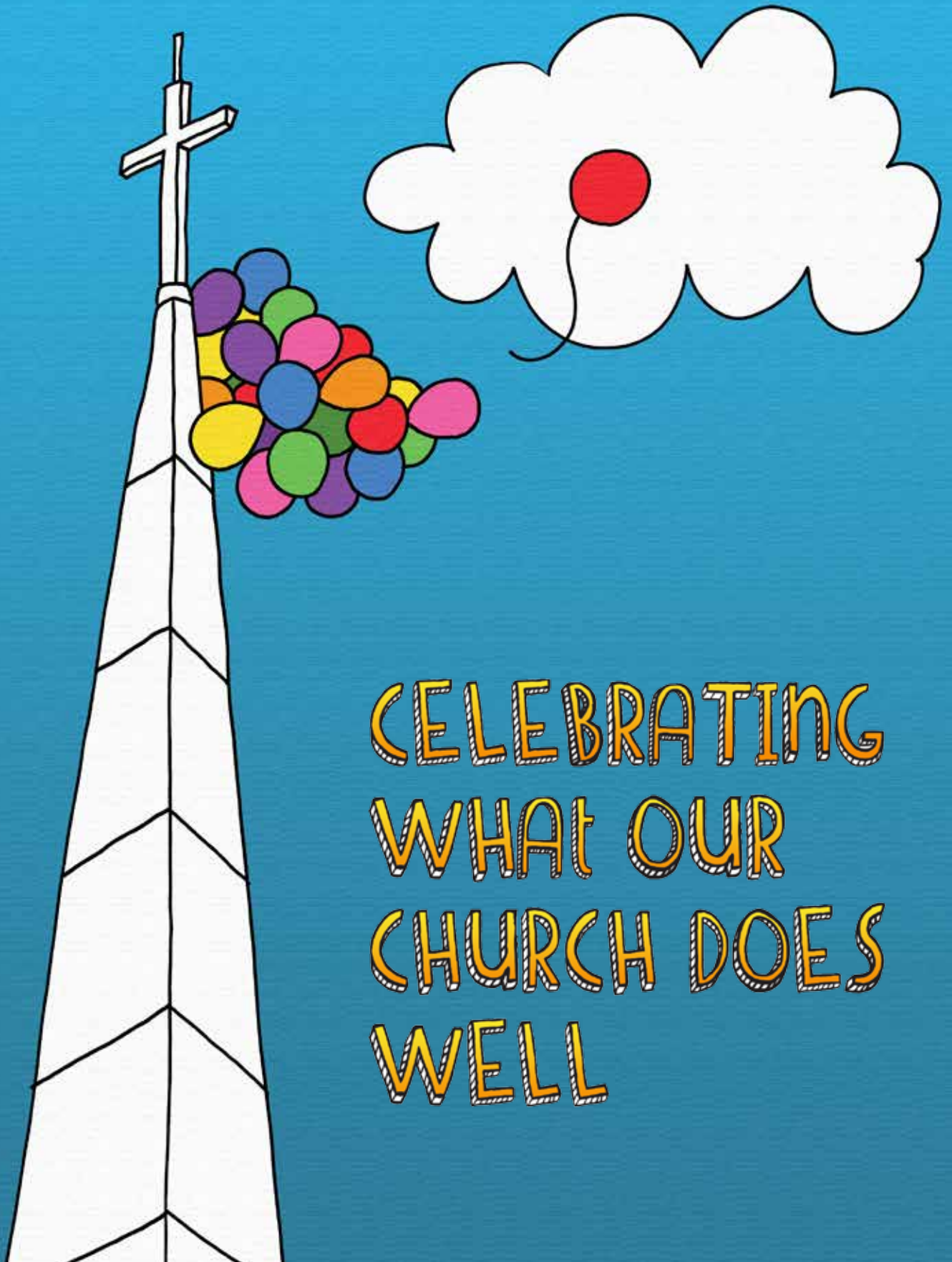


Advocate



CELEBRATING
WHAT OUR
CHURCH DOES
WELL

Connecting with the



Virginia Advocate

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

FROM THE EDITOR



Neill Caldwell
Editor

Chicken pie,
or die?

Let me tell you about the Chicken Pie Church.

The United Methodist Women of one of the churches that my wife served early in her career was famous for their chicken pies. As a fundraiser for the church, the women would gather once a month and make hundreds of chicken pies in the small church kitchen. (These pies were noted for being easy to freeze and then pull out and prepare on the night you needed one, so they were quite popular, and many people bought multiple pies and popped them in the freezer.) The women even did pre-sales, so that some months they were already sold out before they made their first pie. On preparation day, people would come from miles around, all over the region, really, to pick up the pies they'd ordered.

Now what does this have to do with ministry and advancing the Kingdom of God? Well, first of all, the women were able to convert their chicken pie profits into a large new fellowship hall building! More importantly, they made connections in the community that went far beyond the church's small membership. Friends, neighbors and co-workers took advantage of the pie sale, even folks from an hour away or more. And all that chicken pie fame and community connection translated into some very positive feelings about the church, so that it became well known, even if for this unique reason. And that "positive spin" – as they might say in the marketing business – meant that people visited on Sundays (maybe hoping for a pot luck?). Visitors sometimes became new members, and the church began to grow and was able to do more ministry within the community.

Contrast the Chicken Pie Church with a church that does nothing well any more. The people sit and complain about their problems, bemoan the lack of attendance, or wax nostalgic about the "good old days" back in the early 1960s. They're lost in malaise and discouragement and can no longer see anything positive happening, because it's not.

Our issue offers a couple of specific techniques being used within our conference to "accentuate the positive" in terms of finding points of strength and building on them. This can apply to individuals, of course, as our young ministry candidates are doing, or can be used on a larger scale to focus on the things your church does well, rather than on its problems. This is not to say that problems will go away if we ignore them. But it's all about taking a more positive approach to ministry, and lifting the spirits and spirit of church members.

Next month we will highlight some specific things that growing churches within the conference are doing to make themselves more active in the community and/or attractive to potential visitors.

There might even be a chicken pie in the mix. 🍗

Neill Caldwell



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Deadlines

The Advocate is published once a month. The deadline to submit news and ad copy for the July 2014 issue is June 1. For more information on future deadlines, contact the Advocate office or visit the website.

Advertising/Tributes

Rates for advertising and tributes are available upon request.

Local Church News

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

Letters

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

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USPS 660-740

ISSN 0891-5598

Published monthly by Virginia United Methodist Communications, 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 Methodist Advocate is owned by Virginia United Methodist Communications, Inc.

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

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COMMENTARY

Give without question

By Becki Mann



Becki Mann



Rev. Cheryl Simmons

This column is about my friend, the Rev. Cheryl Simmons, and how her simple example changed my life.

Cheryl was the associate pastor at Arlington United Methodist Church, and we got to know each other when I agreed to be a confirmation mentor to two confirmands, Anna and Carol.

One deeply bonding moment in our early friendship was the dreaded confirmation lock-in, when we were the two adults locked into the church overnight with 20 middle school students. If you have ever had a sleepover for

middle school kids, you can imagine what it's like when you've got kids eating, playing games and running through a whole church. Cheryl earned my undying friendship that night by sending me off to a sofa in the parlor at 4 a.m. to catch a quick nap before I lost my cool with the kids.

In those days, the "local" baseball team for the Washington area was the Baltimore Orioles. On the spur of the moment, I stopped at the Orioles store at Farragut West and asked about tickets to the upcoming Saturday game. It just so happened that a season ticket holder had given his tickets back to the store to sell since he could not use them, and these seats were right behind the Orioles dugout about 15 rows up. These were unbelievable seats, so

even though it was a block of four seats and we only needed three, I bought the tickets.

When I asked Cheryl if she would like to go with us, she agreed and excitedly told me that she had never been to a Major League Baseball game before.

We picked Cheryl up on the morning of April 26, 1998, and drove to Baltimore for the game. When we got to Camden Yards, we realized that the game was to be Cal Ripken's 2,500th consecutive start, an even more special game than we had anticipated.

Ripken took the field with a few other players before the game and did his warm up, just like it was any other game. He ran some wind sprints, did some stretching, fielded some grounders and threw the ball around with a couple other players. The excitement built until the middle of the fifth inning, when the ballgame would be official and we could celebrate this great milestone with Cal. Cal came out of the dugout, tipped his hat and acknowledged the crowd's cheers.

After a few minutes, the Orioles came up to bat, the game continued, and the Orioles snapped a two-game losing streak by beating Oakland 8-2. We had a blast!

Most people exit Camden Yards though the entrance on Eutaw Street, which forces a lot of people through a moderate-size



COMMENTARY

gate. On this day, as soon as we made it through the gate, there was a long line of men along the walkway, shaking cups and asking for money. Our group had gotten separated in the crowd, so I could see my husband and son in front, Cheryl a few people behind, and I was a few people behind her.

That's when I saw something miraculous: Cheryl put money in every one of those men's cups, graciously and with a smile. While we tried to ignore the men and get past them as quickly as possible, she did just the opposite. I could not believe it.

When we got to the car, I asked her why she put

money in all their cups. She just smiled and said, "Jesus said to give to everyone who asks." I didn't know what to say to that, so the question ended there. Later I discovered that in Luke 6:30, Jesus says "give to everyone who asks you" and in the next verse reinforces it with "Do unto others as you would have them do to you."

Since that day, I have made it my practice to give to everyone who asks me. Over time, I think I have learned a little of what Cheryl already knew. True giving changes the giver. When you give without condition, you are allowing God to be in charge.

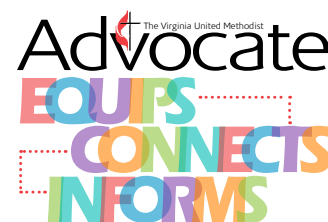
When people say to me

that panhandlers live in big houses and drive expensive cars, or that the person might spend the money I give them on bad things or that the best thing to do is to give people fast-food gift certificates, I say, "God is in charge of that, I just know Jesus tells me to give."

I don't have the resources to solve poverty or hunger in the world or in Richmond. But, thanks to Cheryl, I know that God is in charge and I hope that my gift of \$1 or \$5 lets someone know that they are not alone in the world and someone cares for their needs. ♥

-Becki Mann works with the American Heart Association.

Rev. Simmons died on March 22, 2014 at the age of 58.



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

Chaplain Needed

Windsor Meade of Williamsburg (a Virginia United Methodist Home) is looking for a Chaplain to provide pastoral presence to the residents, their families and staff. This part-time position (20 hours per week) includes coordinating, planning and presiding over community worship services and providing spiritual counseling. The qualified candidate will have a bachelor's degree and be an ordained minister with training in Christian education and pastoral care. Certification in older adult ministries preferred. Download full job description at: <http://www.vaumc.org/ncfilerpository/Jobs/WindsorMeadeChaplain.pdf>. E-mail resume to wmdcareers@vumh.org.



Lynchburg District committee is co-sponsoring conference on aging

For the second year, the Lynchburg District Older Adult Ministries is a sponsor of the 2014 Conference on Aging, to be held Tuesday, June 3, at Schewel Hall on the campus of Lynchburg College.

The keynote speaker will be Missy Buchanan, a United Methodist from Texas who is an author, columnist and advocate for older adults.

In addition to her keynote, Buchanan will lead a workshop entitled "Faith and Aging." Buchanan has done a segment for ABC's Good Morning America on this topic.

In 2013, the Lynchburg

District was a Silver sponsor. In 2014, the district will be a Gold sponsor along with the Centra Foundation, Centra Mental Health Services, AARP, Lifestyle of the Active 50 Plus Senior News and Heritage Green.

For more information, go to www.lyncburg.edu/beard.

Aging Well in Mind, Body, and Spirit

June 3, 2014
8 a.m. - 4:45 p.m.
Schewel Hall
Lynchburg College

COMMENTARY

An open letter to the left and the right of The United Methodist Church

By Dylan P. Ward

You're killing my church. There, I said it. And it hurts.

But not only are you killing my church, you're killing my future kids' and my future grandkids' church. You're killing the church I grew up in, the church I found shelter in, the church I call home. You're killing the legacy of a man, in John Wesley, that I found connection and passion in. You're killing the church that I chose to give my life working for because it professed to be working for the Kingdom to be set up here on earth. You're killing it and there's not much I can do about it. And that upsets me.

I don't have a stole, I don't have a guaranteed appointment, I'm not ordained, yet. I am a lowly licensed local pastor who dearly loves what I do and who I do it with. I'm a progressive pastor in a small rural Oklahoma town with some progressive people and a lot of fundamentalist people. And we get along just fine.

It's not enough to say that the ever-widening chasm between the left and right of the church is

unable to be crossed. It is 2014, we can build a better bridge.

It's not enough to say that there is a way to part paths, to tear apart the fabric of the connection and play in our own sandboxes, because that means that one side or the other (though it should be both) has to remove the "United" in front of the Methodist, and I'm not okay with that. Both the left and right wing of the UMC is my church, my home, and an eagle cannot fly without both of its wings.

There is no simple answer. I get it. Both progressives and fundamentalists claim that they are convicted by the Holy Spirit, that their belief on the topic of homosexuality is well with their soul, that they hold the correct, biblical view. How can a group of pastors, who have dedicated their lives to Jesus, say that

another group of pastors, who have dedicated their lives to Jesus, are not worthy to share the same family? How can we be so selfish that we cannot make the table bigger?

When I was growing up, my Nana always had room at her table. When more people showed up, we put these big plywood pieces in the table and made it bigger. If more people showed up, we squeezed our chairs in real close. She didn't turn anyone away.

There is always room.

I don't have a big title. I'm not considered a "church leader" or an authoritative voice at district, annual, or General Conference. I haven't published books or contributed to the *Book of Discipline*.


I'm just a pastor of a church – one that you are killing.

I am not okay with losing any of my family, the left or right. I'm not okay with churches around the nation stripping the UMC logo from their signs. I am proud to wear the Cross and Flame, and I want others to be proud, too.

So this is my plea: don't take the easy way out. Don't pack up your toys and go home. Don't give up on the chasm. Build a bigger bridge.

The headlines keep saying you are "church leaders," so be that. Step up and invite leaders from the opposite side to the table.

Find a way. Don't break up my family. Because it is not okay with me, and I can't do anything about it.

Find a way. There is always room. 

-Pastor Dylan P. Ward serves
Adair UMC in the Oklahoma
Conference



Dylan P. Ward



EVENTS

JUNE

Safe Sanctuaries Training

June 18-19, Hampton Roads Convention Center

Pre-Annual Conference two-day event on Safe Sanctuaries with Dr. Joy Melton, author of the book *Safe Sanctuaries*. Cost is \$25 per person or \$80 for a team of four. For more information, contact the Rev. Derrick Parson at DerrickParson@vaumc.org or call **1-800-768-6040, ext. 136, or (804) 521-1136**.

Annual Conference

June 20-22, Hampton Roads Convention Center

The 232nd session of the Virginia Annual Conference will be held in Hampton again this year. Laity and Clergy sessions will begin at 1 p.m. on Friday. First plenary session begins at 3 p.m. Ending time should be around noon on Sunday. The theme of this year's Annual Conference is "Lord Renew Us with Your Spirit." For more information visit www.vaumc.org/AC2014.

JULY

Helping Hands mission event

July 7-8, Danville, Fairview UMC

July 17-18, Staunton, Marquis Memorial UMC

July 24-25, Chesterfield, Woodlake UMC

This experience is for rising 4th-6th graders to learn about opportunities for mission and includes an overnight stay at the host church. For more information, contact (Danville) Katherine Lewis at **(434) 792-3391** or director.fumc@comcast.net; (Staunton) Beth Christian at **(804) 347-5999** or bethchristian@vaumc.org; (Chesterfield) MaryKaye Cochran at **(804) 739-4535** or mcochran@woodlakeumc.org.

Mission Encounter

Weekend Session July 25-27, Blackstone Conf. Center

Weekday Session July 28-30, Blackstone Conf. Center

Formerly called the School of Christian Mission, this is a cooperative event sponsored by the Virginia Conference Board of Global Ministries and the Virginia Conference United Methodist Women. It helps participants understand God's work in our world and how we are involved as United Methodists. Visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org for more information.

LEAD

July 25-Aug. 3, Roanoke

The Conference Council on Youth Ministries invites youths from across the conference to participate in LEAD, a 10-day leadership training immersion experience. District and local church youth councils are encouraged to select as many as three to five youths who are willing to commit to this 10-day intensive experience. Upon their return, they will implement covenant action plans to utilize newly developed leadership skills in their districts and local communities. For more information visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org.

AUGUST

SERVE

Aug. 3-5, Randolph-Macon College, Ashland

This event will help high school students explore a calling to ministry. "SERVE: A Missional Exploration for Ministry" will have a work camp focus and include small groups, Bible study, recreation, special worship services and more. For more information, call Margie Turbyfill at **(804) 368-7276** or e-mail margieturbyfill@rmc.edu. The program is co-sponsored by the Bailey Pre-ministerial Program at Randolph-Macon College and the Virginia Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.

Lord, Teach Me to Pray

Aug. 23, Williamsburg UMC

Practical applications for prayer, this is the second of three times this seminar will be offered. Main speaker will be Dr. Wendy Miller, professor emeritus of Spiritual Formation at Eastern Mennonite Seminary and adjunct faculty at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill., and Perkins School of Theology in Dallas. Visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org for more information.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Annual Conference returns to Hampton Roads Convention Center

By Neill Caldwell

The 232nd session of Virginia Annual Conference will be held at the Hampton Roads Convention Center in Hampton, as it was last year, with the theme "Lord, Renew Us With Your Spirit."

The annual gathering of United Methodists from across the Commonwealth will again be tightly scheduled. The event will begin at 1 p.m. Friday, June 20, with the Clergy Executive Session and the Laity Session. The official start of the opening plenary will be at 3 p.m. Annual Conference will conclude about noon on Sunday, June 22, with the fixing of clergy appointments.

Dr. Elmer Colyer will lead three sessions of teaching on church renewal. Colyer is professor of Histori-



cal Theology and Wesley Studies at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary in Iowa and a United Methodist clergy.

Guest preacher will be Oklahoma Bishop Robert Hayes, a Texas native who was elected to the episcopacy in 2004. Hayes will preach twice on Saturday, including at the Service for the Ordering of Ministry.

The Rev. Dr. Rhonda VanDyke Colby, vice president for Student Life at Shenandoah University, will preach for the Service of Remembrance on Friday evening, and the Rev. Dr. Jim Noland, senior pastor at Reveille UMC in Richmond, will speak on behalf of the retiring class.

Bishop Young Jin Cho will preach during the closing service on Sunday morning and will deliver his episcopal address on Friday. Conference Lay Leader Warren Harper will deliver the Laity Address.

Among the special guests will be the Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe, newly installed General



Secretary of the General Board of Church and Society.

The Conference Offering will support our partnerships with Cambodia, Mozambique and Brazil through the Initiatives of Hope, and assist two mission projects in our conference which reach out to at-risk children. The offering will also be used to encourage mission engagement of our small membership churches and assist the mission work of the Methodist Church in Haiti. Offering funds will also support *Imagine No Malaria*.

Among other notable elements of 2014 Annual Conference:

- ❖ Members of the 2014 Annual Conference will vote on a proposal to conduct a one-year appeal for *Imagine No Malaria*, a denomination-wide effort to eradicate that deadly, infectious disease around the globe.
- ❖ There will be a time of commissioning on Saturday morning. Laarni Bibay and Anselma Samson from the Eliza-

Dr. Elmer Colyer (left) and Bishop Robert Hayes (right) will be featured at 2014 Annual Conference.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

beth River District and Carla Blackmon from the Alexandria District will be commissioned as Deaconesses, and the Rev. Pat Watkins will be commissioned as a Missionary of the General Board of Global Ministries with assignment to Caretakers of God's Creation related to the Council of Bishops.

- ❖ Pastors and lay members from several congregations will offer a time of witness on Saturday and Sunday.
- ❖ Several resolutions will be discussed, including a request that the Virginia Conference petition the 2016 General Conference to expunge the sentence "The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching" ... from the *Book of Discipline*." That resolution was submitted by

dozens of co-signers from several different churches.

- ❖ The Cokesbury store and the exhibits area will again be right next to the plenary hall.
- ❖ The Society of St. Andrew will sponsor its Potato Drop at 5:30 a.m. on Saturday. Kits for the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) will be collected, as will cans of nonperishable food for the Tidewater Food Bank.
- ❖ WiFi will be available in the gathering space outside the plenary hall, but not inside the hall itself. The Annual Conference Planning Committee decided not to provide that extra service because of its high cost.
- ❖ Some sound-absorption material has been added since a year ago, which should help the sound quality in the

hall.

- ❖ Other new additions include an opportunity each morning to start the day with Holy Communion, offered at 7:30 in the Prayer Room.
- ❖ There is also a plan to streamline the process of receiving the video recordings of the event on DVDs. The Friday-Saturday sessions will be produced on site and available for pick-up on Sunday, and then the Sunday morning session will be mailed to those who order it.
- ❖ The conference is sponsoring "Safe Sanctuaries" training on Wednesday and Thursday, June 18-19, at the Hampton Roads Convention Center. "Safe Sanctuaries" is a United Methodist program to make sure our congregations and facilities are safe places for everyone. 🏡



The Hampton Roads Convention Center will again be the site of Annual Conference.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Lay Servants have questions about name changes, categories of endorsement

By Johnnie Draughon

We are now more than one year into our new designation as “Lay Servants,” and there has been a great deal of progress with the new ministry of Lay Speaker. There are, however, still a number of questions.

Most Lay Servants are making this process much more difficult than it needs to be. As a Local or Certified Lay Servant, individuals are qualified within The United Methodist Church to continue to do anything that they felt called to do before the name change. That includes sometimes delivering a message from the pulpit if invited by the pastor and/or speaking in nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

We are all called into service for our Lord Jesus Christ and, for some, that calling is to preach the gospel as laity. For those unique individuals the office of Lay Speaker was created. This new ministry, within the Lay Servant Ministries, is really for a very select few individuals who feel compelled to study more and become more proficient at delivering a message from the pulpit.

It is not about what you have or have not done in the past – but about what you would like to do in the future to serve your church in this capacity.

For those who desire to become Lay Speakers, the new process is similar, although much less rigorous, to requirements for our pastors to take extensive training in homiletics, prayer, worship, church history and polity, do trial sermons for evaluation and take continuing education courses throughout their career. They are also periodically evaluated by their congregation and district superintendent.

I like to use Stephen Ministers program as an example. If someone were to take a course in congregational care and realize they have a heart as a listening/caring minister, then they can commit to 50 hours of additional training to become a Stephen Minister and then a regimen of continuing training to remain a Stephen Minister.

One question has to do with the trial sermon. Several people have asked why we have to do one since it is not specifically spelled out in *The Book of Discipline*. The *Discipline* requires the candidate to be interviewed by the committee. The conference committee, in dialog with the Board of Laity and with feedback and final approval from the Bishop's Cabinet, determined that offering a sermon and receiving immediate feedback from

the committee was a more effective method to evaluate how an individual could deliver a message.

The trial sermon is not intended to disqualify anyone from becoming a Lay Speaker. Its purpose is to help the candidate become the most effective Lay Speaker he or she can be.

For this reason, we recommend doing a trial sermon very early in the process. Then feedback from the committee can guide your learning as you take the additional courses required to become a Lay Speaker.

It is also not intended to be a “final evaluation.” Doing it early may also encourage those who are really not gifted in this area to pursue other avenues of service before they commit the time required to complete all of the required courses.

What are we looking for in a trial sermon?

- ❖ These trial sermons should be prepared in a style that is comfortable for the speaker. However, it is important that the trial sermon not be a personal testimony. While personal testimonies may be extremely compelling, they cannot be “preached” over and over again to the same congregation. And the purpose of a Lay Speaker is to be sent to fill a pulpit for an extended period of time.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

❖ As you review the evaluation form it is important to remember that you are not required to address each specific item listed. That is why we have an “NA” column. For example, not all sermons should include humor. However, if humor is used it should be appropriate and support the message. We are also not looking for a message that you would expect from a ministerial candidate. Basically, can the speaker take a piece of scripture, expound on it and make a point relevant to living out our faith today within the context of Wesleyan theology? And can they do that while clearly and appropriately expressing themselves to their audience?

❖ Comments should be supportive and informative for the candidate. If not immediately recommended, candidates should be given specific guidance and encouraged to try again after further developing their skill.

❖ This is specifically for district directors. All trial sermons should be done in person. Some of my best talks have come from some of my worst notes and some of my weakest “sermons” came from some of my best prepared write-ups. The Holy Spirit can play a powerful role in how effective a message is delivered. Also, the candidate deserves direct feedback from the committee, not a compilation of information after the fact provided by one person.


The trial sermons during the Lay Servant Academy provided us with a wealth of information on the effectiveness of the evaluation tool (which can be found on the conference website). That being said, we will not disrupt future Academy classes to provide a platform for our trial sermons. That did have some minor

negative impacts on the courses being taught.

A Certified Lay Servant is not a Lay Speaker until their recommendations have been properly submitted through their local church charge conference with endorsements from the pastor, district superintendent and final approval by the district committee (director in most cases).”

-Johnnie Draughon is conference director of Lay Servant Ministries

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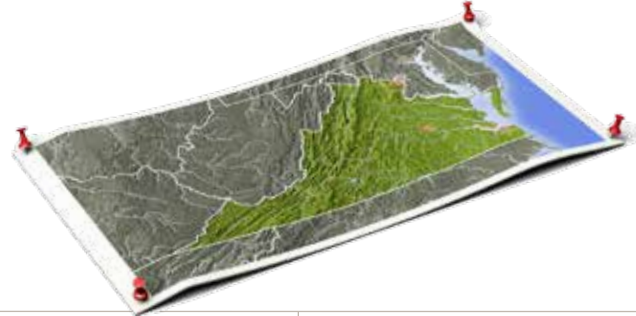
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The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Church gives money away

By Walt Westbrook

Several months ago, I saw a post on Facebook about a church that had decided to do a “reverse offering,” sending church money out with church members. So, Remington UMC followed this example, handing out envelopes with a card on each that read, “Use this gift for good. Share the fact that it came from your church. Return and tell the story.” Each envelope had a \$5, \$10 or \$20 bill in it.

During worship, I handed out the envelopes to anyone who wanted to take one. Nobody knew how much money was in their envelope. We ran out the first Sunday and came back the next Sunday with enough envelopes to cover the need.

I got about a dozen reports back, either in writing or verbally. The variety of ways people found to distribute the money fascinated me. I wouldn't be surprised if there are people who still haven't found a way to give the money away that they find satisfying. I'd say there is a very good chance that we'll do this again next December.

We're a small church with probably somewhat worse than typical money problems, and I heard of a couple of members who thought we were out of our mind giving church money away, when we're not getting enough in to be sure we meet the budget each week. But, I felt this was an investment in everyone who took the money, everyone who got some, and in the spirit of generosity in this congregation. I think they surprised themselves.

First, a trend: Several people added money to the \$5, \$10 or \$20 they received in their envelopes, then gave the new amount away. Other people would give the initial amount away, then “re-load” their envelope, and give that amount away to someone different. Some of our people will be doing this throughout the year, helping people with their own money.

In the first envelope, there was a note about how the family used the \$20 to buy gifts for the Angel Tree at school. Along

the very same lines, one of our people sent her money to one of the families that had children on our Angel Tree.

One family matched the \$20, then decided to give friends and family the opportunity to do the same. They wound up with \$400 to give to the family of a child with cancer. The additional contributors represented 11 churches beyond RUMC. That is an excellent example of multiplying talents.

There were gifts given to the homeless (one at the Heat Shelter at Culpeper UMC when a group from RUMC prepared and served dinner to the homeless) and the working poor, to individuals and to families, including one family expecting a baby.

One of our youth gave his money to a friend at school who was on the subsidized lunch program to make sure he could afford lunches. Another gave his to a family he knew was having money troubles.

One couple gave the \$10 (plus \$20 more) to start a “credit meal plan” at a local restaurant for a homeless man who stops there occasionally. He should have some hot meals this winter.

And, in the one example I'll name, Mo and Scott Mullins gave their \$10 to the Ronald McDonald House of Charlottesville. They had stayed there for a long time while Ella grew big and healthy enough



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

to bring her home. And, we know RUMC got credit for the gift because we got a lovely letter and gift receipt from Ronald McDonald House.

So, class, what have we learned?

1. **Going around looking for someone to whom we might give money is a different way of looking at the world.**
2. **Some (Many?) of us don't actually know anyone who needs our church's money.**
3. **It feels so good to give out the church's money, some of us started giving away our own money, and some are going to keep giving their own money away throughout the year. Who knew generosity could be such a thrill?**

My deepest thanks to everyone who took part in this great experiment. You have made a difference to people who needed a difference made in their lives. It may not seem like a whole lot, but mighty oaks start from little acorns. You have done well, and you have done good. You are blessed to be a blessing. I am blessed to be your pastor. ☞

*-The Rev. Walt Westbrook
is pastor at Remington UMC,
Fredericksburg District.*

Clark becomes president at Virginia United Methodist Foundation

Stephen Clark has been named president of the Virginia United Methodist Foundation (VAUMF) effective June 1, according to Gus Paulette, VAUMF board chair.

Clark replaces Dave Thompson, who announced his retirement earlier this year.

Clark has been serving as Planned Giving Officer since joining the Foundation a year ago. After graduating from Houghton College in upstate New York with a degree in Ministerial Studies, Clark followed in his father's footsteps and was ordained to serve as a pastor in the Christian and Missionary Alliance. Prior to joining the Foundation, he spent 26 years working with a number of faith-based non-profit organizations in leadership roles and legacy raising capacities. Clark has also served as a "generosity coach" with numerous private donors in crafting family legacy plans to fund kingdom ministries.

"Steph has an incredible knowledge of the tools of the trade, a work ethic that is admirable and great technical skills that are required this day and age," said Thompson. "More importantly, he shares my vision that the Foundation becomes a major financial resource for the churches, agencies and districts in the Virginia Conference."

The Foundation also announced the hiring of Bryan Carper as the new vice president for Stewardship Ministries. Carper graduated from Virginia Tech and has served as Vice President and Financial Advisor for Sun-Trust Investment Services since 1988. He is a Certified Lay Speaker and serves as the Endowment Chair at Highland UMC in Colonial Heights.

"I am much impressed by his presence," Clark said of Carper, "his own pilgrimage in coming to grips with God's call on his life and resources, his sense of personal mission to serve God and the church with his gifts and his desire to be useful in connecting donors and churches in stewarding their mission and fulfilling God's calling."

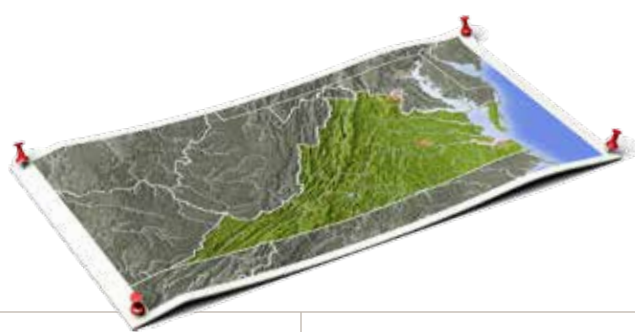
Paulette also announced the retirement of two members of the Foundation's Board as of 2014 Annual Conference in June. The Rev. Jon Woodburn, who serves as senior pastor for Oakland UMC in Blairs, has served on the board since 2008. The Rev. Jeffery Witt, who is senior pastor at Round Hill UMC, has served on the board since 2004. ☞



Stephen Clark is the new president of the Virginia United Methodist Foundation.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



The Resource Center settles in to its on-campus digs

By Neill Caldwell



Judy Bennett and Denise Jansen check some of the prints that are a part of the collection at The Resource Center, now located at Virginia Union University in Richmond. Above, an image from the collection.

RICHMOND - On the fourth floor of Kingsley Hall on the tidy, green campus of Virginia Union University, Judy Bennett and Denise Jansen continue to open boxes and unload materials for The Resource Center,

The Resource Center has been the Virginia Conference adjunct facility for Christian education materials since the conference closed its own Media Center in 2010. The majority of the conference's collection of materials is now housed here.

After some bouncing around, including stops at Union Presbyterian Seminary, the Baptist Theo-

logical Seminary (BTSR) and Ginter Park Baptist Church, the Center's large collection has settled here in the building that houses the historic Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology. The center staff began the move-in about a year ago.

"Very few churches have extra space, and we can't house this material in basements," Jansen said. "When I heard Dean (John Kinney) say the School of Theology was getting out of the student housing business, and heard Judy say that they had to get out of the BTSR space, I began evaluating this space. Because I teach Christian Education here (at STVU), it was a humongously exciting possibility."

Former apartments for seminary students are being converted to display area for the Center's

resources and curriculum. But The Resource Center also means a lot more, including an interesting collection of religious-related

The prime goal, says Bennett, is to "find what is immediately useful for lay leadership in a congregation."

artwork that now can be put on display.

The Resource Center has been making itself heard through a couple of special events, including its annual Open House for Vacation Bible School offerings, and a special "Interesting Women" gathering in March. Two ecumenical book-reading groups are coordinated through the Center.

Jansen, who teaches Christian Education at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology, says people need to know that The Resource Center is available to help with their needs.

"We have resources and the staff to help people sort through them. If you need to do a series or a one-time program, we can help - It's the best deal going. We have a massive quantity of resources for a really responsible price.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

We have material for all churches, but especially for United Methodist churches. If you need something on stewardship, for example, we might say 'let me show you three or four things...' Where a bookstore wants to sell you the newest and latest, we focus on what's the best fit. It may be three, four, even 20 years old."

The prime goal, says Bennett, is to "find what is immediately useful for lay leadership in a congregation."

There is a sliding fee to be a member. The cost for United Methodist churches is based on average weekly worship attendance.

When browsing the collection it's really a library at its most basic, but a storehouse of different kinds of tools to help with Sunday school or Bible study of all types.

"The Resource Center can now be more about the space than the books," Jansen added. "We want people to come and ask questions. We're trying to make this into a comfortable space to study. We have a broad commitment to hospitality, because students can't learn when they're hungry."

The Joe Nash Collection

There's also the Joe Nash Collection, which is housed in The Resource Center.

"The collection of Joseph V. Nash came to us when we were still at Presbyterian School of Christian

Education," said Bennett, who worked with Nash as one of his editors. "Joe Nash was a professional dancer in New York City. He started the collection, first housed at 475 Riverside Drive (in New York City), then at Scarritt-Bennett (College, in Nashville), then they downsized and it came to us. We continue to develop it and make it available to the African-American community.

"Nash began working for the National Council of Churches in the 1970s, helping to develop the field of multicultural Christian education. However, his passion remained dance and he became a fastidious collector of African-American dance memorabilia."



Joe Nash

Internet resources

One big change, of course, is that more and more people are now looking for resources via the Internet.

"Our catalog is online, which helps," Jansen said. "We encourage people that if they find something in a search (online) we will

pull it out for them (to look at). And if you don't know what you want, we can help you find something."

Jansen said the Center is also pondering the creation of some kind of awards that would honor excellence in ministry. "We want to help local churches celebrate what's good, and that includes sharing what is going on with them. It's time to celebrate the excellence in churches, including what is going on beyond the local church."

An event is scheduled for June 8 as a fundraiser for The Resource Center where church musicians can come in and sing pieces of music that they may not be familiar with.

You can learn more at the Center's website, www.resourcingchurches.com, or follow @TRCRichmond on Twitter. You can call (804) 358-8306 or 1-888-241-5132, or e-mail info@resourcingchurches.com.

The facility is open to the public Monday through Friday from noon to 6 p.m. When visiting the Center, park in the lot beside Kingsley, come upstairs and get a parking pass and return to the lot and place it on your dashboard. 🇺🇸

-Neill Caldwell is editor of the Virginia Advocate.

Events for The Resource Center:

VBS Curriculum Fair

Held in late January to early February, The Resource Center and Cokesbury present Vacation Bible school resources from denominational, cooperative and independent publishers.

INCLUSION Concert

Singers are invited to join in this ecumenically inclusive choir festival held at a local church (June 8 this year). Rehearsals take place at several times in order to increase participation. A love offering is taken to benefit the ministry of The Resource Center.

Excellence in Ministry Banquet

This evening in November will celebrate those who faithfully serve God and neighbor. The banquet also serves as a fundraising effort as proceeds benefit the ministry of The Resource Center.

Toolbox for Tomorrow

Join with others from various denominations to explore new directions in Christian formation/education and hear about what some churches are learning.



APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

1. DEFINE



WE WANT TO BE A
(HUR)CH THAT MAKES
DISCIPLES FOR JESUS
(HRIST!

- AWARENESS OF THE NEED FOR DEVELOPMENT
- PREPARING FOR AN APPRECIATIVE PROCESS

2. DISCOVER WHAT WE DO WELL!

- WHAT IN GOD'S NAME IS GOING ON IN YOUR CHURCH?
- INTERVIEW PROCESS AND GATHERING OF LIFE-GIVING EXPERIENCE WITHIN CONGREGATION.

COMMITTING TO THE POSITIVE

VALUING THE BEST OF WHAT IS

5. DELIVER!

- DOING CHRIST'S WORK IN THE WORLD.
- CO-CREATING A SUSTAINABLE, PREFERRED FUTURE.
- WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, HOW?

INNOVATING WHAT WILL BE



PROCESS

3. DREAM!

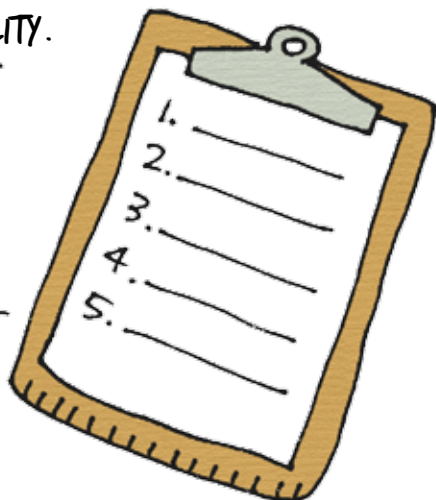
- WHAT IS GOD AND THE COMMUNITY CALLING US TO BE?
- WHAT WOULD OUR CHURCH LOOK LIKE IN FIVE YEARS?
- DEVELOPING COMMON IMAGES OF THE FUTURE.

VISIONING THE IDEAL

4. DESIGN

- ALIGNING IDEALS, VALUES, STRUCTURES AND MISSION
- DEVELOPING ACHIEVABLE PLANS AND STEPS TO MAKE THE VISION A REALITY.

DIALOGUING WHAT NEEDS TO BE



GOING FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH: INTRODUCING APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

By Lynne Caldwell

When first introduced to Appreciative Inquiry, I thought, “What an odd name for a methodology for systemic change for organizations, groups and the world around us!” But as soon as I understood that to appreciate something – to really explore what gives life and meaning to an organization or relationship, and then to ask questions, to inquire more fully about the capacities, abilities to create energy for positive change – I began to see all sorts of possibilities for utilizing this process in the life of the Church.

Primarily this approach was and is appealing because it is a 180-degree movement away from our typical strategies for planning in the church. We identify the negative, the missing link, person or factor or money, the shortest stave on the barrel, the need, the problem, and then we look for a way to fix it or them. We spend enormous amounts of time, money, energy and human resources on the “problems” rather than investing those resources in the practices and behaviors which produce creativity, innovation and positive change.

(Continued on page 18, “Appreciative Inquiry”)

(Appreciative Inquiry," continued from previous page)

Appreciative Inquiry begins, almost radically, by helping groups discover and identify what they do well, even best, even uniquely – that which no other group is or can do, and then guides the group in further explorations of how those strengths can be used to help them move forward toward articulating their dreams, designing a plan for living into

"WHAT HAVE WE ALREADY RECEIVED FROM GOD'S GRACIOUS PROVISIONS THAT WE CAN CELEBRATE AND USE AS A STARTING POINT IN DISCOVERING WHAT GOD WOULD HAVE US DO NEXT?"

those dreams and fulfilling their destiny.

Dr. David Cooperrider, at the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University, developed this positive approach to change more than 20 years ago. In his book, *A Positive Revolution in Change: Appreciative Inquiry*, co-authored with Dianne Whitney, Dr. Cooperrider says:

Appreciative Inquiry seeks, fundamentally, to build a constructive union between a whole people and the massive entirety of what people talk about as past and present capacities: achievements, assets, unexplored potentials, innovations, strengths, elevated thoughts, opportunities, benchmarks, high point moments, lived values, traditions, strategic competencies, stories, expressions of wisdom, insights into the deeper corporate spirit or soul – and visions of valued and possible futures. Taking all of these together as a gestalt, AI deliberately, in everything it does, seeks to work from accounts of this "positive change core" – and it assumes that every living system has many untapped and rich and inspiring accounts of the positive. Link the energy of this core directly to any change agenda and changes never thought possible are suddenly and democratically mobilized.


Across those years, Appreciative Inquiry has swept the globe and has become a vehicle for positive change in fields as diverse as medicine, child care, education, government, the military, corporations and the Church. Organizations like World Vision and synods in the Presbyterian Church USA have utilized the process and have included hundreds

of persons in summit experiences, valuing the input and contributions of everyone in their organizations from Presidents/CEOs to housekeepers and accountants. Out of those experiences, entire organizations have transformed not only their products, but also their presence and their process.

While Appreciative Inquiry has risen out of the disciplines of social and behavioral sciences, one of its compelling characteristics for application in the life of local congregations and throughout the structure of The United Methodist Church is that it seems to start from a grace perspective: What's already in our hands, in our midst, that we do well? We might ask the question in the Church: "What have we already received from God's gracious provisions that we can celebrate and use as a starting point in discovering what God would have us do next?"

Whatever those strengths are, if a congregation is using the Appreciative Inquiry process, then that congregation can begin to identify the ways in which those strengths are giving life to them as a community of faith, and to their neighbors beyond their walls.

The point is we are not beginning with a half-full, or half-empty glass mentality. It's not just a matter of attitude. By identifying the facts of the group's strengths, the members of it are more readily equipped to avoid the pitfalls of moving down dead end paths of the way things used to be, or dwelling on what they can't do. Instead, they can focus on those things they can and are doing well, and thus develop enthusiasm and commitment for the next victory, however great or small. They may even find themselves looking forward to the next challenge as an adventure and a new opportunity, rather than an experience for dread or disaster.

Appreciative Inquiry can help a congregation move from isolation, complaining and blaming to cooperation, partnership, creative collaboration and innovation. Appreciative Inquiry inherently holds potential to help us explore what it might mean for us to be organizationally transformed from one degree of glory into another, more and more into the likeness of Christ, so that we might truly go from strength to strength in God's service. 

-The Rev. Dr. Lynne Caldwell is pastor at Brookland UMC, Richmond District, and teaches at the School of Theology at Virginia Union University.

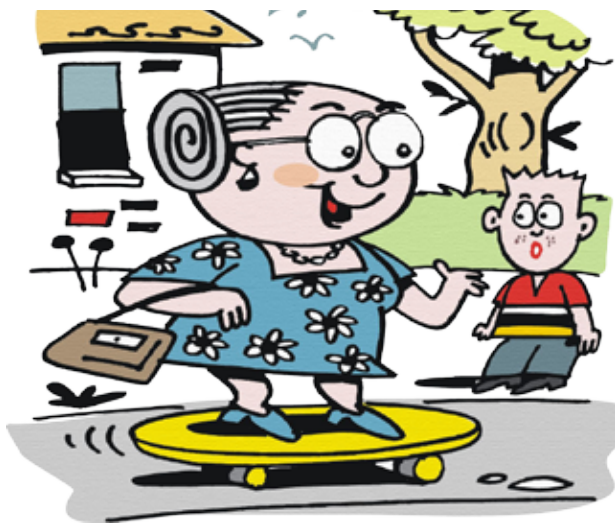
For more information:

<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/intro/whatisai.cfm>

The Appreciative Inquiry Commons:

appreciativeinquiry.case.edu (Case Western Reserve University). A worldwide portal devoted to the fullest sharing of academic resources and practical tools on Appreciative Inquiry.

An Appreciative Inquiry Parable



By Karin Walker

Ninth United Methodist Church in Goodtimes, Md., was hosting its annual planning retreat.

The church is located just a mile from the Top Shelf Retirement Community, where most of its members live, and as a result it sees lots of activity.

New roads to accommodate Top Shelf now place Ninth Church on a busy thoroughfare.

This morning, the Church Council gathered, along with a few other interested members. There were 30 in attendance.

Everyone was excited to see that Phil and June, new residents of Top Shelf and soon to be members of Ninth Church, were among those gathered.

The sea of gray that stretched out over the pews as worship began was a clear indicator of the average age of the congregation.

The Bible study focused on Philippians 4:8. Jerry, the church council chairperson, began the planning by a review of last year's goals.

"Well, we didn't make progress on two of our four goals, as usual. We still do not have anyone under the age of 40 and certainly no children to speak of, except when Ella's great grandkids are in town. And we did not have a Vacation Bible School again this year," he lamented.

"That's such a shame," Joe said. "Fifty years ago, this place would have 150 kids."

"I just don't see why we can't attract young people. We have the money. I think we should hire a full-time youth minister. Why, the church down the street built a skateboard park for their youth. We have all these handicapped

ramps – maybe they could use those to start," commented Louise.

"We're going to die if we don't get young people. Maybe we need a younger pastor," offered Murray.

Not wanting to get off on a totally negative note, Jerry reviewed the other goals. The church paid 100 percent of their apportionments and funded, along with three other community churches, a house for Habitat for Humanity.

Phil, the newcomer, who had been taking all of this in, chimed in: "You know why June and I are here? Because you have a wonderful outreach to seniors. The Bible study over at Top Shelf was what hooked us. And our first Sunday here, we felt right at home with the coffee and donuts, and June got invited to the quilters group."


Ninth UMC is like lots of congregations in that they ask themselves the wrong questions. Rather than, "What don't we have or what are we not doing well?" a more productive question would be: "What do we do well and how can we do more of it?"

This is the basic premise of Appreciative Inquiry.

Most organizational change begins with problem-solving, assessing the deficits and inadequacies, and creating strategies to fix them. This deficit model will often miss opportunities for growth and health.

The Appreciative Inquiry model reviews the organizational history and its best stories and practices, celebrating and appreciating ministries in response to God's call. It then uses creative and careful discerning to focus on possibilities for a future based on strengths and current realities.

Ninth UMC began to appreciate their unique strengths. They used their new sign, now on the busy thoroughfare, as an opportunity to be noticed. They moved their quilting group to the retirement community. They arranged a van pick-up for worship every Sunday. They hosted a health and wellness fair for seniors, and knitted blankets for the homeless. They even started a Bible study at the McDonald's down the road at 7 a.m., where the retired men met for breakfast.

Appreciative Inquiry offers new hope and new possibilities for congregations in the midst of change. Church leaders can invigorate their congregations by focusing on strengths and re-imagining the future. When done in the context of discerning God's call, we celebrate what God has done and what God can do through the people of Jesus Christ. 

-The Rev. Karin Walker is superintendent of the Baltimore North District, Baltimore-Washington Conference

Living Your Strengths

FOCUSING ON WHAT YOU DO WELL CAN HAVE POSITIVE IMPACT ON MINISTRY

By Bret Gresham and Alison Malloy

We learned about *Strengths Quest* (or *Strengths Finder*) while serving the Virginia Tech community. Tech is now a “Strengths University,” which means they have adopted this framework for all students to gain insights into how to use their talents to achieve academic success, to explore careers, and in leadership development.

Skeptics feel *Strengths Quest* is another personality test used to box us into some pre-conceived paradigm. Once you look at *Strengths* through a theological lens you begin to see the uniqueness and power of this approach. For instance, there is a 1 in 275,000 chance that an individual will meet someone with the same Signature Themes, regardless of order. Additionally, there is a 1 in 33 million chance an individual will meet someone with Signature Themes match in the same order. Therefore, applying a theological lens to *Strengths*, it is clear that each of us is uniquely and wonderfully made!

Living Your Strengths is about investing in the incredible and unique talents God gives you so that you can use those strengths to build the Kingdom of God (Matthew 25: 14-29). This is much different than a weakness prevention model that promotes well-roundedness. In a weakness prevention model, the Body of Christ becomes mediocre because no one is living up to their potential.

The premise of this tool is that God creates each individual with a unique set of themes/talents. When individuals and communities invest (combining skills, knowledge and effort) in these themes/talent they grow into Strengths. *Living Your Strengths* says, “God wants you to be you – not somebody else, but you! When we discover our talents, when we give them a name, something resonates deep within us. It is as if our spirits react to this discovery with a resounding “Yes! This is the way it is supposed to be – this is who I was created to be.”

Not only does God call each individual to harness these themes and invest in them, God instructs that it is each individual's responsibility to best utilize our gifts to live into God's dream. Often this liberating experience enables and empowers us to focus on our gifts and grace so as to

better lead in our faith communities.

Paytience Shaffer, (LEAD 2011 Alumni and James Madison University, Class of 2017), writes:

“When I first learned my strengths I believed a few and doubted the rest. Yet as I have grown into the person I am today, these strengths have come into play more often than not, even the ones I thought were not relevant at all... Now in college I see my other strengths coming into play!”

Talents ARE NOT spiritual gifts, but rather, understanding your talents and developing them into strengths can be a very effective way to enhance gifts and your calling. Using a Strengths approach to ministry allows us to work together in relationship with our strengths. Moses, Aaron and Miriam are a great example. By combining their strengths they were able to form a mighty (and very effective) trio. While Moses was unable to speak, Aaron specialized in that department, Miriam supported all efforts, and Moses focused on vision and strategy.

The Conference Council on Youth Ministry has utilized this tool during the 10-day intensive leadership training event, LEAD (in 2011 and 2012). The team found many of the participating young people had never spent time naming the things which come naturally to them. While the group spent much time joking “Your RESPONSIBILITY is showing...”, much power was found in having something to call the ideas they had always been thinking. Once this group invested time in exploring themes, the remainder of the week was spent reaffirming the utilization of themes in regular or daily activities.

Wesley at Virginia Tech utilizes this tool in all aspects of leadership development and in the daily life of the community. As the students seek to understand who they are, where they feel called, and what gifts they bring to our common ministry, this tool gives powerful language to all of those questions they face. Just like the University utilization of *Strengths*, Wesley embodies *Strengths* language to help students focus on using their talents in the context of Christian community through ministry teams.

There are several suggestions about how to utilize the tool:

1. **Encourage your team to use the *Strengths*-based language daily. The students at Wesley at Virginia Tech talk about their “Top 5” Talent themes regularly in conversation with one another. When students understand their talents and invest in one another, developing strengths, they start to see how they can best interact with the community and world.**

2. Have your team learn their “Top 5” and build a retreat to discuss the ways you can work together. What you will find is that creativity will thrive as people learn to use their strengths together to build community and leadership. Your group begins to look less like individuals with their own “agendas” and more like a team that focuses on the team’s ministry rather than individual goals.

3. As the *Strengths* language becomes more and more a part of your vocabulary, people will begin to focus less on flaws and more on strengths! Unity with each other in Jesus is primary to understanding strengths – in this approach you cannot be a “lone ranger,” you must be a part of something greater than yourself for it to be successful.

Lauren Wright, the Student Campus Minister at Wesley at Virginia Tech and a conference intern for two years, said: “The coolest thing... is that it is inclusive. Ministry is most effective when it is an inclusive process that other people are actively engaged in. I know that in my own life, I like to try to do everything on my own. *Strengths* flips that idea on its head – instead of spending our time trying to improve our weaknesses, which enables us to be self-sufficient, well-rounded autonomous people, it encourages you to focus on strengthening your personal, individual strengths, so that you can excel in your key areas and do awesome things. For this to work, though, you have to be willing to let other people excel in their strengths. This promotes the idea of building a team of people that have

different strengths, each gifted and set apart in different ways. This leads to the inclusive idea of being in ministry with one another, and really enables faith communities to do radical things.”

The early church gives a great model into what living your strengths looks like. As the church grew quickly, leaders had to find others who had the talents, strengths and gifts to take care of the widows. When people were given roles that fit their talents and gifts (instead of just saying “you are young so you get to work with youth or children”), then God can do marvelous things.

A *Strengths*-based approach to ministry is not only effective, but it allows people to do what they do best and that can only strengthen our common ministry. 🍷

-The Rev. Bret Gresham is campus minister at Virginia Tech.
Alison Malloy is part of the conference Council on Youth Ministries.

Living Your Strengths resources

www.gallupstrengthscenter.com/

<http://www.gallup.com/strategicconsulting/157658/living-strengths.aspx>

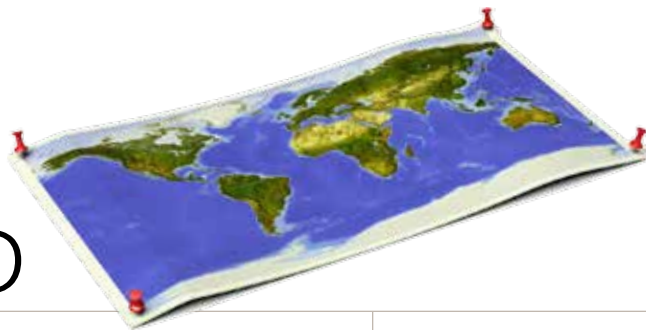
www.strengthsfinder.com

<http://vimeo.com/32086574>

<http://thewell.cor.org/why-your-weirdness-wonderful-embrace-your-quirks-and-live-your-strengths>



Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD



Sovandy, the first native Cambodian to hold the position of Mission Superintendent, or head of the Cabinet. Prior to his taking office last September the position had been held by a Korean pastor. "Our vision statement is 'To grow stronger and grow more rooted in Jesus Christ,'" he said. "We are working to equip clergy and lay people, encourage young people as leaders, create self-supporting churches and plant new churches."

The Cambodian Methodist Church has 11 districts, some of them very large geographically. "There is opportunity for growth in the number of churches," Sok said. "There is also population growth in the urban areas, which is providing new opportunities for us."

Seven new churches are already on the drawing board. Currently in Cambodia there are

Cambodia Consultation brings people together

ALEXANDRIA – Representatives from around the world gathered here May 1-3 to talk about the growing Methodist mission in Cambodia. The United Methodist Church is one of five denominations working in the Southeast Asia nation of 16 million that is still recovering from the 1977-79 genocide that wiped out millions, mostly the educated and professional. Aldersgate UMC in Alexandria hosted the gathering of Cambodian guests and others from California to Switzerland who are involved in ministry there.

During the three-day meeting, participants worshiped together, shared American meals, danced

to Cambodian music and heard ministry reports.

Perhaps the most special of the special guests was the Rev. Sok

Country Director the Rev. Dr. Romeo del Rosario (top) uses a map to talk about churches in Cambodia. At right, the Rev. Sok Sovandy is the new Mission Superintendent for Cambodia.



Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD

27 local churches, 68 “preaching points” and 57 “outpost” churches, for 152 total churches. The Methodist mission there has about 140 pastors.

Sok said that what Cambodia needs to continue its growth is partnerships.

“My proposal is for churches to partner with churches, districts with districts. For example, a church in Virginia would be a partner to a church in Cambodia. The keys to this partnership? To share prayer, encouragement to serve the Lord, and help train our youth and young adults.”

The Rev. Nathan Decker, pastor at Ivey Memorial UMC and a member of January’s United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) team organized by retired pastor Sam NeSmith from Virginia, said he found joy “in being with people of a different culture and ex-

periencing their hospitality, their lives, and sharing the experience with them.”

General Board of Global Ministries County Director, the Rev. Dr. Romeo del Rosario, thanked the people of the Virginia Conference for their support over the past two years as Cambodia has become an Initiatives of Hope partner.

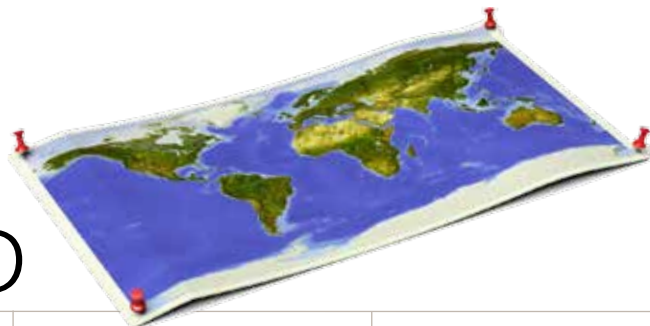
“Virginia is one of the most generous of our supporters,” del Rosario said. “I spoke at Virginia Annual Conference last year and Cambodia’s share of the offering taken at 2013 Annual Conference was \$47,900. And that is extra, on top of the regular giving... I don’t know how we would survive without Virginia.” 🍷

-Neill Caldwell

The Aldersgate UMC Day School children sing for the guests (below). Center, the Rev. Nathan Decker talks about his trip to Cambodia in January. Right, Sophany Heng from Cambodia gives her testimony.



Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD



Connectional Table considers change to sexuality stance

By Heather Hahn

The Connectional Table, one of The United Methodist Church's governing bodies, has decided to draft legislation that could change church law "to fully include LGBTQ persons in the life and ministry of the church."

The draft would be brought back to the Connectional Table at a future meeting for consideration. The April 29 decision to draft the legislation came the same day the Connectional Table began a series of three public discussions on human sexuality. They were meeting in Chicago.

The dialogue "is an exercise of our responsibility to be a common table for the church and to confer with one another as representatives of the church," said Dakotas-Minnesota Area Bishop Bruce Ough, Connectional Table chair,

the day before the event.

"The Connectional Table believes that we need some specific language to inform the discussion before we can seek effective feedback from the Connection and fully discern what our next steps will be," Ough said after the event, in a press release. "This decision has empowered the Table to begin developing such language, which would be open to debate, amendment, and improvement before any final decision is made on adoption."

The 59-member Connectional Table is a United Methodist governing body of clergy and lay people that coordinates the denomination's mission, ministry and resources. Any legislation adopted by the body would go to the denomination's top law-making assembly, General Conference, for action in 2016. Raleigh (N.C.) Area Bishop Hope Morgan Ward, the chair of the Connectional Table's Human Sexuality Task Force, served as moderator for the morning's discussion.

She told those gathered in Chicago and online that

the hope is these public discussions will lay the groundwork for any substantive change the Connectional Table proposes to General Conference.

The possibility of changing the church's stance on homosexuality came up soon after the Connectional Table returned from lunch. The *Book of Discipline*, the global denomination's law book, states that all people are of sacred worth but "the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching."

Los Angeles Area Bishop Minerva Carcaño proposed beginning the process for greater inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals. She did so following the urging of the Rev. Julie Todd, a member of Love Prevails. Todd's unofficial United Methodist group advocates the inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in the life of the church.

Carcaño said she had not expected to make such a motion at this Connectional Table meeting but felt led by the Holy Spirit.

(Left) The Rev. Pamela Lightsey, associate dean for community life and lifelong learning at Boston University School of Theology, shares her views during the April 29 online dialogue on human sexuality, held by the Connectional Table in Chicago. The Rev. Mark Teasdale (center) and retired Bishop Daniel C. Arichea Jr. round out the three-person panel.

(Right) Retired Bishop Daniel Arichea Jr. describes his personal journey during an online dialogue on human sexuality as Bishop Hope Morgan Ward (right) listens.

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What followed was a discussion that lasted nearly two hours and at times included motions to table Carcaño's motion until the end of the public dialogue.

Other members expressed concern that, with the rapid approach of the 2016 General Conference, legislative wording needed to be worked on now. The body would need to approve such legislation before it could be submitted to General Conference. A number of members said they saw a need to eliminate "discriminatory language" in the *Book of Discipline*.

The deadline for petitions to General Conference is Oct. 13, 2015. General church agencies and the Connectional Table are urged to submit petitions by Sept. 1, 2015.

By a show of hands, a clear majority of Connectional Table members affirmed a motion from Ward that the body engage in "parallel paths through dialogue and emending (that is, changing from within) the *Book of Discipline*."

The body narrowly

voted – 17-15 – against a subsequent motion to reconsider that action. Fred Brewington, a member from the Northeastern Jurisdiction, made the motion to table the action in hopes of fostering more conversation that would lead to the body voting, "on a date certain," to remove the "exclusionary language that has done so much harm to persons." Carcaño, however, said she wanted to trust that the process Ward had outlined would result in the removal of "exclusionary language."

Ough said the narrowness of the vote on Brewington's motion indicated that "we are still not of one mind" on the issue.

The question at the center of the Connectional Table's first dialogue on human sexuality was: Can The United Methodist Church sustain deep disagreements regarding human sexuality and still remain in unity?

The church's divisions on homosexuality have made headlines in recent months, and, not for the first time, some church members have mentioned

the possibility of schism.

The April 29 discussion included clergy and scholars who approached the topic from various theological perspectives.

Ough called the panel discussion a historic conversation that attempted to engage the entire United Methodist Church through live-streaming and Twitter.

San Antonio Area Bishop James Dorff opened the discussion with a Bible study based on Jesus' prayer for his disciples' unity in John 17:20-26. Dorff told those in Chicago and online that Jesus prayed for unity so that Christians can be a witness to the rest of God's people.

"What is our end game?" Dorff asked. "Will we be of one mind? I doubt it. Will we all be of one church? I sure hope so. Will we all be brothers and sisters in Christ? I hope so." ☞

-Heather Hahn is a reporter for United Methodist News Service.

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EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY



50 ways to welcome your new pastor

By Robert Crossman

Prepare to welcome your new pastor

1. Open your hearts and decide that you are going to love your new pastor.
2. Begin praying daily for the new pastor and family, even as you continue to pray for your departing pastor and family.
3. Invite church members individually to send cards of welcome and encouragement to the incoming pastor.
4. Know that welcoming your new pastor in genuine and effective ways lays the ground work for a healthy and vital relationship and the development of stable, long-term ministries together.
5. Plan for the transition.

Occasionally important welcoming gestures are missed with everyone thinking someone else is handling these details.

6. Appoint a specific liaison person to whom the pastor can go for help and information during the transition.

Say goodbye to your current pastor in a healthy way

7. Show love, regard and even grief, for your departing pastor. This is one of the best things you can do for the new pastor.
8. Acknowledge the change in public ways. Especially in the case of a much-beloved pastor, this allows the congregation better to let go and receive the new pastor.
9. Provide the congregation the opportunity to say thank you and goodbye to the outgoing pastor, even if things have not always gone well.

10. Find appropriate occasions – in worship and at other times – to thank the outgoing pastor.

11. Express appreciation in ways that are consistent with what you have done in the past.

12. Consider giving the pastor the last two weeks off. This helps the pastor enter the new situation rested and gives an emotional buffer between one pastor's last Sunday and another pastor's first Sunday.

13. Plan goodbye celebrations prior to the beginning of the two weeks off.

14. Provide information to the local media about the outgoing pastor's accomplishments and future plans.

15. Do not invite the former pastor to return for weddings, funerals or baptisms. This allows your former pastor to engage fully with his or her new congregation, and it establishes your new pastor as everyone's pastor from the beginning.

Make things move-in ready

16. Make sure the parsonage and pastor's office are clean and ready. Offer to provide help or a cleaning service if needed.
17. Determine if the parsonage is in need of repairs or painting. Consult the outgoing and incoming pastors about timing so as not to disrupt the lives of either party. Do not ask a

new pastor to move into a parsonage "under construction."

18. Consult the new pastor on any paint, design or furnishings issues.

19. Offer to have someone cut the parsonage grass.

20. Make sure the new pastor and church officials are clear on how moving expenses are paid and all matters related to compensation, benefits and reimbursement policies.

Welcome your pastor on moving day

21. Stock the parsonage refrigerator and pantry with some staples.

22. Make sure there are kid-friendly foods and snacks in the refrigerator if children are arriving.

23. Have a small group on hand to greet the new pastor and family when they arrive and to help as needed.

24. Offer child care if there is an infant or toddler in the household.

25. Invite children in the household to do things with others of their same age.

26. Welcome any youths in the household by having church youth group members stop by and offer to show them around.

Continue the welcome during the entry period

27. Take food over for the first few days. Many church-



es continue the practice of having a “pounding” for the new pastor when persons bring food items.

28. Provide a map with directions to local dry cleaners, grocery store, drug store, veterinarian, etc., and information on local options for internet and cable television providers.

29. Give gift certificates to several of your favorite restaurants in the community.

30. Give the pastor and family a welcome reception on the first Sunday.

31. Plan a worship celebration of the new appointment.

32. Invite the new pastor to any social events held by Sunday School classes or other groups in the early months.

33. Make sure the pastor’s spouse and children, if applicable, are invited to Sunday school and other appropriate small groups.

34. Continue to remember your new pastor and family in your daily prayers.

Help the new pastor become familiar with the congregation

35. Introduce yourself to the pastor repeatedly! You have one name to learn; your pastor has many names to learn.

36. Wear name tags. Even if name tags are not a tradition, the congregation can wear them for a few weeks to help the pastor learn names.

37. Provide a current pictorial directory of all the church members, if available.

38. Provide an up-to-date list of all church committees and officers.

39. Provide the new pastor with a tour of where things are kept inside the church and perhaps a floor plan of the facilities.

40. Orient the new pastor to information systems and the way records are kept.

41. Make sure the pastor has a list of home bound or nursing home members, a list of those struggling with long term illness, and a list of those still in grief over recent deaths in the family. Better yet, take the pastor for an introduction to each of these households.

42. Have an appropriate person offer to go with the pastor for introductions and support if there are particularly urgent pastoral situations (a member near death or the family of a member who has just died).

43. Have a lay official offer to take the pastor to meet church members in their businesses or other work settings, if they are easily accessible.

44. Offer to help arrange small group sessions to meet and talk with the congregation.

45. Create a “church yellow pages” (a list of people in the church who have specific skills that a newcomer may find beneficial... auto mechanic, doctor, dentist, dry cleaners, book store, office supply, etc.).

Help the new pastor connect to the community

46. Provide local media with information about the new pastor.

47. Provide a list of hospitals, nursing homes and community service agencies.

48. Introduce your new pastor to other clergy in the community. Provide information on any ecumenical activities or associations.

49. Introduce the new pastor to public and community leaders.

50. Ask church members in civic clubs to take the new pastor to one of their meetings. ☞

-Dr. Robert Crossman is minister of New Church Starts and Congregational Development for the Arkansas Conference. This list was originally published by the Lewis Center for Church Leadership.

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LOCAL CHURCH NEWS



▲ **Lincolnia UMC** celebrated its 150th anniversary on May 11. The original name of the Lincolnia community was Lebanon. The original Methodist congregation in Lebanon was chartered on May 11, 1864. The community was named Lincolnia in 1875 to honor President Abraham Lincoln. An earlier church there, known as the Lebanon Church, was burned by Federal troops retreating after the battle of Second Bull Run. Lincolnia Methodist Church was built on Lincolnia Road in 1876. In the early years, it was served by a circuit-riding minister who split his duties among several churches. After outgrowing the old building, church members built the current building on Little River Turnpike and Lincoln Avenue in 1965. A cabinet in the new building contains several items from the old church, including a log, glass communion set and a Bible dated 1875.

Payne Memorial UMC in Cumberland will kick off its centennial celebration on June 29 at 11:15 a.m. with worship. The Farmville District superintendent, the Rev. Bob Parks, will be the guest speaker at this special service. There will be a covered

dish lunch directly after worship, and special music is scheduled after lunch. Then there will be an ice cream social at 3 p.m. Members have been planning this special occasion for a long while, reports communications coordinator Marjorie White. The Rev. Todd Gess is the current pastor.

A 10-person mission team from **Mount Olivet UMC in Arlington** journeyed to Haiti in April to help create a modern learning environment at an impoverished school in Arcahaie. The school, Institution Mixte Edouard Charles, has 130 students, ages 6 to 16, and before this project had no electricity or clean drinking water. The team also worked with the Thomas Food Project, which was spun off from work done through UMVIM as part of the Haiti Response Plan after the earthquake in 2010. Mount Olivet has sent five teams to Haiti since 2011. ▼



▲ Jo Louderback, a member of **Christ UMC in Shenandoah, Harrisonburg District**, recently painted a 16-foot nativity scene on a wall in the church which will be used as a backdrop for the stable scene in the dinner drama "In Bethlehem Inn." The 90-member cast and crew perform two shows during the Advent Season and offer the Christmas Story to the people in the community along with a meal.

The farming community around **Joyner UMC in Capron, James River District**, came together for a "Blessing of the Seeds" service on April 5. This area of Southampton County is blessed to have many involved in agriculture. Pastor Nancy Palmer asked blessings to be bestowed upon the seeds and plants for the upcoming growing season, and many from the congregation gathered to pray together and enjoy fellowship. ▼

St. Luke's UMC in North Ches-
terfield, Richmond District, recently held a unique event, called "Mission Babies: An Apportionment Adoption Event." Over a pot luck meal, members and guests were invited to "adopt a baby" which was tagged with the name of a mission, ministry or organization corresponding to Virginia Conference Missions and Ministries apportionment that St. Luke's was unable to pay last year. By emphasizing the ministries supported, and inviting members to choose a baby representing a specific part of the apportionment, St. Luke's was able to raise nearly \$4,000, enough to assure this apportionment will be paid this year. The gift of new life, given by us through the church, was represented by a "mission baby" to take home. Pictured, Becky Jenkins with a "mission baby." ▼



Two Virginia women consecrated deaconess at UMW gathering

Dr. Laarni Serquina Bibay, a Pediatrician and children's health advocate with Tidewater Pediatrics in Portsmouth, and Anselma Samson, coordinator for Leadership Development for Church and Community, Resurrection UMC in Chesapeake, were two of 26 women from 18 annual conferences consecrated as deaconesses during the closing plenary worship of the United Methodist Women's Assembly in Louisville April 27. More than 6,000 people witnessed

the consecration service. Deaconesses and their male counterparts, Home Missioners, are called by God to lay vocations of love, justice and service in a lifetime relationship in The United Methodist Church. Their work alleviates suffering, eradicates causes of injustice and all that robs life of dignity and worth, facilitates the development of full human potential and shares in building global community through the church universal.



Laarni Bibay (right) of Virginia and Garlinda Burton of Tennessee celebrate their consecration as deaconesses in April at Louisville. Photo by Paul Jefferies.



Devotions from International Lesson Series

LIVING THE WORD



The Rev. Mikang Kim is a pastor, a mother, and soon to become a clergy spouse, as her husband will be appointed as a licensed local pastor at 2014 Annual Conference. Mikang studied music composition in the College of Music of Gachon University in Korea, and Religion and Psychology for her first M.Div at Methodist Theological University in Seoul. She graduated from Wesley Theological Seminary in 2013, where she received her second M.Div. In the same year, she became a provisional elder and was appointed to Epworth UMC, Eastern Shore District.

June 1, 2014

**Not my house, but God's house
Haggai 1:1-11**

My house in Korea is gone now. As the house was very old, my family had to find a new house while I was studying in the U.S. When I visited Korea two years ago, I stayed in the new house for a month. All of my family was there. Except for the house, nothing had changed. Nevertheless, I missed my old house a lot and felt like I had lost my home to go back to. It was a significant loss; I had lost my safe place with its loving memories of my family.

In the book of Haggai, we meet a God who lost God's house. While the books of Ezra and Nehemiah begin with the prayer of a people who lost the Lord's temple and prayed for its restoration, Haggai begins with God calling the people to rebuild God's lost house. Interestingly, Haggai uses the word "the Lord's house" eight times (NRSV) and "the Lord's temple" only twice. It emphasizes that God wants people to rebuild not only the Temple which was destroyed by Babylonians in 587 B.C, but God's covenantal relationship with the Israelites. Before Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem, the house of the Lord had been in Shiloh (1 Sam 1:3). Joshua 18:1 says that this was the house where the Israelites put the tabernacle that signified God's covenant with the Israelites in the wilderness.

Likewise, when the Temple was destroyed, the covenantal relationship between God and the Israelites was destroyed. Haggai 1 shows that God and the Israelites had opposite views of this broken relationship. The Israelites totally forgot God. They built houses for themselves and satisfied only themselves. But God remembered them. God called the people to rebuild the temple, thus restoring their covenantal relationship. God still put God's priority on the people and invited them to restoration through the voice of Haggai. Through Haggai, God proclaims, "Take your ways to heart" (1:5,7, CEB). God then asks the people to go to the mountain to bring timbers in order to build the House of the Lord.

Today, it is easy to find beautiful church buildings without people. They are empty because people have forgotten their covenantal relationship with God. As we read Haggai, I want you to check your covenantal relationship with

God. Without rebuilding your individual temple, our church cannot be God's house.

June 8, 2014

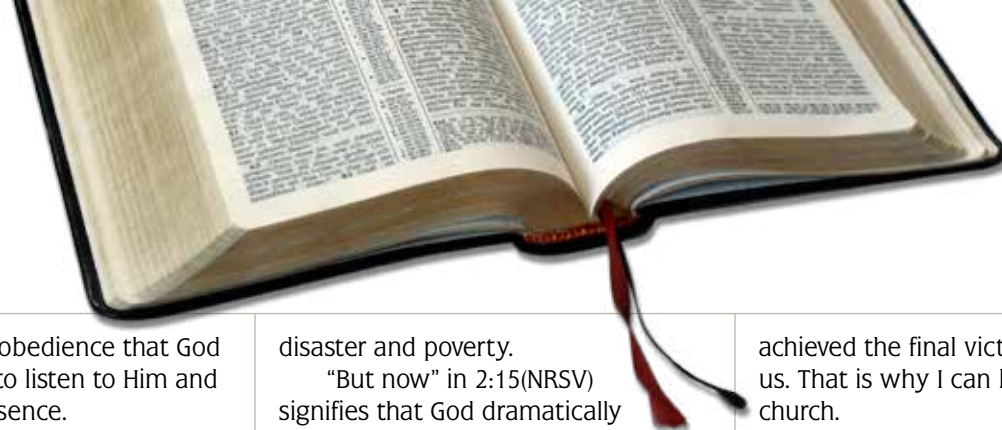
**Hearing + response = obedience
Haggai 1:12, 2:1-9**

Obedience is one of my strengths. Before I realized what obedience is, I learned to be obedient to others in my words and actions. Although I was too curious to be an obedient child, the Korean education system was pretty good at disciplining me. I grew up to be a submissive Korean woman. People told me that I was polite and I was the one they could trust. However, I forgot how to express my thought and feelings with appropriate language. At that time, obedience meant I had to hide myself in order to respect others.

Israelites' obedience to God is a very important theme of the book of Haggai as God calls people to rebuild the temple. Chapter 1 describes the Israelites as selfish, satisfying their human desires and faithlessly forgetting God's dwelling place. In chapter 2, the people were discouraged by the elder who remembered the glory of Solomon's temple. However, God restores this people to faith as they rebuild the house of the Lord. This means that God did not force the Israelites' obedience. Rather, Haggai 1:14 mentions that God "stirred up" people's spirit by speaking to them and sharing God's vision for the new temple (NRSV).

Obedience for Israelites here did not mean hiding themselves before God. Obedience was revealed in the restored relationship with God. God speaks to the people – "Be strong! Work! I am with you. Don't fear. I will provide prosperity in this place" (v.4,5,9 CEB). Interestingly, the Hebrew word for "prosperity" in Haggai 2:9 is *shalom*. This means spiritual and material prosperity full of wholeness, security, welfare, and peace.

God calls us every day with different words and visions. As faithful Christians, we feel like, although God's calling challenges us, we have to be ready to be obedient. However, God does not welcome this kind of obedience. This kind of obedience forces us to hide our weaknesses and to pretend to be faithful. Our God is a God who loves us as we are and shares God's vision with us. This God speaks to us and promises us His



shalom. The true obedience that God wants from us is to listen to Him and work in God's presence.

June 15, 2014

But... now!

Haggai 2:10-19

Sanctification begins with cleaning. For me, cleaning reveals my inner life as well as my outward attitude toward life. There are three kinds of cleaning that sustain my life: The first is regular prayer and journaling. These practices clean my heart and nurture my relationship with God. The second is cleaning the parsonage. As a working mother, I struggle with this. Since this is the first time my family is living in a parsonage, we are still learning how to clean such a big house! But when we clean our house, my husband and I have time to clean our personal life; where do we spend the most of our time? Do we work together cleaning the house and taking care of our child? The third kind of cleaning is clearing my desk. This is when I reflect on my ministry and organize it.

Interestingly, these three different kinds of cleaning influence each other. When I neglect my daily prayer and journaling, my house gets messy, as does my desk. Whenever I see a dirty desk in my office, I check on my spiritual life. Frequently I discover that I am in a time of inner chaos when I feel physically and spiritually exhausted.

In Haggai 2:10-19, through the voice of Haggai God says that the Israelites' hands were unclean: People used their hands to turn away from God. They worked for themselves and neglected to build God's house. When they worked hard with their unclean hands, God did not accept their efforts. Without God's blessing, their work could not be fruitful. Their unclean hands signify their broken relationship with God, which caused

disaster and poverty.

"But now" in 2:15(NRSV) signifies that God dramatically changes God's attitude from judgment to restoration. Now is the time that people rebuild the temple. People's hands are purified when they listen to God and orient their life toward God. At this point, God repeats "consider from this day on" three times in verses 15-18 (NRSV). In doing so, God encourages the people to see how God draws them out of uncleanness into holiness.

Sanctification requires our daily efforts to be holy. We cannot make ourselves holy by our own hands. God makes our hands clean and empowers us to live in holiness. Now! Consider what will come to pass from this day on!

June 22, 2014

**Leadership comes from Lordship
Haggai 2:20-23, Zechariah 4:5-14**

Leadership comes from Lordship – that is the most important lesson I learned in Licensing School last year. Those 10 days were the most anxious of my life. Before Licensing School, I was in a honeymoon period, filled with joy at becoming a provisional elder and anticipating my new ministry. However, Licensing School taught me that I was stepping into uncertainty. I did not feel ready to enter this uncertainty: I did not have enough experience. I was not mature enough to serve church members who would be older than me. The more I learned about ministry, the less confidence I had in my ability to be a pastor.

One night, Bishop Cho spoke to us about leadership. Several times he repeated, "Leadership comes from Lordship," proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus Christ. He meant that our Lord Jesus Christ who called me to serve His church leads me and empowers me. Most of all, our Lord already

achieved the final victory for all of us. That is why I can be a leader of a church.

The book of Haggai ends with a proclamation of God's sovereignty. Although the Israelites returned to their homeland and rebuilt the house of the Lord, they were still occupied by Persians. In the midst of this time of frustration, God proclaims that God's power rules over all nations and universe. This mighty God uses this universal power for His people.

Interestingly, although God shows His willingness to destroy all the Kingdoms and nations, God promises to build His Kingdom where He governs all the nations and universe. Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, had been disgraced by his grandfather Jehoiachin, the last King of Judah. God removed his shame and chose him as "the signet ring" of God. Pouring out God's heavenly power on Zerubbabel, God promised His glory over God's new house. In Zechariah 4:6, God tells Zerubbabel, "Neither by power, nor by strength, but by my spirit.(NRSV)" This verse best expresses that leadership comes from God's sovereignty.

Being Christian means being chosen to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Just like God chose Zerubbabel to build His new house, God calls you and me to expand His Kingdom all over the world. We do not do this by power or by strength, but by the Spirit of God. Leadership comes from Lordship!

June 29, 2014

**Unity vs. communality
1 Corinthians 1:10-17**

I learned about unity after coming to the U.S. When I was in Korea, I was confused unity and communality. Living there, a homogeneous nation, I valued communality. I did not want to say anything against a large number of people. I did not

(Continued on pg. 33, "Living Word")

CLERGY & DIACONAL



Deaths



The Rev. Mary Margaret Cook Jones, 55, of Hurt, died April 18, 2014. A Kentucky native, Jones served as pastor at New Bethel and Motley United

Methodist churches, Lynchburg District. She was a Deacon in Full Connection in the Virginia Conference and previously served as Minister of Outreach at Virginia Beach UMC and director of Christian Education at Thalia UMC in Virginia Beach. While in Virginia Beach, she was active in the Emmaus Community and served as a resident with Tidewater Pastoral Counseling. She is survived by her husband, Dale Jones, managing director of Education and Plan Sponsor Relations for the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, and two adult sons.



The Rev. Walter Roberts (Bob) McIvor, retired elder in the Virginia Conference and former Navy Chaplain, died April 15, 2014. McIvor served Oak Grove

UMC in Chesapeake, Elizabeth River District, and for the past few years has been affiliated with Courthouse Community UMC in Virginia Beach, where his service was held. He is survived by his wife Suzanne, and two sons.



James Kermit Meadows, 74, of Mocksville, N.C., died April 23, 2014. A native of West Virginia, he was a retired local pastor in the Virginia Conference,

serving five churches in the Staunton

District. Meadows had served 20 years in the United States Air Force, and following his military career he worked in an administrative capacity with the federal government until his retirement in 1995.



Margaret Lee 'Peg' Mitchell died April 15, 2014, in Alexandria. Mitchell was a retired local pastor in the Virginia Conference and was active with

the Loudoun County Chrysalis community. Her memorial service was held at Franconia UMC.



The Rev. Dermont James Reid, 93, died April 20, 2014. After graduating from high school in his native North Carolina, he served in the Unit-

ed States Air Force before starting his quest to become a Methodist minister. He obtained degrees from Elon College and Duke Divinity School, and served multiple churches in North Carolina, in Wichita, Kansas, and in Redwood and Staunton in Virginia before retiring. He is survived by his wife of 70 years, Tennie P. Reid.

The Rev. William Henry Smith, 87, of Appomattox, died March 19, 2014. An Ohio native and Navy veteran of World War II, he attended United Theological Seminary in Dayton. Smith was founding pastor of Sleepy Hollow Community Church in Falls Church from 1953-1965. After working in education and human resources for several years, Smith returned to the ministry in 1988 as pastor at New Hope UMC until retirement in 1992.



The Rev. Dale M. Wilson, 81, died April 29, 2014, in Warren, Ind. Wilson was a pastor with the Northern Indiana and Virginia Conferences of The United

Methodist Church after beginning with Evangelical United Brethren churches. He also served as chaplain at St. Mary's Hospital in Richmond. Survivors include his wife of 53 years, Patricia Wilson.

Mable LaVelle Cox Baird, 88, died April 5, 2014. A life-long Methodist, she was active in a UMW circle, chancel choir, and as *Advocate* subscription coordinator for First United Methodist Church, Warwick Boulevard, Newport News. Baird served as secretary for the district offices of the Alexandria and Peninsula districts for more than 30 years.

Charlotte Thompson Cooley, 88, of Roanoke, died April 29, 2014. She was preceded in death by her husband, the **Rev. Arthur P. Cooley**, and was actively involved with Huntington Court UMC.

Willard Archer Graham Sr., 93, of Hopewell, died Sunday, May 11, 2014. He was the father of the **Rev. Karen Sandoval**, who is currently on medical leave.

Ella Elizabeth Griffin, age 90, died April 14, 2014 in Asheville, N.C. She was a former Methodist missionary to Zimbabwe and the mother of current Virginia Conference missionary **Nancy Robinson** of Sierra Leone.

Sallie Ann Arnn Hardy died April 16, 2014. She was the widow of the **Rev. Robert Fletcher Hardy III** and mother of the **Rev. Robert F. "Woodie" Hardy IV**, pastor of Harmony UMC.

Elsie Lee Bland Kellington, 91, of Waynesboro, the widow of the **Rev. John Sterling Kellington**, died May 4, 2014.

Elizabeth "Lizzie" Wiltshire Martin, 100, of Gum Spring, died April 27, 2014. She was the mother of **Estelle Pruden**, recently retired secretary to the Virginia Conference office of the Bishop.

John Glenwood Strickler Sr., 86, of Roanoke, died April 28, 2014. He was the father of the **Rev. Dr. Louis M. Strickler**, pastor of Woodlawn UMC, a long-time member of Greene Memorial UMC and a Lay Speaker.

Kathleen Harrison Thompson, 82, of Trinity, N.C., died April 21, 2014. She was the mother of the **Rev. Larry Thompson**, superintendent of the Winchester District.

Births

Lily Diane Richards, second grandchild of **Bishop Young Jin** and **Kiok Cho**, was born April 14 to **Grace and Tony Richards**. Lily has an older brother, Luke.

The **Rev. Alan and Libby Reifsnyder** are grandparents for the first time, after the birth of **Emile Wesley Sawaya** in January. Emile is the son of **Salim and Maggie Sawaya**. Rev. Reifsnyder is retired.

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("Living Word," continued from page 31)


want to look different. I wanted to think, talk, and look like everyone else. In this sense, it was painful for me to become a foreigner in the U.S. My different appearance and strong Korean accent made people notice that I came from different country. I was ashamed when people noticed my difference.

It was from Holy Communion that I learned the true meaning of unity. A week after we arrived in America, my husband and I went to a United Methodist church. Although we were invited to Holy Communion, I was anxious. The pastor had said "come!" But I waited in that long line worrying if I could be rejected from the table. However, the pastor smiled at me, called me by name and gave me the body and the blood of Christ. This experience taught me that unity respects differences, but creates oneness as it integrates differences by a special power.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul says that this special uniting power is Jesus Christ. As the confluence of Greek and Roman cultures, the city of

Corinth was diverse in its law, politics, economy, and religious life. Although it was Jesus Christ who called the church, believers there were divided to groups. Some claimed to belong to Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas (1 Corinthians 1:12). Therefore, Paul must proclaim, "By the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, be united in the same mind and the same purpose" (v.10).

What is Jesus' mind and purpose? It is His loving obedience unto death for God's salvific ministry. That sacrificial love would not make His disciples to do the same things. Rather, it would empower them to bear different spiritual fruits in their lives.

If we only try to look like nice Christians and speak like famous Christians, we live in mere communality of Christianity. But when we ask God to give us the same mind of Christ, when we look at our brothers and sisters with Christ's eyes, and speak to them with Christ's mouth, we will be united by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 

FROM THE BISHOP



“Lord, renew
me first”

May the grace and peace of our risen Lord be with you.

This month we will gather again at Hampton Roads Convention Center for the 232nd Session of the Virginia Annual Conference. This will be a time to worship, to celebrate what God has done in our churches, to share fellowship in Christ and to prepare for the coming year. This will also be a time to learn about the renewal of the church and to do the business of our conference.

As I prayed last year, I truly want our gathering to be more than a business meeting. I pray that all of us will experience the presence of our risen Lord and be renewed by the Spirit. The theme of our gathering this year is “Lord, Renew us with your Spirit.” This is truly our prayer, hope and expectation for the future of our churches.

According to Dr. Robert McAfee Brown, the spirit of Protestantism is in constant renewal at the hands of God. The Reformation was not completed in the 16th century. The renewal of the church is being continued by the Spirit of God. The Methodist Church is a great example of the church renewal movement. This movement has truly transformed the lives of people and the church and the world.

The renewal of the church is not a human creation. It is God's grace and gift for the church, which is initiated by the Holy Spirit. In church history God used men and women who opened their hearts to God and prayed for a renewal of the church. As E.M. Bounds says in his book, *Power through Prayer*, the church is looking for better methods, but God is looking for better persons whom God can use, persons mighty in prayer.

The renewal of the church is more than implementing another program. It is the movement to restore a biblical, authentic and vital church, as in the Bible. This will begin with the renewal of an individual or a group of people. These transformed people will change the church and the world. So, there is a prayer we need to pray as we prepare for our Annual Conference: “Lord, renew me first with your Spirit.”

Today we are in urgent need of the renewal and revival of the church. The church is facing many internal and external challenges. We have been trying to turn around our declining churches for many years, but so far we do not see much fruit. All of us agree that the church needs to be renewed. The need for a renewal is there, but not many people kneel down before God and pray for a renewal of the church. Now is the time for us to get together and pray for this. Now is the time to gather together with holy expectations.

This year we invited Dr. Elmer Colyer to our Annual Conference for three sessions of teaching on church renewal. Our preacher will be Bishop Robert Hayes for Saturday morning worship and for the service for the Ordering of Ministry. The Rev. Rhonda VanDyke Colby will preach for the Service of Remembrance Friday night. The Rev. Jim Noland will speak on behalf of the retiring class. I will preach the closing service for the Fixing of the Appointments. I invite you to join me in praying for all of these speakers.

As our gathering approaches, I am very excited about what God will do among us. I truly believe that the words of Jesus are true: if two or three of us gather in Jesus' name, the risen Lord will be with us. So, I am very excited about what God will do among us. I am looking forward to the work of the Spirit who will renew us and empower us for God's mission and ministries. I invite you to keep on praying for this Annual Conference. I also want you to remember me in your prayers for our Annual Conference sessions.

If we prepare for our gathering with prayer, great things will happen through the Holy Spirit who renews and leads our churches today. I look forward to seeing all of you in Hampton. 🍷

In our Lord,

Young Jin Cho

ONE LAST WORD



Tweets heard 'round the conference

Lindsey Baynham @LMBaynham

About to use a TelePrompter for the first time...oh wait minus that one time at the state fair when I got to pretend I was a newscaster. #pumped

Morgan Guyton @MAGuyton

A heretic is someone who destroys the harmonics of orthodoxy either by playing a sour note or by playing the right note too loud.

Drew @dvcolby

There are lots of young pastors right now in the #vaumc. Gonna be a fun ride.

Andrew Hudgins @andrew_hudgins

Just taught my professor what tinder is #winning #WinningWednesday #LikeABoss #AcedThatPresentation

Lindsey Baynham @LMBaynham

Beth Downs' farewell speech making me weepy... "I've known some of you since you were first called." #blessed #endofanera #VAUMC

Daniel Wray @WrayDaniel

Kudos to the #vaumc for providing small church leadership training to the provisional members

Pastor Jason Elmore @PastorJasonE

Less than a week and I will be walking across stage accepting my MDiv from VUU! #beyondexcited

Patti Money @pattimoney

Wondering...would a flash mob to "We Didn't Start the Fire" be too crazy for Pentecost Sunday?



Cast members and Heart Havens residents pose together for a photo following a showing of the play "Kiss the Moon, Kiss the Sun," which benefited the adult group home ministry.

Play about man with intellectual disability benefits Heart Havens

On March 30 the Huguenot Community Players provided a special day of theater for staff and residents of Heart Havens.

The Norm Foster play, "Kiss the Moon, Kiss the Sun," is about Robert, a man with an intellectual disability who befriends Holly, a young, pregnant woman he meets at the bus stop. The lead actors were Eddie Webster and Laura Chalk. Other cast members were Ann Davis as Claire, Robert's ailing mother; Bill Oglesby as Simon, the father of Holly's baby; and Lucy Balch as Dr. Andrews, who is caring for Claire as she battles illness.

The characters' lives intertwine in meaningful and moving ways that strike a special chord with anyone who knows someone with an intellectual disability, or anyone who has a pulse.

The set, consisting only of a bus stop bench and sign, a living room table and chair and a doctor's office,

was kept to a bare minimum, with walls painted black. There was nothing to distract from an elegant, moving story and top-notch acting.

Proceeds from the play benefitted Heart Havens.

The Huguenot Community Players are housed at Huguenot United Methodist Church in the Richmond District.

"Kiss the Moon, Kiss the Sun" was produced by Fred Schneider and Ellen Bode and ran March 21 through April 6.

Alex Martin, the director of the play, along with Eddie Webster and Ann Davis, visited the Marybeth Graff Heart Havens home to see first-hand what their efforts were supporting. The residents gave them a tour, and as the conversation unfolded they found they all had a common love of theatre. 📖

-Kiki Nausbaumer is director of Development and Public Relations at Heart Havens.

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