

Advocate

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Virginia Advocate

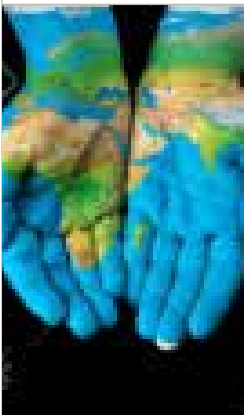
The official magazine of
the Virginia Conference of
The United Methodist Church

PILLOW TALK



Madeline Pillow
Editor

Missing the landmarks



"I have to try, but I do not have to succeed. Following Christ has nothing to do with success as the world sees it. It has to do with love."

— Madeleine L'Engle, *Walking on Water*

At the end of January, I, along with our Communications director and videographer, traveled to Portland, Ore., for the United Methodist Association of Communicators meeting as well as the Pre-General Conference Briefing. It was a good time to meet people in the communication industry, learn more about what to expect at General Conference and explore Portland.

I admit that in planning for this trip, I knew that visiting Voodoo Doughnut was high on the priority list. But I also wanted to go where the locals were, to see the places they have carved out for themselves. Something I wasn't prepared for were the number of homeless that we saw on the streets.

In talking with a pastor from the Pacific Northwest Conference, she said that this is due in part to the lack of churches and shelters in the city. But it is also because Portland is a large hub for victims of human trafficking.

Clutching my bag of doughnuts (you can't have just one) and being asked by person after person for money, I asked myself not to forget the faces. There's a part of me that wants to. The part that wants to pretend that we don't live in a world where people are homeless, hungry and taken against their will. The part that reminds me that no matter where I am, there is hurt all around.

But it's true. It's such a common way of life for many people that it seems so overwhelming to resolve. In 2014, Seattle, Wash.; Los Angeles, Calif.; and Portland each declared a state of emergency in terms of homelessness. According to the Portland Housing Bureau, around 4,000 persons spend the night in shelters or on the street every night.

And while I'm left with the sweet thought of doughnuts in Portland or the great food and fellowship we experienced, I also brought back other landmarks. For me these landmarks weren't just statues. They are real people. The people living in tents under bridges or standing on street corners by food trucks with their children and pets.

It makes me think about my own, relatively new home of Richmond. What people and situations do I pass by on a regular basis because I just get used to their presence? What do visitors who come to the city see as landmarks that maybe aren't so pretty?

This is present in every town and city, state and country: the things that we think are too big to overcome, the problems we don't think we can help or the problems that overwhelm us into submission and defeat. So it's not just a problem for Portland. I saw homeless persons every day when I lived in D.C. and now in Richmond, but sometimes by going to see the "sights" in another city, I see the true landmarks of our city landscapes that we may forget about.

Here's to not missing the landmarks but finding a way to meeting them head-on. 🍌

Until our next issue,

Madeline

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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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NEWS

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Above: Cataract surgeon Isatu Sesay examines Aminata Bangura's eyes at the Lowell and Ruth Gess United Methodist Eye Hospital in eastern Freetown. Bangura is an Ebola survivor receiving free treatment. Photo by Phileas Jusu, UMNS

On the cover: Fatmata Samu worships at the United Methodist church in Kortihun near Bo, Sierra Leone. Several villages in the Bo district received new, insecticide-treated mosquito nets from The United Methodist Church's Imagine No Malaria campaign. Photo by Mike DuBose, UMNS.

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LETTERS



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

Need for lasting change

Eighty three years ago, I was born into a family with a history in Methodism going back to Francis Asbury. Most of my adult life I have been blessed to be a member of St. Luke's UMC in Falls Church. Though small, St. Luke's is a diverse congregation with members of different races, nationalities, ages, economic standing, political views, and yes, we even have a few with a different sexual orientation. Like the churches you featured in the January *Advocate*, our members spend much of their time supporting programs for the needy in our area. For this and many other reasons I am thankful God made The United Methodist my church home.

My concern is that the temporary relief we give through our charity does not contribute to a more "lasting change" in the lives of those we are helping. Some of the most needed changes such as health care and fair wage laws require legislative action at the state level. Our conference leaders and our local pastors seem unwilling to speak on these subjects for fear of offending someone in their congregation. I wonder if many of our members are aware of the positions

the UMC has adopted on these issues at the General Conference. At the February 4 United Methodist Day at the General Assembly, what will the UMC members seek to accomplish? Will local pastors and lay leaders tell their congregations about the event? Mine never have. Will there be follow-up and legislative alerts sent out following the event?

I thought the January issue of the *Advocate* was excellent. It just did not go far enough. It gave national figures on poverty, not state. None of the issues that deal with poverty and other human needs that are being addressed at the state government level were even mentioned. These are nonpartisan issues, and to be an advocate for action is a nonpartisan process as well as a Christian responsibility. Please, let us treat them as such and use all opportunities available to us to bring them to the attention of our members.

— Doris Langland, St. Luke's UMC, Arlington District

Teenage disciples

In the January edition of the *Advocate* I was correctly quoted as stating that "...when the disciples were called — all of them were teenagers..." While in context the statement was meant to prove a point — that God often chooses

young people such as those in the audience to carry out God's purposes — it is improbable that all disciples were teenagers when called. Peter was married (Mat 8:14) and payed taxes (Mat 17:26-27) which would almost certainly mean he was over the age of 20, Matthew was a tax collector which would also make him a good candidate for being over 20 years old.

A compelling case can be made that most — if not all — of the other disciples were, indeed, teenagers when called by Jesus. However, the truth is that one cannot assert this. My statement at our conference middle school retreat should have sounded more like this: "There's a good chance that several of Jesus' disciples were teenagers." My hope is that my mistake did not take away from the important point that must be made to young Christians. Namely, that we are never too young to hear God's voice and to respond to God's awesome call to each and every one of us. My prayer is that our young people will learn to hear God's voice like Samuel, to be faith-filled like David, to be courageous like Esther, and to have character like Joseph (of Egypt). 📖

— Paulo Lopes is Virginia Conference director of Ministries with Young People.

Faith still essential part of Scouting program

By Bill Chaffin

Many around the U.S. have watched in the last several years as the Boy Scouts of America have struggled with many of the social issues that the rest of the nation has. Many in The United Methodist Church have wondered where Scouting is and where it is going. We United Methodists rival the Mormon Church as the top supporter of the Boy Scouts in America. Scouting IS the youth program in the Latter Day Saints (LDS) church, but the United Methodists have more Scouting units. The position of Scouting and what the organization is has not softened but remained true to the core of Scouting. If anything, they have strengthened themselves moving into the 21st century.

Surely many have thought that the Boy Scouts are no longer the youth program they knew when they were young. In many ways the Boy Scouts you see today could be the young men you knew 30, 50 or 70 years ago. Camping, hiking and first aid merit badges are still there, but they are met today with geocaching, web design and more.

Several years ago, Scouting modified the youth application to simply state

that a boy within a given age range could be a Scout. That has always been the case, but another agenda made it seem otherwise.

There are long-standing Scouters (adult leaders) who left the program when this happened. I am sure that more than a few left thinking that faith and a belief in God was not far behind. Well, not true. "Duty to God" has been part of the BSA from the onset. The first Boy Scout handbook, published in 1911, says, "No boy can grow into the best kind of citizenship without recognizing his obligation to God." The PRAY organization, known to many Scouts as God and Country, has offered excellent programs to help our youths identify and understand who God is in their lives.


The program development team of the Boy Scouts of America has been working for several years to make sure the statement from the original handbook was still used and relevant in the 21st century.

As of January 1, 2016, every rank from Tenderfoot to Eagle Scout, including the Eagle palms, has a "Duty to God" requirement. It is important to know what this means — and what it doesn't.

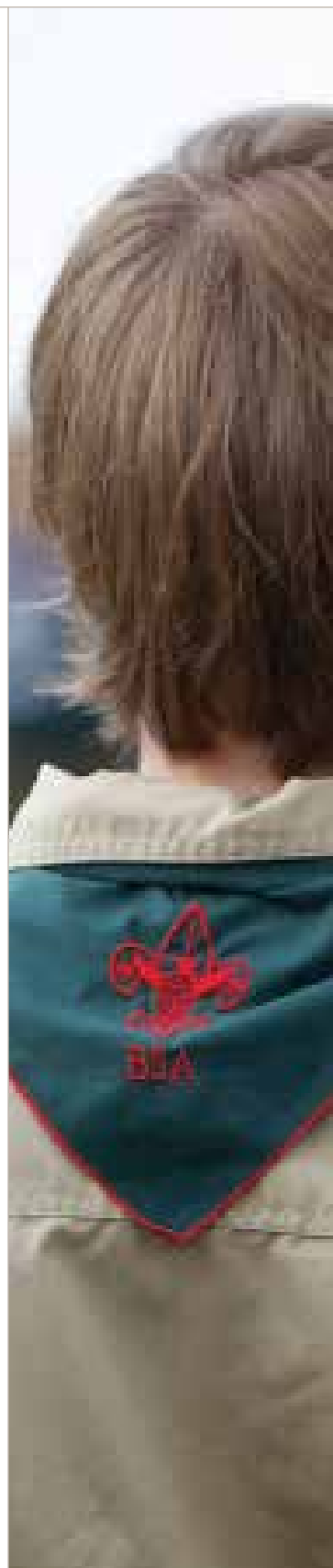
The new requirements

do ask each Scout to reflect on their own belief. The Scout leader is not asking the Scout to dialogue with them about religion in their life or to proselytize or explain their opinion whether his duty to God meets the leader's personal standard. The requirement clearly states, "Tell how you have done your duty to God." It doesn't ask for a rote answer back to what a manual says or to prove anything. The first word, the verb, says it all: tell. There is no canned answer. The Scout is challenged to tell about his relationship with God. It can be a short response or a long, detailed one.

The requirement, at each rank level, is complete once the Scout has explained how he has done his duty to God. The leader is there to listen, not to evaluate the Scout's expression but to hear and accept the Scout's journey with God. Many Scouts will have different religious beliefs and that is healthy and accepted.

Each of us has traveled our own journey to faith. We know it is not necessarily an easy journey. Faith is a complicated subject, but it remains an essential part of the Scouting program. 

— Bill Chaffin is Virginia Conference Scouting Coordinator





It's time to end bigotry in church

By Tammy Estep

The SPRC (Staff/ Pastor-Parish Relations Committee) chair looked at me across the table and said, "No offense, but we do not want a woman pastor." I did take offense. I am a clergywoman, and I was his district superintendent. He was asking his woman DS to tell his woman bishop not to send a woman to his church.

In each of my eight years on the Bishop's Cabinet, at least one district superintendent reported at appointment time, "This church refuses to accept a woman." Worse yet: "This church has done the 'clergywoman' thing; now they want a man." In a Church committed to open itineracy, how are such statements tolerated in any local church and/or at the Cabinet table?

UMC.org recently featured Heather Hahn's article, "How Thick is the Stained-Glass Ceiling?" which reveals the findings of a study on clergywomen's advancement in the Christian denomination. Hahn begins:

"A woman's place can be behind the wheel of racecars, at the front of corporate boardrooms and along the U. S. presidential campaign trail. But for many U.S. congregations, a

woman still has no place in the pulpit. Even as U.S. congregations become more ethnically diverse, a new analysis of Duke University's National Congregations Study shows that women hold only a small minority of those faith communities' top leadership positions. Women serve as senior or solo pastoral leaders of just 11% of U. S. congregations — indicating essentially no overall increase from when the study was first done in 1998."

Of the Virginia Annual Conference 992 clergy (local pastors, deacons, provisionals, elders and associate members): 33 percent are women; 67 percent are men. How are they appointed? *

Even though clergywomen are serving ably at every level of the church, there continues to be a stained-

glass gate into large church leadership. Why is this so? Who are the gatekeepers? How can these gates be opened to **all** who are called and gifted by God? What is it going to take?

Women have been ministering in the way of Christ since Mary Magdalene, Mary, Martha and Lydia; yet it wasn't until 1956 that the Methodist Church approved full clergy rights for women. The United Brethren Church had ordained women much earlier (since the 1880s). Even decades after full clergy rights, women continue to encounter opposition to fulfilling their divine calling to serve God and God's people as pastors in the local church and beyond.

Often quoted are two biblical verses in the epistles instructing women to be silent in church. No such admonition is found in the gospels. In the gospels, Jesus'

Of the 111 clergy serving as associate pastors:	45% are women; 55% are men.
Of the 83 serving in extension ministries:	37% are women; 63% are men.
Of the 16 serving as district superintendents:	25% are women; 75% are men.
Of the 48 large church lead pastors with an average worship attendance of 350+:	8% are women; 92% are men.

*Statistics come from The Center for Clergy Excellence and The Center for Congregational Excellence in the Virginia Conference

COMMENTARY

longest theological conversation is with a woman. That woman became the first evangelist for Jesus Christ (John 4:1-39). In each of the gospels it is to women the risen Christ first appears. The good news of Easter was entrusted first to women. Perhaps the SPRC chair would have preferred to hear the resurrection news from someone else. No offense.

How can these gates be opened to all who are called and gifted by God? What is it going to take?


So in 2016, what is at the heart of the continued discrepancies between clergywomen and clergymen regarding appointments, salaries and acceptance in leadership roles within the church? Like clergymen, clergywomen are not all alike. Some make decisions about appointments based on family needs, some leave the local church for extension ministries, some feel called to the small church and most are never given the opportunity to serve larger churches. Likewise, not all churches are alike, but when there

are churches that are still allowed to say, "we don't want a woman," "we don't want a person of color," or "we don't want someone who is single," we have lost our call from Christ to trust in God's Spirit at work in the world and in others.

This said, I still believe that the underlying reason women cannot break the stained-glass ceiling is a learned, nurtured, hidden, deep and long-tolerated bigotry in our church and in local churches. Sexism (like other viral "isms" of systemic ecclesiological bigotry) invade and infect every branch of the church. Yet, the root of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is **love** . . . love of God with all one's heart, soul, mind and strength and the love of our neighbor as ourselves. With love at our root, there is no place in our church for the refusal to receive anyone in leadership based solely on gender. The bigotry has to stop.

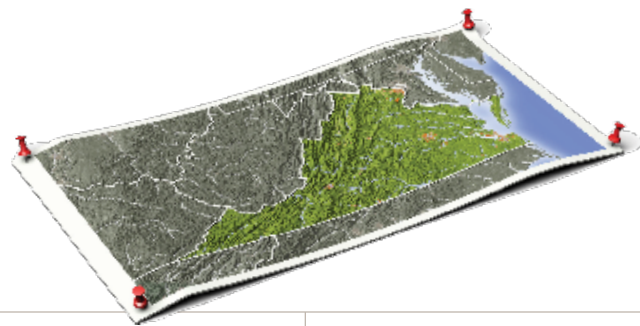
At a recent United Methodist Men's dinner, the speaker began saying, "I am here to speak to the men tonight, because men are the only ones who can reproduce and we need men to reproduce to bring more men into the church." There is so much wrong about this statement, I hardly know where to begin. Here is the bottom line. If we, the church, are going to be a witness in the world, we have got to do it together: men and women,

hand in hand with youths and children, middle-aged and young adults, infants and elderly. We do not have the luxury of lingering in the sin of bigotry and sexism, rejecting the leadership of those God has called and equipped for ministry. The church is in need of faithful leaders. We need all those whom God is calling, not just the male half. If ever there was a time to join hands, live the faith and put an end to the bigotry and hate that continues to divide people rather than unite, that continues to judge rather than to love, that continues to say "no way" when with God all things are possible. . . that time is now.

I pray for boldness in our churches and the Cabinet of the Virginia Conference to move beyond bigotry and into the abundance of love and the fullness of leadership God is calling and equipping. As we know, bigotry is learned. The church should never be its teacher. church, listen instead for the voice of the woman saying, "Come. See the one who told me everything I have ever done. Is this the Christ?" 

— Rev. Tammy L. Estep is the lead pastor of Haygood UMC, Elizabeth River District. Estep served eight years as superintendent of the Eastern Shore District and is an elected clergy delegate to the 2016 General and Jurisdictional Conferences.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Tom Berlin, Ted Smith endorsed as candidates for bishop



The Rev. Tom Berlin



The Rev. Ted Smith

By Linda S. Rhodes

Two clergy members of the Virginia Conference – Tom Berlin and Ted Smith – have been endorsed as candidates for bishop.

Virginia Conference delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conferences voted to endorse Berlin, senior pastor of Floris UMC in Herndon, as a candidate for bishop during a delegation meeting Saturday, Feb. 6.

Members of the Virginia Conference chapter of Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR) had voted the previous week to endorse Smith, Fredericksburg District superintendent.

Five bishops will be elected at this year's Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference to be held July 13-15 at Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center in western North Carolina.

Delegation votes to endorse Berlin

The conference delegation vote to endorse Berlin came after a number of delegates expressed a desire to reconsider an earlier decision made in October that they would not endorse a

candidate from Virginia for episcopal service.

In considering a motion to reopen the discernment process, Martha Stokes, chair of the delegation, noted that her desire was “to honor the integrity of the process and recognize the serious discernment that each person whose name was lifted by the delegation entered into between July and October.”

But she also noted that the delegation was given an opportunity to allow for the work of the Holy Spirit.

“We can each give examples from our own lives of how the Holy Spirit moves, often when least expected and in unique ways,” Stokes said. “This is nothing we can hold to a deadline or schedule, nothing we can make fit into even the most well established formal process.”

BMCR votes to endorse Smith

Following the October announcement that Virginia General/Jurisdictional Conference delegates would not endorse a candidate for bishop, the Rev. Debra Straughter, Virginia BMCR president, said she and some members of BMCR engaged in holy conferencing regarding endorsing Smith for bishop.

“After several conversations and prayer,” Straughter said, “I sent out an e-mail on Jan. 27 to the members

of the Virginia Conference BMCR. Of the many votes that came in, an overwhelming majority voted to endorse Ted for the episcopacy.”

Official nominations for episcopal service may be made by any annual or missionary conference in the jurisdiction, by any delegation to jurisdictional conference or by another group in the life of The United Methodist Church.

Delegates surround candidates with prayer

The Feb. 6 delegation meeting closed with a time of worship and celebration of Holy Communion during which Berlin and Smith were surrounded and prayed for by the delegates and guests.

Tom Berlin bio

Berlin has been lead pastor of Floris UMC in Herndon since 1997. During that time, Floris has grown from an average worship attendance of 400 persons in 1997 to an average of 1,300 in 2015. Under Berlin's leadership, in 2006 the church purchased land and built its current facility. In January 2015, Floris established a satellite congregation, Restoration Church, in Reston.

Berlin has also served Toms Brook UMC, Bruce-town-Welltown Charge in Frederick County and was assistant pastor of Duluth

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

UMC in Duluth, Ga.

Berlin was elected a delegate to General Conference in 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2016 and was clergy leader of the delegation in 2016, 2012 and 2008.

He has written six books, including *Defying Gravity: Breaking Free From the Culture of More*; *The Generous Church: A Guide for Pastors*; *High Yield: Seven Disciplines of the Fruitful Leader* (co-authored with Lovett Weems), *6 Blocks Small Group Studies – 6 Decisions That Will Change Your Life*, *6 Things We Should Know About God*, *6 Ways We Encounter God*; *Overflow: Increase Worship Attendance and Bear More Fruit* (co-authored with Lovett Weems); and *Bearing Fruit: Ministry with Real Results* (co-authored with Lovett Weems).

Raised in the Shenandoah Valley, Berlin has lived in Virginia most of his life.

"I was raised in The United Methodist Church by parents that regarded church attendance and participation as a highly valued aspect of family life," Berlin said. "I enjoyed growing up in a congregation that was conscientious in its desire to live out the baptismal vows that they undertook with children and adults. My experience of Sunday school, confirmation, UMYF and numerous other ministries was a means of grace that God used to form me as a



Virginia Conference delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conferences form a prayer circle around Tom Berlin and Ted Smith, candidates for bishop. Photo by Madeline Pillow.

disciple of Jesus Christ."

Berlin attended Virginia Tech (1981-1985) and received a BS in business with a major in public administration. His Master of Divinity is from the Candler School of Theology at Emory University (1985-1988). He was ordained an Elder in the Virginia Conference in 1990. He and his wife, Karen, have four daughters.

To view Berlin's detailed resume, go to <http://www.vaumc.org/ncfilerespository/NewsRelease/TomBerlin.pdf>.

Ted Smith bio

Born and raised in Hampton, at the age of 10 Smith left his family's Baptist church to go to Central UMC because he had be-

come "greatly disturbed by the constant hell, fire and brimstone messages."

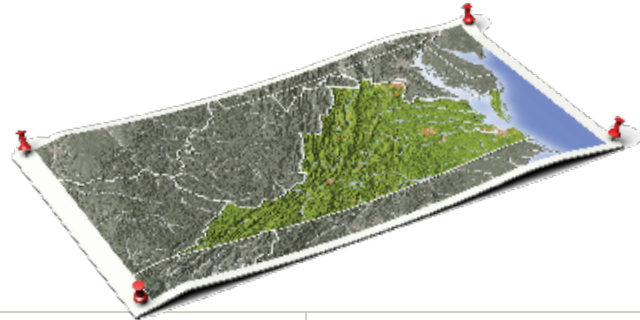
"Central UMC, combined with the pastoral and fatherly mentoring of the Rev. Gary Shelton, nurtured, formed, and shaped [me] in the mold of Methodism," Smith said.

Smith went on to attend three United Methodist schools: Virginia Wesleyan College (1980-1984, Bachelor in Religious Studies), Candler School of Theology (1984-1987, Master of Divinity) and Wesley School of Theology (1993-1995, Doctor of Ministry in Evangelism). He was ordained an Elder in the Virginia Conference in 1988.

Smith was appointed Fredericksburg District

(Cont. on pg. 11: "Candidates.")

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Scott Davis named new Lynchburg District superintendent



The Rev. Scott Davis

Bishop Young Jin Cho announced Feb. 9 that he is appointing the Rev. Scott Davis, senior pastor of Aldersgate UMC in the Charlottesville District, to be Lynchburg District superintendent, effective July 1. Davis will replace the Rev. Larry Davies who will leave the Cabinet after serving as Lynchburg DS since 2008.

"I have discerned that the Rev. Scott Davis, senior pastor of Aldersgate UMC in the Charlottesville District, has the gifts and graces needed to serve the Lynchburg District," Bishop Cho said. "Scott has demonstrated effective and faithful ministry in each of his appointments and has a strong commitment to his spiritual disciplines. He has the gift of bringing out the best in people and possesses a compassionate heart. Scott is also a life-time learner and knows how to manage change. I pray that this new appointment will be a blessing to the churches on the Lynchburg District and to the entire Virginia Annual Conference. Your prayers for a smooth transition for Scott, his family and Aldersgate UMC will be deeply appreciated."

Davis said he was "surprised, humbled and honored" to be asked to serve as a district superintendent, "especially knowing Bishop Cho's careful, intentional practice of discernment." He added that he would like to apply the same practice in his role as district superintendent.

"I want to listen well," Davis said, "help discern God's vision for our next steps in ministry together, discover and develop the gifts of the clergy and laity, and to think strategically about how to make disciples of Jesus Christ."

Having served in a variety of positions both within and beyond the local church in urban, suburban and rural areas, Davis, in his new position, will fall back on habits that have served him well.

"In each setting I've tried to build trust, develop leaders and plan the next steps together in response to God's calling," Davis said. "I'm always looking for insights and resources that arise from conversations with a great variety of people from across the spectrum of faith."

In preparing to serve the Lynchburg District, Davis said he plans to build

on the district's work in training and equipping clergy and congregations, something he sees as a vital ministry in today's changing culture.

"There are many gifts on the Lynchburg District. The Rev. Larry Davies, the current DS, has done a fantastic job in partnering with the clergy and laity to put those gifts to work in new and effective ways," said Davis. "The district has a deep sense of mission as evidenced in the Park View Community Center, home not only to the district office but also to nine outreach ministries. The congregations have been organized into six cluster groups to facilitate learning together and gathering for charge conferences."

Bishop Cho also offered praise for Davies and his service on the Cabinet.

"His love for both clergy and laity and his positive attitude and leadership skills have been great assets to the churches on the Lynchburg District, Cabinet and our Annual Conference," Bishop Cho said. "Additionally, he has provided exemplary leadership as chair of the steering committee for our All Things New-Equipping Vital Congregations program. May the Lord continue to bless Larry and his family as he returns to his beloved parish ministry."

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

Scott Davis bio

Davis is a native of Davis Wharf on the Eastern Shore. He spent his childhood on the water and on the family farm where they specialized in sweet potatoes and pork production.

He completed his education at Virginia Wesleyan College (1984, Bachelor of Arts in Humanities), Candler School of Theology at Emory University (1987, Master of Divinity) and through continuing education which included the Reynolds Program in Church Leadership (2013).

Davis was appointed to Aldersgate UMC in 2010. Prior to that, he served at Trinity UMC, Alexandria District; Nimmo, Norfolk District; Broomwood-Clapham Circuit, Central London, British Methodist Church; Emmaus UMC, Lynchburg District; and as chaplain at Virginia Wesleyan College.

He has served in a variety of conference leadership positions, including Board of Ordained Ministry, chair of the Board of Church and Society, chair of the Annual Conference Site Selection Committee and Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry.

He and his wife, Laurie, an art teacher at Nelson Middle School in Nelson County, are parents of Sarah and Jordan, young adults who live and work in Charlottesville.

Davis said he enjoys running, hiking the Appalachian Trail and surrounding environs, scouting out great coffee and sharing date nights each week with Laurie. ☞

("Candidates," cont. from pg. 9)

superintendent in 2011. Prior to that, he was pastor of Regester Chapel UMC in Stafford. He also served St. Stephen's UMC in Burke, Good Shepherd UMC in Woodbridge, Roberts Memorial in Alexandria, Asbury UMC in Christiansburg and Fowler Memorial (formerly Leesville) Charge in the Lynchburg District.

He has also been director of Ethnic Minority Ministries at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg and adjunct faculty Humanities instructor at Strayer University's Woodbridge campus. He was elected a delegate to

General/Jurisdictional Conference in 1996, 2004, 2012 and 2016 and a delegate to Jurisdictional Conference in 2000 and 2008. He has served on a number of conference and district boards and agencies and led several United Methodist Volunteers In Mission teams.

He is married to the Rev. Teresa Signer Smith, and they have one adult daughter, Helen.

To view Smith's detailed resume, go to www.vaumc.org/ncfilerepository/NewsRelease/Ted-Smith.pdf. ☞

-Linda S. Rhodes is Virginia Conference director of Communications.

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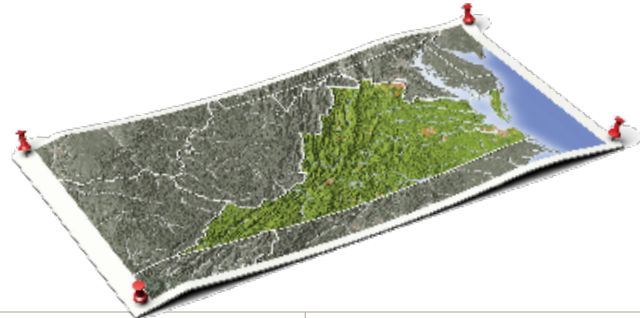
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The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Virginia United Methodists advocate at the General Assembly



About 150 United Methodists traveled to the General Assembly on Feb. 4 to advocate for justice.

By Linda S. Rhodes and Madeline Pillow

About 150 United Methodists traveled in buses to the General Assembly on Feb. 4 to call on Virginia lawmakers and advocate for social justice during the 24th annual United Methodist Day at the General Assembly.

Attendees gathered early in the morning at Bon Air UMC, Richmond District, where United Methodist Men cooked breakfast for

participants before they left for Virginia's Capitol Square in downtown Richmond. Once at the capitol, United Methodists met in the offices of their legislators, were debriefed about the status of some important legislation and viewed opening sessions of the Senate and House before heading back to Bon Air UMC for lunch.

Bishop Young Jin Cho told participants that what they were doing is an important part of our church's commitment to social holiness.

"We not only pray that 'thy will be done on earth,'" Bishop Cho said, "we are also called to live out that prayer." He noted that one way United Methodists do that is by "meeting with the legislators and sharing with them our hopes and dreams and prayers."

Key issues that United Methodists focused on included:

- ✓ Providing driving privileges for immigrants;
- ✓ Expanding Medicaid to provide health care to more than 400,000 Virginians who now fall in the health care coverage gap; and
- ✓ Raising the felony

threshold from a value of \$200 to \$1,500.

In addition, Bishop Cho urged lawmakers to support "Breakfast after the Bell," Gov. Terry McAuliffe's 2015-2016 budget proposal of \$537,000 funding to provide schools with an additional \$0.05 per breakfast served when breakfast is made a part of the school day served in the classroom or through other models outside of the cafeteria.

"More than 300,000 children in Virginia come to school with a hungry stomach," Bishop Cho told his own representative, Hyland "Buddy" Fowler Jr. (R-55th). "We need to do something."

The Rev. Barbara Lewis, pastor of Laurel Park UMC and Greenwood UMC, Richmond District, was most interested in Medicaid expansion.

"The senator that we talked to is not really in favor of it," Lewis said. "He is really concerned about how it might impact our budget long-term. But he was willing to listen to us and to hear our ideas and to talk about the pros and cons of Medicaid expansion and some of the other health-related issues like mental health care and the needs for that."

Rick Pillow, a United Methodist who is president of the Virginia Credit



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Panelists (left to right) Lana J. Heath de Martinez, Becky Bowers-Lanier, Jesse Frierson and the Rev. Charles Swadley spoke to UM Day participants about immigration, Medicaid expansion and criminal justice.

Union League and works as a lobbyist for credit unions in Virginia, saw the United Methodist group at the capitol and stressed the importance of United Methodists coming to the General Assembly.

"It is extremely important, because if you are not here your message never gets heard. So you have to stand up for what the Methodists believe in, and they need to communicate that to their state legislatures and their federal legislatures on laws that have a good effect," said Pillow.

Robb Bohannon, who works as a contract lobbyist with Hunton & Williams in Richmond, said it is important for United Methodists to share their points of view.

"Delegates get a lot of information, they vote

on a lot of issues, there are hundreds of issues every session, and it's really important for them to hear from groups in their districts on issues that are important to them," said Bohannon. "You don't want them to assume anything, you want them to know what's important to you, why it matters and why they should care and why it's important to the district for them to vote a certain way."

After lunch, a panel composed of Becky Bowers-Lanier, Lana J. Heath de Martinez and Jesse Frierson further discussed issues of immigration, Medicaid expansion and criminal justice.

Bowers-Lanier is president of B2L Consulting which specializes in consulting with health care and educating non-profits

on advocacy strategy and grassroots advocacy development. Heath de Martinez is an M.Div. student at Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond and president of the Virginia Chapter of American Families United, a national 501c4 for mixed status families. Frierson is executive director of Virginia Alliance Against Mass Incarceration, a direct advocacy organization that analyzes and provides education about Virginia laws that lead to excessive incarceration of many Virginians at great cost to taxpayers.

Calling discouragement "the devil's perfect tool," the Rev. Charles Swadley, United Methodist pastor serving as interim director of Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP), told participants not to get discouraged even when

they are unable to influence legislators.

"All of us have to realize that we have each other," Swadley said, "and lean on each other and encourage each other" as we work for justice for the least of these.

The Rev. Dan Kim, pastor of Kenwood UMC, Richmond District, said he believes that United Methodist Day is not just important, but necessary.

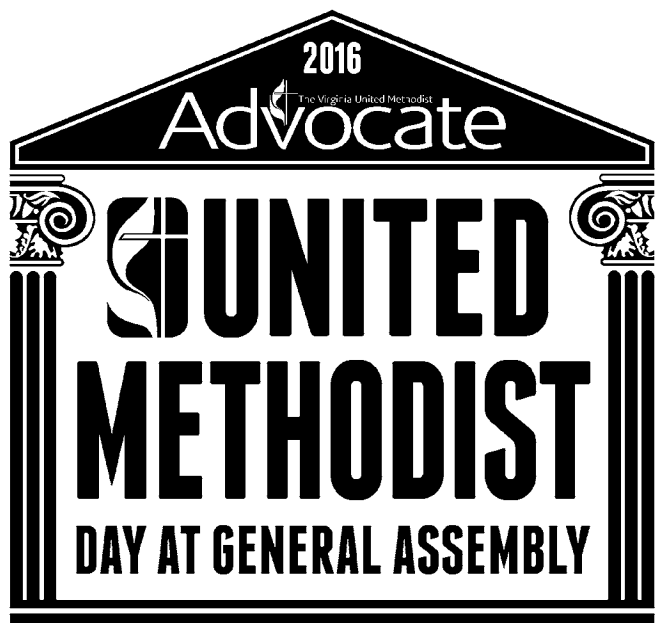
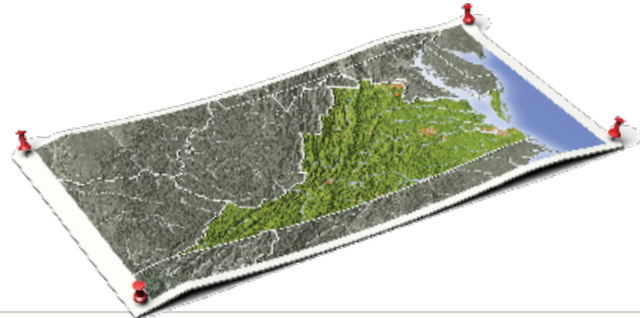
"In Scripture it says we're not of this world but we're in this world, and being in this world means we have the responsibility to engage this world," Kim said. "Coming from a western tradition as United Methodists, there is no religion without social religion. There is no holiness without social holiness. This is exactly what it means to be called to social holiness. Changing policies that fit our faith background. Working and advocating for the last, the least and the lost." 

– Linda S. Rhodes is Virginia Conference director of Communications.

– Madeline Pillow is editor of the Virginia Advocate.

Positions and key points of The United Methodist Church in Virginia on the following page.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Bishop Young Jin Cho (right) visits with Del. Hyland "Buddy" Fowler Jr. (R-55th).

Positions and Key points

Driving privileges for immigrants

Position: We support SB 390 that would allow the DMV to create a system for immigrants getting driving privileges.

Key point: Driving is a necessity in most parts of Virginia given limited access to public transportation.

Raising the felony threshold

Position: We support the Commonwealth of Virginia raising its \$200 felony threshold to a minimum of \$500, while we strongly prefer raising it to \$1,500.

Key point: Virginia's legal threshold for felony robbery charges has not changed since 1980, when it was raised from \$100 to the current level of \$200. Virginia's felony threshold is the lowest in the nation. Thirty states have set their felony larceny threshold at \$1000 or more, including Georgia, South Carolina, Texas, Arkansas, Kansas, Mississippi and North Carolina; 46 states have set their threshold at \$500 or more.

Having such a low felony threshold results in severe punishments for young people who steal sneakers, jackets or other tempting items. Felony convictions can result in jail

sentences as long as 12 years. With a recidivism rate of 82 percent, most of those entering the prison "system" stay for their lives.

Closing Virginia's health care coverage gap

Position: We support the part of the Governor's budget that will allow the Commonwealth of Virginia to close its health care coverage gap and help up to 400,000 uninsured Virginians have access to health care through pulling down available Federal funds.

Key point: Virginians' health would improve. More (approx. 400,000) working parents, children, veterans and students would get early care for preventable conditions and reasonably priced primary care instead of costly emergency room care. 📌



Delegate Mark L. Keam (D-35th) welcomes United Methodists to General Assembly and shares his faith story.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

Ministry Accelerator designed to help local church ministries grow

By Madeline Pillow

Ministry Accelerator, a new program of the Virginia Conference Common Table, took its first steps at the Virginia United Methodist Center Jan. 28-29. Through this new program, the Common Table is providing additional support, other than just financial aid, to local ministries in order to help them grow and be effective and impactful ministries.

Seven local church ministries that were recipients of 2016 Special or Sustaining Program Grants from the Common Table, accepted an invitation to participate in the pilot. They met with mentors from the Richmond area, including leaders from local consulting firms, at the conference center in Glen Allen for the two-day event to identify action steps required to make the biggest improvement in their organizations over the next six months.

The idea for the program started when the Rev. Chris Bennett, Common Table member and pastor of St. Matthew's UMC in Mechanicsville, compared startup business cultures with that of new church

starts and realized their similarities offered opportunities to church ministries.

"About 18 months back, a good friend of mine had started his own business here in Richmond and he was telling me about the entrepreneurship culture and the startup culture here, and I was fascinated by it," Bennett said. "I started doing some reading, and it sounded a lot like church culture and startup church culture. It also got me thinking about how there are organizations out there that exist to help small businesses accelerate and start to be more effective, and I thought what would that look like in the church?"

As a member of the Grants Committee of the Common Table, Bennett thought the committee should do more than just give money to these ministries. "We were handing out money to ministries doing good work," Bennett said, "but we were just giving them money. So we had a conversation as a team to say, what would it look like to do more? What would it look like to be in relation-



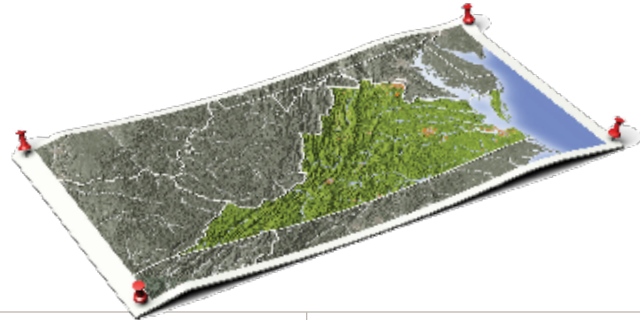
ship with our partners we are giving money to? And what would it look like to help them be more effective?"

With the Grants Committee and Common Table in agreement, Bennett contacted local startups and local incubator accelerator groups, including John Sarvay of Floricane Zone Strategic Consulting Business and Todd Knuckles of Lighthouse Labs Small Business Accelerator, who helped resource the program with mentors.

As part of Ministry Accelerator, business consultants and mentors met with representatives of local church ministries to give them advice on how to grow and be more effective.

(Cont. on pg. 28: "Accelerator.")

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Cultural immersion helps Wesley Seminary student find reasons to change the world

Melissa Lee, food pantry manager at Rising Hope, proudly displays National Geographic's newly released *Feeding America* publication. The book documents the community involvement and feeding ministries at Rising Hope. Photo courtesy of Monica Reynolds.



By Emma Johnston

This past January, I had the opportunity to spend two weeks on the Route One corridor of Fairfax County. I was part of a group of 10 students from Wesley Theological Seminary participating in our Intercultural Immersion requirement for a Master of Divinity. I, along with nine of my peers, were partnered with Rising Hope UMC in Alexandria, and we were led by our partner in ministry, the Rev. Keary Kincannon, as we spent two weeks learning about the hidden culture within the Route One corridor. Fairfax County has the second highest median income in the entire nation. But just behind the Costco, there is an 800-unit

trailer park. I spent the two weeks racking my brain trying to figure out how such a large disparity was able to occur between the socio-economic classes. To give you a sense of what we did, I want to share with you several moments and days that spoke to who I am as a child of God.

I struggled to find my place in the group when I first entered this experience. Some people find it natural to quickly lead and jump headfirst into things. I like to observe. I like to see where people are in their journey, to hear their stories and get a sense of where I am and where I fit in before diving into something. The problem is, when you have only two weeks to be as fully present as possible, you cannot take your time to adjust as you might wish.

During the first week, we met with Ventures in Community (VIC), which is composed of non-profits, educators, law enforcement and local churches. They meet once a month to discuss upcoming events, planning and envisioning what the future of the Route One corridor looks like and how they can be catalysts for change. They understand what the phrase "it takes a village" means — they know that it is through the combined efforts of

their organizations and resources that they can be the most helpful to those in the community.

At the halfway point of our immersion, we went to the Alexandria/Arlington Bi-District meeting, where the keynote speaker was the Rev. Joe Daniels of the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference. While there is much to be said about the day, Daniels gave us three questions to ruminate on as we begin or continue to be in ministry: 1) What does your heart break for? 2) What does your church's heart break for? and 3) What does your community's heart break for?

Those questions became the turning point for me in the immersion experience. They allowed me to see the work of Rising Hope UMC in a new light. They allowed me to see the intersection of the work of the Holy Spirit, the community and the church and where their hearts break for the same things. They gave me room to see the transformational work of the church in the lives of people who are considered to be the least, the lonely, the lost and the left out. The people at Rising Hope UMC take you in and make you feel like family. No questions asked. No pretenses about who I was or who they were. Just

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



A group of 10 students and ministers from Wesley Theological Seminary gather at the Eleanor Kennedy shelter to learn and to serve. Kennedy is a 50-bed shelter for 38 men and 12 women, located on Fort Belvoir grounds. Photo courtesy of Monica Reynolds.

a group of people coming to the Table to gather and worship the God that works through our mess and our pain.

The highlight of my experience was on the last night of the immersion. We were all encouraged to sign up for a police ride-along and to spend at most four hours with our officer and experience an average night of life on the Route One corridor. I was the last person to take this on.

My friends experienced moments when they had to deal with someone we had met at Rising Hope, or they had quiet nights when they were part of a traffic stop. Somehow, I drew the lottery when it came to my ride-along. I was able to experience every kind of call possible, and they were heartbreaking. They

made me want to reach out and hug the people we were with. I was able to have very frank and open conversations with the officer, and we were willing to explore different ways in which we see the Holy Spirit at work in our different fields. My evening inspired me to want to be part of the long-term change in my neighborhood. The people I met are the people my heart breaks for, these women and men and their children — they are who I want to change the world for. 🇺🇸

— Emma Johnston attends Wesley Theological Seminary. She is a certified candidate for graduation in May 2016 and is on the deacon track. She is a staff member at the office of Spiritual Life at Shenandoah University and is currently exploring ministry opportunities in the non-profit, community organizing sector.

April 10 to be conference-wide day to pray for General Conference

The United Methodist Council of Bishops has invited each annual conference to designate one day to hold a 24-hour prayer vigil for General Conference. These prayer vigils began on Jan. 1 with the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference and are continuing through the 131 days from Jan. 1 to May 10, the opening day of General Conference. Because The United Methodist Church has 131 annual conferences throughout the world, each annual conference is able to take one day.

Bishop Young Jin Cho selected Sunday, April 10, to be the day for the Virginia Conference prayer vigil. Each district is invited to plan activities using resources being developed on both the conference and general church levels. (For more information, go to <http://www.vaumc.org/2016GeneralConference>.)

Organizers are encouraging districts to use a Prayer Wheel to allow all congregations on the district to sign up for half-hour or one-hour increments so there will be 24 hours of continuous prayer beginning at 12 a.m. April 10 and continuing until 12 a.m. April 11. As part of this initiative, the chapel in the Virginia United Methodist Center in Glen Allen will be open for prayer. In addition, all congregations are asked to include the prayer initiative in their Sunday services on that day. A common prayer that can be used in all services will be part of the resources offered.



The United Methodist the health of people



Curious schoolchildren crowd one another for a glimpse of a delegation from Saving Lives in Sierra Leone, part of the Imagine No Malaria campaign in the Gbo Chiefdom outside Bo, Sierra Leone. A UMNS photo by Mike DuBose.

United Methodist Church works to improve lives around the world



The United Methodist Church has established Four Areas of Focus to express the vision and yearnings of United Methodists. Narrowing our focus to these four areas allows churches to use their resources effectively as they live out God's vision for the church. The Four Areas of Focus are: 1) Engaging in Ministry with the Poor 2) Improving Global Health 3) Developing Principled Christian Leaders and 4) Creating New and Renewed Congregations.

In this month's issue of the Advocate, we look at the second area of focus: Improving Global Health.

Seeing a connection between poverty and health, The United Methodist Church has been working toward fighting diseases such as AIDS and malaria as well as promoting initiatives that improve well-being.

For decades, The General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and Women's Division have responded to three diseases of poverty: malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS.

In launching the Global Health Initiative in 2006, a major education and fundraising focus was begun for one disease: malaria. Now in 2016, the church is close to completing its goal of raising \$75 million to combat the disease. As part of that effort, last year the Virginia Conference met its goal to raise more than \$1 million for Imagine No Malaria.

In beginning this initiative with malaria, it was hoped that the campaign would create a powerful foundation and infrastructure to help fight other diseases.

Read on to find out how The United Methodist Church is fighting these diseases of poverty.

Mothers with sick children wait to see a doctor at the San Pedro Health Center near Huambo, Angola. Photo by Mike DuBose, UNMS.



United Methodists plan new global health focus for 2017–2020

By Olusimbo Ige

The United Methodist Church has had a long-standing and active engagement in global health efforts for over a century. In 2007, the church identified four initiatives to address and guide mission and ministry, one of which was global health. When the 2008 General Conference elected to name global health as a strategic area of focus for the UMC, Imagine No Malaria (INM) became the first expression of that focus. INM is part of a coordinated international effort to wipe out a disease that can be prevented but still kills someone every 60 seconds, especially in Africa.


In 2009, The United Methodist Church, leveraging on the success of the Nothing But Nets partnership with the United Nations Foundation, officially joined the global effort against malaria, defining Imagine No Malaria as the church's effort to address malaria. The \$75 million fundraising campaign officially launched in 2010. By the end of 2015, over \$68 million had been raised in cash and pledges.

The dollars provide mosquito nets and other malaria control services in affected areas. To maximize the effort, 51 percent of funds raised go to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS,

Tuberculosis and Malaria. The United Methodist Church is the largest faith-based contributor to the Global Fund.

The remainder of the funds are expended by the General Board of Global Ministries through its Global Health Unit in collaboration with health facilities and annual conferences in Africa. Some 194 health facilities and 12 annual conferences or episcopal area-defined health boards are involved in the hands-on work of INM. The malaria control projects of the UMC health boards in Africa, funded through the INM campaign, reached over 4 million beneficiaries between 2012 and 2015. Within these four years more than 1 million mosquito bed nets have been purchased and distributed and 252,851 persons successfully diagnosed and treated through UMC clinics and hospitals supported by Imagine No Malaria. More than 2,000 health workers have been trained and 29 health facilities renovated.

This extraordinary effort of The United Methodist Church has helped avert more than 6.2 million malaria deaths between 2000 and 2015, especially of children under five years of age in sub-Saharan Africa. The global malaria rate fell by an estimated 37 per cent and mortality rates by 58 per cent



in this time frame (WHO, 2015).

INM received a Superhero Award from the Rotarians Action Group on Malaria at the 2015 annual meeting of the Alliance for Malaria Prevention, a coalition of government, nonprofit, humanitarian and faith-based organizations working for malaria control. INM, the only faith-based awardee, was honored for grassroots efforts to extend its prevention methods into rural and hard-to-reach areas. Celebration and formal culmination of the Imagine No Malaria fundraising campaign will take place at 2016 General Conference.

Global health focus for 2017-2020

The success of this malaria effort has led to a palpable United Methodist desire to “do more” in the realm of health. As we celebrate the remarkable declines in death rates of HIV and malaria in developing countries, we are also aware that many global health challenges remain. We continue to focus on sustaining current gains in infectious disease prevention and control efforts, ensuring equitable access to quality health care services and addressing the growing global burden of non-communicable disease. We recognize that nearly 6 million children under age five continue to die, mostly from preventable and treatable diseases like pneumonia, diarrhea and complications during childbirth. Yet practical, low-cost interventions exist to prevent up to two-thirds of child deaths.

This staggering fact provides incentive to a new United Methodist signature health effort. The church has a sacred calling to ensure abundant health for all children. “I have come that you might have life and have it abundantly,” Jesus says in John 10:10. In this campaign, United Methodists will seek to reach one million children with life-saving interventions by 2020. Goals and means include education on safe births for mothers and babies, addressing nutritional challenges and promoting breastfeeding, advancing prevention and treatment of malaria, pneumonia and diarrhea and promoting child health. This campaign is a United Methodist contribution to an extensive global effort to improve health for all by 2035 and is expected to be kicked off at the 2016 General Conference.

As a sign of our commitment, Global Ministries joined “Every Woman, Every Child,” a global initiative to reach 15 million children by 2020. This initiative is supported by government, private sector, non-profit and faith-based organizations that are committed to realizing healthier, more productive futures for children, their families and communities across the world.

The Global Health Initiative will focus on saving the lives

of mothers, children and families and improving health systems. This focus on child health responds to the sacred calling of the church and is a full expression of the vision of abundant health for all. This focus was also supported by findings from a recent survey by Global Ministries with over 6,000 respondents which identified maternal and child health as a key need and the desired program area focus for global health. In addition, evidence shows that health interventions in childhood offer a unique window of opportunity to shape healthier and more prosperous communities.

The goal is to reach 1 million children with life-saving interventions and health promoting measures by 2020, thereby achieving 25 percent relative reduction in negative child health outcomes in the communities where we work.

Global Health Unit created

In response to enthusiasm within the church for the Imagine No Malaria campaign and the assignment of the health focus area to Global Ministries by the Council of Bishops, a separate Global Health Unit was created by Global Ministries in 2014 to lead the global health program of the church. The new unit is composed of existing health-related ministries and new initiatives. The unit has a mandate to support projects to improve health globally. Goals are to scale up existing programs on community health education, to improve the quality of health care services through church-supported hospitals and clinics, to increase the scope of such programs and increase mission service opportunities in health. The Global Health Unit will be responsible for coordinating the UMC global health initiative for the new quadrennium.

Other program areas of the Global Health Unit

Global AIDS Fund and its inter-agency committee were established by the 2004 General Conference as a United Methodist response to the AIDS pandemic. It was readopted with changes in 2012, moving to an emphasis on prevention of mother-to-child transmission of the HIV virus, with the slogan “Just Save One.” From 2004 to 2012, grants went primarily to grassroots projects

related to United Methodist congregations or organizations, partner ecumenical groups and other recommended organizations. Over 66,000 pregnant women were screened for HIV to prevent transmission to their unborn children between 2014-2015 through UMGAF grants. The Global Health Unit of Global Ministries is responsible for managing grants to support clinics and community based HIV programs.

"Healthy Congregations, Healthy Communities" is a new initiative for churches, primarily in the U.S., but potentially also in Europe, which was introduced in September 2015 at the U.S. Health Forum in Houston, Texas. The goal is to equip and empower churches, districts and conferences to nurture spirit, mind and body in holistic ways and to encourage health ministries in a range of contexts, including medical institutions, schools and seminaries and local churches.

The goal is to have churches provide opportunities for physical activities, promote healthy diet and nutrition, encourage prevention and recovery from addictive substances and promote the mental well-being of members of their congregations and communities. The U.S. programs also includes the Special Program on Substance Abuse and Related Violence (SPSARV). Once a General Conference special mandate program, SPSARV is now a regular part of the mission program and budget. Objectives are to equip congregations to respond effectively and compassionately to those affected by substance abuse, promote the recovery of families and loved ones trapped in addiction and promote prevention ministries for comprehensive education of children and youths.

Africa Health Boards

The network of annual conference or episcopal area United Methodist health boards in Africa continues as Imagine No Malaria moves toward formal conclusion. The boards continue efforts to train and organize for community-based primary health care and to respond to emergencies, such as the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa. The health boards represent important steps toward the annual conferences of the central conference in Africa assuming oversight and ownership of expanding health ministries represented by the almost 200 United Methodist health facilities and the expanding number of community-based primary health care programs. During this quadrennium, representatives of the board met periodically in an Africa Health Forum to share information and coordinate ministries.

— Dr. Olusimbo Ige is director of Global Health with the General Board of Global Ministries.

Virginia United Methodists made significant difference in fight against malaria

By Maria Maxwell

What a difference! I often find myself thinking about the significant difference we made as a conference in the fight against malaria (saving 100,000+ lives), and the difference we continue to make as a global church (we have currently raised \$68 million toward our \$75 million goal).

The newest malaria report from the World Health Organization (WHO) shows a dramatic decrease in the number of deaths caused by malaria. When The United Methodist Church began its Imagine No Malaria campaign in 2010, a child under the age of five died from malaria every 30 seconds. Today, the number of deaths has decreased to one child every two minutes. That news is still heartbreaking, but what we know is that our strategy is effective.

Here are two points from the 2015 World Malaria Report issued in December:

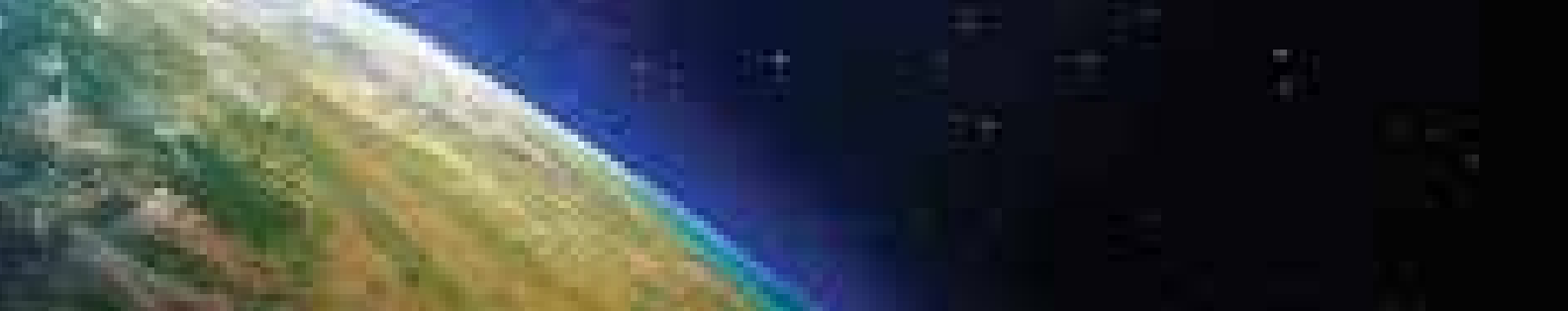
From 2000-2015 malaria incidence fell by 37 percent globally, 42 percent in Africa

From 2000-2015 malaria mortality fell by 60 percent globally, 66 percent in Africa

In 2006, when the United Nations Foundation began a new effort in the fight against malaria called Nothing But Nets (NBN), the UMC was invited to become a founding member. NBN became an instant success, raising more than \$7 million to provide insecticide-treated bed nets to Africa.

In 2010, building on the success of NBN, an intentional shift was made toward a more comprehensive approach in the fight against malaria. We believe it is this approach that is making a huge impact in the fight against malaria.

The approach includes four key areas: prevention, edu-



cation, communication and treatment.

Prevention generally means the use of insecticide-treated bed nets (ITNs), although draining standing water and improving sanitation are also included. In 2000, less than two percent of the population in sub-Saharan Africa slept under ITNs compared with 55 percent of the population in 2015. Of those, 68 percent are children under age five.

Education continues to be effective. Thousands of local people in African communities have been trained to deliver and install bed nets as well as teach their communities about avoiding malaria. Last March, while visiting the community of Chicunque in Mozambique, we met with the staff of The Center of Hope which was given a grant through the Imagine No Malaria Initiative. They conducted surveys in neighboring communities to discover what people knew about malaria prevention. Their next step was to educate the communities regarding misconceptions about malaria to help reduce the number of cases in their area. This type of grassroots network will be valuable as we move past malaria and onto other diseases of poverty.

Communication becomes a valuable tool when emergency situations arise, like the recent Ebola outbreak. INM helps upgrade communication networks throughout the continent. Building new radio stations and providing hand-crank and solar-powered radios ensures we are reaching larger numbers of people with life-saving information about malaria and other life-threatening situations.

Treatment includes, but is not limited to, improving infrastructure, making sure treatments like Artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs) and rapid diagnostic tests (RDTs) are made available to hospitals, clinics and

medical posts operated by the UMC in Africa. RDTs have made it easier to determine if a patient has malaria and gets the proper medicine. Today, 65 percent of suspected cases are tested by RDTs in Africa, compared to 36 percent in 2005. Procurement of ACTs increased from 11 million in 2005 to 337 million in 2014, 98 percent delivered in Africa. During my trip to Mozambique, we stayed in the community of Cambine. We found that the Cambine health outpost saw 1,200 cases of malaria during the month of February, the height of their rainy season, and had enough medication to treat almost all of those cases. Good news!

An estimated 663 million cases of malaria have been averted in sub-Saharan Africa since 2001 as a direct result of the work of initiatives like the Global Fund, the President's Malaria Initiative and Imagine No Malaria. Of those cases, 68 percent were due to the use of ITNs and 22 percent due to the use of ACTs.

My time spent working with Virginia Conference churches was encouraging and filled with hope. The energy around saving lives was contagious and spread throughout the districts. Churches saw giving exceed their greatest expectations; district superintendents did crazy challenges; kids sold lemonade in the rain and cold; and church groups baked, educated and crafted to raise funds for an incredible cause. Our efforts together made a difference in 100,000+ lives an ocean away. We worked hard and now can share in the joy of watching children grow up to be teachers, pastors, health care workers and any number of other occupations. What a gift! Matthew 25:40 says it best, The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." 🍋

— Maria Maxwell was Virginia Conference field coordinator for Imagine No Malaria 2014-2015.



Cabinet members of the Virginia Conference prepare for the Imagine No Malaria Lemonade Challenge for World Malaria Day. Photo by Kay Panovec.



St. Germain meeting the residents of Batey 7 in the Dominican Republic. The Dream Ministries Team set up a new Batey each day of their mission trip. Photo courtesy of Katie St. Germain.

Nurse practitioner works in mission fields in Virginia and abroad

By Madeline Pillow

Katie St. Germain, a member of the Virginia Conference Missional Ministries Board, works as a nurse practitioner for Crossover Ministry in Richmond where most patients do not have access to Medicare or Medicaid. Many are immigrants or fall through the health care coverage gap.

St. Germain is also an international missionary through the Western North Carolina Conference and Dream Ministries. She just returned from her latest mission trip in January when she spent a week in the Dominican Republic setting up a clinic in a new village every day. The conference sends both a clinical and surgical team to the country four times a year and seeks to provide a continuity of care by shipping supplies between mission trips. While there, St. Germain and her team saw 800 patients and performed 100 surgeries.

“In the mission field, there’s a sense that God is working through us, and we are going to pray that God is going to be faithful and provide. God always is.”

Having traveled to the Dominican Republic and Haiti and lived in East Africa for a time as an HIV missionary, St. Germain sees many similarities between Virginia and the world outside the U.S. “You don’t have to go far to be in the mission field,” she said.

In Virginia, she has even seen similarities between children in Africa and those in rural areas of Virginia. “I have seen malnutrition and low access to health education in rural parts of our country,” she said, “and it can look like a third world country.”

But there are also differences. “Certainly when I’m home, I’m a lot more grateful in terms of the ability to provide continuity of care,” St. Germain said. “It’s also nice to go there and not have the kind of headaches that we have in medicine here — like productivity and things like that. You kind of just get to go and love people and I’m finding in my job now, it’s very similar to that.”

Both mission fields provide opportunities for God to step in and work. “In the mission field, there’s a sense that God is working through us, and we are going to pray that God is going to be faithful and provide. God always is,” St. Germain said. “To see the miracles that happen in the mission field, abroad and at home, miracles are definitely happening every day, they just look different.”

Global health issues she sees in her work are hypertension and diabetes. “Before I got into medicine, I wouldn’t have thought they were disease states,” she said. “But they

are there, and they impact people's daily lives because of the complications that arise."

St. Germain says it is important that the church partner with groups outside the UMC as part of its global health initiatives.

"The good thing about this is that these are emerging pathogens that are changing all the time, and it would be harder for the church to do it directly," said St. Germain. "So to partner with community partners who are focused on and are experts in this — that is going to make our effort much more productive."

Local churches offer health care to communities

The way health is viewed is changing at the global and local church level. At St. Germain's home church of **Welborne UMC, Richmond District**, a congregational health initiative is beginning as a pilot program for the conference. Known as "Healthy clergy, healthy congregations, healthy community," the initiative launched in January will include members of the congregation measuring outcomes with the hope that this program will spread to other congregations around the conference. This is part of the UMC's health initiative called the Global Health Initiative provided through UMCOR.

Internationally, Welborne UMC is mission-focused on meeting the United Nations Sustainable Developmental Goals. Learn more at www.undp.org.

Another church focused on health is **New Life UMC, Richmond District**. At the start of 2015, church members began a year-long initiative on global and local health in conjunction with Matthew 25. In doing this, they participated in a number of ministries, including Imagine No Malaria and assembling Health Kits for United Methodist Committee on Relief.

On a mission trip to Henderson, Ky., church members brought school supplies for an after-school program and baby supplies for the Maternal Infant Health Outreach Worker (MIHOW) program. After learning about this program, mission trip participants shared information about the program with their congregation, and a Christmas offering of \$4,000 was raised for MIHOW.

Another facet of their ministry efforts was for Sole Hope for Uganda Africa. Forty shoe patterns were cut out and shipped along with money for a shoemaker to create shoes. These shoes will ensure the prevention of diseases as well as provide employment. Learn more about the program at www.solehope.org.

— Madeline Pillow is editor of the Virginia Advocate.

MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH

GLOBAL MINISTRIES
The United Methodist Church

DID YOU KNOW?

- Every minute a child dies from malaria. (Imagine No Malaria)
- Every year 330,000 children are infected with HIV. (Children & HIV)
- Every day 800 women die due to complications during pregnancy and childbirth. (WHO)

BUT THERE'S HOPE:

- Every year 1 million lives could be saved with improved nutrition during the first 1,000 days of life. (Save the Children)
- The risk of mother-to-child transmission of HIV can be reduced to less than 5% with effective interventions. (WHO)
- An infant fed breast milk within an hour of birth is up to 3 times more likely to survive than a baby breastfed one day later. (Save the Children)
- 75% of all maternal deaths can be prevented by skilled health care before, during and after childbirth. (WHO)
- 6 million children each year could be saved by low-tech, evidence-based, cost-effective measures such as vaccines, antibiotics and micronutrient supplementation. (WHO)

WHAT GLOBAL HEALTH IS DOING:

UMC Global Health's maternal and child health focus aims to positively impact the well-being, personal status and quality of life of women and children, and through them, to affect families and communities. Positive impacts bring gradual improvements in community knowledge and health status, as well as changing behavior. As more mothers and children survive, communities will be healthier.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Help us to achieve our goal of helping more moms and babies survive and thrive by contributing to **Global Health, Advance #3021770**.

www.umcmision.org/give

Focusing on saving lives of mothers and children as well as improving health systems, the "Every Woman, Every Child" global initiative hopes to reach 15 million children by 2020.



The UMC's Ebola Response Team talks about children's health to women of Moyolla, Sierra Leone. Photo by Phileas Jusu, UMNS.

EVENTS



March

Clergy Spouse Retreat

March 3-5, Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center, Blackstone

Clergy spouses from around the Virginia Conference will retreat with keynote speaker Lee Anne Orndorff, wife of the Rev. Randy Orndorff, March 3-5 at the Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center (VUMAC) in Blackstone. On Aug. 29, 2008, the Orndorffs' daughter, Kelsey, was killed in a car accident while heading to a Chris Sligh Christian concert. Subsequently, Lee Anne suffered overwhelming grief that led her to the depths of despair but, with God's help, she began to make a turn around. Out of her experience with a parent's worst nightmare, she began speaking at engagements at churches and other groups encouraging others battling despair and grief. For more information or to register, visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org under "Events" and the date.

Bishop's Convocation on Prayer

March 5, Trinity UMC, Richmond

The Bishop's Convocation on Prayer will be held Saturday, March 5, at Trinity UMC, 903 Forest Ave., Richmond. Theme is *Deepening Discipleship: Piety and Mercy through Prayer*. Plenary speaker will be Dr. Frederick Schmidt, Reuben P. Job Associate Professor of Spiritual Formation at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Ill.

5 Talent Academy

March 8, Floris UMC, Herndon

Join the 5 Talent Academy on Tuesday, March 8, for "POWRful Worship: Transforming Worship Planning and Leadership." The event will begin with

worship, and then the Rev. Barbara Day Miller, associate dean for Worship and Music at Candler School of Theology, will lead a reflection on worship using the POWR model, a conversational model of worship planning and leadership. Miller will be speaking live from Floris UMC in Herndon. The event will also be live streamed to nine satellite locations throughout the conference in order to bring this event close to your church home. For more information or to register, go to www.vaumc.org/5TalentAcademy.

April

Ethics 102: Clergy Reporting of Child Abuse & Neglect Training

April 18, Virginia Crossings Wyndham Hotel & Conference Center, Glen Allen

For newly-appointed clergy and interested church professionals, this event meets the commitment to require mandatory sexual ethics training for the Virginia Conference. Registration for this event is required 48 hours prior to the event to ensure sufficient materials are available for all participants. For more information, contact the Center for Clergy Excellence at (804) 521-1126 or 1-800-768-6040, ext. 126; e-mail ClergyExcellence@vaumc.org.

Ministers' Convocation

April 18-20, Virginia Crossings Wyndham Hotel & Conference Center, Glen Allen

2016 Ministers' Convocation, "Come to the Table: Bringing Food and Faith Together," will be held April 18-20 at Virginia Crossings Wyndham Hotel & Conference Center, 1000 Virginia Center Parkway, Glen Allen. This will be a time of Sabbath retreat, fellowship of ministry leaders, engagement

in theological and academic conversation, and a time to be re-inspired for ministry. All clergy, diaconal ministers and professional/paraprofessional certified ministers in the Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church are invited. For more information or to register, visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org under "Events" and the date.

Clergy Ethics II Training – Roanoke District

April 21, Thrasher Memorial UMC, Vinton

All clergy and church professionals are required to attend an Ethics II Training event in the current quadrennium (2012-2016). Registration is required 48 hours prior to the event in order to ensure sufficient materials are available for all participants. Refunds will not be processed once registration closes 48 hours prior to the event. For more information or to register, visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org under "Events" and the date. If you do not have a credit card to register online, e-mail Kristen Seibert in the Center for Clergy Excellence at kristenseibert@vaumc.org. For more information, contact the Center for Clergy Excellence at (804) 521-1126 or 1-800-768-6040, ext. 126.

May

Virginia PAUMCS Retreat

May 15-16, Camp Overlook, Keezletown

Virginia chapter of PAUMCS retreat will feature Dr. Sandy Gramling, associate professor in Clinical Psychology at Virginia Commonwealth University, where she teaches "Stress and Its Management." She will discuss how to stay centered in Christ while meeting the needs of our congregation and

DISCIPLES HELPING TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD

community members. Held at Camp Overlook in Keezletown, this event is an opportunity for church secretaries and administrators to learn, network, fellowship and relax. Breakfast and lunch on Monday are included in the cost of registration. The fee for this event is \$88 for PAUMCS members; \$98 for non-members. Register online at www.vaumc.org/PAUMCS by May 2.

Five-Day Academy for Spiritual Formation

May 22-27, Roslyn Retreat Center, Richmond

The rescheduled Virginia Five-Day Academy for Spiritual Formation will be held at the Roslyn Retreat Center, Richmond, May 22-27. Registration is currently full, but to be placed on a waiting list, contact Dot Ivey, Registrar, at dotcivey@gmail.com.

Whaleyville UMC, James River District, created this Advent banner (made of felt) with symbols that were attached to the banner for each Sunday of Advent, Christmas Eve and two Sundays after Christmas (Epiphany). Members of the congregation took turns placing the symbols. This was a special program that included Scripture reading, invocation and first hymn (Christmas carol) and was accompanied by lighting the Advent wreath.

The United Methodist Women's Teen Circle at **St. Stephen's UMC, Alexandria District**, met to discuss and be informed about human trafficking. The UMW are opening umbrellas as an awareness and protest of these crimes. They hope to prevent more trafficking and intend to be supportive of the survivors. Supporters pictured below are Sara, Matt, Margaret, Quinn, Katie, Beth, Michael and Bradley.



Ministry ACCELERATOR VA Conference 2016

("Accelerator," cont. from pg. 15)

"We offer grants through the Common Table called Special Grants and Sustaining Grants," Bennett said. "Instead of just handing out money, we wanted to see what we could do to help these ministries grow. So we're offering the Accelerator [program] as a way to accelerate their ministry, accelerate the great work they are already doing and help them make a greater impact in their local communities."

Participants from this event will meet again in August to share their progress and examine successes and failures. Until then, a private Facebook group will help these ministries share ideas, and Bennett will check in periodically with all participants.

Already the Ministry Accelerator program has caused the growth of a small community. "We've take seven groups who didn't know about each other, didn't know about each other's ministries, and who are now invested with each other and are going to continue to follow up with one another," Bennett said. "Those relationships will

continue beyond just this process."

For Bennett, the program offers opportunities in a number of ways. "I'm so thankful to be able to serve in a conference where this is a possibility," Bennett said, "that a new idea can come and emerge and get energy and traction and there's the safe space to try it. I'm excited about the intersection between our culture and what's going up in startup culture. I'm also excited because it is bringing in new, fresh way of looking at how we do ministry and how we move from just serving meals to how we transform people's lives. I'm excited about the possibilities and how that can transform not just these local church ministries but also, perhaps, local churches and, perhaps, conferences. It's exciting to see that God's redemptive work is moving through the people who are The United Methodist Church."

To view video about the Ministry Accelerator program, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FvvPTC3Ifkw>.

— Madeline Pillow is editor of the Advocate.

Special and Sustaining Program Grants are designed for programs outside of normal conference and local church funding processes. Funds are provided from conference apportionments and contributions from Virginia Conference United Methodist Women.

Special Program Grants provide startup funding for up to three years to innovative programs of tangible and caring outreach that is beyond a local church's current financial resources. Sustaining Program Grants are available for ministries that received three years' worth of Special Grants in the past and still need financial assistance to continue.

In 2016, 16 Special Program Grants and 14 Sustaining Program Grants were awarded for a total of \$115,100.

Ministry Accelerator participants are:

1. Community Garden of Basic UMC, Waynesboro

Mission: Create a community garden to supply a weekly meal offered to local under-resourced residents; offer residents healthful food choices. Impact: Serving 60 people/week and resourced 840 meals.

2. Circles Ashland of Duncan Memorial UMC, Ashland

Mission: To work with families below the poverty line in Ashland to help them build an economic stability plan and identify financial, emotional and social resources available to them as they work to

move out of poverty. Impact: 15 families (projected) per cohort.

3. Tuesday's Table of Stanardsville UMC, Stanardsville

Mission: To reach out to the financially struggling in their community by offering a weekly community meal free of charge. Impact: 400 people.

4. Neighbor Helping Neighbor of Kenbridge UMC, Kenbridge

Mission: Assist low-income owners with home repairs in one of the poorest counties in the state. Impact: 18 individuals, 7 homes.

5. Food Pantry at Heritage UMC, Virginia Beach

Mission: To build lasting relationships with people in the community by feeding needy families in the community. Impact: 2346 individuals annually.

6. Food Pantry at Calvary UMC, Stuarts Draft

Mission: To offer food to community members in need through a food pantry at the local church. Impact: 32,000 individuals annually.

7. Agape Christian Children's Community Center, Horntown

Mission: To break down racial barriers and promote economic justice and self-development of peoples in the community spreading the love of Jesus Christ by offering programs for children, two nutritional meals and two nutritional snacks daily, and a safe place for children to play. Impact: 364 children per year.



TECHNOLOGY TIPS

Engaging online followers with Lenten ideas

By Gavin Richardson

Lent is a time of reflection. It is also a time when individuals seek ways to deepen their spiritual relationships. With technology, it is easier for people to connect with one another in order to learn more and further their spiritual disciplines. Read on for creative ways churches can engage members and potential visitors during Lent.

Photo-a-Day Meditation: To provide an easy entry for seekers at Lent last year, Rethink Church created a photo-a-day meditation that invited participants to submit their photos on social media that related to the word of the day. These words followed the lectionary and were accompanied by a brief devotion. It resulted in international participation and reached people from different denominations as well. Think about collecting images from your members that you can use as sermon illustrations, slideshows or even a photo book of devotionals.

Online Study: Since people are generally open to new ideas during Lent, it might be the perfect opportunity to try something new. You could create an online study in a very traditional sense by utilizing Skype to connect participants in a virtual class meeting.

Online Fast: Invite congregants to unplug from cell phones, email and social media for a day a week or other



designated time, giving them more time to read or pray during their "fast." Challenge members to engage by different means, perhaps a hand-written note, thank you card or letter for their children or spouse.

Stories of Faith: What is your favorite Scripture and why? Ask members if they would be willing to answer this question on video. Create simple one- or two-minute videos using a digital camera or smartphone. You can expand the scope of the videos to allow people to tell a significant story in the life of their faith. Post the videos each day online on a social media platform or your church website.

Text Prayers: If you have a text message system plugged into your community, ask one of your pastors or lay leaders to share a significant word or phrase from their daily prayers. You generally cannot capture a whole prayer in a text message, but sending

a capsule of a prayer can encourage others. They might also seek their own daily prayer based on your text.

Online Missions Experience:

This might be a 40-day period of fundraising for a particular mission of the church (Imagine No Malaria, Global AIDS Fund, an Advance project, etc). It could also be a daily or weekly effort to raise awareness within your congregation.

Go On Pilgrimage: Set up a blog for those who might want to go on an actual pilgrimage in or out-of-town. Tumblr is easy to use and mobile-friendly. Share daily experiences, photos and videos. If you can't make a physical trip, go virtually using Google Earth. For example, you can download Google Earth coordinates to "walk" the Via Dolorosa (Stations of the Cross).

(Cont. on pg. 33: "Technology")

"Technology Tips" is a new section of the Virginia Advocate. Here you can learn more about how to use technology to convey God's message on every level of the Church.

Devotions from International Lesson Series

LIVING THE WORD



Beth Givens is in her fourth year of serving as the pastor at Welborne Church, Richmond District, and in her 21st year of ministry in the Virginia Conference. She is a graduate of the University of Virginia and received her Master of Divinity from Candler School of Theology at Emory University. Beth has served the Virginia Conference in a number of capacities and currently serves as a member of the delegation to the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference for the fourth time. Her passion in life, second to faith, is seeking to faithfully co-parent, with their father, two daughters in middle school and high school.

March 6, 2016
Taking Time to Listen
Mark 9:14-29

As this story begins, Jesus, Peter, James and John walk onto the scene just after the Transfiguration—just after they have seen Jesus in all of his glory. They've had this amazing spiritual experience, and then they slam into a wall of arguing. Talk about coming back to reality.

It seems that a father has brought his son for healing, and the disciples who remained down off the mountain have been unable to deliver. What precisely they are arguing about with the scribes is not clear—other than their failure to exorcise a demon, something they have done before in Mark's story (6:13).

Jesus is a little exasperated with their failure to do something he knows they can do. We can see him shaking his head as he asks the father to bring the son to him. The father does, and Jesus is able to cast the demon out.

What makes the difference? Other than the obvious, that Jesus is the actor? Notice what Jesus does when the boy comes to him. He begins to ask the father questions. He gets curious. He seems to really, genuinely want to know this boy's story — and his father's. He witnesses the boy's "fit," seeking to know what is really happening, not just relying on the father's description. He asks how long this has been happening.

Jesus takes the time to listen to this father and son, to welcome their story, to wonder about their lives. It seems that this is important—or even the missing piece. Perhaps the disciples were unable to heal the boy because they failed to really listen, to fully experience his truth. Perhaps it is the willingness to deeply engage with one another that will be the key for healing.

As we confront brokenness in our lives, in our church and in our world, may we follow the lead of our Savior and take the time to listen to the real stories around us. May we listen without judgment and listen for the Holy Spirit to speak through the story of a companion on the journey. Then may we follow Jesus' directive in verse 29

and take those experiences to God in prayer, trusting that there, in conversation with God, we will find the power to cast out our demons.

March 13, 2016
Spiritual Hoarding
Mark 10:17-31

Among the explosion of television shows focused around homes in recent years have been several shows on hoarding. Hoarding, loosely defined as the over-accumulation of stuff, is fascinating to many of us—and those of us it does not fascinate, it convicts. Professional organizers make a nice living helping hoarders clean out and simplify. Arguably we have been a society obsessed with stuff for most of our lifetimes. Whether we lived through the Great Depression and that motivates us to hold on to things, or we are pre-Internet kids who remember saving every *National Geographic* magazine in case we needed it for a project, we know what it is to have a love affair with stuff.

One of the great dangers of our new reality is that now we can hoard stuff without it actually taking up physical space in our home. Rather it takes up space on our hard drives, in the Cloud or in data limits. Recently, we phased out an old computer at our house that held most of our digital family photos. I can attest to the fact that it takes a while to back up over 32,000 photos to the Cloud! Yet, did I take the time to go through them, select the one that needed to be saved and move the rest to the trash? No. It was easier to hoard, just to back them up and deal with them later. Whenever later is.

In a digital world, we can hoard friends on Facebook, likes on Instagram posts and comments on blog entries. These things don't take up space in an unlabeled box in the attic. They don't fill up the junk drawer until it won't close. They don't even clutter our hard drives any longer. But they do take up spiritual space. They take up space in our thoughts and in our hearts. Space that needs to be more open to the Holy Spirit.

Jesus challenges us, in the guise of the rich young man. He challenges us to stop hoarding



and let go. Let go of the things that we think are treasures. Cling only to Christ.

March 20, 2016

Finding Courage to Show Up

Mark 14:26-31, 66-72

Since 2012, I have been doing a lot of work with the Center for Courage and Renewal, founded by Quaker writer, speaker and activist Parker Palmer. The mission of the Center for Courage and Renewal is “to create a more just, compassionate and healthy world by nurturing personal and professional integrity and the courage to act on it.”¹ The focus of my work with the center has been on integrity and authenticity—connecting what I do (professionally, as a parent, as a friend, etc.) with who I really am on the inside, my true self, as defined by the Holy Spirit at work within me.

I have learned that it does take a tremendous amount of courage—and vulnerability—to show up as my true self in the midst of difficult conversations. This is even more challenging in the current climate of pastoral leadership in The United Methodist Church, where anxiety about the future is fairly high. In that climate, people (including me) become reactive and want to build a wall of protection around ourselves. Our instinct is not to show up with our whole self. Our instinct is to be Peter.

That was, after all, a pretty anxious night. What started out as a nice Passover meal had very quickly gone bad. Jesus was starting to talk about betrayal and death. Peter insisted he would stand by him. But Jesus seems to know that Peter will not, that as the situation unfolds, Peter may still be

loyal to Jesus, but he will value self-protection more.

The verses left out of this reading include the betrayal in the garden and Jesus’ arrest. By the time we find Peter in the courtyard in verse 66, he has gone from wary and unsure as they entered the garden to frightened and hiding. As the situation has grown more and more predictable and more and more out of control, Peter is not thinking about courage. He is thinking about saving his life. He is afraid of being mortally hurt—either physically or emotionally—and so he denies Jesus.

The temptation to be Peter rests within each one of us. The ability to live as people of integrity, people who show up with our whole selves, requires us to fight that temptation. No matter how much we think it won’t be us, the fear takes hold when we least expect it. May Peter remind us, when we start to build walls and deny the truth of our hearts, that there is a cost to such denial.

March 27, 2016

Easter Metrics

Mark 16:1-8

If that first Easter morning, as Mark describes it, had been about metrics it would have been a miserable failure. Only three people showed up for the sunrise service, and they were of the same gender and ethnicity. They weren’t even professing their faith in Jesus. In fact, they were coming with the attitude that it was all over. They were finishing up the formalities of death. When they found something they weren’t expecting, the news that Jesus was risen, they didn’t even witness to anyone about it—even though the angel told them to go and tell the

disciples.

Thank goodness we don’t measure the “success” of our Easter by those standards. No, we measure it in how loud the music is, how many people are packed into the pews, how many lilies release strong fragrance into the air, how many sausage biscuits the United Methodist Men make for breakfast....Wait. That somehow doesn’t seem right either.

Looking back at the Scripture, we discover that something happens that morning to Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome. They approach the tomb with burial spices, grieving, worried about who will roll away the large stone; similar to the concerns of us “church folk” who approach Easter morning, carrying our music, making sure the communion elements are prepared, worrying that there won’t be enough and checking and double checking the AV system. Then they are suddenly confronted by the terrifying and amazing truth that he is not there, he has been raised. All their worries about stones and spices have vanished, and they are completely overwhelmed by this new truth. So overwhelmed that they go into hiding. This response is so disconcerting that ancient copywriters edited the ending, adding later bits about Jesus appearing to the disciples.

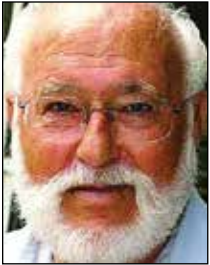
What if...what if we measured the vital signs of Easter morning by the number of people who were so overwhelmed and amazed when they heard the story that they were tempted to go into hiding? For they won’t stay there long—the promise of the resurrection is simply too powerful to leave us in our hidden places. It compels us to move out into the world to share the news: Christ is Risen. He is Risen, indeed! 🌹

¹<http://www.couragerenewal.org/about/mission/>

CLERGY & DIACONAL



DEATHS



Jerry Francis Weigel, 71, died Dec. 29, 2015. A Navy veteran and resident of Virginia for over 25 years, Jerry served as a United Methodist

local pastor for 21 years in five Virginia churches: Grace UMC in Rollins Fork; Zion UMC in Spotsylvania; Greenwood UMC in Winchester; Wesley Chapel UMC in Cross Junction; and Pine Grove UMC in Winchester. Jerry is survived by his wife, Barbara; three children: Lisa Barham, Gary Weigel and Jeffrey Wade Weigel; his sister, Betty Ann Adamson and brother, Robert Stanley Weigel; his step-children, Darlene Ohlenbusch and Dan Foote; and his grandchildren, T. Baxter Barham, Zane and Ayla Ohlenbusch. The Rev. Mike Mayton and the Rev. Jason Duley officiated a service of celebration at Macedonia UMC, Stephens City, on Jan. 3, 2016.



Al Davis, retired local pastor, and husband of **the Rev. Marsha Davis**, pastor of Centenary UMC in Chase City, died Jan. 16, 2016. His Service of Resur-

rection was held Jan. 19 at Beulah UMC on the Prince Edward Charge in Abilene.

Lillian Caroline Kane Porter, 90, died on Jan. 25, 2016. Lillian served in the U.S. Navy during World War II as a Physician's Assistant in the Hospital Corp serving on many bases saving the lives of hundreds of fellow American soldiers during the war. It was during this time she met and became friends with Helen

Keller, and they remained close friends the rest of Helen Keller's life. Mrs. Porter was preceded in life by her husband, **Rev. Joseph A. Porter D.D.**, who served 14 parishes in America, including the Virginia Conference. Lillian is survived by Joseph David Porter, Agent/Officer Thomas Alexander Porter D.P.O.; L. Keith Porter; Jacquelyn Ann Hennessey Donovan; Kevin McKeon; Wanda Kane Andrews; and Joan Kane Kelly.

Ken NeSmith, father-in-law of **the Rev. Rick Bucher**, pastor at Thomas Chapel UMC, died Jan. 14, 2016. His funeral was held at Hobson's Chapel UMC in Powhatan, VA.

A Service of Death and Resurrection was held for **Charlene Hogue**, wife of **the Rev. Wayne Hogue**, retired UMC pastor from Central PA Conference, on Jan. 4, 2016, at St. Matthias UMC, Fredericksburg. Charlene is also survived by her children Carolyn Jones of Manassas, David Hogue (Rosa) of Fredericksburg and Lori Hogue (Leigh) of Charlottesville; three grandchildren, Natasha Grant, Kara Hogue and Bryce Hogue; and brother, Wesley Taylor (Rosemary) of Cowlesville, N.Y.

Jack Eugene Neal Jr. died Dec. 29, 2015. President of the United Methodist Men, Jack also was a church trustee at Phoebus United Methodist Church, Hampton. Jack is survived by his wife Joanne Neal; mother, Ida Armel; children, Corey Preston, Matthew Preston, Daniel Neal, Jennifer Upton and Jeremiah Neal; sisters, Catherine Neal and Patricia Neal; grandchildren, Cody Upton, Alexis Upton, Bryson Upton, Harlow Neal, Alyssa Preston, Hunter Preston and Tristan Preston. A funeral service was held Jan. 2 at Phoebus UMC.

The Rev. William Jeryl "Jerry" Fink, 86, of Henrico County, died Dec. 28, 2015. Jerry is survived by his wife of 62 years, Ann Eckman Fink; daughter, Ellen Walsh; grandsons, Brandon Walsh and Grant Walsh; great-grandchildren, John Thomas Walsh, Emily Margaret Mary Walsh and William James Walsh; and several nieces. Jerry was a retired United Methodist minister and served churches in Northern Virginia, Lynchburg and Richmond as well as serving as district superintendent in the Petersburg and Roanoke districts. For 21 years, he served as President of Virginia United Methodist Homes, Inc. A memorial service was held Jan. 6 at the West Chapel of Bennett Funeral Home, Glen Allen. The Rev. Ray W. Chamberlain Jr. officiated.

A Service of Death and Resurrection was held for **Dorothy H. Bennett**, mother of the **Rev. Pat B. Tony**, pastor at St. Matthias UMC, Fredericksburg, on Dec. 27, 2015, at Chatham Presbyterian Church with burial in Hillcrest Cemetery in Pittsylvania County. Dorothy is survived by four children and their spouses: Pat B. Tony and husband, Dean, of Fredericksburg; Jan B. Hamilton and her husband, Tom, of Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.; Fred R. Bennett and his wife, Brenda, of Blacksburg; and David R. Bennett and his wife, Karen, of Danville; as well as seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

BIRTHS

The Rev. Kurt Ludwig is the proud grandfather of his second grandchild. His son, Sherman, and wife, Liz, welcomed their first child, a daughter, **Georgianna Rose Ludwig**, on Jan. 2, 2016. Kurt is pastor of St. Mark's UMC in Manassas.

("TECHNOLOGY," continued from pg. 29.)

40 Days Meditation: For each day of Lent, share a visual meditation via email or social media. Consider using stock photographs that go along with a daily meditation. Using an email service or third party social media platform, you can pre-post all these daily images and meditations to send to your community.

Gracious Giving: The idea of giving graciously and generously is a core tenet of our faith. Encourage your congregation to give generously, in a different way, throughout Lent. The people of Ginghamburg United Methodist Church participate in their own version of this each year as part of their "Christmas is Not Your Birthday" effort. The idea is showing grace in such a generous fashion it is hard for people not to share it.

Consider how these ideas may deepen your congregation's faith and extend the mission of your church and what additional ideas may grow. ☞

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FROM THE BISHOP



Two invitations

Friends,

It is spring! Trees and flowers are celebrating the arrival of this new season. We see new leaves and flowers everywhere. May the grace and blessings of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you in this season of hope.

This month, we will continue our Lenten journey of reflection on the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. But this is not the end of our journey. God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. The power of sin and death was defeated, and the tomb of despair and fear was broken and opened to new life. Christ is risen! Yes, Jesus Christ our Lord is risen, indeed!! Hallelujah!

In this Lenten month, we will have the 2016 Bishop's Convocation on Prayer on March 5. This will be our fourth convocation on prayer. In this convocation, we want to equip the clergy and laity to move into a deeper prayer life and transform our churches by opening ourselves to God and seeking God's will in our mis-

sion and ministries. We also want to spread the culture of deeper prayer in our churches. I am deeply grateful to those team members who planned and prepared this convocation and to all who will participate in it.

This year we invited Dr. Frederick Schmidt to be our plenary speaker. He is teaching at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary as the Ruben Job Professor of Spiritual Formation. Many of you may know that the late Bishop Ruben Job was one of our great spiritual leaders in The United Methodist Church and challenged and awakened us to the importance of a deeper spiritual life. Garrett-Evangelical Seminary founded this professorship in honor of Bishop Job's ministry. Dr. Schmidt was chosen as the first professor to fill this important position. We are very excited about having him with us on March 5. Please, not only join this event, but also spread this news and encourage others to participate in this convocation. This is my first invitation.

Another invitation is to the Conference-wide Day of Prayer/24-hour Prayer Vigil for General Conference (GC). We used to have our Conference-Wide Day of Prayer for a church renewal around May 24, Aldersgate Day, but this year we set April 10 as our day of prayer. We want to pray before General Conference in May and respond to the call for a 24-hour Prayer Vigil for GC from the Council of Bishops. I am very happy that each annual conference chose or was assigned one day for prayer for our upcoming GC. This prayer movement will last for 131 days, from Jan. 1 to May 10, the opening day of GC. The entire United Methodist Church (UMC) in the world has 131 Annual Conferences.

Our beloved UMC is facing serious challenges. While our church has been declining and becoming an aging church, the world, our mission field, is changing rapidly. We are also struggling and being divided over the

issue of human sexuality. We see and hear warning signs for the future of our denomination,

I believe this is the time to pray, the time to humbly seek the will and guidance of the risen Lord.

Please pray that only the Holy Spirit will lead and guide our GC. Pray for all delegates to lay down their agendas and open their hearts and minds to the head of our church, Jesus Christ. Pray for God to give them humility, wisdom and depth of spiritual vitality to discern our Lord's will and follow it. Fill their hearts with love for our churches that their decisions may build up our churches.

Without seeking God's help and guidance, I think our upcoming GC will face many difficulties, frustrations and disappointments. Many people are worried about the future of our UMC. Now is the time to convert these worries and fears into prayer and trust in God. Do we really believe in the power of prayer? Do we have an assurance of God's answer to our prayers?

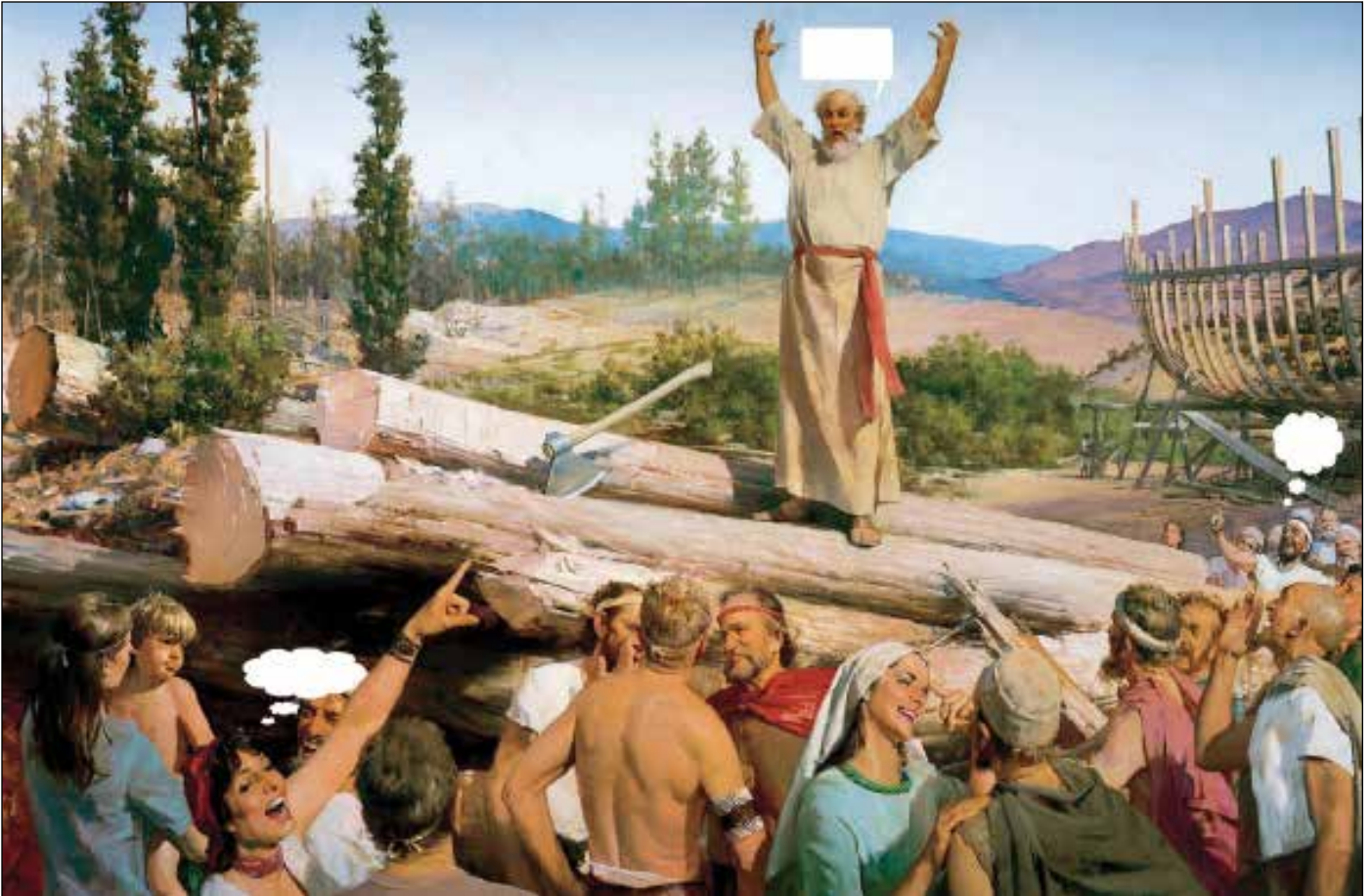
So, this is my second invitation. I invite you to join our day of prayer on April 10. Each district will soon develop a 24-hour Prayer Vigil for GC. I invite you to join this prayer movement. Please choose a time and devote some time to praying for a renewal and revival of our churches, especially for the upcoming GC. Let us seek signs that prayer is making differences! Prayer can bring a new future in our churches.

I am grateful for your consideration of these invitations. May our Good Shepherd continue to lead all our journeys. 🌹

In Christ,

Young Jin Cho

ONE LAST WORD



Bible story caption challenge

We asked our readers and our social media followers to share their thoughts and fill in the bubble about this graphic of Noah and the reactions of the crowd. Whether serious or funny, thought-provoking or philosophical, we wanted to know whether Noah was really talking about the ark or talking about that fish he caught last week. Here are the top responses!

Noah: "THIS is the length of a cubit!"

Woman: "He finally tells us..."

Man: "I think he's off — just a bit."

Noah: "We're getting THIS much snow!"

Woman: "Clearly, you forgot the bread."

Man: "Not according to the GFS Model!"

.....
Noah: "I feel like I'm talking to my kids!"

Woman: "Look! He sounds like my father!"

Man: "If you texted, you might get their attention!"

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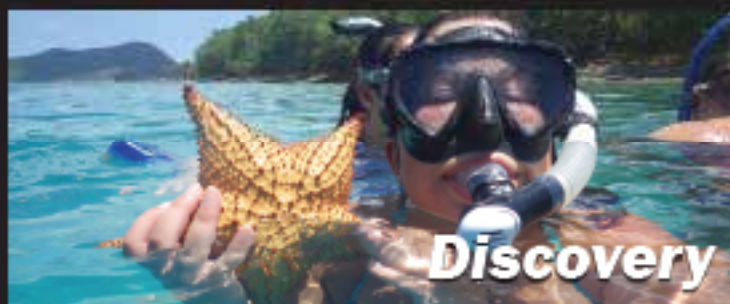
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