

2011 Annual Conference to focus on mission



Virginia United Methodist

Advocate

\$2.00

June 2011



***God is good!
All the time!***

*Celebrating SUCCESS STORIES
from across the conference*

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

— Virginia Conference Vision Statement


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Thou shalt steal...
these successful ideas
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©2011 Virginia Advocate  Read us on Facebook
National award-winning newsmagazine
USPS 660-740 ISSN 0891-5598
Published monthly by Virginia United Methodist Commu-
nications, Inc., an agency of the Virginia Annual Conference of The
United Methodist Church. Periodical postage paid at Glen Allen,
Va., and at additional mailing offices. The Virginia United Meth-
odist Advocate is owned by Virginia United Methodist Commu-
nications, Inc.
POSTMASTER: Send changes of address to Virginia United Meth-
odist Advocate, P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058. Editorial
and business offices are located at 10330 Staples Mill Rd., Glen
Allen, Va. Mailing address: P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058.
Telephone: 1-800-768-6040, ext. 110; local (804) 521-1100. Fax:
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God is good! All the time!



Neill Caldwell
Editor

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to God's purpose."
(Romans 8:28)

A few months ago I placed a notice on the conference's ClergyNet and LaityNet soliciting examples of churches' "success stories," ministries that are working well and making a difference in the local community.

All too often we focus on things that are going wrong; the media — even faith-based media — is sometimes more guilty of that than others. But even individual church members are often eager to complain about things or find fault with others. So it's up to us to point out what's working well, to celebrate the good news about Christ's good news, you might say.

The response to my simple query was strong. In fact, we received a lot more responses than we had room for. We will try to use all the information we received in one form or another. What you see in the following pages is a sample of some simple ideas that could easily be replicated in your church.

You don't have to do them all! Every church and every community is different, with different needs. These success stories are offered with the hope that one or two might trigger a light bulb to go on over your head: "Hey, what a great idea! We could do that!" There are so many needs in our neighborhoods and communities. If each of our churches does one or two things to help others, and does them well, it will make a huge difference across this conference.

All of this is to say that putting together this issue was a joy. It's great to see so many church members and pastors who are excited about ministry, who are thinking "outside the box" and doing great things.

You've probably participated in the call and response: "God is good. All the time. All the time. God is good." Sometimes speakers start with that as a way of bringing their audience together. It's a simple statement about a fact of life that we sometimes forget. God does provide us with so many good things, including a keen mind to think about how we can give back to God as our show of thankfulness. Helping our fellow travelers on life's journey is one great way to respond to God's goodness and love.

Neill Caldwell

Thou shalt steal... *these successful ideas*



'Beach Bags' for youngsters

As librarian at a local elementary school, I became aware of a project called "Beach Bags" that began in other local schools and found its way to ours. The purpose of the project is to provide food for the weekend for some students who qualify for free or reduced cost breakfasts and lunches at school. Grocery bags are filled with nonperishable foods: two individual servings of cold cereal, two boxes of shelf-stable milk, two individual servings of a main entree (spaghetti, ravioli, mac & cheese, etc.), two servings of fruit (fruit cups or juice), and two snacks (cereal/granola bars, pudding, pretzels, raisins, trail mix, etc.).

On Friday afternoons, we visit classrooms, ask students to bring their backpacks out into the hall, and put the grocery bags of food into their backpacks. The distribution is discreet, and with the food tucked away in backpacks, students aren't subjected to a lot of questioning from their peers.

When Jeff Waller and the Missions Committee at **Baylake UMC in Virginia Beach** became aware of the project, 24 students in the school (12 of whom are considered homeless, living in a hotel) received a 'beach bag'

once a month or less. Food was provided by Dominion Power. Our committee began working with school personnel to supplement the program so that students receive the beach bags every Friday. Now we provide food for 30 students at our school and 35 students at another school each week.

The project could easily be replicated by others (we, in fact, are duplicating what others have already done). The fact that donations can be as small as a box of cereal bars or as large as anyone wishes, makes this a project that many people can participate in. Many people at our church appreciate the fact that this is a very local mission.

— Patty Waller



Rebecca Phelps is a second-grader at Bayside Elementary.



Three churches now blend their youth to boost participation.

Combined youth groups

In 2008, **Burnt Factory** and **Greenwood UMCs** in the Winchester District started having joint youth meetings after offering Vacation Bible School together. With five or six kids each, we created a 10-12 member group. The numbers definitely help with the interest and participation. Today we are a combined youth group of three churches (**Bruce-town UMC** joined in 2009) and have 25-35 youths from 11 schools at youth functions.

The regular meeting is on Sunday evening, which each church hosts in rotation. We ask parents to provide the meal, then we play games, introduce a central message and (now that we have greater numbers) separate into middle school and high school groups. Trust, the Internet, entitlement, service to the less fortunate, bullying and peer pressure are some topics we have covered. In addition to the regular meeting, we have one 'fun' event: paint ball, rafting, bowling, a scavenger hunt, disco party, Super Bowl party, or end-of-school celebrations.

We utilize district and conference events such as Eagle Eyrie retreats in Lynchburg and Spl@sh at Shenandoah University. We have done a camp-out at the beginning of the school year to welcome sixth-graders and World Vision's 30-Hour Famine. We raise money through car washes, even a 1950s-style lunch. Our principal mission is Teens Opposing Poverty, where we serve meals to the disadvantaged living at local motels.

Youth are a part of the church, not separate. As leaders, we encourage all the kids to be in worship and Sunday school and participate in activities of their respective churches. We recognize each church has a life of its own.

Does everything always run smoothly? No. We are learning and growing together. Does each church contribute equally? We all give according to our abilities. A youth band and joint mission trip are future goals. Still, we have committed ourselves to God.

— Rob Moss



Partnering volunteers with children

Emmanuel UMC in Stephenson (Winchester District) provides a free after-school tutoring program to elementary students during the school year. This ministry has impacted more than 60 students since the program began five years ago. The program is open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday each week from 3:30 to 5 p.m. The students meet one-on-one with an adult volunteer to complete homework, projects and work on skills in related areas. The program is open to third-, fourth- and fifth-grade students (the greatest need is in these grades due to the Virginia Standards of Learning). There are about 15 volunteers who help the students.

Program Director Paige Gum coordinates with the principal of the school identifying students that could benefit. Gum was a former teacher at the school, which helps communication. Emmanuel UMC supports this program through prayer, providing volunteers and financially.

We have seen attitudes change toward homework and grades improve. Now parents are asking if the program can be expanded into the middle school years.

The love our volunteers show to these students has a very broad impact on all involved.

— The Rev. James M. Smith



Trinity UMC in McLean has been a partner with Stanton Elementary School for nearly 18 years. The Washington, D.C., school serves the Ward Eight community in our nation's capital. Students of this school struggle, not only with math and reading scores, but also with the needs that poverty and life's disruptions inflict.

Not only do we make weekly visits to interact with teachers and students, but we also have donated needed goods such as an electronic keyboard, lawn mower and microscopes. Every year we give Christmas gifts to every child and dictionaries to each graduating student. During flu season we provide antibiotic wipes and gels and continually provide needed uniforms and underwear. We have hosted students and teachers at Trinity services and shared Thanksgiving dinners in our Fellowship Hall. What we have received in return are hugs from the students, the appreciation of thanks from faculty and staff and, frequently, their friendships.

We do not measure our success on reading and math scores. We measure our success on the fact that life for children and teachers is easier and, hopefully, better with our presence. Also, since this is a reciprocal relationship, we measure it in the rich rewards of children's smiles, teachers' thanks, and the appreciation of friends.

— Suzanne Hamilton

Extending God's table

Like almost everyone else in this part of the country, the people of Purcellville in Loudoun County experienced the worst winter in memory in 2009-2010. Many were confined to their homes for weeks. Yet God chose that season to open the church doors and extend the Lord's table in new and amazing ways that are nurturing love.

Members of **Bethany UMC** have for some time been volunteering at local food pantries, serving Angel Tree and All God's Children families in the area and reaching out to the needs of immigrant families. During those cold winter months some of these persons felt called by the Lord to offer a regular weekly meal to anyone in the community who cared to come. Because it was a way of offering resources of the church to persons outside the church, they immediately began to say they were "Extending the Table" of Jesus Christ to others. That name stuck.

The simple Wednesday evening meal began in February 2010, and immediately drew a wide variety of persons. Meals are prepared in the church kitchen and served in the fellowship hall by a small cadre of members. In the first few weeks they met and engaged with a more culturally, ethnically and economically diverse group of residents than Bethany usually sees: white, Hispanic and African-American, families with incarcerated parents and families with working parents, people who had their own homes and those who lived in subsidized housing.

As relationships developed, it soon became clear that many of the families had another need: clothing. The table was, therefore, extended again. After seeking donations from the church and community, a free clothing closet was offered to all in need.

Before long, yet another need was identified: tutoring. And so the table was extended yet again. Volunteers from the church offer their time to work with students, assisting with homework assignments and with difficult subjects. A personal computer with Internet access was donated to the church to provide access to resources.

During this time it also became clear that transportation was a challenge for some of the families. A radically generous family donated a van to the church to meet this need.

The table has continued to be extended in other ways, including trips to local museums and parks, ESL (English as a Second Language) classes and a budding food distribution service that will soon provide a food pantry.

— The Rev. Jeff Roberts



Mount Pisgah UMC opens its doors to a men's recovery group from Texas twice a year.



Showing hospitality

Every spring and fall, **Mount Pisgah UMC in Midlothian** hosts a team of 20 men who travel to Richmond from the House of Peace in Fort Worth, Texas. They come to work at the State Fair and NASCAR races to raise money for their Christian recovery programs. Each season the team is unique but it is always comprised of men that have found hope in Jesus Christ to recover from drug or alcohol addictions.

It is always difficult for these groups to find a place to stay when they work. But thanks to Mike Johnson, our former director of Contemporary Worship, they were welcomed with a warm embrace. Johnson knew from the very beginning that this ministry was important to the participants but, perhaps more importantly, to the suburban church body of Mount Pisgah.

They don't expect anything from us. They are happy with just a roof over their heads. But that level of hospitality would not create the relationship that God has called us to have. The men sleep in Jewett Bass Hall (formerly our Youth Center and Boy Scout gathering place). We provide access to our industrial kitchen and laundry facilities. They are invited to dine and fellowship with us every Wednesday night when they are not working.

Numerous members of the congregation have felt called to this ministry and have taken the opportunity to get to know the men personally. In addition to serving them lots of home-cooked meals, people have donated gas cards, lunch and drinks for their ride back home; lots of food for them to prepare during their stay; warm socks, clothes, replacement tire for one of the vehicles, etc.

The beauty of this ministry is that the men are here long enough for us to establish a relationship. The ministry gives our church members an opportunity to learn to see these men the way God sees them and not as our culture might label them. In fact, these men are so appreciative of their new life in Christ they have started to light fires of enthusiasm at our church.

What an honor it is to serve them! What a gift it is to meet them and allow their stories and smiles to reach into our souls. These opportunities prepare us for the next, and we welcome them with open hearts, open minds and open doors.

— Cheryl Lafferty

Creative fundraising

Every year the United Methodist Men of **Manor Memorial UMC in New Market** sponsor a Valentines Dinner and auction. Our local emergency squad and fire department provides a meeting place and prepares a meal for which tickets are sold. Local businesses donate merchandise or gift cards, and church members purchase or make additional items for the auction. We attempt to have 65-70 items available. We are lucky enough to have a member who is a professional auctioneer who knows our audience. He makes the evening fun and profitable.

Our biggest money-maker is a cake. This year's cake was a huge United Methodist Cross and Flame (pictured below). We have been blessed with two members who have each taken days to prepare an outstandingly decorated cake that

will feed well over 100 people. Approximately halfway through the auction the entire cake is sold. Once sold, the cake is donated back, sold again and again until the auctioneer determines we have no more bidders. At that time we remove the cake and, while the auction continues, the cake is cut up into slices. A \$50 bill is inserted in one slice. At the end of the auction we bring out the slices and auction them. One lucky buyer gets a bonus along with an excellent slice of cake!

Annually the cake brings in from \$1,500 to \$2,000. While many people find this amazing, it has become a tradition.

We have found over the years that the best bids have been for items made by members. This includes turned wooden items, woodworking, meals for four to six people, artwork, homemade jams and jellies, quilts and other items where the bidders know the person who has produced the item. The funds from the auction are used for many different church projects as well as to support our local Boy Scout troop, our food pantry, Heart Havens, Camp Overlook, and other worthy causes.

— Jim Douglas



Trish Crown holds up the \$50 bill she found in her piece of cake.



Last year's famous Cross & Flame cake at Manor Memorial.





Involving children in worship

Immanuel UMC in Annandale established a new children's program in July 2010. We had been working toward this goal for about three years. This Saturday afternoon program focuses on Bible story and worship work, teaching children how to worship and empowering them to lead worship.

We started with only 10 children (all from African countries) so that we could more easily form the program. Within two weeks, people started stepping forward to be a part of the program. They were caught up by the vision of children and adults from around the world leading worship services together.

From the beginning of the program, the decision was made to intentionally give ownership of the program to the parents of the children. Currently, there are three mothers who give leadership. The program has also expanded to include youth.

We have found that the *Godly Play* Bible instruction and the worship work are perfect for this program. The children are always eager to receive the Bible story; its visual aspects are very appealing. They love to stand in the pulpit and speak the words of Scripture they have learned. One of the boys is working on a sermon on Moses at the Red Sea. Two boys have been learning the theological significance of lighting the altar candles. An Immanuel member is teaching the group some songs to sing as a choir. All of the children are working on the art of public prayer.

At this point, we are ready to grow the program. We are working on music events that we can advertise in the community for children and their families.

The design is for the children to come to Sunday morning worship and offer leadership – in music, prayer, body movement, witness, even preaching. In this way, the children will be the change agents for allowing our worship to become more multicultural. It is about giving children and youth a voice. It gives our congregation so much joy!

– The Rev. Deborah Austin



Store raises money for church's mission work

Laurel Park UMC in Richmond is a small-membership church that started a thrift store a year ago as a mission project. All profits go back into the community. This year we will be giving four \$500 scholarships to the technical center at Hermitage High School, and we have taken on providing meals for 21 children at local schools. The “Aggie’s Attic” mission store on Hungary Road in Glen Allen also provides additional funds to many local projects.

This mission is provided by a church with an average attendance on Sunday of 35. Now that’s the Holy Spirit at work!

– The Rev. Dean Pittman



Sewing love into gifts for others

In 2009 the women’s morning Bible study class at **Oakland UMC** could not find a curriculum that resonated. Reluctant to forfeit the fellowship time, they brainstormed with pastor Tizzy von Trapp Walker. An accomplished seamstress and former alteration shop business owner, she had an epiphany: “Why couldn’t we make lap quilts for the veterans of McGuire Veterans’ Hospital in Richmond?”

Oakland has had a five-year relationship with the hospital, adopting as many as 35 residents at Christmas.

Combining von Trapp Walker’s sizable fabric “stash” and the talents of the women in the Bible class has become a match made in heaven. In less than six weeks, eight women completed 34 lap quilts and two crocheted afghans for the adopted veterans. The women then shifted to fleece blankets, which were less time consuming.

The Richmond Charge Sewing Circle began considering other outreach opportunities. They sewed baby receiving blankets, knitted hats, crocheted baby blankets and baby clothes for the Kilmar-nock Family Maternity Center which serves low-income, at-risk mothers. A conversation with Bethanie Constant at UMFS (United Methodist Family Services) led the group to add those graduates to the list of blanket beneficiaries. Last fall the sewers delivered 130 fleece blankets and socks to McGuire Hospital. Items have been received by Richmond County Social Services, Jerusalem Baptist Church’s Hispanic ministry, The Haven and individuals. Now an official who moved from the veterans’ hospital in Richmond to one in Roanoke is asking if it, too, can be included. “Each stitch, each knot, and each handcrafted item is blessed and filled with the love of Jesus Christ,” von Trapp Walker says.



One can make a difference

Can one person really make a difference? Does one little 5-year-old girl have the ability to change lives? If her name is Mariah Jackson, the answer is definitely, YES!

It all began with a trip to Washington, D.C. Mariah had accompanied her mother and grandmother to the city to run an errand when, while at a gas station, a man knocked on their car window asking for money. Later that day, Mariah watched as another man dug deep into a trash can looking for food. She was deeply affected by these events and begged her mother and grandmother to give the men money to buy food. Mariah's mother explained to her daughter that it was more effective to give money to organizations that provide food for the poor and homeless than to just hand it out to folks on the street.

Coincidentally, during this time, Mariah's grandmother's church, **Pleasant Valley UMC in Loudoun County**, was conducting a mission drive for the Society of St. Andrew (SoSA). Mariah got one of SoSA's coin boxes and waited patiently outside the doors of her church asking parishioners to contribute. She was hoping to collect \$100 but soon realized that she had collected far more than her goal. With the permission of her teacher, Mariah brought her coin box to school and invited all of her kindergarten classmates to bring in their pennies.

Mariah changed the lives of more than 15,000 people who were the recipients of the food that was provided from the \$363.43 she collected.

Shortly after receiving the collected money from Mariah, SoSA Executive Director Mike Waldmann and I had the honor of meeting Mariah Jackson and her family at a "Potato Drop" at **Fairlington UMC in Alexandria**. Mariah was excited to witness first-hand how the food is distributed to the local organizations and provided to the hungry and homeless. She also got a chance to get her hands dirty by bagging potatoes and loading the big truck.

Mariah's generous spirit and hard work touched my heart so deeply that I submitted her story to Cokesbury to be featured in the *Shake it Up Café* Vacation Bible School program. In addition to reading about Mariah's great work in Cokesbury's program, you can learn more through SoSA's Web site at <www.endhunger.org>.

Jesus said, "Let the children come to me and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs." (Luke 18:16) Mariah heard these words and through her small hands and her big heart did do great works for the Kingdom by feeding God's hungry children.

— The Rev. Jennifer Vestal Moore



Mariah Jackson at a SoSA 'Potato Drop.'

Churches step up to meet need for the homeless

The idea for "To Our House" was born about two years ago, following the death of a local homeless man, Teddy Owen Henderson (hence the initials in 'To Our House' in his honor) who often wandered the streets of Blacksburg. Following a memorial service held for Teddy at the Blacksburg Public Library, a small group of concerned citizens came together to discuss what could be done to help homeless men in the New River Valley. The group soon discovered that nothing was available in the area for single homeless men. Typically, single homeless men have been sent either to the Rescue Mission in Roanoke or to another homeless ministry in the Wytheville area.

An organizing committee was quickly formed of concerned citizens along with area clergy and representatives from a variety of agencies who worked with the impoverished of the New River Valley (New River Community Action, New River Valley Community Services, Departments of Social Services, and others). Working collectively, 'To Our House' began housing homeless men in area churches beginning Jan. 15. The ministry concluded this year on April 1.

In all, 28 faith communities served as host or support congregations. Of the United Methodist churches involved, the **Pembroke Charge (First UMC and Mount Lebanon UMC)** hosted the men for two weeks, along with **Fieldstone UMC and Blacksburg UMC**, who also hosted the men for two weeks each. Additionally, **Mount Tabor, Belview, and Newport and Mount Olivet churches** served as support congregations. First UMC-

Narrows and Central UMC in Radford, from the Holston Conference, also served as support congregations.

A total of 27 different men were served over the 77 nights the shelter was offered. Most of the guests were from here in the valley, but several came from as far away as Clifton Forge and several others from out-of-state. Because 'To Our House' has been a collaborative effort with local agencies, two of the men were able to access a program available to veterans and several others were able to secure permanent employment locally.

— The Rev. Morris Fleischer



Fieldstone's Brenda Sternfield prepares food for "To Our House." Above, a cross drawn by a guest.



Community garden

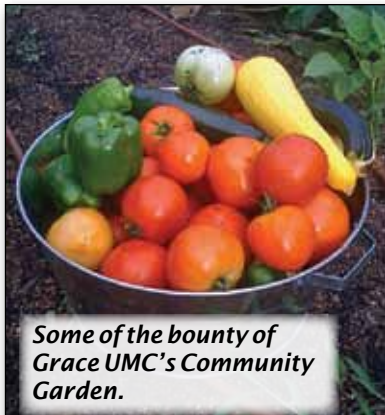
Grace UMC in Manassas has had a great experience in providing food for the community. We had a long-unused sand volleyball court that some church members got inspired about. We plowed it under with a load of compost and created a community garden last summer.

Groups from all different ministries of the church, especially the children's ministries, worked in the garden, and we were able to give away several bushels of fresh produce each week at our community assistance ministry.

The garden is re-launched for the new season, now drawing on a rainwater irrigation system (the water tank of which the local high school's art class is going to paint as a community outreach project). The suburban kids and youth (and adults) in the church are getting some new insight into all the growing-farming-planting stories and metaphors in the Bible and learning about where food comes from. The gardeners in the congregation have found a way to use their talents in God's service, and we are surprising the members of the community who come for assistance with bills and food; they expect just canned goods, and we offer tomatoes, peppers, squash, cabbage and more!

We shared this as a "good idea" at our clustered charge conference in Alexandria last fall, and it was well-received as an easily replicated way to re-purpose unused land at a church in life-giving ministry for and with the poor.

— *The Rev. Meredith McNabb*



Some of the bounty of Grace UMC's Community Garden.

Providing a respite for caregivers

Williamsburg UMC will soon be celebrating the 10th anniversary of our Respite Care ministry. This is a ministry for adults with special needs and their families, where family caregivers can bring their loved ones several hours a day so they can take time off or do errands.

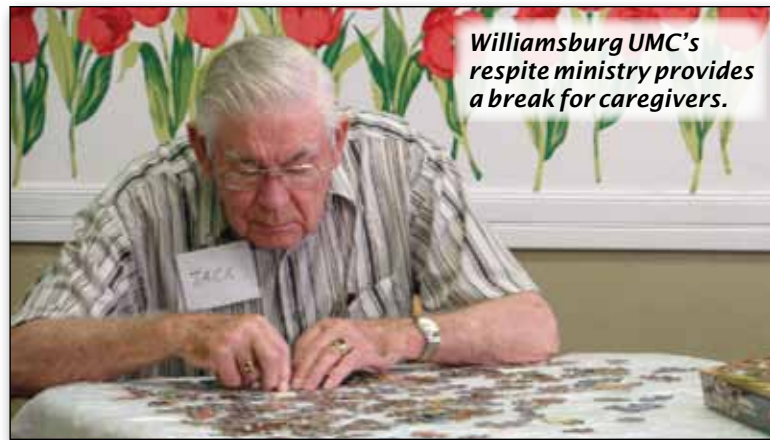
Respite serves adults with dementia, Alzheimer's, mental retardation, Down syndrome and various physical disabilities, to name just a few. These clients who spend time in Respite Care get to spend social time in a wonderful community doing crafts, playing games, singing, gardening and eating together.

I used to intern/volunteer in Respite when I was in college here at William & Mary, and the time I spent with the clients was formative in my sense of call to ministry. Sitting around the lunch table there with so many very different people, from clients to staff and volunteers, always seemed like a little piece of God's Kingdom to me.

In Respite's 10 years of existence it has gone from having one client to about 20, which is about capacity for our space. Along the way it has served many more clients and their families.

We believe this program to be fairly unique both in the area and among Virginia Conference churches. Though we are limited by space for our own ministry, it is part of our vision to be a model and resource for other churches to begin similar ministries.

— *The Rev. Allie Rosner*



Williamsburg UMC's respite ministry provides a break for caregivers.

Give it all away

For the past couple of years **St. Mark's UMC in Manassas** has been doing a biannual event we call "The Great Giveaway." It is rooted in our belief that God doesn't want us to be sucking resources out of our community, but to give ourselves away to the community.

In February and August, we gear up for a giant yard sale, except the

cost of all items we offer is free. Our fellowship hall is full of clothing, furniture, baby items and other ... stuff. We open the doors at 8 a.m. and over the course of the morning we will serve 200-300 people.

During this past February event, we provided an added benefit of a sack lunch for each person who came.

The importance of what we were doing was driven home by a woman who came up to me at the last Great

Giveaway. She told me that she kept foster children and had gotten two middle school girls the day before who showed up with everything they owned in a plastic grocery bag. The girls were going through the clothes at the church, finding stuff that they thought was "pretty cool."

For folks like her, St. Mark's succeeds in being the presence of Jesus for our community.

— *The Rev. Jim Johnson*

Breakfast for everyone!

At **Washington Street UMC in Alexandria**, we struggle to find missions that are both meaningful for the community and feasible for our church. We discovered that there was no offering of breakfast in the city of Alexandria, so we started The Open Table last July.



Some of the Washington Street UMC Open Table volunteers.

Monday mornings, from 6 to 8 a.m., we provide a simple meal: muffins, fruit, cheese, hard-boiled eggs, nuts, cereal, oatmeal, coffee, water and juice. The program is simple: we set up a few tables, coffeepots, and other supplies on Sunday afternoon right after our last morning service. All of our food is donated and we have a weekly "shopping list" for our volunteers so they will know what is needed each week. Some volunteers only bring food. Some only help set up. Some only come on Mondays. And some do all three. We have found that our members do not have much time to donate, but can manage to come to the church before they head into work in the morning.

This breakfast does not cost much money and has zero impact on the church's budget. It also takes very little space and time. Because our social hall flooded two weeks before the start of this ministry, we host The Open Table in the narthex of our sanctuary building instead.

Guests come from the streets, nearby shelters or their own homes. They each have their own stories and slowly, week by week, we are forming friendships and learning about their lives. There is no pressure. They can stay and eat, or take a cup of coffee and a bag of food to go. They can chat or sit quietly in our chapel. A few volunteers take breakfast out too, sometimes leaving a meal beside a man who is sleeping or offering it to one who is looking for food in a dumpster.

Ours is a small, yet meaningful gesture, impacting our community and infusing our church with a sense of purpose. This program is now being used as a model for others in our community with the hopes of providing breakfast for every day of the week.

Collecting items that benefit others

Palmyra UMC in Fluvanna County has two successful "collection" ministries. One is pull tabs (from soda, soup, cat/dog food cans) for Ronald McDonald House near the University of Virginia Hospital in Charlottesville. (It takes 1,000 tabs to make one pound.) The other collection is dirty sneakers (too far gone to be worn) for the "Nike Reuse" project. The sneakers are made into play surfaces, such as tracks, tennis courts, etc. Unfortunately, the church cannot do a major collection of sneakers since they are too far from a factory collection outlet. Fortunately, members of the congregation deliver shoes as they travel past an outlet to visit relatives.

Also worth noting is Palmyra UMC's "HUGS" (Hands United by God's Spirit) prayer shawl group, which made the decision to meet in a local country store rather than at church so that by visibility they could reach out to the community. "It has worked!" said the Rev. Sandra Benton Plasters. "As women have come into the store, they've seen us and asked to join us, so that now we are an ecumenical group representing several area churches. It has been like the pebble thrown into a pond: the ripples reach much farther than where the pebble first went in."



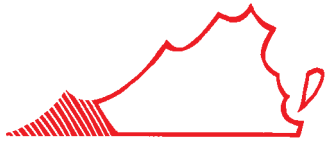
Palmyra's HUGS group attracts attention by meeting in a local shop.

Creating multiple ways to meet the needs of the community

In 2009 **Peninsula District** clergy and laity met to develop a model much like John Wesley's way of serving those not in churches, the neglected and the needy. Urban Partners is a suite of four ministries: Family Link, a video visitation program connecting families with their incarcerated juvenile loved ones hosted by **St. James UMC**; Peninsula Crime Victims Council seeks to heal hearts wounded by crime through counseling, support groups and referral services; Seton Youth Shelter, which provides emergency shelter and crisis counseling for youth (**Phoebus UMC** opened their doors to offer a satellite location); and mentoring efforts to identify and assist youth at-risk of dropping out of school by assigning adult advocates to each student to work on a goal-oriented, one-on-one approach. "Urban Partners is working to let the Spirit take hold and unite United Methodists to help heal hurting souls," says program coordinator Shan Sixbey.



Family Link allows prisoners to see family members via a video connection.



Virginia

Balloting, mission celebration to be focus of 2011 Virginia Annual Conference, set in 'Star City'

While the election of delegates to 2012 General and Jurisdictional conferences will be the main logistical order of business at this month's Annual Conference meeting, the official focus will be on mission.

The 229th session of Virginia Annual Conference will be held June 15-19 at the Roanoke Civic Center. The event will open with Laity Session and Clergy Executive session on Wednesday night; the opening plenary session will get under way Thursday morning in the arena.

The theme of 2011 Annual Conference is "Being Christ to Others – Snapshots of the Kingdom." A special worship service will be held on Thursday night, June 16, celebrating mission. A team of 13 children, ages 11-14, and four adults from one of the Shade and Fresh Water projects in Brazil will be a part of that celebration.

The conference preacher will be Dr. Sam Wells, Dean of the Chapel at Duke University, and the Bible Study leader will be German native Thomas Kemper, General Secretary of the General Board of Global Ministries. Other special guests include Junaluska Singers and their new director, Dr. Melodie Galloway, who will sing on Friday afternoon.

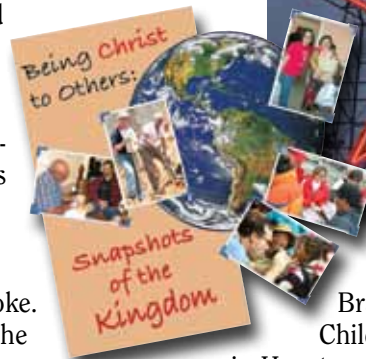
The Rev. Alex Joyner will preach for the Service of Remembrance, to be held Saturday evening. The Service for the Ordering of Ministry will take place on Friday evening.

There will again be a large display area with a Cokesbury store.

The Society of St. Andrews' annual "Potato Drop" will start early Friday at 5:30 a.m. in the Civic Center parking lot. Collection of kits for the United Methodist Committee on Relief will be

open Wednesday from 3 through 7:30 p.m., all day Thursday and Friday from 7:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. Also, clergy and lay members of Annual Conference are encouraged to bring "4 Cans 4 Conference," canned goods or boxed dry foods for the Southwestern Virginia Food Bank in Roanoke. The Red Cross will be at the Civic Center on Friday from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. for a blood drive.

This year's conference offering will benefit leadership development in Mozambique, the John Wesley Medical



The star atop Mill Mountain shines on Roanoke.

Boat and the Shade and Fresh Water project in Brazil, the Agape Christian Children's Community Center in Hometown on the Eastern Shore, and Shalom Zone: Grace Ministries in Roanoke.

For more information, visit the conference Web site at <www.vaumc.org>. □

Conference clergy and laity prepare to run 'The Good Race'

More than 25 clergy and laity of the Virginia Conference are making plans for the "Good Race," a commitment to walk or run the 5K, half-marathon or marathon in Richmond on Nov. 12.

This effort began with the desire of Allie Rosner, associate pastor at Williamsburg UMC, to promote clergy self-care. A number of studies have shown that many clergy do not adequately care for themselves despite the high stress they experience in their work.

"This is not a competition and it is not for super athletes," Rosner said. "We are simply clergy and laity who want to encourage each to regularly exercise and to celebrate the goals we set for Nov. 12."

A Facebook group has been established, and members are reporting and encouraging each other daily. The Richmond District is also making plans for a pre-race pasta dinner for all participants on Nov. 11.

A number of clergy throughout Virginia have already responded to this invitation: Tim Tate at Bonsack UMC is training on the mountains of Roanoke; Alex Joyner at Franktown UMC is running from one side of the Eastern shore to another; Sarah Calvert at Luray UMC is using her treadmill; and even Donna Holder's Labrador has joined in getting fit at Westover Hills UMC.

"We hope others will join us, especially those clergy who have been looking for motivation to begin exercise," Rosner said.

Interested clergy and laity can contact Rosner <arosner@williamsburgumc.org> or Steve Jones <richmonddds@vaumc.org> or visit the Facebook group, "The Good Race." □

— The Rev. Steve Jones

Blackstone Assembly Center hires Sam McCracken as new executive director

The Board of Directors of the Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center (VUMAC) has hired Samuel A. McCracken as its new executive director, effective in July. He will replace Cammie Armstrong, who served as executive director for the past six years and recently announced her retirement.

McCracken comes to VUMAC from DeFoggi Development and Construction Co. in Richmond, where he served as senior vice president. He has a background in administration, marketing, facility maintenance and construction.

"Though we interviewed several strong candidates, we could not be more pleased with the board's hire of Sam McCracken," said the Rev. Tommy Herndon, Search Committee member and Harrisonburg District superintendent. "He has a record of strong leadership, a commitment to United Methodist values, and a dynamic, but diplomatic personality."

"The first time I saw VUMAC, I saw endless possibilities," said McCracken. "Though the facility has seen substan-

tial challenges, the opportunities that exist in the hospitality field for retreats and conferences are promising. I believe that VUMAC is positioned for growth and a strong future where I look forward to building on its strengths as we update facility needs and fulfill expansion opportunities."

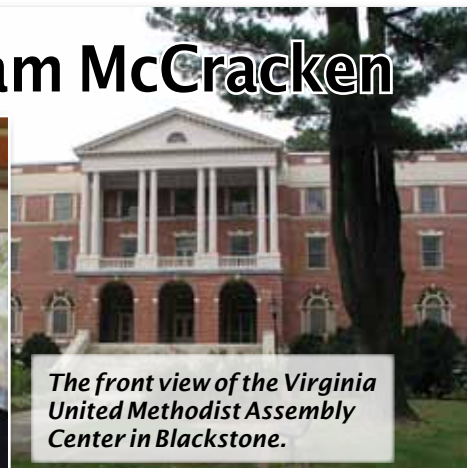
In addition to the new hire, VUMAC announced that it has successfully raised \$138,988 to date in its emergency appeal to handle its debt.

"We could not be more thankful to the countless number of individuals, groups, United Methodist Women, United Methodist Men, businesses and churches that have generously donated to our critical need," said director of Development Jennifer Wall. "Because of such generosity, our debt is now below \$300,000."

Wall also noted that the VUMAC board received title to the Blackstone



McCracken



The front view of the Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center in Blackstone.

property on April 11. "While the transfer of title in no way changes our relationship with

The United Methodist Church, it does give us the opportunity to secure a low interest loan and to be able to more aggressively pursue independent funding opportunities through foundations and governmental agencies," she said.

The facility was founded in 1892 as Blackstone Female Institute. When the college closed its doors in 1955, the Methodist Church took on the responsibility of the property's maintenance. At the 1972 Virginia Annual Conference it was decided that a comprehensive plan was to be developed for turning the property into a conference center. □

Virginia's Gov. Bob McDonnell to speak on 'Faith of Our Founding Fathers' at VUMAC



Gov. McDonnell

On June 11, Gov. Bob McDonnell will deliver an inaugural Founders Day address titled "Faith of Our Founding Fathers" at the Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center in Blackstone. McDonnell was elected as Virginia's 71st governor in November 2009 and took office in 2010. He grew up in Fairfax County, attended the University of Notre Dame and then entered the military, where he served 21 years in the U.S. Army, retiring as a lieutenant colonel. While in the Army he earned an M.B.A. from Boston University. Later he graduated from the Regent University Law School.

McDonnell's address will be preceded by a colonial-style dinner in the facility's dining room and followed by a lively debate between renowned interpreters for George Washington (Kevin Grantz) and Patrick Henry (Michael Wells). In addition, area youth will salute the "Faith of Our Founding Fathers" in song.

Saturday evening program tickets are \$30 per person and \$50 per couple. The dinner cost is \$60 per person and \$100 per couple. The cost of program, dinner overnight accommodations and Sunday breakfast is \$125 per person, \$230 per couple.

Retired United Methodist Bishop Hasbrouck Hughes will deliver the Sunday morning worship message on June 12.

For event information, call (434) 292-5308, or e-mail <jenniferwall@vaumc.org>. □

Pastor of northern Virginia mission church reflects on 15 years of raising hope for the 'least of these'

In 1995, after nearly two decades of working with Sojourners and the inner-city poor of Washington, D.C., Bishop Tom Stockton appointed me to explore starting a church among the poor and marginalized living along the Route One Corridor south of Alexandria. In June 1996, Doug Dillard, the Alexandria District superintendent, and I chartered a new congregation in the community room of the West Ford public housing project. We had 11 members and named this congregation Rising Hope United Methodist Mission Church.

Our mission has always been to bring the power of Christ and the support of the church to the least, the lost, the lonely and the left out of our community. As a result we have drawn our membership from the many homeless, formerly homeless, disabled and working poor members of our community as well as a number of middle-class families called to serve God among the least of these.

Today our small congregation has grown, not so much in membership, but in impact. With 100 active members, two-thirds of whom have been homeless, we serve the needs of 8,000 impoverished people in our community annually with our food pantry, soup kitchen, clothing closet, hypothermia shelter, recovery programs, job programs and emergency assistance. We may do a number of things that look like a social service agency, but the core of our life at Rising Hope is our worship of the God made known in Jesus Christ. And it is His power that drives all our outreach into the community. We access that power regularly through disciplined times of worship, prayer and Bible study. We worship together five times a week. Sunday morning is our central celebration, but we also come together in a shorter celebration at noon every Tuesday through Friday.

I have always taken Jesus' words to reach out to the least among us very seriously. But Jesus is not content that we should simply feed the hungry. He was transforming lives by welcoming traitorous tax collectors, revolutionary zealots,

prostitutes and sinners into his inner circle. When criticized for eating with them, he replied, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matthew 9:12-12). If Jesus invited the most disreputable members of society to become his disciples, can we do any less? The gospel is both challenging and life-changing.



As I reflect on Rising Hope's 15 years, one thing we got right was insisting that we empower the poor and not simply serve them. Our food pantry depends on the many volunteers from area churches and their generous donations of food. With their support we serve more than 300 families every week, yet equally important is the empowerment of dozens of people volunteering from the community in need. We put them to work stocking the shelves, making deliveries and welcoming the patrons who come desperate for assistance with their food budgets. By offering everyone an opportunity to volunteer, we are giving dignity to even the most destitute of individuals. Rising Hope is not about a "free hand-out." Neither are we about the wealthy sharing their surplus with poor souls who have so little. Rising Hope has a much greater goal in mind. We want to manifest the Kingdom of God where rich and poor, black and white, privileged and disadvantaged come together to be empowered to live out our highest potential and humbled to serve even



(Above, L-R) Aceline Bapthelus, Deborah Johnson and Dwayne Sands prepare meals for the impoverished. (Left, L-R) Mauri Bishop (Wesley Seminary student) assists Pastor Keary Kincannon in serving Holy Communion to Jackie Martin and Deborah Brothman. (Photos by Ed Simmons)

the most undeserving. Love demands nothing less. That is what God did for us in Jesus Christ and that is what God is calling us to do.

The work of Rising Hope will be recognized with a year of celebrations designed to lift up and support our work. The first will be a simple service of gratitude on June 26 at 7 p.m. at Rising Hope. On Sept. 30, the Friends of Rising Hope are sponsoring a fundraising dinner, dance and auction at the Mount Vernon Country Club. Christian comedian Scott Davis will present two benefit concerts at Springfield UMC on Oct. 23. Then, at a date and time to be arranged in early 2012, Jeff Majors (gospel and jazz musician, recording artist) will host a "HopeFest" with great musicians and preaching to culminate our year of celebration. Join us for one or more of these celebrations as we give thanks to God for God's presence in our work.

For more information go to <www.risinghopeumc.org>. □

— The Rev. Keary Kincannon,
pastor at Rising Hope UMC in Alexandria

'SpL@Sh' youth event uplifting for all involved

Early on a Saturday morning, Shenandoah University's (SU) campus came alive as more than 30 students prepared to welcome approximately 150 youths and adults to campus for an event called University SpL@Sh.

SpL@Sh stands for "Spiritual Life @ Shenandoah University." This event reaches out to youth groups, inviting them to campus for a day of worship, mission, small groups and a concert.

The event is SU's way of welcoming youth to a college campus for a day, as they are led by college students in order to gain a glimpse of what it can look like to become transformed through a college experience.

The youth came with donations for Teens Opposing Poverty (TOP). In all, more than two large pickup truck loads worth of donations were collected. Steve Jennings from TOP took

the donated items to street and motel ministries throughout the state.

"I thoroughly enjoyed watching the youth pass the mission articles over their heads while rushing to be the first ones finished so that they could win the awesome, incredible, priceless prize of ... being the first in line for lunch," said the Rev. Justin Allen, dean of Spiritual Life. "They really wanted to win that!"

Sophomore nursing student and member of the Just Faith program Samantha Martin said "the Spl@sh retreat at Shenandoah University this year was an awesome event for youth in the area. By the end of the retreat I could definitely see the Holy Spirit working in them. It was truly inspiring for me to minister to the youth that attended."

Students helped set up the worship space late Friday night, led small groups, welcomed each youth group as it arrived, participated in and explained the mission activity, used their musical abilities in worship, served Communion and served as the speakers for closing worship.

Not only was University SpL@Sh a transformational event for all who attended, it also was very transformative for the students who served throughout the day. "I really loved being a student leader and a small group leader because it really showed how much middle- and high-schoolers looked up to college students," said Emily Ehr Gott, a freshman in the Just Faith program. "I was really grateful that I had the opportunity to be an example for them." □

— Amy Howard is part of the Spiritual Life team at Shenandoah University



During the Prayer of Confession at the closing worship session, youth were asked by the Rev. Rhonda Van Dyke Colby and the Rev. Justin Allen to imagine writing their sins on their hands, and then symbolically lifting their sins up to God.

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Teens Opposing Poverty expanding ministry to all ages

Teens Opposing Poverty (TOP), a ministry that empowers youth to become involved in the fight against hunger and poverty, is expanding its outreaches to include groups of all ages. Under the name of Together Opposing Poverty, the new ministry will include families, young adults, intergenerational groups and entire congregations. The organization will retain the name of Teens Opposing Poverty for its youth-based outreach.

"The addition of Together Opposing Poverty reflects the reality of our current ministry," said Steve Jennings, the ministry's executive director. "We've had a number of churches continue their involvement even during times when they had no youth group, and in many churches, TOP has changed into a church-wide ministry over time."

The participation of a senior adult Sunday school class in TOP's Richmond ministry and the addition of young adult groups over the last year prompted consideration of the change.

"The need is too great to leave out anyone who wants to serve," said Jennings.

Currently, TOP conducts homeless ministries in the Washington, D.C., Richmond, Charlottesville, Lynchburg, Newport News and Winchester areas. It also offers "Impact the Valley," a weeklong home repair mission in the northern Shenandoah Valley. It is an Advance Special of the Virginia Conference. □



Volunteer Kendra Toney plays with a youngster who participates in TOP's Lynchburg ministry.

Foundation awards Rickard Scholarships

The Virginia United Methodist Foundation (VUMF) has announced that eight scholarships have been awarded for 2011 from the Harry C. and Reba C. Rickard Endowed Scholarship Fund.

The purpose of the endowment is to provide financial assistance to young persons of the Virginia Conference who are preparing for full-time Christian service. Seven students will receive \$1,000 grants and one \$500 grant will go to the eighth student.

Recipients are: Caitlyn Bailey, Ginter Park UMC (Richmond), Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond; Lindsey Baynham, Wesley UMC (Hampton), Duke Divinity School; Jennifer Fletcher, Grace UMC (Hartwood), Duke Divinity; Courtney Joyner, New Hope UMC (Har-

risonburg), Eastern Mennonite University; Jiyeon Kim, Chesterbrook UMC (McLean), Wesley Theological Seminary; Koren Robins, Williamsburg UMC, Duke Divinity; Laura Whittle, Del Ray UMC (Alexandria), Wesley Seminary; and Brian Boettcher, West End UMC (Portsmouth), Virginia Wesleyan College.

The Rickard fund was established with VUMF in 2007 through a bequest from the estate of the late Reba C. Rickard who lived in her later years in Strasburg. She was the widow of a former clergy member of the Virginia Conference, the Rev. Harry C. Rickard, who served much of his ministry as a military chaplain.

For more information, call (804) 521-1122 or 1-800-768-6040, ext. 122. □

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Upcoming Events – for all ages!

JUNE

Music Festival and 5K Run, June 4, Westview on the James (a United Methodist camp), Goochland. The event is to raise money for Westview's Annual Fund. Shalom Farm at Westview is one of the sponsors and will be open for visits. White Hawk Music Café in Goochland will provide food for the event. The cost of the race is \$15 and the cost of the festival is \$15, or you can do both for \$20. Children under 5 will be admitted free. Musical acts will include the Clay Mottley Band, the River City Band, A Good Natured Riot, the Remnants, and others. Westview will provide space for overnight camping along the river and at the Shalom Farm (quiet camping on the night of the event at no additional charge). There are limited private and RV camp sites for a fee and these must be reserved in advance through the camp office. A worship service along the river will be held Sunday morning June 5 at 8 a.m., followed by a free workout offered by "Seal Team PT" at 9:30 a.m. Registration will be from 8:30 to 9:50 a.m. The race will start at 10, followed by music from 11 a.m. until 7:30 p.m. at the farm. Music will continue at 8-10 p.m. at the River Shelter. Lawn chairs, blankets and small coolers will be permitted; no alcohol is permitted at Westview. To register for the 5K race visit <www.raceit.com/register/?event=4268>. To buy tickets to the music festival or to learn more about the event, go to <www.westviewonthejames.org>.

'Sojourn to Sacredness: A Theological Ecological Pilgrimage for Young Adults,' June 6-10, Young adults will hike the Appalachian Trail, canoe on the Shenandoah River and renew relationships with God, each other and the earth. Participants will learn low-impact and earth-friendly outdoor living skills, experience the beauty of God's creation, learn about some of the problems creation is facing, and discuss ways the church can be part of the solution. Conversations on the pilgrimage will include scientists, envi-

ronmentalists and theologians. Fee of \$125 includes canoes, food, transportation to and from the trail and river plus camping fees. For more information and to register online, visit the "Events" section at <www.vaumc.org>.

JULY

Helping Hands: A Virginia Conference Children's Mission Event, Four dates and locations during the summer: **July 7-8, Main Street UMC**, Waynesboro area; **July 21-July 22, Woodlake UMC**, Richmond area; **July 25-26, Williamsburg UMC**, Williamsburg area; **July 29-30, The Stand UMC**, Petersburg area. This event offers rising 4th-6th-graders a hands-on opportunity to do mission work as kids from all over the conference join together as one "United" Methodist church making a difference in the community. Woodlake will offer an optional early start time to include one additional mission opportunity. Come and learn about mission opportunities and the importance of being a caring Christian. The cost is \$36 per person; this will include a T-shirt, meals and snacks, and overnight stay. Register online at <www.vaumc.org>, under "Events." Questions regarding the event should be directed to Beth Christian at <bchristian@woodlakeumc.org>, or call (804) 739-4535, ext. 28.

Familiarization Trip to Russia, July 10-25. Sponsored by the Russia Initiative groups of the Baltimore-Washington and Virginia conferences. For more information, contact Laura Whittle at <whittle.la@gmail.com> or (540) 742-8148.

School of Christian Mission, July 22-24 (weekend), July 25-28 (weekday), Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center, Blackstone. The School of Christian Mission is a cooperative school for all ages offered annually by the Virginia Conference Board of Global Ministries and United Methodist Women (UMW). Your congregation is invited to come alive to mission under this year's theme of "All Things Made New." Topics for this year are: *Coming Out on the Side of Grace: Forgiveness and Reconciliation*; *Haiti: Challenges and Hope*; *Joy to the World: Mission and Evangelism*; and for the children's study, *Krik, Krak: The Story of Haiti*. Participants will have the opportunity to take two studies, receive literature that is helpful in teaching these studies in the local church, and bring items for school kits that will be assembled for the United Methodist Committee on Relief. Download a brochure and registration form at <www.vaumc.org>, under "Events," then click on the date. For more information, visit the UMW Web site at <www.vaumw.org> or contact Louise Miller at (540) 343-7529 or <rolmiller@cox.net>. **Registration deadline: July 10, 2011.**

AUGUST

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

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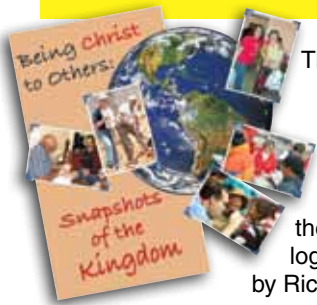
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2011 Annual Conference Info – June 15-19, Roanoke Civic Center



The 2011 Virginia Annual Conference theme is "Being Christ to Others: Snapshots of the Kingdom." The logo was designed by Richard H. Jenkins.

• VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR POTATO DROP

— The Virginia Conference Board of Global Ministries and the Society of St. Andrew (SoSA) are co-sponsoring a Potato Drop Friday, June 17, at 5:30 a.m. The potatoes will provide 120,000-135,000 servings of food to the region's poor and hungry. SoSA is delivering a tractor-trailer filled with more than 20 tons of donated potatoes to Roanoke and the board is helping to cover the cost of shipping. The truck will arrive in the predawn hours and the potatoes will be dumped in Parking Lot A of the Civic Center Parking Lot. This is the NE corner of the lot facing Orange Ave. and the Sheetz gas station. Volunteers are needed to help bag and load the potatoes for pickup by regional food banks, church pantries, soup kitchens and other local feeding agencies. Bagging is expected to be completed before 7:30 a.m. For more information about SoSA or about the Potato Drop, contact Sarah Ramey at 1-800-333-4597.

• COMPUTER-ASSISTED NOTE-TAKING VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

— Volunteers are needed to help with computer-assisted note-taking for the hearing impaired during this year's session of Annual Conference. Assistance is needed to type text of reports, worship and music using Microsoft Word, at times as the speaker is presenting. Good typing speed and accuracy is a must. Individuals are needed for all sessions for shifts of one hour or longer. For more information, contact the conference office of Leadership and Inclusivity at 1-800-768-6040 or (804) 521-1100, ext. 154; or e-mail <MarthaStokes@vaumc.org>.

• ANNUAL CONFERENCE OFFERING

— Each year, members of local churches are encouraged to help raise money for global mission projects designated by the bishop. The pastor or lay representative of each church will take that money to Annual Conference where it will be collected during a special time of the session.

This year's offering goal is \$200,000 and will benefit the three following projects:

1. MOZAMBIQUE -

Leadership Development/Living Water: \$50,000 — leadership development training for laity and clergy in the United Methodist Church in Mozambique and funding for the Living Well Society in its ministry of drilling new wells for drinking water;

2. BRAZIL -

Shade and Fresh Water/Children At Risk: \$50,000 — minister to the spiritual, physical, educational, social and emotional needs of at-risk children through the Shade and Fresh Water program and the John Wesley Medical Boat, both sponsored by the Brazil Methodist Church;

3. LOCAL MINISTRIES -

1. Agape Christian Children's Community Center, Inc. - Eastern Shore:

\$50,000 — help with the center's ministry in this small rural ethnic minority community of Horntown as it strives to provide a healthy nurturing environment for at-risk children;

2. Shalom Zone: Grace Ministries -

Roanoke: \$50,000 — minister to the disenfranchised of downtown Roanoke with an emphasis on the recovering community, immigrant community and marginalized people.

Promotional materials and more information about these projects can be found on the conference Web site at <www.vaumc.org> under "Resources >> Annual Conference 2011." Or contact the conference Mission office at 1-800-768-6040, ext. 144, or (804) 521-1144, or <Mission@vaumc.org>.

• PICTORIAL DIRECTORY SUPPLEMENT PHOTOS

— The Virginia Conference will publish a SECOND SUPPLEMENT to the 2009 *Pictorial Directory of the Virginia Conference Ministry*. Olan Mills Portrait Studios will have a booth in the Special Events Center (where all other conference exhibits are located) from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thursday, June 16, to take photos of clergy, local pastors, diaconal ministers, certified professionals, those serving as pastoral supply, retired bishops and conference staff who DID NOT have a picture taken last year or in 2009, including those newly commissioned. **If your picture is already in the 2009 directory or the 2010 supplement, it is NOT necessary for a new photo to be taken.**

For more information, contact Linda Rhodes, director of Communications, at (804) 521-1111 or 1-800-768-6040, ext. 111.

• **KITS FOR CONFERENCE** — This year's kit collection will replenish the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) supply. All types of kits are needed. Local churches are encouraged to collect items for any of the following most requested UMCOR kits and bring them to Annual Conference for delivery: **Health Kits, School Kits, Baby/Layette Kits, Birthing Kits, Cleaning Buckets (see urgent plea for buckets on pg. 21).** Details on the Web.

• PERSONS WITH SPECIAL

NEEDS — Large print or Braille editions of the *Book of Reports* and other accommodations for persons with special needs can be requested through the office of Leadership and Inclusivity at 1-800-768-6040 or (804) 521-1100, ext. 154; or e-mail <MarthaStokes@vaumc.org>.

• EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBER

— (540) 853-1545. This phone is for incoming emergency messages only.

• **BLOODMOBILE** — The Red Cross will be at the Civic Center for a blood drive on Friday, June 17, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

• **BANQUETS** — Details on the Web.

• 4 CANS 4 CONFERENCE

— Each clergy and lay member of Annual Conference is encouraged to bring "4 Cans 4 Conference," canned goods or boxed dry foods for the Southwestern Virginia (SW-VA) Food Bank in Roanoke. Requested are: one can of vegetables or fruit, one can of meat or fish, one can of soup or stew and one can with a pop-top. In addition, there is a need for cereal (hot, cold, or instant), peanut butter and jelly, cooking oils, dry preparation aids (like Hamburger Helper, pasta, etc.), flour, sauces, etc. As you are able, please bring your 4 Cans in recyclable grocery bags, rather than plastic bags. The SW-VA Food Bank will gladly pass the 99¢ reusable ones along to the recipients with the food. Please do not bring home-canned items, out-of-date cans, glass jars, damaged cans, fresh fruits/veggies, or already-opened or partially used supplies.

If each clergy and lay member brings the minimum number of cans, we may be able to present the SW-VA Food Bank more than 10,000 pounds (five tons) of food to distribute to the various agencies in the Roanoke area.

This can be a church-wide collection, a youth group project, an initiative of the United Methodist Women or United Methodist Men, your congregation's mission emphasis group, or an opportunity for individuals to take up a meaningful, personal act of charity and grace.

You gifts are also not limited to 4 Cans! Bring 4 boxes of cans! Bring 4 dozen cans! Bring 4 cases of canned food! Bring 4 cans of each type of food! Bring 4 grocery bags of cans!

The need for the ministry and supplies of the SW-VA Food Bank continues to grow. More requests come every day for food supplies. To get additional insight, visit the Web at <www.faswva.org/>.

For more information, contact the Rev. Jim Earley at <revsrus@comcast.net> or at the office at (703) 538-5200.

• **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR MONITORING SESSIONS** — The Conference Commissions on Disabilities (COD), Ethnic Minority Concerns and Advocacy (CEMCA), and Status and Role of Women (COSROW) will jointly monitor the sessions of the 2011 Virginia Annual Conference in Roanoke.

The ministry of monitoring is the act of raising awareness of how effectively all people are involved in full and equal participation in the life and mission of the church. The goal of the monitoring ministry is to advocate gender, racial and age-level inclusiveness in the conference's decision-making process. It can be a means of transformation by opening our eyes, ears and hearts. This is the first time that all three of our conference commissions for inclusivity will collaborate together in this effort.

Volunteers are needed to serve in this ministry. Those who are interested should be attentive to details and willing to observe at least one session of Annual Conference. All those willing to be a part of this ministry **must** attend a training session. The training will be held on Wednesday, June 15, 4–5:30 p.m. at the Roanoke Civic Center. A light meal will be provided.

You do not have to be a member

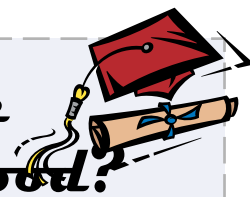
of the Annual Conference to serve as a monitor. In fact, this would be a wonderful opportunity for spouses, visitors, or those from churches in the Roanoke area.

If you are interested in serving, contact Iris Smith by e-mail at <igunter@verizon.net>. She will need to know if a spouse or anyone else will be with you for the training and how to get in touch with you during the Annual Conference.

Questions can be directed to the office of Leadership and Inclusivity at 1-800-768-6040 or (804) 521-1100, ext. 154 or 153; or <MarthaStokes@vaumc.org> or <CindyIngroff@vaumc.org>.

• **PRAYER ROOM** — A Prayer Room will be provided at Annual Conference by the Conference Board of Discipleship. Located off the lobby of the Special Events Center, the Prayer Room will be available during all conference sessions. Members of the conference and guests attending conference are invited to visit the Prayer Room for times of personal prayer and meditation, and for intercessory prayer on behalf of persons engaged in mission, those in need of healing, and people facing difficult situations throughout the world.

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Nation & World

Bin Laden's death challenges pastors

Within minutes of learning that Osama bin Laden was dead, the Rev. Andy James knew he would address the killing in worship the following Sunday.

Late on May 1, his Facebook post said, "President announces that OBL is killed one week before I start a sermon series on forgiveness. A poignant, unexpected turn."

In the days since, James, pastor of Tuttle UMC in Oklahoma, has struggled with what he will say. He may simply acknowledge the tension between being "an American citizen who, as the news unfolded Sunday night, just exhaled ... (and) being a citizen in the Kingdom and having a sense that this was not an occasion that God was rejoicing."

"I can't address fully the topic to the degree that I intend without going there somehow," he says. "I start and keep coming back (to that idea) that I'm in need of forgiveness, and that's what I've got to work out before I start making statements about Osama bin Laden or anyone else for that matter."

The Rev. Marjorie Nunes serves Summerfield UMC in Bridgeport, Conn. "Most of my congregation is happy that he is dead," she says. "There are a lot of folks from Connecticut that died in 9/11, so the sentiment is that he was an evil man and, as one person said to me, 'You live by the sword, and you die by the sword.'"

She will discuss the killing with a Bible study group and use a prayer or litany printed on a worship bulletin insert, asking for God's grace to surround survivors who lost loved ones in 9/11.

At Minnetonka (Minn.) UMC, the Rev. Ken Ehrman is considering how to follow up a May 2 gathering of 21 people who met to talk about the killing.

The group used the circle process in which only the person holding the

"talking object" speaks. Ehrman selected a small world globe "so we would be mindful that what we are talking about has implications far beyond ourselves."

"A common theme was relief, but also concern, a lot of dualism," he said. "I don't think anybody suggested there should be this celebration. People were struggling a lot with what it does mean to take a human life balanced against what they do, what Osama bin Laden had been involved in and the lives lost, especially in 9/11 and other instances."

The closing prayer asked "for a sense of God's presence in the midst of a confusing situation, that we could find a sense of what it means to be people of reconciliation, justice and forgiveness as opposed to people of hatred or vindictiveness."

Midweek, other United Methodist clergy across the United States were still considering whether to mention the killing.

"I've talked with people who say 'I'm happy about this, but I'm distressed in myself that I'm so happy.' It's not knowing what to do with the emotions they are feeling," said the Rev. Jason Radmacher, senior pastor at John Street UMC, which sits next to Ground Zero in New York City.

In coming weeks, he says, "My response as a pastor will be to name that tension we feel and then continue with our worship life, our liturgy, continue to pray for our enemies, continue to pray for those in harm's way and let God through the Holy Spirit continue to work with us and shape us."

At Galt UMC in California, the Rev. Helen Mansfield says, "I deal with it



UMNS photo by Mike Dubose

almost every Sunday in the sense of being a disciple of Christ is not an easy path to walk in this culture that is focused on revenge. I know that people will think I'm not remembering the folks that lost their lives on 9/11. That's the last thing I'd do, I would not want to add hurt. Still the death of any human being is nothing to celebrate. Scripture is clear on that."

As they talked and counseled, several of the pastors experienced the mixed emotions they saw in their parishioners. Distressing to all were scenes of celebration.

In Denver, the Rev. Kerry Greenhill, associate pastor at Highlands UMC, says, "I certainly understand the value from a political perspective of finding and killing him. My heart was greatly saddened by images of people celebrating, that people would respond that way."

"I have to think that God was grieved that God's children were rejoicing over the death of someone," says James. "I've been stuck in that tension all week, the ironies, the timing of one week."

"A week before we were celebrating the Resurrection of one who was dead, and a week later, the rejoicing over the killing of one who was alive." □

— Kathy Noble, editor of *Interpreter*,
for United Methodist News Service

Bishops to seek change in role of Council president

United Methodist bishops approved a proposal May 4 that would significantly redefine the role of president for the Council of Bishops.

The amendment to the church's constitution would allow the council to elect one of its own to a full-time, four-year position without the usual responsibilities of overseeing a geographic area.

The individual in that role would serve as the denomination's chief ecumenical officer, help align the strategic direction of the church and focus on growing vital congregations, among other duties.

At present, the council president serves a two-year term and retains a residential assignment to a geographic area. The council's ecumenical officer usually has been chosen from the ranks of retired bishops.

The bishops' vote on the proposal – which, by a show of hands, was not unanimous – came after hours of discussion over a three-day period. Some bishops, particularly from the central conferences outside the United States, expressed misgivings that such a position would fairly represent the global nature of the church.

To be ratified, a constitutional amendment first requires a two-thirds majority vote at General Conference, the denomination's top lawmaking body. It next must win a two-thirds majority of the total annual conference voters. If ratified, the change would not take effect until 2016.

After the vote, Charlotte Area Bishop Larry Goodpaster – the council's current president – voiced his support for the proposal. A set-aside bishop whose sole focus is the global church would be able to more effectively connect people and get everyone moving in the same direction, he said.

Doing that in his current role is a challenge.

"I'm trying not to take anything away from Western North Carolina," Goodpaster said. "However, it just means I have to lose days off to do

council business. I think the time and energy is huge for somebody to do everything that needs to get done."

Another hope is that the president would help give The United Methodist Church a more prominent voice on the public stage.

"Right now within the denomination, we don't have somebody if the (U.S.) president wants to invite somebody from The United Methodist Church to the White House," Washington Area Bishop John Schol said. "Because our bishops have residential responsibilities, we also can't just leave to work with other denominational leaders. Having a president

tion would also rotate among bishops from around the globe – much like the presidential role does now.

"It would give us someone who would focus on organizing the council meetings and council life," Illinois Area Bishop Gregory Palmer said. "It also gives more opportunities for more people to bring leadership to different aspects of the council."

Retired Bishop Emerito Nacpil of the Philippines remains skeptical about having the two positions.

"I think it will be a two-headed hydra," he said. "I don't think it's going to work."

Bishops also voted overwhelmingly

to support folding the denomination's ecumenical agency and its work into the Council of Bishops. The vote came at the urging of the Rev. Steve Sidorak, the top executive of the agency, the United Methodist Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns.

Under the proposal, the agency would

cease to exist as a separate entity, and its staff members would work for the council as part of the newly created Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships. The proposal also calls for transforming the commission's 38-member board of directors into a 15-member oversight group that includes laity and clergy.

Sidorak said the change will deepen the relationship between the ecumenical and interreligious staff and the denomination's bishops and its ecumenical officer, a position now held by retired Bishop Sharon Rader. He also said it will help the ecumenical staff build strong connections with conferences and give staff members direct access to bishops in central conferences outside the United States. □

– Heather Hahn,
United Methodist News Service



Baguio (Philippines) Area Bishop Rodolfo Alfonso Juan (center) and retired Bishop Robert H. Spain (right) share in a discussion about proposals for implementing the Call to Action recommendations.

(with no residential responsibilities) helps to focus on those areas."

Some bishops have their doubts.

"My reservations are not about the principle of a set-aside bishop; my reservations were more about what is packed into it," Central and Southern Europe Bishop Patrick Streiff said after the vote.

Details of the proposal are yet to be worked out, but supporters remain confident that the concerns about central conference representation can be addressed.

One possibility put forward is for the Council of Bishops to elect a chairperson who serves a two-year term in addition to a nonresidential president. The chairperson, who would also serve a geographical area, would oversee the council's executive board and its committees. The posi-

Many hands lighten the work of tornado recovery

Across the tornado-ravaged South, United Methodist pastors gathered their congregations to pray, to listen and to share shoulders to cry on. Afterward, they continued to take their churches into the community, offering resources and helping hands to those struggling to recover from the impact.

The Rev. Todd Chancey, a local pastor at Apison UMC in east Tennessee, is one of those leaders. Chancey's practical experience and business acumen gained through 20 years as a church business administrator come in handy as he helps his flock cope with the aftermath of tornadoes that whipped through numerous states on April 27. The death toll has exceeded 350, with scores missing and injured, and property losses mounting.

While Chancey's congregation had no loss of life or serious injuries, the tornadoes affected 22 of the church's 35 active families. Some lost homes, cars and other property, while others coped with fallen trees.

"We're relocating families who lost their homes, serving meals at the church, having prayer meetings and vigils, and providing generators and tarps," he said.

So far, he has handed out \$2,700 worth of gift cards donated by other United Methodist churches, friends and families.

"We're setting up work teams from other churches — both nearby and in other states," he added. The first teams were scheduled to arrive May 7 to help with tree and brush removal.

In Glade Spring, Va., the Rev. Paul Griffith opted for a May 1 prayer service at Byars-Cobbs UMC instead of traditional worship.

Several parishioners lost friends or family members or were still cleaning up from storm damage and the church had no electricity, so a prayer service seemed better suited to the dark sanctuary, he explained. Thirty people showed up to worship.

"Even if we come today with heavy hearts," Griffith told them, "we come to celebrate family and community... This is a time that God can use to draw us

together as a community and to make a difference."

He reminded the congregation, "You're the only Bible that some people will ever read. ... We have an opportunity, as the church, as a connectional body, to meet the needs of the community. We are blessed, are we not? ... We have a mission of hope. We have a mission of love. We have a mission of grace."

That same day, the Rev. John

Bonner, Demopolis District superintendent for the Alabama-West Florida Conference, worshiped at Jackson Chapel UMC in Sawyerville.

"Despite the community losses and some personal losses among church members," he said, "it was a joyful, thankful service. They spent time telling their stories, confessing their fears, crying tears and thanking God that it was no worse than it was. One man was ... on the scene when an infant who died was found. These are tough realities."

In Mississippi, Bishop Hope Morgan Ward wrote about visiting a hard-hit area April 29 with her husband. "As Mike and I stood with (the Rev.) Charles Coggins by the devastation that was Smithville UMC," she said, "we were greeted by a family from St. Paul, Ocean Springs."

"I was baptized and married here," a woman told them. "St. Paul is ready to help in any way we can. We know how it is. ..."

Ward continued: "In God's great economy, nothing is lost: nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. We are connected in this moment as we grieve and comfort, as we clean up and trust God for the future."

Across the South, congregations whose buildings escaped the tornadoes are opening their doors to those who were less fortunate. Some offer emergency shelter for tornado evacuees. Others serve as drop-off locations



Anna Aycock and Elam Wallace, students at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, view the damage at Ford's Chapel United Methodist Church. (UMNS photo by Kathleen Barry)



In Emory, Va., Emory and Henry College President Rosalind Reichard (right) and students study storm damage and needs in the community surrounding the college. The school opened its gymnasium as a shelter and services center. (Photo by Annette Spence, The Call)

for donations of health kits, cleaning buckets and specific items such as diapers and tarps.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief has been responding to the tornadoes since Day 1.

The denomination's humanitarian-aid agency underscored its "absolute commitment" to communities affected by this year's historic spring storm season, even though the organization's U.S. Disaster Response funds are extraordinarily tight.

The Rev. Cynthia Fierro Harvey, UMCOR's top executive, appealed to United Methodists to help replenish the funds and ensure the agency's ability to continue to respond to the spring storms emergency. "I have no doubt that the people of The United Methodist Church will respond just as they always have, whether it is to an earthquake in Haiti or Japan, a hurricane in the Gulf, or widespread tornadoes and storms such as these," she said. "People always respond to great need." □

— Barbara Dunlap-Berg,
United Methodist Communications

UMCOR issues urgent call for cleaning buckets

Due to all the recent disasters locally and around the world, there is an urgent need for cleaning buckets (formerly known as flood buckets).

Local churches can assemble items for the cleaning buckets and send them to this year's Annual Conference in Roanoke along with the other regular UMCOR kits.

Cleaning buckets and other disaster relief supply kits also can be sent directly to the UMCOR Sager Brown Depot, P.O. Box 850, 131 Sager Brown Rd., Baldwin, LA 70514-0850.

For information about assembling cleaning buckets, visit the conference Web site <www.vaumc.org>, scroll down to the UMCOR bucket article and photo. □

Virginia Conference aids recovery at home and across Southeast

Across the Virginia Conference it's been a busy spring storm season and now hurricane season is upon us. "We have seen and witnessed first-hand the destructive power of these storms," said conference Disaster Response Coordinator the Rev. Bob Pihlcrantz.

The Virginia Conference Disaster Response Team has been actively responding in our own conference while providing any support requested by Southeastern Jurisdictional partner conferences.

Early Response Teams have been busy in the Rapahannock, Peninsula, Petersburg and Harrisonburg districts assisting with tornado damage, as well as in neighboring Pulaski County in the Holston Conference.

"We now have an opportunity to provide assistance to our brothers and sisters in need in these areas hit hardest by the storms by collecting extra cleaning buckets for UMCOR," said Pihlcrantz. "Tom Hazelwood, Assistant General Secretary for UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief), has informed us that cleaning buckets are being sent out in response to current disaster needs. Since Annual Conference is coming up, he has requested that we do what we can to replenish the buckets that have already been sent out so that UMCOR can be ready for any future events where they may be needed. These kits will be sent with our regular shipment that we collect in Roanoke June 15-19." (see related article at left)

There are openings for service on the conference and district teams if you feel led to support this valuable ministry. Contact Pihlcrantz, <vacdrt@cox.net> or call toll free 1-866-264-8488.

Meanwhile, the Rev. Jim Laven-



Members of Discovery UMC, Richmond, box supplies needed for victims of tornado disasters in Alabama.

der at Discovery UMC in Richmond came to the aid of relief efforts in the North Alabama Conference, where he has relatives. On May 8, members at Discovery organized a shipment of supplies sent to Decatur, Ala.

"The Tuscaloosa area is in dire need of hygiene products, underclothing, baby supplies, first aid supplies, disposable medical gloves, hand cleanser, sun screen, fruit juice (individual), batteries, garbage bags, coffee, bottled water, gasoline generators and money to buy gasoline, health kits, high energy bars, school supplies and any kind of 'grab and go' foods that are nonperishable," Lavender reported. "Discovery appreciates your help, your gifts, and most of all, your prayers in this effort to help the poor and displaced people of Tuscaloosa and the Decatur areas." □

U.S. ambassador praises Virginia-supported Mercy Hospital in Sierra Leone

The U.S. ambassador's enthusiasm for The United Methodist Church's health-care and humanitarian efforts was obvious when he emerged from Mercy Hospital's research lab.

"The lab is probably one of the best labs in all of Sierra Leone," said Michael Owen, ambassador to Sierra Leone. Owen was in the Kulanda Town Community of Bo to tour the hospital and Child Rescue Center, both of which he praised for helping the country heal in the nine years since a long civil war.

He and his wife, Anna, were joined by a flock of dignitaries – including the Rev. Tom Berlin, pastor of Floris UMC, Herndon – as they visited the two facilities. The United Methodist Church, which has three major hospitals and four health centers in the country, is among Sierra Leone's key health-service providers.

The trip to Bo emphasized the important role the church is playing in the healing process. Needy and homeless children, plucked from the streets of Sierra Leone during the depths of an 11-year civil war, were the first to receive hope and help from the Child Rescue Center. Their medical needs have been tended by Mercy Hospital.

Both facilities are supported by Helping Children Worldwide, a foundation formed by nine churches in Virginia. Mercy Hospital also receives funding through The United Methodist Church's designated-giving program as Advance Special No. 15173A.

Herndon-based Helping Children Worldwide provides 95 percent of the funds for Mercy Hospital. The foundation's African Programs division, supported by 12 United Methodist church partners in Texas and Virginia, provides financial planning and oversight as well as strategic planning and program development for the Bo facilities. It also tends to the human resources needs of employees.

Several Helping Children Worldwide board members traveled from



Anna Owen (left) greets a staff member of Helping Children Worldwide. Ambassador Michael Owen (right) and Bishop John Yambasu look on. (UMNS photo by Phileas Jusu)

the United States to participate in the ambassador's visit, which was planned as a way of creating a relationship and perhaps partnerships between the facilities, the embassy and America.

Partnerships were on the ambassador's mind after he emerged from the lab. "We're going to partner them with labs in America," he said, citing the high standard of the facilities.

Berlin, who has led many work teams to help the facility in the last 10 years, was excited by the tour.

"It's something very powerful when we come to know and love each other across cultures. We come to see each other as sisters and brothers," Berlin said. His friendship with Sierra Leone Bishop John Yambasu led to the founding of the center 10 years ago, with Yambasu serving as the first director.

The success of the Child Rescue Center also drew praise from Liberia Bishop John Innis during a March address to the Sierra Leone Annual Conference. "This is our pride. It is an excellent setup. It is transforming lives. It is making children to be educated; it is making children to be vision-driven," he said.

He thanked Berlin – who has led many groups to the center – and the Virginia Conference "for committing your lives to transforming the lives of our future leaders."

Berlin was similarly moved by what he saw during his tour with the ambassador of the facilities in southern Sierra Leone. "The will of God has uniquely brought us together not simply to bless the children, not simply to bless the hospital patients, but to bless us all," Berlin said.

The hospital's laboratory services include clinical investigation and research technology. The visit went well beyond the labs, as the ambassador's party toured the 26-bed hospital that offers outpatient and in-patient services.

The hospital's specialties include a prenatal clinic, which is much needed, as post-war Sierra Leone ranks among the countries with the highest infant and maternal mortality rates, according to the United Nations Human Development Index.

The hospital also offers therapeutic and treatment programs for malaria, HIV and other diseases.

During the tour, Bishop Yambasu said the church wants to expand aid into remote provinces where health care is virtually non-existent.

"We really want to train our own nurses who are ready to go and work in the remote communities where health needs are greatest," Yambasu told the ambassador. □

– Phileas Jusu, director of communications for the Sierra Leone Conference

Holiday closings set for conference offices

Conference offices in the Virginia United Methodist Center, located in Glen Allen, will close at 1 p.m., Friday, July 1, and will remain closed Monday, July 4, in observance of Independence Day. Offices will reopen Tuesday, July 5. □

Post office in Washington named for Civil Rights leader Dorothy Height

Throughout the U.S. civil rights movement, Richmond native Dorothy Height often kept to the background and worked tirelessly behind the scenes for racial equality and women's rights.

But now Height's name is front and center on a Washington, D.C., landmark. The U.S. post office near Union Station has been renamed in honor of the longtime United Methodist, who died April 20, 2010, at the age of 98.

The post office is the first federal building in the district to bear the name of an African-American woman.



Height

Her many United Methodist friends and admirers say such a distinction is a fitting tribute to the woman who was known as "the godmother of the civil rights movement."

"I think she would be very pleased," said friend, the Rev. Mamie Alethia Williams, pastor of John Wesley UMC in Glen Burnie, Md. "The post office is used every day. It is the kind of place that connects people not only locally but also nationally and globally, and it is no respecter of persons. That represents what she was about."

Height spent 33 years on the national board of the YWCA and more than 40 years at the helm of the National Council of Negro Women.

During the 1960s, as the council's president, Height helped organize voter registration in the South, voter education in the North and scholarship programs for student civil rights workers. She also tackled issues of poverty as her organization supported free school breakfasts for children,

promoted community gardens and advocated for improved housing.

She helped organize the women's caucus in the National Council of Churches in the 1970s, and later worked toward empowering black families as the founder of Black Family Reunion Celebration.

Erin Hawkins, the chief executive of the United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race, called Height "a living embodiment" of the United Methodist mission to transform the world. She also was one of the few women in the inner circle of civil rights leaders.

When Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his historic "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963, Height was the only woman, besides Coretta Scott King, invited onto the platform.

When Barack Obama was sworn in as the nation's first African-American president more than 45 years later, she was on the platform once again.

That historic inauguration was not her first encounter with an occupant of the White House.

She was friends with Eleanor Roosevelt and recognized by three U.S. presidents. She received the Presidential Citizenship Medal from Ronald Reagan in 1989, the Presidential Medal of Freedom from Bill Clinton in 1994 and the Congressional Gold Medal from George W. Bush in 2004.

"She played a far more important role in influencing race and social justice in America than many realize," said retired Bishop Woodie White, the first chief executive of the United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race.

Of the 31,871 post office buildings in the United States, only 599 bear the names of an individual.

President Barack Obama signed H.R. 6118 naming the post office for Height on Dec. 15, 2010. A plaque with her name now hangs in her post office. □

— United Methodist News Service

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Local Church



▲ Many members of all ages gathered at **Farmville UMC** to prep the church's community garden for this year's crop. Families enjoyed a dessert spread of "dirt cake" complete with gummy worms, following the work of preparing the garden, which will grow fresh produce for the **FACES** local food pantry.



◀ On May 1, the congregation of **Singleton UMC**, Rappahannock District, held a special recognition day for Peggy Crittenden (pictured), who has served as organist at the church

continuously since 1956, a period of 55 years. In addition to playing for Sunday morning worship services, she plays for choir practices, weddings, funerals, pageants and any other special services or events. The amazing circumstance is that she does this for no salary, but for the love of the church. The service was led by the Rev. Calvin Griffin. Joining her for this recognition, were many family members and friends. Letters of recognition from Bishop Charlene Kammerer and Rappahannock District Superintendent Joseph D. Carson were presented. A plaque, which will be displayed at the church, was presented as a tribute to her unselfish and dedicated service.

Two years ago, members of the administrative council at **Scottsville UMC** were brainstorming about how to do more to reach out to the community. It was decided that the church provide a monthly free dinner for the community in the Fellowship Hall. For the first year, different groups in the church were in charge of preparing and serving the dinner. The second year a committee has handled the meals. The meal is now served on the second Saturday of each month. In the past few months, musicians in the area have begun to have a "Gospel Jam" following the meal. They had previously been meeting at the town center and needed a new place to meet. This has encouraged others to come out for dinner and entertainment, and the meal is now averaging around 60 folks, including several from the **Scottsville School Apartments** (low-income, primarily older adults).



▲ On March 20, Steven Andrews received the rank of Eagle Scout in a special ceremony at **Mount Carmel UMC** in Covington. For his service project, Steven refurbished the sign for Mount Carmel and applied fresh paint to the United Methodist Cross & Flame in front of the church. He is the fourth member of his family to earn Scouting's highest rank.



▲ **Boykins UMC's** youth group participated in World Vision's "30 Hour Famine." Staving off hunger pangs with water, juices and broth, they learned about hunger in Haiti from Chris Nein, a pre-medical student who'd been there on mission work. Lessons learned included being more appreciative of what they have, less wasteful and more aware of others' needs. Later, they presented programs at churches to raise hunger awareness. Their monetary goal was \$1,080, enough to feed six children for a year, and they exceeded it! Pictured: (front) Kyrsten Bowman, Taylor King; (middle) Paige Casper, Trisha King, Robbie Casper, James Thomas Peden, Megan Drewry; (back row) Brian Draper and Debbie Baugham.



▲ In March members of **Willis UMC** and residents from the surrounding neighborhood joined together to pick up trash on Willis Church Road, which fronts the church. The group gathered at 8:30 am, picked up trash for about an hour and then returned to the church to enjoy breakfast prepared by United Methodist Men. There were about 25 participants, about half church members and half neighbors. In addition, a Henrico County police officer came out with his squad car, blue lights going, to keep the group safe and then joined them for breakfast.



▲ In the Danville District, the White Oak Mountain Community Easter Sunrise Service was held at the top of White Oak Mountain at Owen Farm. Leaders and musicians included Stanley Owen (**Oakland UMC**), Drew Arnn (Oakland UMC), the Rev. Larry Mann (Oakland UMC) and the Rev. Kay Gentry (**Watson Memorial UMC**).



◀ The Rev. Sam NeSmith (retired) recently came to **Sangerville UMC**, Harrisonburg District, to talk about the 126-year-old pulpit at the

church, which was carved by a local man, Frank Witts. The historic pulpit depicts scenes of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. Pictured, NeSmith (left) with the Rev. Gary Monroe. NeSmith served as superintendent of the Harrisonburg District from 1984-89.



▲ Eight members of Cub Scout Pack 1879 at **St. Marks UMC** in Midlothian received God and Family awards after participating in seven study sessions conducted by Bill Chaffin, Scouting coordinator for the Richmond District, and the Rev. David Bonney, senior pastor. Cub Scouts and their leaders pictured are: (first row) Aaron Vardell, Andy Baldacci, Will Meadows, Will Davis, Ian Brown, Rev. Bonney; (second row) Mark Vardell, Todd Baldacci, Chaffin, Jim Davis, David Meadows, and David Brown. Not pictured: Jake Sanza, Joshua and James Ganey.



▲ Recently **Peninsula District United Methodist Women** (UMW) formed a new circle in The Gardens at Warwick Forest, a long-term nursing care facility in Newport News. The Gardens Circle meets the first Monday of the month but does not look like the "typical" circle. Most everyone is in a wheelchair, ages range from the 40s to the 90s, some are on Medicaid, some will one day live independently, but most will remain there for the rest of their lives. "Not everyone is United Methodist and the group is not attached to a specific church," said Debbie Lewis, conference UMW vice president. "But all of the women love God and love mission, and that is what United Methodist Women is about!" This year the group had a variety of programs, including a Bible study on Matthew 27 led by Peninsula District UMW President Nancy Yarborough. District Superintendent Myrtle Frances Hatcher spoke; the circle had a good old-fashioned hymn sing-along with Williamsburg musician Norma Champion; and it held a lunch for employees, residents, family members and local community folk in order to raise money for mission. "We average about 20 women. It is exhilarating to see the enthusiasm these women have for doing God's work," Lewis added.

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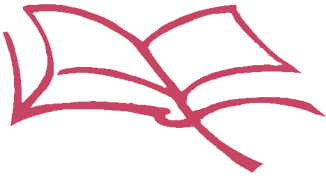
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Living the Word



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Arlene Hewitt is a Christian educator who began working in the Virginia Conference more than 30 years ago. She is a graduate of William and Mary, received a master's degree in Christian Education from Scarritt College, and recently completed a doctorate in Human Resource Development from Vanderbilt University. She served Rev-elle UMC, and was on the staff of the Richmond District before moving out of state to serve on the staff of a church in Nashville, Tenn., and on the staff of the Southeastern Jurisdiction at Lake Junaluska, N.C. Upon returning to Virginia to help care for her parents, she worked part-time with the Peninsula District. She retired her church relationship as a Diaconal Minister in June 2010, and moved to Ithaca, N.Y., where she resides in the co-housing community EcoVillage at Ithaca.

June 5, 2011

Ingredients of success

Joshua 1:1-6; 11:16-19, 21-23

The book of Joshua presents one of the greatest success stories in Scripture. After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, the people of Israel prepare to possess the land that God had promised to them. But Deuteronomy, just preceding the book of Joshua, ends with the death of Moses. How could success possibly be imminent? The opening verses of Joshua offer insight into this success.

First, we discover that Moses was not to be the one to lead the people of Israel into this promised land. Moses was the great deliverer – he led the Israelites out of Egypt, out of slavery and bondage. He led them daily, through 40 years in the wilderness. But the one called to begin leading the work of God's new plan is not necessarily the one who sees the ultimate success of that venture.

Second, we learn that Joshua is called to follow where Moses left off. It is Joshua's role to actually enter and possess the land. Anyone who has ever followed in the footsteps of a strong recognized leader knows what a daunting task that is! And yet Joshua accepted this mission, did as God commanded, and saw its success. It is important for new leaders to also hear and respond to God's assurance that "I will not fail you or forsake you."

Third, we see in Chapter 11 that Joshua and the Israelites did as God commanded, and they were successful in the conquest of all the land which had been promised to them. After 40 years of relying only on God – daily gathering manna, only enough for that one day – the Israelites have been shaped into God-trusting people.

These are not the grumbling, fearful Israelites who were just released from the bondage of slavery. Instead, they are the formed and empowered people of God, who did what needed to be done in order to possess the promised land.

Finally, we realize that what ultimately happened was not Moses' success, or Joshua's success, or even the Israelites' success. It was God's success. Through their faithfulness to God, each of them had a role to play in the conquest and possession of the land. But ultimately this success belonged to God. □

June 12, 2011

God has expectations

Joshua 1:7-16

There's an old story about a rising flood, and a man who felt the assurance that God would save him. As the waters rose, the police came by and told him to evacuate his home, but he responded by saying, "I am not going with you because God has promised to save me." With the rising waters, the man went to the second floor of his house. A boat came by to help the man, but he refused, saying, "I am not going with you because God has promised to save me." The waters continue to rise, and the man is now on the roof of his house. A helicopter comes by, yet the man refuses to grab onto the rope that is tossed down to him, saying, "I am not going with you because God has promised to save me."

When the man enters the Pearly Gates, he requests an audience with God. "You promised to save me," the man cried. God replied, "I sent the police, a boat and a helicopter. What were you waiting for?"

This is a bad joke, especially during times of severe weather crises. But it makes a good point. God makes promises to us, but God has expectations that we will do our part to fulfill those promises. We need to grab hold of the rope, or get into the boat, or follow the instructions that are given to us.

Joshua gave commands, in accordance with the word of God. The Israelites worked together to follow those commands. Some of those commands seem bewildering to us modern-day thinkers. But the point is that the children of Israel faithfully followed Joshua's lead, and did as God commanded.

It is important to notice that God's command is accompanied by a promise. "The LORD your God is with you wherever you go" (1:9). The God who calls us does not abandon us. God promises to be with us. With that promise we, like the Israelites, are able to respond, "All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go" (1:16). □

June 19, 2011

God protects

Joshua 2:3-9, 15-16, 22-24

Like many biblical characters, Rahab enters the story of Joshua as an unlikely participant. Scripture tells us that two spies, sent by Joshua to check out Jericho prior to entering the promised land, seek protection from Rahab, a prostitute. The king of Jericho has heard of their presence and he and his men are looking for the two spies. Rahab hides the spies, and once their pursuers leave, she helps them escape. For her effort, Rahab and her family are given protection.

Who can trust whom in this story? Can the spies trust Rahab to protect them from harm? Can they trust that she would betray her own people in order to save them? Can Rahab trust that the spies would save her and her family from impending destruction by the Israelites? It's a

complex situation.

One of my favorite stories is by Katherine Patterson. A young mother finds herself on a deserted, snowy road on Christmas Eve with her two young children, with an empty tank of gasoline. A man who is trying to get to the hospital to visit his granddaughter walks by. She needs help getting gasoline, without leaving her children alone in the car. He needs help getting to the hospital before he gets too cold to keep walking. Can each trust the other? It, too, is a complex situation.

In the second chapter of Joshua, we learn that it is God who ultimately provided protection. God used Rahab to protect the spies, as she hid them from the king's soldiers and helped them to escape. And God used the spies to provide a way for Rahab and her family to escape what would have been sure death, when the walls of Jericho (where she and her family lived) "came a-tumblin' down."

The God who gave protection to Joshua also offered protection to Joshua's spies and to Rahab. That same God offers assurance to us, saying, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you" (1:5). □

June 26, 2011

God is victorious

Joshua 6: 2-3, 4b, 12-20b

The story of Joshua and the capture of Jericho is both exciting and bewildering. As a child, I remember re-enacting the story in Sunday school, as our class marched around our building block "city" seven times and on that seventh revolution shouting, blowing horns and using noisemakers. There was excitement in our class as the "walls" came tumbling down.

But a child's role play is one thing. The utter destruction of an entire city and its inhabitants is another thing entirely. It is disquieting to realize that these biblical stories of conquest have been used throughout the ages to initiate and justify acts of extreme

nationalism. And yet God's redemptive plan for the Israelites was carried out through these repeated acts of warfare and conquest.

The recent death of Osama bin Laden has, for some, been an illustration of this complexity. Within a few hours of the announcement, scores of people wrote on a blog posted by *Christianity Today*, titled "How Should Christians Respond to Osama bin Laden's Death?" Their responses describe the complexity of both the relief felt by this news, and the struggle with all of the rejoicing in the death of another. As one blogger noted, "Proof-texting is easy; theology, not so much."

And yet God promised a land to Abraham, and to all of the generations who followed. That land was possessed through the active presence of God through the ages, and the faithful acts of God's people. God was – and is – victorious. □

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Letters & Commentary

The invisible people are closer than you think

Commentary by Steve Jennings

You pass by them all the time and probably never give them a thought. I know I didn't. They're invisible, you know. Or at least they were to me until I discovered them. But, even though you don't see them, you can probably find them in most towns and cities. Who are they?

They are the "motel homeless" who live in cheap motels that offer weekly and monthly room rentals. Oh sure, they have a roof over their heads, but can you really call that a home? We've seen as many as nine people living in one room. Imagine what that would be like day after day.

These motel homeless people work at temporary jobs, low-wage jobs, short-term jobs or have no jobs. Some are disabled or elderly. Others have injuries or conditions that aren't serious enough to qualify for disability, but make it more difficult to find a job. Most of the ones who work are at jobs where they don't get paid if they don't show up to work.

Even in a good week, the room rent eats up 80-90 percent of their income. Some weeks, they come up short because they continually have to choose between rent, food and medicine.

Just like homeless people on the street, they defy stereotypes. I have met former business owners, published authors and people with college degrees at these motels. And, just like their less-educated neighbors, they are subject to the great equalizer of hardship.

In the last two years, I can't count the number of motel homeless people who said to me, "I never thought I would end up like this." It seems that once they get knocked down to living like that, one thing after another goes wrong to keep them there. For example, Christina and Michael had already been at one of the motels longer than they had planned when Michael was rushed to the hospital vomiting blood and with blood sugar levels of over 300. His recuperation will take awhile. Until then, Christina, with two small children, is frantic with worry about what to do.

Most of them pay more in room rent than they would if they had an apartment, but because of job instability, bad (or no) credit and the inability to put together the money for a security deposit, they are stuck until they can grab that extra blessing that lets them make the move.

Yet, despite the hardships, the people I've met in these motels have shown me an incredible resilience and faith. I have seen a tenacity and toughness that inspires me, and I see the hand of God working on my heart as I learn anew

the lesson of gratitude for all things. The people we serve are so grateful for laundry detergent or toilet paper that I am humbled and ashamed of myself for the things I take for granted.

Since Teens Opposing Poverty began its motel ministry in 2009, I have been inspired, heart-broken, and blessed as I have shared in the lives of these wonderful people who are no longer invisible to me. I pray they will no longer be invisible to you. □

— Steve Jennings is director of Teens Opposing Poverty

Chrysalis three-day events symbolize spiritual growth for youth and young adults

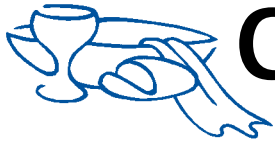
Do you have youth in your congregation who have been very dedicated to church activities, are faithful and love Jesus Christ? The Upper Room has a program just for them. The international Chrysalis movement was established in 1978 as a movement geared towards youth. Chrysalis offers spiritual renewal to young people through a three-day experience and follow-up. Not only do the youth experience three days of spiritual growth but it also provides a network of Christian youth that your youth can stay connected.

Before it becomes a butterfly, a caterpillar goes through a growth stage during which it is called "chrysalis." On the surface it may not look like much is happening, but the delicate chrysalis process changes the fuzzy caterpillar into an awesome butterfly, with wings of intricate designs and intense colors. The chrysalis process symbolizes how Christ can transform you into something beyond your dreams. It happens when you grow beyond yourself, opening your life to Jesus' power and love.

"Chrysalis" is the name chosen for the youth and young adult version of The Walk to Emmaus, its parent movement, because it symbolizes the spiritual growth that is essential between adolescence and adulthood. That growth is as crucial for youth as the cocoon is for the caterpillar. It is that precious time of nurturing a person's faith for discipleship.

Chrysalis "Flights" (for 10th- through 12th-graders) and "Journeys" (for young adults, ages 19-24) are three-

(More Letters on pg. 30)



Clergy & Diaconal

Deaths



Callis

The Rev. Robert J. Callis Jr., 87, retired elder, died March 2, 2011. He began his ministerial career in 1948 at Claremont-Surry. He went on to serve Philadelphia, South

Brunswick, Gladys, Mead Memorial, Powhatan, as the associate at First in Newport News, Norview, Fieldale, Mount Clinton in the Harrisonburg District, and Lawrenceville. He was placed on incapacity leave in 1985. He retired in 1991.

He was preceded in death by his wife of 56 years, the Rev. Beatrice Simmons Callis. Survivors include a daughter, Deborah Callis Old; a son, Robert James Callis III; three grandsons; and two great-grandchildren.

Deborah Grindall McNeill,

64, retired local pastor, died May 4, 2011. As the former Deborah Facer, she served as full-time local pastor of the South Brunswick Charge in the Petersburg District from 1987 to 1992 and of Mineral UMC in the Charlottesville District from 1992 to 1994. Later, as Deborah McNeill, she served as full-time local pastor of Eastland UMC in the Ashland District from 2007 to 2010, when she retired.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Thomas McNeill, and a son, Larry Facer Jr. Survivors include two sons, Michael Facer and Mark Facer; four grandchildren, Larry III, Kaitlin, Christina and Alexander; a brother, Emerson Jon Grindall; and two sisters, Janet Taylor and Emily Dame.



McNeill

The Rev. Ferdinand "Ferd" Wagner, 92, retired elder, died May 8, 2011. He began his ministerial career in 1942 at Wesley (now Arlington Forest). He went on to serve Christ (Arlington), Lakeside, Belmont (Roanoke), Noland Memorial, Central (Staunton), Dulin, First (Martinsville), as superintendent of the Peninsula District, then pastor of Trinity (McLean). He retired in 1986. During his retirement, he served First (Martinsville).

He was preceded in death by his first wife, Barbara Arndt Wagner; his second wife, Dorothy "Dottie" Huey Wagner; and a daughter, Cynthia Louise Wagner Carter. Survivors include a daughter, Mary Elizabeth Wagner Smucker; two sons, Ferdinand L. Wagner and John Wesley "Wes" Wagner; seven grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

The Rev. Joseph W. Hagenlocker III, 64,

died May 7, 2011. Joseph served as part-time local pastor of Mount Zion UMC in Mount Solon (Staunton District) from 2004 until his declining health recently detained him from his pastoral duties.

Survivors include his wife, Oneida Hagenlocker; daughter, Tara L. Coffey; son, Jason; stepchildren, Lisa S. Her-ring and Rusty Sprouse; five grandchildren; and six step-grandchildren.

John H. Hundley, father of the Rev. Mike Hundley, died April 28, 2011. Mike is pastor of the Patrick Charge, Danville District.



Wagner



Hagenlocker

Roy Carl Drake, 65, retired local pastor, died May 9, 2011. Roy served as associate pastor of the Wakefield Charge and was the first pastor of the Rocky Hock-Ivor Charge, all in the Portsmouth

District. At his death, he was serving as pastor of Burton's Grove Christian Church, UCC, and was named their pastor emeritus on April 24, 2011. He taught at Eastern Carolina Christian College for more than 12 years.

He was preceded in death by his first wife, Margaret Bradshaw Drake; three sisters and three brothers. Survivors include his wife, Evelyn Barlow Drake; her sons; two daughters, Nancy V. Beale and Wendy V. Twisdale; two grandchildren; a sister; a brother; and many nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews.

James "Pop" Westmoreland Sr., father of the Rev. David Westmoreland, died May 6, 2011. David is pastor of Providence UMC in Patrick Springs.

Martha Evelyn Grizzle, sister of Loreeda R. Niemann, died April 23, 2011. Loreeda is a retired diaconal minister, Ashland District, who now lives in Kingsport, Tenn.

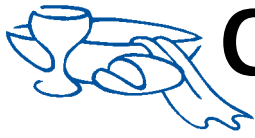
Lucinda McRoberts, mother of Scot McRoberts and mother-in-law of the Rev. Teresa McRoberts, died May 7, 2011. Teresa is associate pastor at Trinity UMC (Richmond). Lucinda was a longtime Trinity UMC receptionist.

Helen Brown, mother of Janette Burrough and mother-in-law of the Rev. Bill Burrough, died while being driven to church, May 1, 2011. Bill is pastor of St. John's UMC in Springfield.

(More Clergy & Diaconal News on pg. 30)



Drake



Clergy & Diaconal

(Continued from previous page)

Births

The Rev. Emmitt Wm. Eccard Jr. and his wife, Sandra, announce the birth of a granddaughter, **Leigh Ellis Eccard**, on Feb. 4, 2011, to Dr. and Mrs. Jonathan Eccard of Charlottesville. Emmitt is a retired elder living in the Staunton District.

Harper Mae Profitt was born April 20, 2011, to Christen and Matt Profitt. Harper is the granddaughter of the Rev. Chancellor Hamilton and his wife, Margaret. Harper joins sisters Campbell and Laney. Chancellor is a retired elder living in Richmond.

Graham Doeppner Snow was born April 21, 2011. Graham is the son of Sarah and the Rev. Jason Snow and the little brother of 2½-year-old Hunter. Jason is associate pastor at Fairfax UMC in the Alexandria District.

The Revs. Brandon and Rachel Gilmore are proud to announce the birth of their second child, **Elizabeth Marie "Izzie" Gilmore**, on May 2, 2011. Izzie has a big brother, Bennett. Brandon is associate pastor at St. Andrew's UMC and Rachel is an associate pastor at Courthouse Community UMC, both in the Norfolk (soon to be Elizabeth River) District.

Ezra James Rothman was born May 14, 2011. Ezra is the son of Jeff and Kara Rothman. Proud grandparents are former Virginia Conference treasurer Jim Branscome and his wife, Libby. Jim retired in 2005, after more than 23 years of serving the conference.

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Jubilee Assistance Fund provides small loans to those in crisis

The Jubilee Assistance Fund is a great partnership program between the Virginia United Methodist Credit Union and several churches designed to provide small, short-term loans to church members in crisis. It is designed to be an alternative to predatory lending (pay day and car title lenders) and also a resource to help the borrower with personal financial management.

Most recently, the program has two people who have successfully completed the program and three currently with Jubilee loans. The Rev. Charles E. Swadley, pastor of Lakeside UMC, Ashland District, and the Rev. Rodney M. Hunter, pastor of Wesley Memorial UMC, Richmond District, are the two pastors that came up with the Jubilee Assistance Fund concept and they are working to get the word out to the conference churches. □

— Janie Hightower,
Virginia United Methodist Credit Union

Large group of clergy and laity participate in VocationCARE training

Some 170 clergy and lay persons in the Virginia Conference recently spent two days in training at River Road UMC in Richmond to become VocationCARE mentors. VocationCARE is a process which helps young people to identify their deepest passions, to discover how those passions intersect with the needs of the world, and then to respond to God's call. The program helps congregations become places that foster and develop the next generation of clergy leaders. □



The Rev. Hyo Lee, pastor of Crums UMC, Winchester District, looks at notes that VocationCARE participants placed on the walls of River Road UMC's Fellowship Hall.



Letters

(Continued from pg. 28)

day events. This three-day spiritual renewal time provides an opportunity for you to learn more about faith, to experience Christian love and support, and to make new faith commitments. The point is to inspire, challenge and equip you for a closer friendship with Christ and for Christian action at home, church, school and community.

Chrysalis lifts up a way for you to enjoy Christ's friendship and love and to be Christ's friend and partner in the world. The three days focus on God's grace, your experience with Christ as friend, what it means to be the body of Christ, and giving love to a needy world.

If this is a program you would be interested in and want more information about, contact your nearest Emmaus/Chrysalis community and start something special. Their outreach committee is ready to come to your church's youth group and provide information about Chrysalis. □

— Joseph BeMiller,
Assistant Regional Representative
for International Emmaus/Chrysalis

Tangier Island's Swain Memorial is example of vital congregation



Charlene Payne Kammerer
Bishop of the
Virginia Conference

Two weeks ago, I had an inspiring day at Tangier Island. I've been wanting to go since we have lived in Virginia. All of my expectations were fulfilled and exceeded!

Two groups of district clergy, from the Eastern Shore and the Rappahannock districts, joined together in a post-Easter immersion trip. One group from the Eastern Shore took a boat from Crisfield, Md., to the island. Another group left from Reedville, Va., and met us on the dock on Tangier. We both had a picture perfect day, with beautiful sun, warm temperatures and smooth bay waters.

We began our day at Swain Memorial United Methodist Church. It is a beautiful sanctuary and building but, more importantly, the center of faith for the whole island. We heard from an outstanding lay leader about the history of Tangier and the history of Swain Memorial. They are inextricably tied together. We also had a teaching time and a witness from the pastor. A young adult musician also thrilled us with song and testimony. We walked down the street and had a memorable seafood meal at Crockett's Inn. Then some of us saw the new Smith Clinic, which provides medical care for the families on the island. We had a great boat ride back and enjoyed the fellowship with other pastors and laity present with us for the day.

What struck me about Swain Memorial is that it is a perfect example of a vital congregation. Throughout its history, the LAY LEADERSHIP has been outstanding. People serve and give sacrificially. They help nurture people of all ages in the Christian faith and story. There are SMALL GROUPS for adults to grow in their faith. They still have Wesley class meetings and all are welcome. The congregation has intentional MINISTRIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH. In fact, children and youth are given leadership opportunities and encouraged in leading. And EFFECTIVE CLERGY have served this congregation for many generations. With these key factors, the congregation is thriving, even in a place where the population is not increasing and where the fact of isolation is part of island life.

Swain Memorial is not self-centered. The church is known for its mission imprint and service far beyond the island. Over its lifetime, the congregation has called forth 17 ordained ministers and two missionaries!

Now do you know why I was so inspired by being with the Swain Memorial folks on Tangier? God has been so Good. Swain Memorial bears witness to the love of Christ every day.

Grace and Peace,

Charlene Kammerer
Charlene Kammerer

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Advertising/Tributes

Tributes are published for a fee on a space-available basis. Rates for advertising and Tributes are available upon request.

Local Church News

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

Letters

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

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