gifts for ministry is not a mitigating circumstance to be factored into whether or not to remove their ministry credentials.

But is the same true about pastors who break the rules because of their commitment to the discipleship of gay people within their congregations? Is there any other rule in the *Discipline* about religious ceremonies you’re not allowed to perform at your discretion in your own respective charge? We could hold an interfaith service with Satanists. We could sponsor a Klan rally inside our sanctuary. We could pray God’s blessing over the drones before they fly off to blow up Pakistani civilians. All without any specific chargeable offenses under our denominational polity.

In any case, regardless of what you believe about how cut and dried the prosecution of rebel pastors should be, it seems pretty clear that the real failure of our connectionalism (if we are in fact more than a majoritarian secular

(Continued on page 6: “Crisis”)



# COMMENTARY

("Crisis," continued from page 5)

democracy) has already happened when we started to behave like political voting blocs, and there's no attempt to learn from each other or say anything for the benefit of anyone outside of our own echo chambers.

So when Frank says, "Our church is desperately in need of open conversation on these pastoral issues. We are retreating into our various camps and avoiding the hard work of engaging each other's views," I say amen! What would happen if the Reconciling Network and Good News teamed up on a mission trip together and got to know each other as human beings? The burden that those involved in this battle are not accepting is to think and act pastorally towards one another. For a pastor, it's not a victory

when your side wins a bitterly contentious vote; it's a victory when the people who disagree with you know that you love them personally and genuinely.

What would happen if the way we discerned questions like this as a body was not to strategize and put together slates of electoral candidates like a bunch of secular political operatives, but to actually pray and fast together throughout our connection, to meet actual gay Christians and get to know them well enough to see if and how their holiness has been compromised by their sexual orientation?

What if we were having conversations in non-decision-making contexts about a holistic framework for thinking about sexuality in which the biblical perspectives were examined and brought into serious and thoughtful engagement with critiques and challenges from modern psychology, feminism, queer studies, etc? I want to hear someone take on the challenge of explaining why it's okay for United Methodists to bracket Paul's patriarchal complementary views of gender as "culturally contextual" when it comes to female ordination but not when it comes to same-gender intimacy.

What The United Methodist Church has essentially told the world through our polity is that the vote we hold every four years about gay people is the one thing that really matters to us.

All the prayers and potato drops and so forth are so much posturing, because ultimately United Methodist pastors' "faithfulness to the covenant" is measured by a single marker, whether or not they refuse to marry the gay couples who worship in their congregations.

It doesn't matter whether we preach Southern Baptist sermons or play exclusively Calvinist praise songs. We can tell our congregations not to pay their apportionments. We can do a Bible study on why every single point in the *Social Principles* is utterly wrong. We can rip all the Charles Wesley hymns out of our hymnals. We can burn John Wesley in effigy. We can talk smack about bishops from the pulpit. We can denigrate the general agencies of our church every day on Facebook. Because the only way we can be "unfaithful" to our covenant as United Methodist elders is to marry the gays.

If our covenant is really no more than a commitment to honoring the principles of majoritarian democracy with regard to a single vote that happens every four years, then we don't have enough of a covenant to call it a schism when we break up, which honestly might be the best idea.

At the very least, the two sides of the resulting split would have to find something different to build a covenant around. 🍌

-The Rev. Morgan Guyton is associate pastor at Burke UMC.



## The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

### Taking partnership with Mozambique to the next level

By Glenn Rowley

In his book, *Cultivating Fruitfulness*, Bishop Robert Schnase writes, "Churches that practice risk-taking mission and service value engagement and long-term relationship. They measure the impact of their work in lives changed rather than in money sent or buildings constructed." The Virginia Conference is poised to be a leader in advocating that theology of mission in all our churches and as a conference.

In October, Molly Wilmarth, chair of the Mozambique team of our conference *Initiatives of Hope* (IOH), and I travelled to Mozambique to meet with the leadership of the two Mozambique annual conferences as we work to advance our long-term partnership. The goals of the meetings were to renew our commitments to one another and to re-define a mutual partnership in mission.

Like many mission partnerships, there has been a largely unintentional inequality because of the economic disparity and natural dependency that comes with a donor-receiver relationship. "Mutuality in Mission" is a catchphrase that has been a part of the lexicon of mission used by our church for many years. It goes hand-in-hand with "Partnership in Mission," but how both partners envision their respective roles in the partnership can easily be

misinterpreted, and the lines of mutuality can become blurred.

As Virginia and Mozambique sat down at a common table, we experienced a time of spirit and grace that brought our more than 13-year relationship into much closer focus. During those years, multiple volunteer teams have journeyed to Mozambique, and Virginia churches and individuals have hosted Mozambican clergy and lay members. This connection has created relationships that have served both partners and enriched the lives of many. It is the blessing of those relationships that has sparked a rekindling of the mission spirit and passion for the future.

The IOH team has been wrestling with a new vision of mission to guide their theology of mission with our mission partners. That vision is to promote a "Mission of Presence." A theology of mission of presence is to acknowledge relationships as the foundation of partnership rather than donor-receiver.

The Virginia Conference is seeking and praying for a new partnership with Mozambique that does not view Mozambique as an object of our mission activity but rather a mutual partner sharing and discovering how grace can be shared and the gifts of the Spirit revealed.

"We are very thankful for the Virginia Conference's long commitment

to us and their willingness to share with us in an open and truthful way so that our relationship can become stronger," said Bishop Joachina Nhanala during the roundtable discussion. Bishop Nhanala has a great appreciation for the idea of a mission of presence. She has spoken and written of her belief that nothing is more powerful in ministry than allowing the Holy Spirit to be revealed simply by being present with people.

In working to prioritize our presence there, the discussions led to an understanding that a major priority of our partnership is working to strengthen education and formation for both laity and clergy. Also to provide learning opportunities for young adults from Mozambique and Virginia to travel and share faith experiences. A first step in this process is for the two conferences to sign a memorandum of understanding which will be in place in January 2014.

Molly and I returned with a renewed sense of a common understanding of what it means to be partners with our sisters and brothers in Mozambique as well as a renewed commitment to the Initiatives of Hope and its mission of fostering long-term relationships built on mutuality so lives will be changed on both sides of the ocean. 🍌

-The Rev. Glenn Rowley is director of the conference office of Justice and Missional Excellence.



Top: The cross & flame on a United Methodist church. Bottom: Dot Ivey with Amado Mucambe, who studied at Shenandoah University and was an IOH intern for the conference.



Bobby Prince (left) and Joe Openshaw were married in Alabama by Bishop Melvin Talbert in November. File photo.





# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



## College students from across Virginia Conference earn scholarships

Thirty-five Virginia Conference students are among those receiving loans from the Office of Loans and Scholarships of the General Board of Higher Education Ministry (GBHEM). They are part of the more than 2,500 students around the connection who are receiving a total of \$5 million in scholarship money for 2013.

These Virginia students are receiving a total of \$50,400.

United Methodists' financial support during United Methodist Student Day, World Communion Sunday and Native American Sunday help fund these loans and scholarships. The remaining funds for these awards come from gifts, annuities and endowments GBHEM has invested and administered for decades.

Students, home churches and institutions are: Nathan Anderson,

Central UMC-Clifton Forge, Yale Divinity School; Avrey Ardis, Rocky Mount UMC, Ferrum College; Robert Bacary, First UMC Winchester, George Mason University; Kayla Buechner, Ebenezer UMC Stafford, Shenandoah University; Laura Doan, The Vine UMC, Northern Virginia Community College; Sean Devolites, Herndon UMC, Wesley Theological Seminary; Joshua Diggs, Galilee UMC-Edwardsville, Virginia Commonwealth University; David Downer, Old Bridge UMC, Proctor School of Theology, Virginia Union University; Taylor Early, Woodlawn UMC, Virginia Commonwealth University; Amanda Farmer, Bonsack UMC, Ferrum College; Elizabeth Faucette, Hopewell UMC, Methodist University; Samantha Gangwer, Mount Clinton UMC, Wesley Theological Seminary; Maggie Hasselbach, Calvary UMC-Arlington, Wesley Theological Seminary; Britton

Hipple, Front Royal UMC, Virginia Wesleyan College; Hannah Henry, St. James UMC-Alexandria, Longwood University; Arum Kim, St. Stephens UMC, Wesley Theological Seminary; Minoo Kim, Korean UMC of Greater Washington, Duke Divinity School; Jaeson Kwak, Emmaus Stratford Hills UMC, University of Virginia; Jeremy Koontz, Gordonsville UMC, Wesley Theological Seminary; Jonathan Lamb, Page UMC, Asbury Theological Seminary; Ryan LaRock, Haygood UMC, Duke Divinity School; David Levy, RISE Harrisonburg, Duke Divinity School; Kristianne Macaraeg, Resurrection UMC, University of Pennsylvania; Michelle Matthews, Courthouse Community UMC, Duke Divinity School; Heather Mayberry, Mount Comfort UMC, Ferrum College; James McCarter, Williamsburg UMC, Georgia Tech; Joshua Orndorff, Culpeper UMC, Duke Divinity School; Brianna Peterson, St. Andrews UMC Portsmouth, Virginia Wesleyan College; Seth Seaman, First UMC Fox Hill, Asbury Theological Seminary; Jeff Seals, Main Street UMC-Bedford, Virginia Tech; Talor Sessions, Wesley Memorial UMC Richmond, Virginia Tech; Helen Smith, Regester Chapel UMC, Agnes Scott College; Tim Ward, Floris UMC, Wesley Theological Seminary; Andrew Ware, St. Andrews UMC Virginia Beach, Wesley Theological Seminary; Sarah Willis, Lakeside UMC, Liberty University.



# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

## Teen just starting school in Ugandan is reminder of impact of Stop Hunger Now meals

By Steve Hickle

Who is an orphan? One who has lost both parents? Or just one? A Ugandan daily newspaper, New Vision, reports that "At least 12.3 percent of children in Uganda are orphans. According to 2012 statistics, 420,000 of these orphans have lost only a mother and 1,330,000 a father. However, 402,500 of these are total orphans, having lost both parents, and these children are the more likely to end up in orphanages"

Pastor Solomon Mwesige of Bulenga, Uganda, has heard the cry of the orphans, as has his congregation, Good News Church. In space that could be called a "mission" of Good News Church, a weekday school is filled with orphans.

Typically, local police find orphans wandering the city and bring them to places like this. The police ask, "Can you take this child?" Yes! Not only does the school provide temporary shelter, but with the support of the church for uniforms and a hot noonday meal, members receive the children into their own homes.

There on a "vision trip" with Stop Hunger Now, Mwesige guided me, along with Sara Bryant of Raleigh, N.C., to this orphanage – at the literal and metaphorical end of the road. The biggest

room, with a dirt floor, came alive with Sunday worship and now fairly teemed with children.

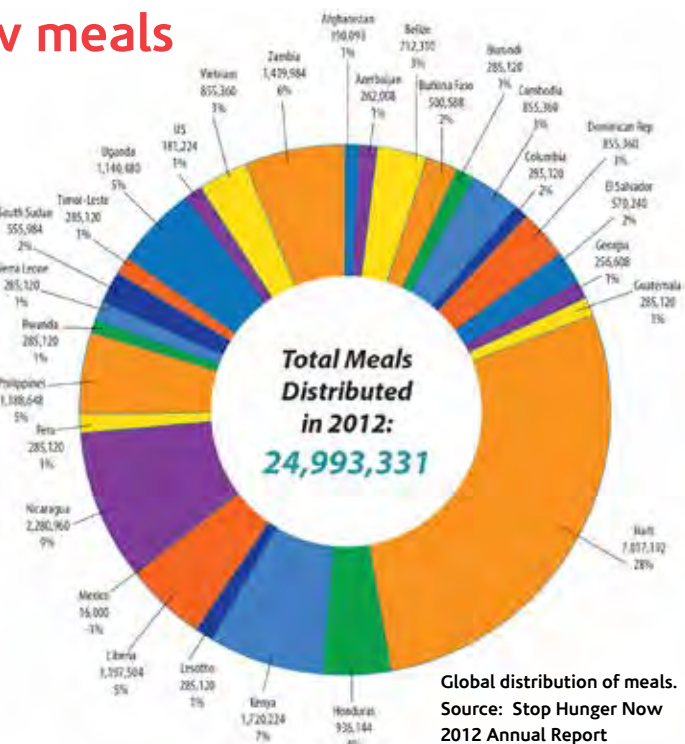
Pastor Solomon turned to us and said, "Do you see the big girl?" In the midst of primary first, second and third grade children, she stood out. He said, "I thought she was here to help the teacher, but she has just begun school."

She engaged us again and again with her inviting smile, a teenager just beginning primary grade 1.

As we toured the facility, we saw her a second time, this time with flip-flops protecting her hands – she was unable to walk because of her withered legs.

It was a blessing first of all for her even to be enrolled in school, but also to have a meal provided in the middle of the day.

[As a somewhat funny aside, when she finished the same portion the first-, second- and third-graders



had been given, she shyly asked, "May I have some more?" At that point she just completely burst out laughing, as did everyone else, as they gave her more. It was her first day, and the school officials had not adjusted the portion size for someone so much older that the

other students.] Providing Stop Hunger Now meals makes possible schools like this one, but hope for children, especially "the big girl," is a gift from God.

-The Rev. Steve Hickle is the Faith Outreach Director for Stop Hunger Now





# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



## How Camp Rainbow Connection has shaped my life

By C. Randy Early

I had no idea how much of an impact Camp Rainbow Connection would have on my life when I first signed up to volunteer in 1995. As a 15-year-old at Ramsey Memorial UMC, I had my eyes on the ministry, as well as enlisting in the military, becoming a detective, or being a chef. I will never forget leaving church one early spring Sunday afternoon when everything snapped into focus: I wanted to work with individuals with disabilities. That was unexpected. It had never even made a place on my list of potential options.

Raised in a house with a father who was an engineer, my brain operated in a rather regimented manner, and continues to do so. Problem solving, geometry, lists and logic provided the structure around which I approached the world. However, that was only half

of my makeup. The other half included the influence of my mother, a lifetime teacher who made puppets, played the autoharp, sang and thought in more abstract terms. Although my brain was steering me towards a regimented life, my heart had different plans. Working with others, for others, was my new calling.

Despite having essentially zero exposure to individuals with disabilities up to that point in my life, when I left church on that memorable Sunday, I knew that I would spend my life dedicated to this often overlooked and underserved part of society.

Fortunately, my minister at the time was Rev. Jim McClung. Jim was a vibrant man, full of songs, hugs, stories and laughter. He was also the founder of Camp Rainbow Connection. Although I was a year too young to officially volunteer, Jim saw fit to look beyond

that, as he thought it was important to make the most of my newly identified interest. For this, I will be forever grateful to him. In looking back, this moment of being encouraged to volunteer at Camp Rainbow Connection was the most influential singular event in my life.

Camp Rainbow Connection has guided and shaped nearly every aspect of my life. My best friends are nearly all connections I have made through camp. Although it is difficult to explain to people who have not lived it, the bond that is built over the course of a week working with others, 24 hours a day, in a cooperative, faith-based environment is a tie that goes beyond other friendships. Volunteering at camp guided my life and career path towards becoming a teacher of students with intellectual disabilities. Through designing t-shirts, creating games for the midway, and developing ideas for mission projects, I have had the opportunity to stretch myself to the point of finding and fostering latent skills that I never knew I had. Above all, Camp Rainbow Connection has made me a better version of myself. Through my relationships with campers and staff, I have had extraordinary opportunities to observe the best and most pure examples of kindness, selflessness, love, compassion, determina-

tion, patience, acceptance, gratitude and peace, all of which I continually try to implement into my life.

Being connected to something like camp over a period of time, I have experienced ongoing changes. One of the biggest and most notable changes comes in the form of people. This occurs for campers and staff alike, because of changes in living situations, familial responsibilities, health and, unfortunately, death.

In the spring of 2013 I attended the funeral of Cary, a long-time staff member and devout Christian. His memorial service was a time of celebration. When the minister spoke of

his life, he included his family, coworkers, teammates, and ended by mentioning Cary's Camp Rainbow Connection family. The minister concluded by speaking to the testament that Cary would share with all who would listen. I believe his words encapsulate camp as concisely as anyone could ever state it. He noted Cary, saying "Camp Rainbow Connection is the place where I truly saw the face of Christ for the first time."

*-Randy Early teaches students with intellectual disabilities at James River High School in Chesterfield County. He has served on the Camp Rainbow Connection Core Leadership Team after starting as a youth volunteer in 1995..*

# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

## Camp Rainbow Connection

Camp Rainbow Connection is a week-long respite camp held once in July and once in August for individuals with intellectual disabilities. A ministry of the Commission on Disabilities of the Virginia Conference, it has been in operation since 1985. The staff and volunteers of Camp Rainbow are dedicated to providing an enriching summer program for each camper. The Blackstone Conference and Retreat Center is the location for Camp Rainbow Connection.

Campers participate in a variety of activities including Bible class, music, arts and crafts, games, dancing and other special activities. Camp Rainbow is a continuation of Christ's ministry where campers and staff of all races and religions experience Christian love.

For more information, visit the Virginia Conference website at [www.vaumc.org/campirainbow](http://www.vaumc.org/campirainbow), or contact the Center for Lay Leadership Excellence at 804-521-1100.

Randy Early leads singing during the August 2014 session of Camp Rainbow Connection.



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# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



## VCU Pace Center's block party is a hit

By J.D. Daniely

**A**nd the master said to the servant, "Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled." Luke 14:23 (ESV)

The Pace campus ministry center at Virginia Commonwealth University decided to venture into new territory for this year and found a word that drove us. In our minds, we had set a 'table' of hospitality and love for the VCU community, but many did not know we were there for them. Therefore, in partnership with Mount Gilead Full Gospel Church, Spring Creek

Baptist Church and the VCU Office of Multicultural Affairs, we decided to offer a block party for the recognition and welcome of new students, and a reminder to ongoing students of our presence.

By showcasing our young adults, we provided a compelling reason to at least come and check us out.

The Black Awakening Choir sang an inspirational musical selection that set the tone. Then the DJ followed with Christian music in between the various speakers/performers. Approximately 300 persons came through the "Quad" and interacted with us!

And after Vernon Gordon, our Associate Pastor, shared a word of hope, through song, we held an altar call. I was not certain how that would go over, but nine persons came forward for prayer, spiritual direction and assurance! Wow! This was more than we could reasonably hope for, but God is always full of surprises!

Pace Center for Campus and Community Ministries is our full name, and we are finally living up to that signage out front. We continue to reach out to the students and others in this community and they are responding. On Sept. 8, we celebrated with 145 persons in worship! 🍀

*-The Rev. J.D. Daniely is director of the Pace Center at VCU.*

The block party hosted by Pace Campus Ministry at VCU drew hundreds of students.



# The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

## Skate board camp reaches kids who otherwise would not be reached

By Michael Berkley

**"P**arents will like this, because they have a hard time getting their kids to go to church. This combines skating with it, so it will help," affirmed an 11-year-old skateboarder at the closing of "Skate Church Camp" at Mekos Skate Park in Newport News. Amid others carving and painting crosses on their boards, this young man spoke with a light in his eyes, while having only gotten three hours of sleep because he was "missing Mekos so much and couldn't wait to come back."

What came together to create a week that left another camper, 8 years old, wishing as soon as camp was over that he had a time machine?

Perhaps it was the newly renovated, colorful Chill Zone area at the park entrance designed for games, concessions and "chilling" with friends. This exciting addition was completed and dedicated just in time for camp, thanks to a generous amount of funds provided by The York River District Missions Committee and its District Superintendent, the Rev. Joe Carson; many hours of construction by Earl Rowe of Salem UMC, Gloucester; and interior design by Angela Staul of Tabernacle



Participants in the Skate Church Camp gather for a group portrait. Photo by Michael Berkley.

UMC, Poquoson.

Perhaps it was the donation in memory of UMC member Doris Baynes by her daughter, Jane Henson, to cover the costs of camp and allow as many children and teenagers as possible to come at no charge.

And they came. At least one additional student came each day, totaling more than 30. Adults volunteered to transport kids unable to get to camp otherwise, and older skaters were there to help. I also spent the week at camp, seeing it as a mission trip.

Perhaps it was the devotions and skate tips of professional rider and guest camp leader Mike Steinkamp, of MS Skate Ministry, who in the words of a 14-year-old skater, "tells stories about everyday things like a truck or something and before you realize it is saying, 'That's like Jesus...'" Included

in Steinkamp's morning prayers was always a prayer that students would grow in their skateboarding skills, but more importantly in their relationship with God.

Maybe contributing to the draw is the caring and encouraging staff and group of volunteers of the park and its Skate Church program, run by Invert Ministries, a non-profit 501(c)(3). The owner and director is Brent Staul, director of Youth Ministries at Tabernacle UMC, Poquoson. Since 2008 he and his wife, Angela, have felt called to "provide a skate church ministry to share the Gospel in a safe environment and pique the curiosity of today's youth and young adults." Strong financial supporters since its origin have been Doug and Judy Butler, owners of Focus Professional Services of Yorktown.

According to the Rev. Rita Staul, mother of the owner, what is happening is the answer to prayer.

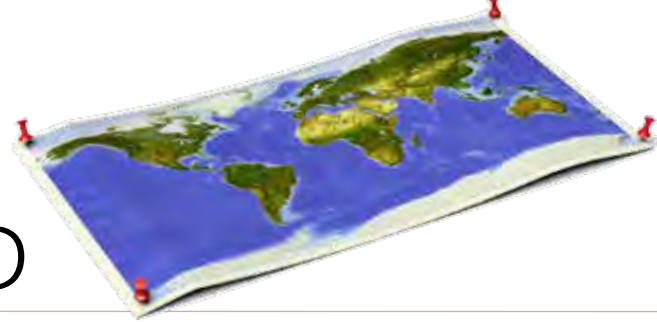
"This is a faith ministry in which we depend on God to supply all our financial needs through special church offerings and individuals," said Staul, pastor at the Salem Olive Branch Charge, Gloucester. "To God be the glory for answering our prayers and supplying our financial needs as well as the spiritual needs of the kids we minister to."

So what was learned at Skate Church Camp? When asked, along with names of skate tricks, participants gave answers such as: "I learned that God is forever loving," "I learned how Jesus died so God sees us as perfect," and "I learned that no matter how bad something gets God will be there."

*(Continued on pg. 25, "Skate Camp")*



# Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD



## Federal judge says clergy tax-free housing allowance is unconstitutional



By United Methodist Reporter staff

A federal judge ruled in late November that the Internal Revenue Service provisions that allow clergy to avoid taxes on housing allowances is unconstitutional.

If the ruling stands, some clergy members could experience an estimated 5 to 10 percent cut in take-home pay.

Churches routinely designate a portion of a pastor's salary as a housing allowance. So, for example, a minister who earns an average of \$50,000 may receive another third of income, or \$16,000, as a tax-free housing allowance, essentially earning \$66,000. Having to pay taxes on the additional \$16,000 (\$4,000 in this case), would mean a 6 percent cut in salary.

The exemption is worth about \$700 million per year, according to the Joint Committee on Taxation's Estimate of Federal Tax Expenditure.

U.S. District Court Judge Barbara Crabb ruled Nov. 22 that Section 107(2) of the tax code violates the

Establishment Clause of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution ("Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion..."), based in her belief that the Section 107(2) "provides a benefit to religious persons and no one else, even though doing so is not necessary to alleviate a special burden on religious exercise."

A complaint was also made in opposition to Section 107(1) of the tax code which allows clergy to live in church-owned parsonages without paying taxes on that portion of their compensation. Judge Crabb dismissed that complaint as part of her order.

The suit was filed by the Freedom From Religion Foundation, based in Wisconsin. In their complaint, they asserted that the housing allowance violated the separation of church and state, and that the principle of equal protection should allow any non-profit to likewise receive the same exemption.

The provision for a tax benefit for clergy and others living in employer-owned housing dates back to the 1920s. That benefit was extended to cash allowances with the enactment of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954. In 2002 Congress clarified the provisions by adding language limiting the amount of the allowance to the fair market rental value of the

home.

The trend in recent years has been to move clergy from church-owned parsonages to housing allowances as a means of allowing clergy to purchase their own homes and build equity.

While the judge has ruled Section 107(2) unconstitutional, no actual changes are happening at this time as she has delayed the implementation of that decision until any appeals which may be filed by the government are concluded. The government has 60 days to appeal the decision, and while some observers wonder if there will be no appeal to prevent the ruling from having nationwide impact, most observers believe an appeal is likely.

"This is nothing to panic about," said Jim Allen, treasurer of the Tennessee Conference. "This is something to keep on the radar, but there's still a long way to go."

The United Methodist Church's General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) agrees. "If an appeal is filed, it is certainly conceivable that this case could take several more years to be finally decided."

GCFA said that they will be monitoring the case as it develops, and will take actions to represent the interests of The United Methodist Church as needed. However, they believe that

it is "... too early to fully understand the impact of this case, or to predict the chances for this decision to be reversed."

The law's tax exemption has been contested since a decade-old dispute between the IRS and California megachurch pastor, Rick Warren. In 2002, the IRS attempted to charge Warren back taxes after he claimed a housing allowance of more than \$70,000.

He eventually won the federal court case, and that led Congress to clarify the rules for housing allowances. The allowance is limited to one house, and is restricted to either the fair market rental value of the house or the money actually spent on housing.

Annie Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker, co-presidents of the Freedom from Religion Foundation, which brought the suit, hailed the decision. "May we say hallelujah! The rest of us should not pay more because clergy pay less."

This ruling has no impact on the Social Security/self-employment status of United Methodist clergy. ☞

-With additional reporting by Sarah Pulliam Bailey, Religion News Service

## UMCmarket.org: New initiative can benefit local churches

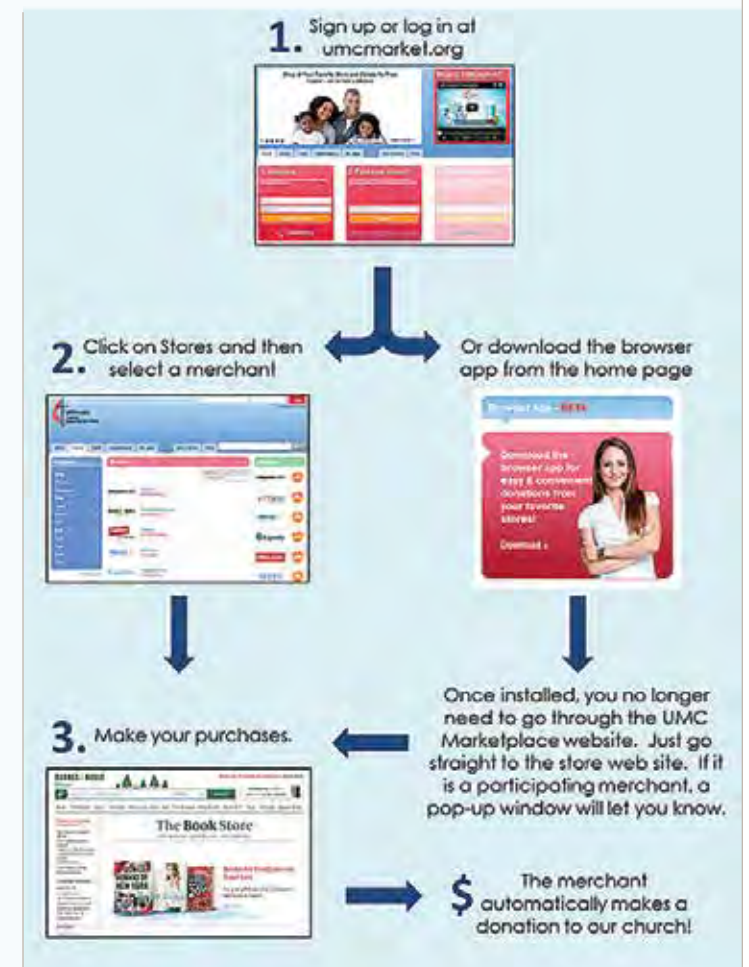
The General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) office of Corporate Partnership announced a new program, UMCmarket, which allows members of The United Methodist Church the opportunity to shop online at some of their favorite sites while generating a donation to their local church.

UMCmarket is an online shopping community designed especially for members of The United Methodist Church which provides a portal to access popular retailers. Members can shop online whenever they want. With each purchase, a percentage of the sale can go to the church the shopper chooses. Membership in the program is free.

The benefit of the program is that a shopper can designate his/her own local church or other United Methodist group to receive a percentage of the sales. For information on how a local church can add the link to their website, send an e-mail to: [info@umcmarket.org](mailto:info@umcmarket.org).

You can also donate to your church by booking travel, hotel room and car rental through UMCmarket.org.

"This secure online shopping portal is an easy way for church members and their friends to support the mission and ministries of their local church," said



Bobby Lee Smith, manager of Corporate Sponsorship and UMC Giving.

United Methodists can be assured that the service is secure."

Members can immediately begin supporting their church ministries by signing up at [www.umcmarket.org](http://www.umcmarket.org).

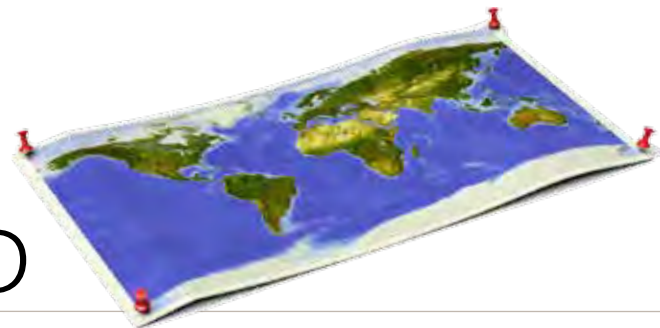
For details, contact Smith at (615) 369.2407, or [blsmith@gcfa.org](mailto:blsmith@gcfa.org). ☞

-General Council on Finance and Administration

GCFA



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Agencies move to intensify ministries with the poor



UMNS Photo by Kathy Gilbert

By Elliott Wright

Efforts are underway to expand, strengthen and promote United Methodist ministries with the poor in the United States.

This intensified work includes connecting local models of successful ministries that cross class, ethnic and racial lines to address the causes and conditions of poverty. It seeks to engage more people in these ministries and to bring about a church more vital, diverse and welcoming of those who are marginalized.

A series of regional training events in 2014 and 2015 will utilize the

expertise of practitioners in such fields as community development, financial literacy and management, employment and multicultural encounters.

Ministry with the Poor is one of four current focus areas of The United Methodist Church. A strong emphasis is on “with,” rather than ministries “for” or “to” the poor.

The new efforts reflect a four-point plan agreed to earlier by the Justice and Reconciliation Table of the denomination’s Council of Bishops and representatives of the General Board of Church and Society and the General Board of Global Ministries. The two agencies share overall responsibility for the Ministry with the Poor area of focus.

Step one is a request, already made, that each resident bishop in the United States identify up to three existing ministries with the poor to consider as models to be shared, studied and adapted for wider use.

In making this request of colleagues, Bishop Michael McKee of North Texas, chair of the Justice and Reconciliation Table, said, “We want to know about ministries that are about more than charity and show persons of various economic backgrounds responding to the love of God in Jesus Christ in economic as well as spiritual ways.”

“We know that there are already many excellent and varied examples of ministries with the poor in, or associated with, United Methodist churches throughout the United States,” said James Winkler, general secretary of the Church and Society agency. “Some are known only to their immediate communities. We want to identify those that can have broader value or suggest a variety of approaches to poverty reduction.”

The action plan includes three other measures to strengthen the Ministry with the Poor emphasis, according to Thomas Kemper, who leads the Global Ministries agency.

- ❖ Global Ministries will organize regional experiential training events featuring local ministries with the poor that can inspire and equip others to develop creative approaches.
- ❖ Church and Society will lead, or arrange for, training in community organizing relevant to ministries with the poor.
- ❖ Global Ministries will continue to collect, publicize and distribute Ministry with the Poor materials and best practices and partner with United Methodist Communications on other communication strategies for spreading the gospel of “Ministry With.”

“Bringing in local ministry models that have proven track records will strengthen our connectionalism as well as deepen our reservoir of resources and trainers,” Kemper said.

The training events next year are being preceded by two Ministry with the Poor roundtables, or forum events, one held in Dallas in November, hosted by Bishop McKee, and the other coming up in Chicago in December, hosted by Bishop Sally Dyck. These events are providing opportunities for those engaged in ministries with the poor to get to know one another and to interact with annual conference and general agency personnel.

While these particular efforts relate to local ministries in the United States, the Ministry with the Poor focus is global in nature, relating to international programs in humanitarian relief, health and education.

The other three focus areas of the church are Global Health, Leadership and Congregational Development. These overarching priorities are meant to intersect in ways that spark the transformation of individuals, the church and the society in response to the Christian call to bring about a world of love and justice.

—Elliott Wright is a contributing writer for [umcmission.org](http://umcmission.org)

Maryland church aims for ‘Hunger-free’ ZIP Code

By Erik Alsgard

St. Paul’s United Methodist Church in Kensington, Md., has set out to make the ZIP Code in which it resides – 20895 – the nation’s first “Hunger Free Zone.”

It all started three years ago. “We believed, with all our heart, that God was calling us to feed hungry people,” said the church’s pastor, the Rev. Adam Snell.

And the church responded in those days, he said, with small steps: feeding people at Thanksgiving and Christmas, handing out coupons to a monthly pancake breakfast the church held, and buying 2,500 re-usable bags that were handed out to members of the church with an invitation to fill the bag when they went grocery shopping and return the bag to the local food pantry.

“But today, it’s about to take a very big step,” Snell said. “It is a very big leap of faith for us.”

Snell outlined a vision whereby, in partnership with Bethesda Help – an organization that provides emergency relief and food assistance to area residents – chronic hunger in 20895

would be eliminated.

“Our promise is that anyone living in 20895 who is hungry will be fed,” said Snell.

According to the 2010 United States Census, ZIP Code 20895 had a population of 19,054, with an average income per household above \$111,000. With those statistics, it might be hard to imagine anyone not having the resources to buy food, or anyone going hungry.

“Our promise is that anyone living in 20895 who is hungry will be fed.”

And yet, in 2012, Bethesda Help assisted more than 300 households, according to Karen Auerbach, president of the organization. “Through the first six months of 2013,” she added, “we’ve already helped 190 households. The

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need is there.”

In 20895, Snell said, there is a population of immigrants, transients and people who are hungry. “The need is great,” he said. “The reality is, it will always be great here. For whatever reasons, there are people who run short of food. When people call, and we’re able to respond and people get fed, it’s hunger-free.”

The church’s district superintendent, the Rev. Joe Daniels, applauded the efforts of the congregation.

“It is always good to meet the needs of the community,” he said. “Hunger is a problem, not just here but throughout the region. This church is doing a wonderful work in meeting the need.”

Snell said that members of the church have three ways they can become involved in the campaign, either through being a driver to help deliver food, packing the food into boxes for delivery, or coordinating the responses to requests.

“We promise to deliver a three-day supply of food to

those people who are hungry in our neighborhoods,” said Snell. “All they have to do is simply ask for it.”

To spread the word about the campaign, the church has produced lawn signs and postcards in both Spanish and English. Members of the congregation will be distributing the signs throughout the community, especially targeting other houses of worship.

How will Snell know when 20895 has become a hunger-free zone? “Ideally, when no more calls come in,” he said. “When we have gotten everyone to come up to a level where we can then look beyond our ZIP Code and help those around us.”

—Erik Alsgaard is Communications Director for the Baltimore-Washington Conference

From left, District Superintendent Joe Daniels; Karen Auerbach, president of Bethesda Help; and Rev. Adam Snell, pastor of St. Paul’s UMC, hold up bags of food. Baltimore-Washington Conference photo by Alison Burdett





# Bringing comfort to typhoon survivors in the Philippines



(Top left) Donna-Grace Orbong, 5, sits with her family's food bag following a distribution by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) for survivors of Typhoon Haiyan in Tacloban, Philippines. (Middle) Survivors of Typhoon Haiyan line up for a food distribution in Tacloban, Philippines. (Bottom right) Staff members and volunteers for the United Methodist Committee on Relief pray in their Manila office after preparing bags of relief supplies for transport to survivors of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. UMCOR photos by Mike DuBose.

By United Methodist News Service

**W**hen the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) delivered food packages Nov. 20 to six storm-ravaged communities in Dagami, the Philippines, it was the first substantial emergency relief aid there since Typhoon Haiyan struck nearly two weeks earlier.

Linda Unger, a senior writer for the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, and Mike DuBose, a photographer for United Methodist Communications, were there to tell the story.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you," said Lucia Millona, a small, slight woman who is the only support for her small child. "Our house was destroyed and we have no clothes," she said. "This is the first help we've received."

Although Dagami, about 20 miles from Tacloban, turns away from the coast, residents still suffered typhoon winds and flooding from overflowing rivers that destroyed crops, homes, businesses and livelihoods.

This was UMCOR's second food distribution in two days, part of a truckload of 1,500 food packages that UMCOR staff and volunteers assembled in Manila, the capital, and drove over the course of 36 hours to Haiyan-impacted communities in Leyte Province.

The first was to residents of Barangay Naganaga, a struggling and impoverished community in Tacloban, one of the areas hardest hit by the Nov. 8 typhoon, known locally as Yolanda.

Ciony Ayo-Eduarte, head of mission of UMCOR Philippines, and the Rev. Jack Amick, UMCOR's executive for international disaster response, led the convoy to Naganaga, where food assistance had only begun to trickle in the day before, 10 days after the typhoon.

(Continued on next page, "UMCOR")



("UMCOR," continued from previous page)

"We thought it was the end of the world," said Erlinda Andal, 30, as she waited for a food package. She, her husband and their four children ages 7, 8, 9 and 12, had climbed to the roof of their modest home for safety as the storm surge rose. "The water kept going up and up," she said. "It was up to our chests."

Andal, a manicurist, said she and her husband, a carpenter, were thankful for the assistance. "It will be a very big help for our family," she said.

Through its presence and prayers, the United Methodist team tried to respond to the hurt as well as the hunger.

When Edita Tante picked up the bright yellow bag that contained enough rice, oil, beans, coffee and other staples to last her family about a week, an UMCOR volunteer, Archelaus Joseph Laudes, offered to carry it for her back to her shanty.

It was only on arriving there that Edita Tante, who survived the storm with her husband, Margarito, tearfully revealed that four of their grandchildren had not. Laudes, a student pastor who is finishing his studies at Union Theological Seminary in Cavite, listened to Tante's story and offered a prayer of strength and hope.

Many volunteers, mainly Filipino university and seminary students, spent two days making food packages filled with rice, oil, salt, brown sugar, mongo beans (a versatile lentil), sardines, cooking oil and coffee for the typhoon survivors.

"Thanks to the generous outpouring of United Methodists, this is just the first of several shipments UMCOR anticipates making to assist the survivors," Amick said.

"Rebuilding will take years," he said. "We will move forward with the Filipino people, counting on God's grace and the support of United Methodists and people of goodwill everywhere."

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

## Local church makes UMCOR possible

By Denise Honeycutt

**T**he United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) really is the local church. The work that we do is only made possible because of the local church around the world.

When Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines in November, United Methodists around the world responded, with gifts and prayers. The dollars given to UMCOR go directly to those in most need.

One hundred percent of your money will go to those people in the Philippines, and that's a huge thing. You can give to a lot of organizations, but there are few that can say 100 percent of what you give will go to help those in need.

"The best way to really support a response is through dollars because we can get dollars working on the ground very quickly," said Francesco Paganini, executive secretary for UMCOR International Disaster Response. "Dollars are extremely versatile, and it enables the organization to provide relief that's needed specific to what the needs are and it enables us to do it immediately.

"There's this tendency to want to send material goods," Paganini said. "And I can understand it, even from a perspective of seeing the images on television. Material goods can be very useful in a certain context. By the time it gets there, that might not

be the right stuff that's needed on the ground. You're also not supporting the local markets. Volunteers have been on the ground in Manila making food packets. What the food packets consist of is some prepared foods, some rice, all stuff that the Filipinos are going to be familiar with, because you want the food to be something the people know how to prepare, that they're comfortable with."

Many people are giving so I want to say on behalf of the UMCOR staff, on behalf of the people of the Philippines, on behalf of those people who will wake up tomorrow and have something to eat for the next week who did not have that before, I want to say, "Thank you," for those people. I want to thank those men and women in the pews who are giving sacrificially.

Please remember, your gifts to **International Disaster Response, UMCOR Advance #982450**, will help UMCOR respond now and over the coming years.

To learn more, go to **UMC.org**. To follow coverage of how The United Methodist Church is responding to the typhoon in the Philippines, visit **umc.org/philippines-typhoon**. Make a donation to **United Methodist Committee on Relief's International Disaster Response.** 🇵🇭

*-The Rev. Dr. Denise Honeycutt, in September became the deputy General Secretary for UMCOR.*



Ciony Ayo-Eduarte (center) leads survivors of Typhoon Haiyan to a food distribution by the UMCOR in Tacloban, Philippines. She serves as manager for UMCOR in the Philippines. UMNS photo by Mike DuBose

## A great gift: Community fortitude in the face of disaster

By Ciony Ayo-Eduarte

**T**yphoon Haiyan was bearing down on the Philippines, where I live and serve as the director of the disaster response office of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). At the time Haiyan was a category-2 storm. It has since been declared one of the most powerful typhoons ever recorded, and the United Nations issued a level-3 emergency.

Every year, the Philippines is hit by about 20 big storms. I am blessed to count on a great group of volunteers, most of them college and seminary students. Each time a cyclone or typhoon turns into a disaster, they show up and help me fill bright yellow bags with emergency food supplies. Then they wade with me through knee-high (or higher) floodwaters to get the bags to the families that need them.

We're happy to help. But I have to tell you, as a disaster responder, the greatest gift I have ever experienced was the time – just last September – when, our arms full of those bright yellow bags, the volunteers and I were actually turned away. That's right: a storm-impacted community turned us away and told us to take the supplies to another neighborhood, as they were able to care for themselves. What a gift!

A southwest monsoon had collided with a tropical storm and hung over the northern part of the country, including the capital, for three days. The streets of Manila were under water, but in coastal towns just outside the capital, like Rosa-

rio, the water level reached 10 feet high.

The volunteers and I quickly packed more than 300 emergency food bags and, on the second night of the devastation, headed for Rosario. We were familiar with this town because for months before the storm, UMCOR had worked with another local partner, the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR), to provide training in disaster risk reduction to community officials there.

One of those officials was Conrad Abutin, the neighborhood, or baranggay, captain, a local elected official. It was Captain Conrad who received our rain-soaked delegation. "We're thankful for the help," he said, "but there is another neighborhood that needs the food more than we do. I'll identify the area and let you know."

According to Captain Conrad, he and his community in the Muzon Uno neighborhood felt confident in their ability to respond to this particular disaster thanks to the UMCOR and IIRR trainings. "Morale among our community response team members was very high," he recalled later. "We had a contingency plan in place and an early warning system. We had already met with the community and explained how the early warning system worked and what they should do when it sounded. We were prepared."

He said that prior to the storm his community had practiced their new-found skills in response to small accidents, fires and other local incidents. "The people were amazed," he said, "that they knew how to use these

skills in first aid, triage and dealing with patients."

When Captain Conrad turned us away, it was a great gift on so many levels. UMCOR believes that local communities are the first line of response in any emergency. The people of Muzon Uno were empowered by their training to take on that role. Who can say how many lives were saved because they knew what to do and had the confidence to do it? Plus, they were able to divert precious resources to a community that had greater needs than they.

The volunteers and I finished distributing our relief supplies and went home happy, savoring the experience of the people of Muzon Uno. Today, the people of the Philippines are showing great strength once again, even in the wake of one of the most powerful typhoons ever recorded. The scale and severity of this tsunami-like storm could not be predicted or stopped. But I am more aware than ever how great a gift a community's fortitude is in the face of disaster.

Typhoon Haiyan delivered massive devastation across my country. It affected more than 11 million people. Our recovery efforts will continue in the days, weeks and months ahead. I am currently responding with local volunteers to help those affected, while also training new volunteers in the region to meet immediate needs and planning for longer-term recovery and disaster risk reduction. 🇵🇭

*-Ciony Ayo Eduarte is director of UMCOR's Disaster Response Office in the Philippines.*



# UMCOR relief goes to town that was all but forgotten

By Linda Unger

Neighbors from six communities in the interior town of Dagami, the Philippines, lined up to receive emergency food packages brought by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR).

It was the first substantial package of food staples any of the communities, or baranggays, had seen since Typhoon Haiyan, a category 5 super storm known locally as Yolanda, roared through the central Philippines on Nov. 8. The package contains a 10-kilo bag of rice, coffee, cooking oil, beans and other basic food items.

This was UMCOR's second food distribution in two days, part of a truckload of 1,500 food packages that UMCOR staff and volunteers assembled in Manila, the capital, and drove over the course of 36 hours to Haiyan-impacted communities in Leyte Province. UMCOR's first food

distribution was in Tacloban.

Until now, some of the Dagami communities had received small packages from local television foundations, noted Orville Berino, an official with the Department of Social Welfare and Development of the Filipino government and a resident of the town. Berino accompanied the UMCOR delivery.

Dagami is located about 33 kilometers [20.5 miles] from Tacloban City, which suffered severe damage and destruction from the typhoon. So far, most humanitarian assistance in the area has focused on Tacloban and other coastal towns that bore the brunt of Haiyan's rage. Residents eagerly lined up at four different spots in Dagami, which were designated by neighborhood officials who helped UMCOR to organize the communities for the food distribution. Even before many of the residents received their packages, relief shown on their faces,

and their thanks echoed along the lines.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you," said Lucia Millona, a small, slight woman who is the only support for her small child. "Our house was destroyed and we have no clothes," she said. "This is the first help we've received."

Although Dagami turns away from the coast, residents still suffered typhoon winds and flooding from overflowing rivers. Livelihoods were destroyed as the storm ruined crops, particularly rice, coconuts and bananas. Berino said any coconut trees left standing will not likely bear fruit again for two to three years because of the battering the trees took, and new plantings will take five years, he said.

John Harvey, 19, is from a family of rice farmers. He said the family had harvested some of their crop before the storm, but had had no way to

protect it. "The water came up, and the current took it all away," Harvey said, as he balanced the bright yellow UMCOR food package on his motor-bike. Also lost in the storm were the family's water buffalo that they used for plowing.

Harvey's straight, black hair was tied in a knot at the top of his head in a stylish and, in better times, whimsical way, but his furtive dark eyes clearly were still filled with images of the storm. "The wind was very strong," he said. "Everything was shaking and shattering – we thought it was an earthquake."

When the winds died down momentarily, the family fled from the house, thinking they would be safer outdoors, but the typhoon winds quickly returned, and they were left clinging to the roadside guardrails for their very lives. All of them survived.

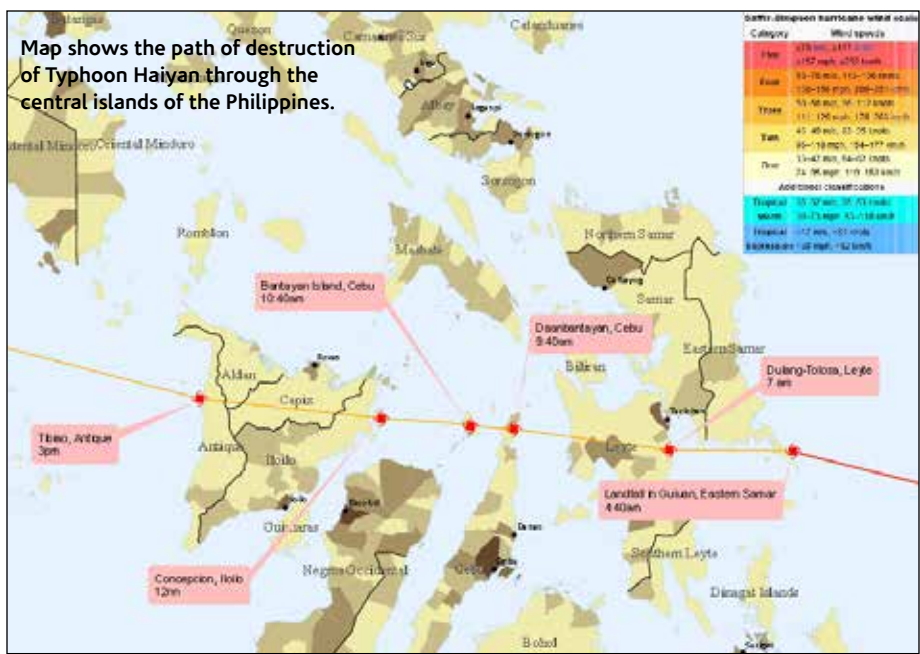
Katrina Anguren lives in Dagami with her parents, brother and elderly grandmother. She worked in a local pharmacy, but it was destroyed in the storm.

"We were very scared because the wind was so strong, with matching rain," she said. "We watched as the [galvanized iron] roofs of some of the houses flew across the street."

The family decided to stay put, afraid they might be struck by the heavy roofs if they left. They needed also to protect the grandmother, who can neither walk nor see. This was their best option, Anguren said, even as the floodwaters rose and the winds tore the second story off of their house. In the fields her brother works, she said, "there is so much broken glass."

Nevertheless, she said, "While we live we will not lose hope." She expressed the family's thanks for the UMCOR food package that will provide them sustenance for about a week.

The Rev. Jack Amick, assistant general secretary for International Disaster Response, who is in the



Philippines to accompany the relief effort of UMCOR's local office here, remarked, "This distribution is a link in the chain that begins with the generosity of our UMCOR supporters. It's the whole chain that is making a difference in the lives of the people of Dagami and elsewhere in the central Philippines as they work through these first days and weeks after this

devastating disaster." Thank you for your gifts. They will continue to be needed as UMCOR, together with our local partners, develops a strategy of long-term recovery from Typhoon Haiyan. Please give generously to **International Disaster Response, UMCOR Advance 982450.** -Linda Unger is senior writer for the General Board of Global Ministries.







## EVENTS

### Midwest tornado survivors: Recovery 'is going to take a long time'

By Susan Kim

Just as Shelly Kerker was about to leave Sunday morning worship at Crossroads UMC in Washington, Ill, the pastors told the congregation and staff they needed to shelter-in-place immediately. An F4 tornado touched down close-by, tearing up at least 1,400 homes in the community.

"I could hear it pass around us," Kerker said.

The church emerged relatively unscathed from the storm, and has since been serving as an American Red Cross shelter for tornado survivors.

Greg Forrester, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) U.S. Disaster Response executive, said that Crossroads, as well as dozens of other United Methodist churches across the midwest, have opened their doors to tornado survivors, some within minutes after the storms struck.

Kerker, the church's facilities coordinator, is helping families who have lost everything. She said she is amazed at the outpouring of compassion from across the country.

On behalf of tornado survivors and responders, she urged donors to strongly consider monetary donations over material goods. "We are at full capacity with donations," she said. "There is a baseball stadium in Peoria that is completely full of stuff people have donated."

She wants to comment on people's incredible generosity – before pleading that this generosity needs to be appropriately directed: "Right now we can't take any more clothing, for example. It's been very overwhelming."

Kerker – along with pastors, church staff and local volunteers – has been ensuring that tornado survivors have the support and safety they need, 24 hours a day. "I have watched our church work and just be here for people. I'm amazed. It makes me proud to work here."

"We also have UMCOR-trained Early Response Teams serving in the field in areas where it is safe to work," Forrester said.

The deadly storms were part of a multi-state outbreak of tornadoes and powerful winds on Nov. 17 that caused damage not only in Illinois but

also in Missouri, Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin. Six people died in Illinois, and two were killed in Michigan. As many as 200 people were injured in Illinois alone, according to state emergency management reports, with as many as 120 of those injuries occurring in Washington.

As people filtered back into heavily damaged communities, Forrester emphasized that UMCOR is not only supporting the immediate response but also will help strengthen the backbone of the response through long-term recovery, which could take years.

Kerker was grateful to hear Forrester's perspective: "Please, yes, we're asking that people think of us six months from now."

Bishop Jonathan Keaton, who leads the Illinois Great Rivers Conference, wrote in an online message, "Pray not only for those affected, but those neighbors who roll up their sleeves and help rebuild their communities."

*-Susan Kim is a contributor to www.umcor.org. With additional reporting by Melissa Hinnen, General Board of Global Ministries' director of Public Information.*

### HOW TO HELP:

The best way to help midwest tornado survivors is via a monetary donation. Donate through the UMCOR U.S. Disaster Response Advance #901670 on the website, via text or telephone, or by setting up an automated monthly withdrawal. Want to help in a hands-on fashion? Consider the UMCOR Relief-Supply Kits. Assembling or purchasing kits helps keep UMCOR's Relief-Supply Network ready to quickly deliver vital goods into the hands of disaster survivors. Those who want to volunteer in areas impacted by the tornadoes should connect with their jurisdictional Volunteer in Mission coordinator to determine the appropriate time.

### JANUARY

#### Candidacy Summit

Jan. 3-4, Blackstone Conference and Retreat Center

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

#### Ministers' Convocation

Jan. 14-16, Blackstone Conference and Retreat Center

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

### FEBRUARY

#### Large Church Leadership Training Day

Feb. 1, Woodlake UMC, Chesterfield

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

#### United Methodist Day at the General Assembly

Feb. 6, Bon Air UMC and the State Capitol

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

#### Lay Servant Academy

Feb. 21-23, Blackstone Conference and Retreat Center

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

("Skate Camp," continued from pg. 13)

Our young friend who lost sleep anxious to get back to Mekos said simply, "I learned about church." Perhaps he is wise beyond his years, and more and more skaters will be begging their parents to get them to church at the skate park and beyond, and parents will indeed like this. Invert Ministries offers weekly evening sessions of Skate Church between now and next summer's camp. Sundays welcome those 13 and over, and Tuesdays those 12 and under.

We often hear the phrase, "It takes a village to raise a child." It seems that a Virginia United Methodist village is assembled and expanding to help raise these amazing young people. Be a part of the village, as a church, group or individual. Bring the gifts and talents God has blessed you with. Watch Jesus "invert" or "turn" some youth around. It is an awesome sight.

*-Michael Berkley leads worship and a skateboard ministry at Woodlake UMC, Richmond District.*



Ray Baughman embraces his family after their home was destroyed by a tornado in Pekin, Ill. Journal-Star photo by Fred Zwicky



# EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY



## 'Steve Jobs' your church

By Jeremy Steele

**I**Phones, iPads and iPods are everywhere these days. Steve Jobs, the innovator behind the technology, has become a household name. It's difficult to believe that in the early days of Apple, before Jobs took over as CEO, the company was in peril.

The strategies and techniques that Jobs employed to make Apple such a success offer three inventive lessons that churches can use to thrive in ministry.

### Lesson 1: Simplify and focus.

When Jobs stepped into the Apple CEO slot for the second time, he had a clear plan: simplify. He walked into the board room and drew a giant "plus" on the board and said, "We are going to make four products."

(The company had more than 100 at that point). Above the top columns, he wrote: "consumer" and "pro," and beside the two rows he wrote: "desktop" and "mobile."

He told his biographer, Walter Isaacson, "Deciding what not to do is as important as deciding what to do. That's true for companies, and it's true for products." It's also true for churches.

It starts by



deciding rows and columns. The columns are your potential audiences,

and the rows are main program types (education, worship, etc.). Then, list everything you do by placing each program in the appropriate square. Not only will it show the number of different programs you have; it also will show where you have, intentionally or not, placed your priorities. Then, it's time to ask the question: Who is God calling us to be? From there, you can start new programs or pare them down.

### Lesson 2: Focus on the end user.

The Apple store is another success story and source for ministry insight. Before the launch of the first Apple store, Jobs had a meltdown because the beautiful floors were covered in scuff marks within minutes of opening the doors to the press. It turns out that no one in the design team had thought about the end user of the store actually having to walk in it. Jobs had the whole design team come in and scrub the floors to help them remember the value of thinking about the end user in every detail.

For churches, this means thinking through what church feels like to

the visitor who walks in the door. This goes beyond whether or not anyone speaks to them. Is the reason behind what you do and say in worship clear to an outsider? How easy is your facility to navigate? Do we extend worship to people with disabilities? How about parking? Is your bulletin free from unexplained church jargon? These are the kinds of questions we need to ask ourselves to make sure we keep our "end user" in mind.

### Lesson 3: Steal your own customers.

Jobs was not concerned about whether a new, innovative product would jeopardize the existing line. If that were the case, he was all for it because he felt if they didn't innovate, someone else would and steal the market out from under them. When they had the most successful mp3 player ever produced, they introduced the iPod mini which far outsold the original iPod and decreased overall original iPod sales. Now the iPhone has further shrunk the iPod market, but Apple still owns it all and it's growing over all.

Most of us have been in church meetings where the existing group is concerned that some new, exciting idea would attract people away from the existing, stalled program. If we are wise, we will take our time planning the new, and then make our move to grow overall even if the older program eventually ends. 🍷



## Take inviting photos of your church to attract visitors

By Gavin Richardson

**A**ccording to the adage, a picture is worth a thousand words, and in today's image-driven culture, a photograph might be what brings visitors to your church.

If you have shopped for a house online, you probably have noticed the difference between a house advertisement with great photos and one without. Most likely, a house advertised with bad photos will not initially make your list. A house with great photos will get your second and third look and, perhaps eventually, a visit.

A church is the same. People will likely envision themselves within a church, imagining themselves in various church settings. They want to see how they might fit into a congregation's culture. Photos of a church taken without care or consideration of who might look at them could convey a negative message.

Here are tips and techniques to take the best photos of your church – photos that will welcome people before they ever set foot in the doors.

### 1. Choose good equipment:

Access to a nice digital SLR camera will help you to take excellent photos of your church. Knowing how to use the camera, especially when it comes to lighting, is a huge advantage. If you only have a higher-end "point-and-shoot" camera, you may have to do a bit more work to achieve the results you want (either directly from the camera or within a photo-editing software) than with a digital SLR. However, you can still get great results.

### 2. Maximize the lighting:

Poorly lit areas make terrible photos. Dark rooms with flash bursts on the furniture or windows do not please

the eye. Before you take a photo, think about lighting. Choose daylight hours when the outdoor light is close to indoor light. This will help you to capture both outside and inside views, giving as close to an eyesight view as possible. Use extra lighting in a room, if needed. Use a camera setting for fluorescent lights (white lighting) as that tends to be the basis of lighting construction in most church buildings.

**3. Turn off the flash:** Photos without a flash evoke a more natural, warm feel to a space. A flash can give off harsh-lit elements, destroy natural shadows and ruin a shot with a reflection off windows or furniture. Some cameras allow you to focus the flash in different directions. If you must use a flash, redirect the flash to the ceiling or somewhere else away from the target. This technique dampens the light and keeps some natural tones.

### 4. Choose the right places:

Show off those places that interest people. The sanctuary is a good place to start, but don't forget entrances, welcoming areas, children's rooms, prayer rooms and chapels. Skip rooms with too much clutter.

**5. Prep your space:** Remove temporary or extra items that clutter a space. Cleaner spaces look great and emphasize the space's intended use. Take some test photos and ask people unfamiliar with your church what stands out to them about the space. Certainly, remove trash cans and seasonal decorations.

**6. Shoot at angles:** While this is not necessarily a rule, it is good to test various angles of your building. Do not assume that straight-on front view is the best view. Think of how many people see your church at an

angle as they drive by. Take some welcoming photos with those angles in mind.

**7. Use a tripod:** This is especially helpful if you adhere to tip #3 to avoid flash. Most cameras in their automatic photo setting try to take flash photos when in low light. Switching off the flash function sets up the camera to open the shutter to allow more light into the photo for a better-lit shot. When holding a camera, any slight movement creates a blurry photo. Place your camera on a tripod to achieve a stabilized camera and give you a clear image.

**8. Save images at the highest resolution possible:** If you are going through the trouble of all this prep and time, go the extra step to save at the highest resolution possible. If you use a simple point-and-shoot camera, make sure you save images in a file format that gives the highest resolution.

**9. Stage people:** Invite a handful of church members to come to the church with the intentions of taking photos for and of the church. You can direct people to stand completely still (a good thing when shooting without a flash indoors), look in appropriate directions and give good color contrasts. Using people in a photo adds interest and gives scale to a room.

**10. Go pro:** If you are still not feeling comfortable, consider hiring a professional. Find a few realtors within your congregation or community and ask them who does professional house photos. Check out their work and inquire about hiring them to take photos for your church. It may cost you a few hundred dollars, but the professional results may be worth the money. 🍷





LOCAL CHURCH NEWS



▲ United Methodist Women at **Mount Pleasant/Lamps UMC** hosted a group of 12 Korean War veterans at a special breakfast to honor their service and sacrifice. Four South Korean Army chaplains, who were visiting the U.S. to learn how to conduct military chaplaincy programs, also attended. One of the chaplains is a friend of the church pastor, the Rev. Hung Su Lim. The Korean pastors asked to meet with U.S. veterans in the Winchester area to show their appreciation for them for their service. Personal letters of thanks were presented to each U.S. veteran. Pastor Lim also showed a video, "To My Dearest Friend," made in 2010 in honor of Korean War chaplains.



▲ On Nov. 17, **St. Mark's UMC in Petersburg, James River District**, hosted a community-wide Stop Hunger Now meal packaging event. In two hours, 100 people from eight different faith communities and the surrounding neighborhood packaged 19,224 meals to help end hunger around the

world. (To be a part of this ongoing effort visit [www.stophungernow.org](http://www.stophungernow.org).)



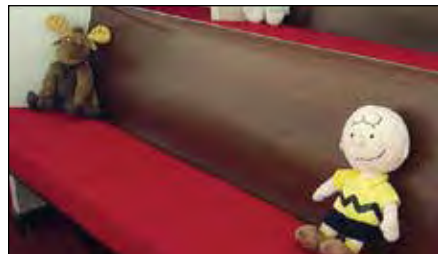
▲ The Rev. Dave Kirkland, pastor of **Dulin UMC in Falls Church**, recently ran the 27th annual AIDS Walk Washington 5K. With a time of 27 minutes, 48 seconds, Kirkland raised \$10,700, the highest amount by an individual runner! Money raised is used to provide dependable, high-quality, comprehensive and accessible health care to those infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS.

On Nov. 17 **Shiloh UMC**, located in the North View community about nine miles west of South Hill, celebrated the 125th anniversary of its founding with special services and

a fellowship lunch provided by the women of the church. At the first service, the Rev. Kent Wise introduced Dr. Wilson Thompson, who shared memories of the people and the experiences in the church that influenced his own faith. For the 11 a.m. service, Wise dedicated to the glory of God the front porch renovation project. The brick ramps and porch not only add to the beauty of Shiloh, but they make entry into the sanctuary safer. Farmville District Superintendent the Rev. Bob Parks introduced the guest preacher, Bishop Young Jin Cho. Pictured: Bishop Cho, Rev. Wise, Rev. Parks. ▼



Stuffed animals filled the pews at **Laurel Hill UMC** in early December. More than 400 stuffed animals, plus hundreds of books and DVDs, were shared this year through the church's partnership with the VCU/ MCV Children's Emergency Room and the children they serve. Laurel Hill UMC's own Santa Claus and Mrs. Santa delivered the gifts for the children to know that Jesus came to share God's life and love with them at Christmas time. ▼



▼ At **Salem UMC**, in celebration of Thanksgiving, members were asked for food donations. The food was delivered to the local mission ministries. When loaded in the truck, it filled the bed of a standard pickup. Salem is part of the Prince George Charge and has an average attendance of around 50 each Sunday.



▲ United Methodist Women of **Trinity UMC in King George** prepared 71 Thanksgiving meals on Nov. 21. For 26 years, the Trinity women have been assembling these meals on the Thursday before Thanksgiving. Volunteers deliver the hot meals to members of the community in need of special consideration during the holidays. This year marked the largest number of meals delivered to date. Each meal includes turkey, dressing, green beans, a homemade roll, cranberry relish and a piece of pumpkin pie cake.

**Persons UMC in Drewryville** celebrated its 175th anniversary with special events on Dec. 15. The church also gathered non-perishable food items for the local food pantry as part of its celebration.

Youth from **Dahlgren UMC** recently visited the Agape Christian Children's Community Center in Horn-

town on the Eastern Shore to dig out grass from the playground area and spread two tons of mulch. Then the youth group fixed appliances, did maintenance work and led Vacation Bible School for the children. Youth from Duncan Memorial UMC in Ashland also made the trek to Agape, as did the Harvest of Hope youth from the Society of St. Andrew and the Holy Rollers bike group.

In November, more than 100 United Methodist Women gathered at **Trinity UMC** in Richmond to celebrate the 61st "Harvest Day" mission event. Brenda NeSmith, Richmond District UMW president, led the program, and more than \$3,000 was raised to be divided equally among three mission projects: UMCOR's Philippines typhoon disaster relief; the district's Shalom Farms and Curtain Call, an in-house ministry at Trinity.

Your house...



Celebrating 80 years of service

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

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

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

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

c/o Thomas L. Coffman,  
President  
4837 Village Lake Dr.,  
Richmond, VA 23234  
**Retired Clergy Housing Corp.**  
Phone: (804) 271-7219; Fax: (804) 271-4558  
E-mail: [nlctlc@comcast.net](mailto:nlctlc@comcast.net)  
Please send me information on:  
☐ The Covenant of Gratitude.  
☐ Including the Retired Clergy Housing Corporation in my will.  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_



Devotions from International Lesson Series

# LIVING THE WORD



*The Rev. Keiko Foster serves as associate pastor at Good Shepherd UMC, Woodbridge, Alexandria District. This is her second year as an appointed pastor, but she was hired there as a staff lay person in 2005. A native of Japan, she came to the U.S. in 2001 to attend seminary. She has an MDiv from Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond and an MA from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. Keiko lost her husband, Jeff, to cancer in July. They have one son, Joshua, who is 5.*

**Jan. 5, 2014**  
**Sabbath-breaking story?**  
**Scripture: Luke 6:1-11**

W e sometimes get confused with what it means to obey God’s law, and what it means to live faithfully as God’s people. Some years ago, when I was an exchange student and lived near Kansas City, a friend of mine used to drive me to her church. One cold, snowy Sunday morning, while we were on our way to the church, my friend spotted a friend of hers stranded on the other side of the interstate (good eyes!). Without hesitation, my friend got off at the nearest exit, turned around and got back on going the other direction so she could support her friend who needed help.

I did not say anything, but inside I was thinking, “Oh, no, we are going to be late for church!” My primary concern was getting to church on time, so I would encounter the living God, as well as learn what it means to serve God and God’s people. Looking back at the incident some time later, however, I realized that God was already there. I also realized that by lending a hand to this lady who was alone and afraid, we were already serving God’s people.

For the scribes and the Pharisees, keeping God’s law meant literally refraining from all labors, including harvesting, threshing or healing a sick person on a Sabbath. But for Jesus, what mattered the most in keeping God’s law was to do good and to save lives (v.9). He was clear that “The Son of Man is Lord over the Sabbath (v.5).”

Through Sabbath, we are to reclaim our identity as God’s beloved children. Through Sabbath, we are to renew ourselves, physically, emotionally and spiritually, so we can fully embrace ourselves and others. Through Sabbath, we are to regain our dignity, so we all can see life both as a gift and a possibility. In other words, through Sabbath, we are to restore wholeness and hope. If we think this way, it becomes clear that the person who embraced the Sabbath the most in this story was the man with a withered hand. Through Jesus’ miraculous healing, his disgrace was taken away, his sense of dignity was restored, and his hope was once again enlivened. For the first time in years he was fully able to embrace this day, his life, and identity as God’s child. In that sense, this so-

called Sabbath-breaking story was in fact the story about true Sabbath.

**Jan.12, 2014**  
**What can love do?**  
**Scripture: Luke 6:17-31**

O ur pastor once asked the congregation a question during his sermon, “What if our church closed its door today – what would you miss the most?” A number of people answered that they would miss the love, support and sense of solidarity as a community of faith. I can personally attest to that. When my late husband, Jeff, was ill and needed care around-the-clock, the church family offered us love and support through their time, presence, homemade meals and, of course, prayers. They truly embodied what it meant to love others and to “treat others in the same way that you want them to treat you (v.31).” I was thankful for them, because their love gave me comfort, courage and assurance that things were going to be OK.

Jesus was again followed by a great crowd of the disciples and a multitude of people (v.17). They followed him to listen to his teachings, but also to be healed. Most of them were poor, working-class villagers, and some among them were considered unclean and unworthy. Jesus, however, clearly declared to them that God was indeed with them and for them. Jesus proclaimed that they already were a part of God’s kingdom, and the foundation of this kingdom was not power, money or social rank, but love. The scripture does not provide the immediate reaction of Jesus’ audiences, but I would imagine that they left feeling encouraged, comforted and made whole (literally and metaphorically). I would also imagine that they felt a sense of solidarity that they were in this life’s journey together.

Jesus’ message teaches us that in God’s kingdom there is a great role reversal, as the poor will be made rich, and the rich will go empty-handed. At the same time, Jesus challenges us on what we are called to do as God’s people. Think about it: poor people will continue to struggle unless those who have abundantly share what they have with them. Hungry people would not become full unless those who have plenty offer them something to

eat. Grieving people would not find laughter unless someone touches them with sincere love and genuine concern. So, people of God, let us think: Who does God call us to love this week? In what ways can God use our life this week, so that someone might find comfort, courage and assurance for tomorrow? In what ways can we be a part of God’s kingdom, here and now?

**Jan.19, 2014**  
**Not seeking to be repaid**  
**Scripture: Luke 14:7-18a, 22-24**

M y son, Joshua, was recently invited to his preschool friend’s birthday party. This child’s mother told us to show up “as we are,” so I took her words literally and we showed up as we are, empty-handed. When we arrived at the party, however, I soon realized that we were the only ones who did not bring a birthday present (oops). As inexperienced as I was as a mom (this was the first birthday party I have taken my son to), I did not realize that gifts were expected at children’s birthday parties!

It is human nature to expect to be repaid. If we are kind to someone, we might expect, whether intentionally or not, kindness from that person. If we invite someone to a party, we might expect to be invited back. If we give gifts to someone, we might expect a gift in return. But Jesus has a different take on this. He tells us that, if we plan a luncheon or a dinner, do not make a guest list based on whether we would be invited back. Rather, we must invite those who have no way of returning the favor. Here, Jesus teaches us that we ought to seek others’ welfare first, instead of seeking to be repaid for our own benefit. The guests who voluntarily sat at the place of honor at the wedding banquet might have been more concerned about their own

pride and reputation, not the occasion for celebration. As we seek other’s welfare before our own, Jesus affirms, we will be repaid when the just are resurrected (v.14).

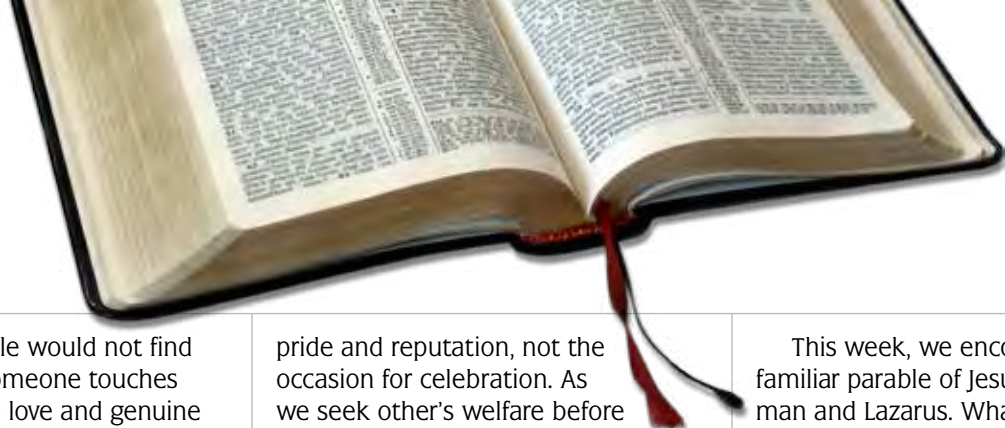
By the way, can you imagine the reaction of the guests in Jesus’ parable of the great dinner, who were invited to the banquet so unexpectedly? I can picture in their faces a sense of amazement, joy and genuine gratitude. Touched by such abundant grace, I can see them leaving the banquet as transformed persons, filled with love and hope. The truth is, this is what God’s grace is like. Despite our sinfulness, God still invites us with such abundant love, so our hearts will be filled with joy and gratitude. Despite our brokenness, God still touches us, so our lives will be transformed into lives of love and hope. Touched by God’s abundant grace, all we can do is humble ourselves and serve God and all God’s people without seeking to be repaid. After all, Christian discipleship is different from throwing a birthday party.

**Jan. 26, 2014**  
**As simple as calling one’s name**  
**Scripture: Luke 16:10, 19-31**

I recently participated in the gathering of clergypersons who are serving cross-cultural appointments. During the meeting, we had a time to reflect on the scripture by using the “Kaleidoscope Bible Study” method. What’s unique about this Bible study method is, participants will be asked to invite each other by naming one another, like, “John, I would like to invite you to speak next.” The person called could either take the turn or simply say, “I pass for now.” By calling each other by name, we are to acknowledge one another and cultivate a sense of closeness and mutual respect.

This week, we encounter another familiar parable of Jesus – the rich man and Lazarus. What strikes me in this story is that, aside from the fact that in the story the rich man is never identified while Lazarus (which means God has helped) is, the rich man does not call Lazarus by name until after he dies. He probably knew who Lazarus was – this poor man who sat at his gate (In *The Message* translation, Lazarus was ‘dumped on his doorstep.’). He probably knew Lazarus was hungry while he had a lavish feast day after day. He probably knew that Lazarus needed help. He probably knew that Lazarus was alone and lonely. But he was too absorbed with his own lifestyle to reach out to this poor, hungry and lonely man. He never cared to acknowledge Lazarus simply by calling him by his name and becoming his friend. Now, both being dead, Abraham declares to the rich man that there is a chasm between them that cannot be crossed over. But the truth is, the chasm might have always been there – a chasm called greed, indifference and self-absorption.

Let’s face it – we all have been in this rich man’s place before. We’ve had times when we were too preoccupied with our own busyness, day-to-day chores, life’s happenings, or sheer ignorance, and failed to reach out to our neighbors, both near and far, who needed our friendship, support, or simple acknowledgement. Jesus reminds us that whoever is faithful with little is also faithful with much (v.10). So, our challenge as God’s people becomes: how can we acknowledge someone – someone who is lonely, struggling and needing help – through a simple action like calling them by name or becoming friends with them. In doing so, the chasms that exist may diminish, both in this world and beyond.✝





# CLERGY & DIACONAL



## Deaths



**The Rev. Anderson Davidson "A.D." Goodson**, 90, of South Hill, died Nov. 21, 2013. He was a retired elder with more than 47 years of

service at Rappahannock, First UMC Charlottesville, Nelson, Clarksville, Lawrenceville, Front Royal, First UMC Hampton and High Street. He retired in 1987 and served Trinity and Providence in the Petersburg District. Goodson is survived by his wife of 66 years, Betty Fisher Goodson. A service was held at Providence UMC in Forksville.



**The Rev. Robert Fletcher Hardy III**, 91, died Nov. 21, 2013, in Danville. Hardy served in the Kentucky Conference prior to transferring

to the Virginia Conference, where he served East Pittsylvania Charge, Oakland, Stokesland, Locust Grove, Central, Madison Heights. Hardy served as a Conference Evangelist from 1963-1966 and as director of Evangelism at Stanleytown in 1976. In retirement, he served at Pleasant Grove, Cascade-Harmony Charge and Harmony. His service was held at Brosville UMC.



**The Rev. John B. Morris**, 63, of Williamsburg, died Nov. 13, 2013. Morris graduated from The College of William & Mary and Duke Divin-

ity School. He served as minister in 12 churches for more than 40 years in Virginia and in North Carolina including Dulin, Portlock, McGuire Park, Mount Hermon (Danville District), Wellspring, Nimmo, First in Hampton, and Andrew Chapel (Arlington). He retired in 2012. Morris is survived by his wife of 35 years, Bettie, four children and five grandchildren.

**Phillip Dollins**, of Waynesboro, died Nov. 26, 2013. He was the father of **Janet Hawkins**, minister of music and congregational care at Fort Hill UMC, Lynchburg District.

**Barbara Jean Johnson Draper**, 77, of Mechanicsville, died Nov. 12, 2013. She was the wife of retired elder the **Rev. James Draper**.

**Henry (Hank) Squire Hulme Jr.** died Nov. 25, 2013. He was the father of the **Rev. Dr. Gary L. Hulme**, an extension minister appointed to Pastoral Counseling of Northern Virginia.

**Julie Keyser Peters**, 66, died Nov. 14, 2013, after a three-year battle with lung cancer. She was the wife of the **Rev. Dr. John B. Peters**, recently retired from Trinity UMC in Richmond.

**Ethel Lloyd Thomas Turner**, 90, died Nov. 8, 2013, in Norfolk. She was the widow of the **Rev. Archer Rudder Turner**, who died in 1989.

## BIRTHS

**Justin and Lydia Basham** welcomed a baby girl, **Lydia Antoinette** (Annie), born Oct. 21, 2013. Annie is the granddaughter of **Rev. Bob Weeks** and his wife, **Lydia**, pastor of Verona UMC, Harrisonburg District, and **Rev. Leon Basham**, and his wife, **Toni**, pastor of Oak Grove/Riverview Charge, York River District. Annie has an older brother, Mateo.

**Anna Charis Hemming** was born to the **Rev. John and Karen Hemming**, Nov. 7, 2013. John serves Powhatan UMC in the Richmond District.

**The Rev. Chad Herndon**, pastor of New Song UMC, Richmond District, and his wife, **Sara**, welcomed the birth of a son, **Silas Andrew Herndon**, on Dec. 3, 2013.

On Nov. 27, 2013 the world welcomed a new Song: **Joey Song** was born to the **Rev. Jae and Star Song**. Rev. Song is the associate pastor at Thrasher Memorial UMC in Vinton.

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## TRIBUTE

**Fletcher Hardy**, a well-known retired pastor of our conference, died Nov. 21 at his home in Danville where he lived with his wife, Ann.

He was a strong preacher and an excellent pastor. His churches always flourished, and his youth groups, too.

Fletcher was a farm boy from the Bosville area near Danville. In World War II he was in the engineers, doing construction. Back home after the war he dramatically met the Lord, was married, called to preach, at-

tended Asbury College and went on to serve in the Virginia Conference for more than 50 years. He helped start an organization of lay persons and ministers now called the Evangelical Fellowship of Virginia, and preached at more than 200 revivals. He also helped more than 20 people answer a call to ministry and was untiring in his service to Christ.

I, along with many others, honor Rev. Hardy and thank God for him.

-The Rev. David Willis  
Stuarts Draft

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# FROM THE BISHOP



## New year offers reasons to be excited

A new year has arrived! The year 2014, which is filled with hope, new possibilities and expectations, has started. I am deeply grateful to God for this new opportunity. May the amazing grace and peace from our Lord be with all of you.

I have many reasons to be excited and to have hope for this year. Last year we invited the churches to join the covenant for spiritual disciplines. I am deeply moved and touched by the responses from the churches. I have not counted the number of churches that decided to take part in this movement, but so far, I am hearing many positive responses. I am very excited about what the Lord will do when we humbly open ourselves to God and seek the will of God in prayer.

Now, the next task will be how to guide the people who have made commitments to this covenant. We

need to help and equip them to practice one hour of daily spiritual disciplines and grow in Christ. I would like to encourage the clergy to take this task seriously and prayerfully lead this journey as spiritual leaders. The Virginia Conference will also help the churches to move forward.

I am very excited about the 2014 Bishop's Convocation on Prayer, which will be held on Saturday, March 29. The theme this year will be spiritual disciplines, and Dr. Tom Albin has been invited as the main speaker. He is dean of Upper Room Ministries of The United Methodist Church and has been well known to the churches as a spiritual leader. My hope is that all the prayer covenant congregations will get together on that day and pray and learn together about spiritual disciplines. Your prayer for this convocation will be appreciated.

Another exciting thing is the Virginia Clergy Leadership program. We have already selected 20 clergy as the first cohort, and they will meet together for their first session Feb. 11-13. The purpose of this program is the nurturing of clergy leadership grounded in deep spiritual maturity. During 18 months, participants will have six sessions of reading, reflection and spiritual practices within the context of a peer learning group. I am deeply grateful to the Clergy Effectiveness Team of the Board of Ordained Ministry for developing and implementing this program. I believe that transforming clergy leadership will be the first step in turning around our churches from maintenance to fruitfulness.

I am also excited about the progress of the systemic implementation of All Things New - Equipping Vital Congregations. The Data Automation Team has already developed a new program for charge conference information and is preparing for a new statistical data reporting system. The Prayer Team has been faithfully praying for this initiative and for a

renewal of our churches. The Discipleship Circle Design Team will soon finish its work and pass the baton to the Implementation Team. I think these Discipleship Circles, which will be small groups organized with both clergy and laity, will be the key in our growing spiritually and in dealing with vital signs of the churches. Soon, the pilot group will begin and the design will be tested. We will need a lot of prayer support for this Discipleship Circle. I invite you to join me in supporting this new plan with your prayers.

In January, the Board of Ordained Ministry will interview and examine the clergy who have applied for ordination and full membership this year. This is a very serious and important ministry for the Kingdom of God, and the Board's discernment will make a huge impact on our churches. The members of the Board of Ordained Ministry are fully aware of the importance of this task, and they will be working very hard to dedicate their best to the Lord and for the church. I deeply appreciate their work and ask all of you to pray for the Board members and for the candidates who applied for ordination.

I am excited and looking forward to the new year because it is full of many possibilities. I am deeply grateful to God for the signs of new things and new changes. I cannot express my thanks enough to God and to all of you for the culture of prayer that is spreading in our churches. If we open ourselves to the Lord and listen and follow the guidance and the wisdom of our Lord, we will have a different future. I am very excited because of this possibility.

May God bless all of us this new year and give us peace.

In our Lord,

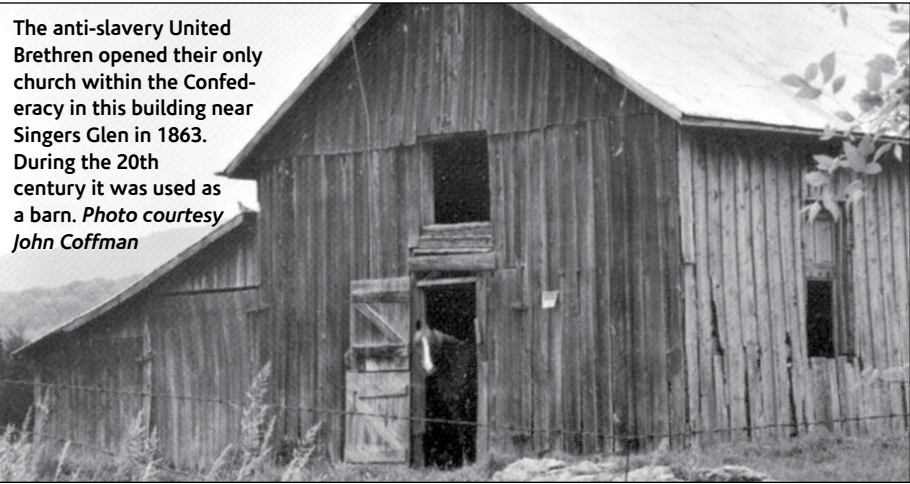
*Young A. Cho*

# ONE LAST WORD



## Tweets heard 'round the conference

- Andrew Book @Andrewbook1**  
No crying he makes?!? Who are you kidding? -Mary @UnvirtuousAbbey  
#SarcasticXmasCarols
- Keith Elgin @keithelgin**  
What the heck is @panerabread thinking getting rid of the steak and cheddar panini? #grieving
- Jacob Sahms @Spider\_Raven**  
7:40 p.m. No US mail yet. Ah, the new normal. #irememberwhenthemailusedtocomeduringtheday
- Rev. Sarah Wastella @SarahWastella**  
My heart grew three sizes today. #Grinch
- Hannah Lambert @hannahbanna004**  
So excited it's baby Jesus season
- Lindsey Baynham @LMBaynham**  
"Spiderman got a hole in his arm at the parade!" ...Mom, I just woke up, I can't take the hard news until at least 11.
- McKennon Shea @McKennon**  
Remember all those tiebreaker scenarios to figure out who represents the Coastal Div. against FSU? Nevermind. The answer is always Duke.
- Emily Stallings @emyh0pe**  
You know it's a good day when one of your tweets makes it in the VAUMC Advocate



## Celebration marks sesquicentennial of historic church

On Dec. 27, 1863, during the middle of the Civil War, Bishop J.J. Glossbrenner presided at the dedication of Salem United Brethren Church in northwest Rockingham County. As the only United Brethren congregation to be established in the south during the Civil War, this historic action served as a platform for religious development in the county, which in turn parented the congregations of Donovan Memorial and Cherry Grove churches, as well as several in the Brocks Gap area.

In 2005, members of the Singers Glen community gathered together to move and restore the historic original church building. In 2008, the restored sanctuary was re-dedicated as a viable historic sanctuary of The United Methodist Church.

More recently, this summer a Civil War Trails marker was placed at the church. The marker, which reads "Old Salem Church; Anti-Slavery Congregation in the Confederacy," gives some of the history of the log church, its organizers and its unique opening in the height of the Civil War.

In late October, Singers Glen UMC observed the 150th anniversary of the historically important church. The

Rev. Gary Ziegler portrayed the Rev. John W. Howe, the first circuit rider assigned to the church.

Salem Church was built in 1833 by Randolph Moyers for use as a Methodist Episcopal Church. Known originally as the Green Hill Meeting House, the church was sold to the United Brethren in 1863, and the building was moved to a more accessible location about one mile north of Singers Glen on today's Route 613. Bishop Glossbrenner brought glass for the windows through Union lines to complete the building.

"One can speculate that the Salem name, which means 'peace,' was chosen as a palliative for a Valley torn asunder ... during a time of war," wrote Dale McAllister in an article on the church for the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society.

The building was used into the late 1880s until it was declared unfit. It was mainly utilized as a livestock barn for most of the 20th century, until Donovan Memorial members disassembled the structure piece by piece and moved it to the church's property for restoration. 🍷

-Larry Huffman, Donovan Memorial UMC



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