

Advocate



Boomer Ministries

Connecting with the



Virginia Advocate

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

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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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PILLOW TALK



Madeline Pillow
Editor

Setting aside time

Some concepts I've been thinking a lot about are meaning and intentionality. Today, it feels like time has become an even more precious commodity.

Your time is spent watching the news from around the world, working, spending time with family, taking personal time and tasks like grocery shopping. Does it ever feel like your time isn't composed of truly meaningful things? Does it feel rushed when you are trying to do something meaningful?

I'm a person who loves lists. I love organization and plotting out my days, hoping that I will check everything off my list.

As you can guess, that rarely is the case. First, this plan is not taking into account what emergencies might arise and what others might need. It also doesn't take into account whether I might wake up a particular day and realize I forgot to do an important task, I'm not well or I simply am not motivated to do my list of tasks that day.

So I finally reached the point, after several months, that I'm tired of writing out my lists each day with no hope of completing the whole thing.

I'm pushing myself to be more realistic about my time. After several months of experimentation, I know exactly what time I'm capable of waking up in the morning and what time is comfortable to go to bed.

My goal is to make this time I've carved out for myself each day a realistic attempt at fitting in work items as well as personal and social commitments, with a focus on creating meaning in my life.

In this month's feature, we look at the Boomer generation and how to start ministries for them. This is a generation who wants meaning and purpose out of life, especially in this second half of their lives.

I want meaning and purpose in my life too. In this anxiety-charged climate we have in the United States right now, have you found yourself wanting to do something different? To make a change? To help another person?

I have.

Probably every day for quite a while now. But the beautiful thing is that we can all bring meaning and purpose to our lives as well as to others.

All you have to do is take the time and set it aside. 

Until our next issue,

Madeline C. Pillow



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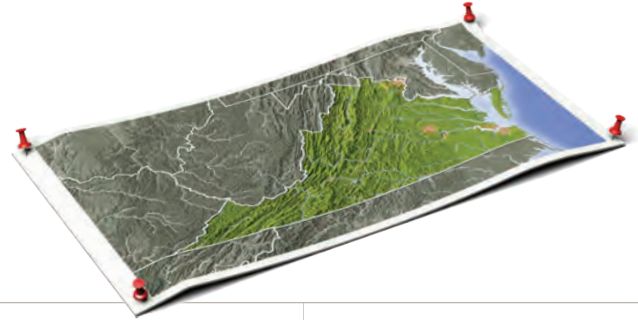
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The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

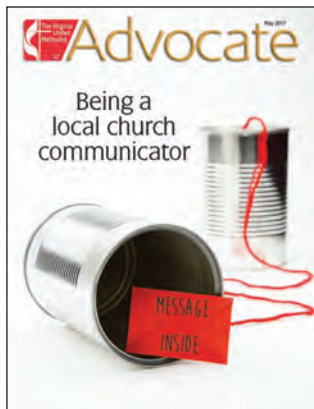


Virginia Conference Communications office staff wins five UMAC awards



Above: *Advocate* editor Madeline Pillow and conference database manager and copy editor Brenda Capen accept award from UMAC chair Mark Doyal. Photo by Matt Brodie.

Below: Graphic designer Cathryn Huff won second place for the feature design in the May 2017 issue.



By Madeline Pillow

The Virginia Conference Communications office brought home five awards from the denomination-wide communications and media awards banquet held during the annual meeting of The United Methodist Association of Communicators (UMAC), March 7-9 in Philadelphia, Pa.

The *Virginia United Methodist Advocate* won a first place award in the magazine category of the Print Publications class which includes the teamwork of editor Madeline Pillow, graphic designer

Cathryn Huff, and database manager Brenda Capen as copy editor.

The magazine also won Best of Class Robert F. Storey Award of Excellence for the *Advocate* magazine.

Nick Ruxton, conference videographer, won second place in the photo series category of the Photography class for his photo series "Faces of Cambodia" (See pictures below).

Huff and Pillow also won second place for the design of the May *Advocate* feature.

Pillow and Capen won second place for the blog "Pillow Talk."

More than 140 communicators from across the United States participated in The United Methodist Association of Communicators 45th annual meeting in Philadelphia. 📌

– Madeline Pillow is editor of the *Advocate*.



Above: Nick Ruxton, conference videographer, won second place in the photo series category of the Photography class for his photo series "Faces of Cambodia."

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

Church closes building, prepares for new kind of ministry

By Madeline Pillow

As the United Methodist denomination comes to terms with a new reality of declining attendance and aging buildings, one church in Richmond, Va., is embracing change wholeheartedly.

Boulevard UMC sold their church building on March 13, 2018, after about four years of discernment.

Sarah Wilkinson, a church trustee, said the process began when the Rev. Rachel May, Boulevard UMC pastor, sought a group within the church who would be interested in talking about the future. This group began meet-

ing at different homes for supper once a month. These discussions weren't just about the property, but also about what the church's future could look like.

Matt Hannay, trustee chair, said the discussion led the group to realize that the "real lives" component of their ministry couldn't be done with the numerous requirements for the upkeep of a large church facility.

"Simply having a building that opens its doors, simply existing is not being in ministry," he said.

May spent an inordinate amount of time working on facility maintenance – from learning about

a 100-year-old boiler to working with a constantly-flooded basement to a lack of central air and other maintenance issues.

"Are you really in ministry if the building is sapping all of your resources? Our answer was 'No we're not.' We want to be in ministry. We're called to be in ministry in this community. Boulevard is the United Methodist presence in the Fan and the Museum Districts," Hannay said.

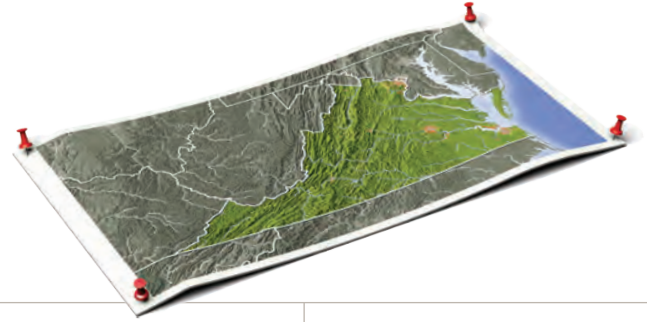
Once the church community decided to sell the property, the process began. It included targeting organizations the trustees thought might purchase the property. Then, they

(Cont. on next page)

The former Boulevard United Methodist Church building



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Easter Sunday 2018 at the church.



Communion at Boulevard UMC on Easter morning.



The Rev. Rachel May sees Boulevard UMC as a deep community. Photos by James Lee Creative, Inc.

("BOULEVARD UMC," cont. from previous page.)

ventured into the commercial real estate market, which included wading through challenging issues such as rezoning, being on the national registry of historical buildings and lack of parking. The trustees realized the natural buyer would be another church. Remnant Church was the ultimate purchaser of the building.

"We were very mindful that anything we do is going to have an impact on the surrounding community, on our neighbors, on the neighborhood. We wanted it to be as much of a positive transition as possible," Wilkinson said.

May, Wilkinson and Hannay said the season of discernment would have not worked without their transparent approach with the Boulevard congregation.

"We were very open. There were no secrets. If people had questions we would happily talk about that," said Hannay.

Through denomination-required church and charge conferences, different aspects of this process were shared, Wilkinson said. The congregation overwhelmingly was positive but asked tough questions, which the trustees welcomed.

A different kind of ministry

The congregation began worshipping at William Fox Elementary School in November 2017, also moving from the traditional 11 a.m. hour to 4 p.m.

Boulevard UMC's new home puts the congregation in the heart of the Fan District where people and families naturally gather. Even though it is a shared space, Fox Elementary has provided the congregation a chance to grow closer together. The old building seated hundreds, which left the congregation far apart from one another. The community averages 40 in worship.

"Passing the peace was really awkward some days," Wilkinson said. "I've noticed since we've been at Fox just leaps and bounds more camaraderie and more fellowship, which translates to being more welcoming when new people come in."

The elementary school space is also having an effect on the church community.

"The space we are now in surrounds us by evidence of children creating things," Hannay said. "With two young kids, I feel like I belong here and it feels great and welcoming. It's very different from what we had."

With this change, that

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

May has termed a step of “holy boldness,” has come opportunities as well as new challenges. Starting to worship at a new space while moving out of the old building was an intense undertaking.

“When a church is not a church plant and it hasn’t spent a year coming up with teams to do certain things, from a pastor’s perspective, there were things I had to do at the same time to get out of one place and into another that our community was not conditioned to think about,” May said.

May described the changes as a “rebirth” for Boulevard, with a new logo

and signage to announce the church’s presence.

“Imagine having an old house where you’re always fixing things, always taking care of something. You can’t focus on being a family,” Hannay said. “The attention of the congregation was on the space. The attention can’t be on the real life ministry piece. We’re free from that. We’re able to open ourselves to the community because of where we are now. We weren’t in a good place before to say, in good faith, ‘Come join us’ because we didn’t know our future.”

“We’re a pretty deep community. What we do is not surface level. Guests will say that. That’s the feedback. I’ve never anticipated growth by leaps and bounds,” May said.

The trustees do not foresee being at the elementary school indefinitely. Next steps include understanding the space needs and finding new property. The church is not looking to build.

“It is important to us to stay in our neighborhood, to stay in our parish. That’s something we committed ourselves to throughout this process,” said Wilkinson.

The future looks bright

The Boulevard UMC community, having shed the building that at times felt like “an albatross to the golden goose,” as Hannay put it, now sees itself at a place from which to grow.

“Are you really in ministry if the building is sapping all of your resources? Our answer was ‘No we’re not.’ We want to be in ministry.”

“I grew up largely unchurched. The building, for me, was oh, that’s the church. I came to realize it’s the people. The people haven’t changed. We’re just in a different spot that makes us a warmer, more engaged community than we were,” said Hannay.

The church embraces the opportunity to grow in their ministry with children and with the community.

“One of the challenges is to rediscover our missional identity,” May said. “But at the same time part of what our community

does is provide a gathering space for people who are already in mission or in service. So, the challenge is thinking about what is our missional identity, what are we going to be known for in outreach, but also celebrate that our people are already doing that good work and sometimes seek out Boulevard where they can get some theological framework, some clarity, for what they’re already doing that I would define as kingdom advancing.”

The trustees encourage church leaders looking to do something similar to be transparent with the congregation from the start.

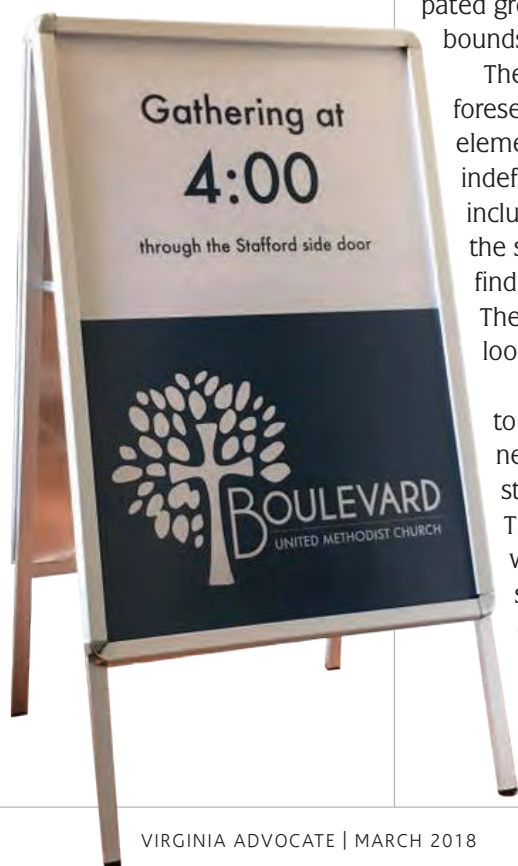
Overall the trustees are excited about the possibilities and the way they can continue to welcome others to their church.

“We’re in a dense area, in the middle of our target demographic which is the older millennials,” Hannay said. “We’ve had some new faces show up, and we continue to hope to have that happen.”

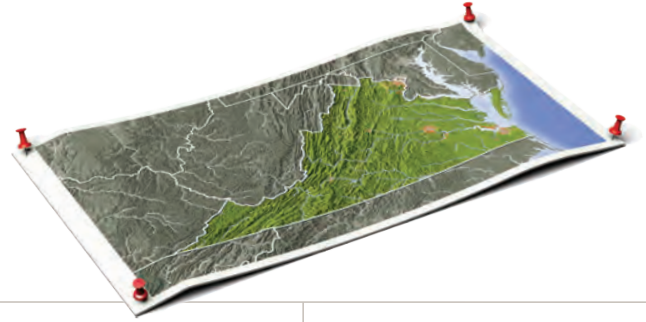
Boulevard UMC is a community, according to May, that does ministry together on a far deeper level than the surface and this change will only accentuate that fact.

“Sometimes church looks like selling the building while holding on tight to the people,” said May. 🍷

—Madeline Pillow is the editor of the Advocate.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Bowling fundraiser raises funds for district mission project

By Forrest White

As Deb Reynolds surveyed the lanes inside the bowling alley, she saw teenagers bowling alongside folks in their 70s, smelled burgers cooking on the grill and heard the sound of pins dropping and of cheers erupting from all over the place.

"We have so much fun," she said, with a chuckle.

Sounds like a typical Sunday afternoon at just about any bowling alley. But this was different.

It was a fundraiser, a

gathering to raise money for the Charlottesville Apartment Complex, a mission of the **Charlottesville District of The United Methodist Church**.

The third annual bowling fundraiser generated about \$8,200 toward the long-term goal of \$400,000 on March 18, 2018 at Kegler's Lanes in Albemarle County.

"We're raising the money to build apartments for persons with intellectual disabilities," said Reynolds, Missions Chair for the Charlottesville District.

A portion of Hinton Avenue UMC will be renovated and transformed into apartments. They will be designed for persons seeking independent living in contrast to the group home model of the past.

Eighty-one bowlers par-



ticipated this year, up from 60 in 2017.

An additional 25-30 folks showed up just to cheer on their teams, which came from eight churches within the district.

Organizers ask bowlers to raise at least \$100.

At the end of the two-hour event, there's a drawing for gift cards to places like Chick-fil-A, Starbucks and local movie theaters, a change from the first year when prizes were potted plants for the garden or a boxes of chocolate from a fine chocolatier.

The change to gift cards reflects a shift in the age range of participants. In its first year, there were a half dozen youth bowlers. This year there were about 25.

"This has truly become intergenerational," Reynolds said. "We switched to gift cards because the youth said, 'I don't want a box of chocolates.'"

A man in his 80s showed up to cheer for his church's team. A young woman bowled with her son, a kin-



Charlottesville District Superintendent Danny Kesner (left) took part in the event to raise funds for The Charlottesville Apartment Complex project. Photos courtesy of Greg Brown.



dergartener. Intergenerational, indeed.

While Reynolds knows the primary reason for the bowling fundraiser is funding the creation of the apartments, she also celebrates the bonuses that come along with the event – church members from one congregation meeting those from another, the fellowship among the generations, the thrill of bowling a strike even if you roll a gutter ball in the next three frames.

In searching for a fundraiser that would generate more than the car washes and bake sales of the world, the organizers asked themselves a question.

“What about bowling?” Reynolds said, recalling those early conversations. “Most people like to bowl. I’m not a good bowler, but it’s always a lot of fun.”

Reynolds encourages churches searching for ways to raise money for missions to give this idea a shot. They might just be bowled over by the results.

To make a donation to the Charlottesville Apartment Complex project or for more details on the bowling fundraiser, email Deb Reynolds at rynldsdeb@gmail.com.

– Forrest White is a news associate with the Virginia Conference Communications office.



Advocate

The Virginia United Methodist

EQUIPS CONNECTS INFORMS



www.vaumc.org/Advocate

EVENTS



MAY

Conference Immigration Summit May 19, 2018, Ramsey Memorial UMC, Richmond

Bishop Sharma D. Lewis formed the Virginia Conference Committee on Immigration Outreach in 2017 to help the conference communicate the Gospel as it relates to immigrants and refugees. The committee also seeks to help the conference understand issues related to immigrants and refugees and how to advocate for them. In partnership with the General Board of Church and Society, Just Neighbors and the South-eastern Jurisdiction Hispanic Caucus, the committee is sponsoring an Immigration Summit in the Richmond area to educate and empower those who want to be in ministry to immigrants and refugees. The planned agenda (full agenda available on conference website) will start with worship at 10 a.m., a discussion about the immigration process, current realities and breakout sessions focusing on topics such as advocacy following lunch. Attendance to the summit is free of charge, and a boxed lunch can be purchased at the time of registration. To register and for more details visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org. Additional resources for those who want to be in ministry to immigrants and refugees are also available at the conference website.

JUNE

Randolph-Macon High School Youth Theology Institute June 23-July 1, 2018, Randolph- Macon College, Ashland

Convergence, a High School Youth Theology Institute on Faith and Science, will be held June 23-July 1, 2018,

at Randolph-Macon College in Ashland. The nine-day, on-campus experience is for inquisitive high school students of any Christian denomination interested in reading challenging texts, hearing presentations from college and seminary faculty, and enjoying hands-on experiences in the place where science and faith come together. Students receive a \$1,000 scholarship to Randolph-Macon for each year of *Convergence*. For additional information and to apply, visit convergence.rmc.edu.

JULY

Shenandoah University Youth Theology Institute

June 23-July 1, 2018, Shenandoah
University, Winchester

Shenandoah University's Youth Theology Institute is an intensive two-week program designed to help rising high school sophomores, juniors and seniors become better leaders through deep and thought-provoking experiences. During the course of the two weeks, daily rhythms of academic study and religious reflection will be balanced with immersive experiences. Students will be exposed to different faith traditions, service opportunities and a mixture of rural, wilderness and urban contexts at Shenandoah's Winchester campus, its Shenandoah River Campus at Cool Spring and the Wesley Theological Seminary campus in Washington, D.C.

The Youth Theology Institute is also a 3-credit undergraduate course taught by engaging religion faculty and focused on exploring Christian voca-

tion in the 21st century. Upon their successful completion of the program, students receive credit for the course at Shenandoah University.

Most importantly, the Youth Theology Institute will help students discern their vocations in the midst of our ever-changing world. Contact the Director of the Shenandoah University Youth Theology Institute the Rev. Colleen Hallagan Preuninger at (540) 665-5453 or cpreunin@su.edu. Find more information and apply at www.su.edu/campus-life/spiritual-life/institute-for-church-professions/youth-theology-institute/.

SEPTEMBER

Embrace 2018: Virginia Clergywomen's Transformational Event

Sept. 25-26, 2018, Virginia Cross-
ings Conference Center, Glen Allen

Embrace 2018 is the first gathering of the Virginia clergywomen in 30 years. Join for two days of worship, study and community. Engage in hands on missions, show off your skills in a Talent/No Talent Show and participate in panel discussions on change and growth within your own ministry context. But most importantly, connect with other clergywomen and claim a renewed sense of call. Be inspired. Be nourished. Be embraced. Continuing Education grants from \$200 to \$400 are available to part-time and full-time clergy under appointment by the Virginia Conference. The application form is available at www.vaumc.org/ClergyContinuingEducation. If you are submitting an application for grant funding, please choose Invoice as your payment method. The deadline for in-residence registration is Wednesday, August 15, 2018. You may register as a commuter, and secure your own lodging arrangements,

The *Advocate* magazine publishing schedule requires that information be compiled sooner than the month for which it is published. For events you are interested in, please contact those listed for the events as points of contact for the most up-to-date information and for questions.

after this date. For pricing and more registration information, visit www.eiseverywhere.com/ehome/index.php?eventid=320185&


NOVEMBER

Volunteers in Mission trip to Israel and Palestine

Nov. 5-17, 2018

A Volunteers In Mission Trip to Israel and Palestine will be taking place Nov. 5 - 17, 2018. This second VIM experience is sponsored by the Virginia Conference Board of Church and Society, and will be led again by certified VIM team leaders, the Rev. John Copenhaver and the Rev. Steve Jones.

This trip will focus on learning and service with Palestinian Christians; but it will include visits to religious sites in Jerusalem, Nazareth, Bethlehem and Hebron. There will also be opportunities to learn more about the lives of all people in Israel and Palestine. A similar VIM trip took place in February 2017.

Interested persons should contact either leader; an itinerary and inclusive cost are available. The Board of Church and Society will be providing possible scholarship funds for young adults. Please contact John Copenhaver at jcopenha@su.edu or Steve Jones at stevejones@vaumc.org to learn more. 

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For more information: www.holidaytours.agentstudio.com or Lvdrotts@gmail.com.

EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY



Do you know why we are called United Methodists?

By Fran Coode Walsh

There have been many nicknames for the band of believers who followed the lead of John and Charles Wesley in their early ministry in England: Enthusiasts, Sacramentarians, Bible Moths, Methodists. Their methods, values, and tradition laid the groundwork for what would become The United Methodist Church, 240 years after John and Charles Wesley began their Holy Club at college.

On April 23, 1968, Bishop Reuben

H. Mueller, of The Evangelical United Brethren Church, and Bishop Lloyd C. Wicke, of The Methodist Church, joined hands at the General Conference in Dallas, Texas. They declared “Lord of the Church, we are united in Thee, in Thy Church and now in The United Methodist Church.”

A new denomination was born and a new logo was created to represent this coming together. A traditional symbol—the cross—was linked with a single flame with dual tongues of fire. This ties The United Methodist Church to God through Christ (cross) and



Lay adult members Emma Tousant of the Evangelical United Brethren and J.P. Zepeda of the Methodist Church shake hands as part of the uniting ceremony that marked the formation of The United Methodist Church in 1968. This moment of celebration was years in the making.

Photo courtesy of Archives and History.

EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY

“Lord of the church,
we are united in thee,
in thy church, and
now in The United
Methodist Church.
Amen.”

the Holy Spirit (flame). Most church members know that the symbol is a sign that “this is a place where United Methodists gather.” But not everyone recognizes how, and why, it is important to use the denomination’s full name.

The moniker is a merger of the names of the mostly German Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Methodist Church. Not using the denomination’s full name can feel hurtful to some members.

The Rev. Alfred T. Day, head of the Archives and History agency, noted: “If your lineage to become a United Methodist today has been through the Methodist Episcopal strain, you’re in the majority because the United Brethren and the Evangelical Associations by numbers are much smaller groups. So it’s easy for you in the majority to think of yourself as Methodist and claim that heritage. But if you’re from the minority—and then that small heritage is combined into the larger heritage—and the only way that you get to claim your name is the word ‘United’ and somebody drops that name off, that kind of leaves you without a name, that kind of forgets your history.”

Another meaning of united in the name speaks to the fuller inclusion of black churches. Even though the Methodist Episcopal Church had re-united

in 1939 after being divided on the issue of slavery, African American congregations were still segregated into a separate Central Jurisdiction. In 1968, that segregation ended.

Day explained, “The United name also represents a coming together of black Methodists and white Methodists in the same conference, with the same preachers, with the same bishops, as opposed to segregated conferences as well. So if you leave the name ‘United’ off you’re leaving off both a significant piece and powerful part of the naming of who we are.”

That newly-formed United Methodist Church became one of the largest Protestant churches in the world with 12.4 million members today. And the cross and flame logo created in 1968 still represents that body, a body united in the goal to make disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world.

“Have you ever typed ‘untied’ Methodist Church?” asks Day. “There isn’t that much difference on the keyboard between ‘untied’ and ‘United’ Methodist Church, but boy, oh boy, are there miles of difference in the story of how we get from one to the other.”

Happy Birthday to The United Methodist Church. 🕊

— Fran Coode Walsh is Director, Member Communications at United Methodist Communications in Nashville.



Celebrating
50
YEARS
transforming
THE WORLD

The United Methodist Church was officially formed on April 23, 1968 with the unification of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical Brethren Church, along with the dissolution of the Central Jurisdiction, a segregated group of African American congregations.

In 1968 the merger of 10.3 million Methodists and 750,000 members of the EUB Church resulted in one of the largest Protestant denominations in the world. Flags from 53 countries testified to the breadth of the new reality.

As we celebrate this anniversary throughout 2018, especially around **Heritage Sunday on May 20**, go to www.umcom.org/umc50 for the latest resources to help your congregation remember this important anniversary of our church.

Who are the



born between 1946 and 1964



99%



15

Boomer Ministries: What are they?

By Madeline Pillow

Who are the Boomers?

The Baby Boomer generation was born between 1946-1964 during a spike in fertility following World War II. This generation witnessed the counter culture of the 1960s, the Vietnam War, the threat of nuclear war and new age spiritualism.

According to the latest U.S. Census, the number of people 65 and above will hit 56 million in 2020 and will grow to approximately 79 million by 2035. In terms of records, this is the first time in history that such a large number of people over the age of 65 are actively engaged in life.

In order for churches to attract Boomers, churches need to understand them. This generation is a mixed-bag; some attended church and stayed, others left. Some learned how to be disciples, and some are still exploring what that means.

Through their sheer size, the Boomer generation has changed society in a number of ways, from being the most educated generation to their buy-in of a consumer culture. Did you know Boomers are the greatest consumers of technology?

Martha Stokes, director of Church and Community Relations at Pinnacle Living in Glen Allen, Va., has taught about Boomer ministries at Lay Servant Academy. She shared that this generation is searching for significance and is looking

for opportunities for spiritual formation.

It is important that churches understand the distinction between the Boomer generation and older adults, the Builder generation. What experts have come to learn is that churches often group the two together. But in order to reach these generations, an understanding of each group's goals and needs are integral.

Creating a Boomer ministry

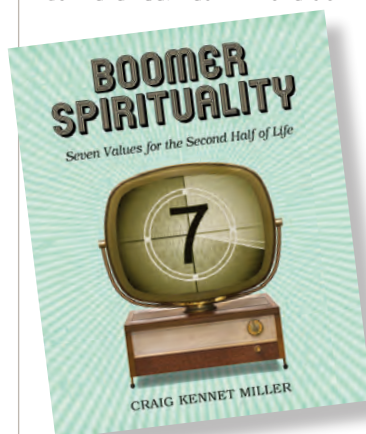
So now that we know more about the boomers, how would one go about creating a boomer ministry?

Stokes has shared in past presentations that a church should first look at their current adult faith formation programming and compare it to their own local community demographics.

One service that local churches can use is MissionInsite which is free, with unlimited access through the Virginia Conference. Learn more at www.vaumc.org/missioninsite.

Churches should identify life issues and spiritual needs of their local congregation as well as the larger community.

Then they should design, implement and market an innovative values-based faith formation or disciple-making plan that might at first glance seem unconventional.



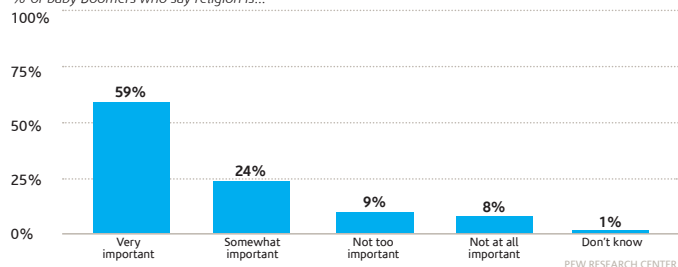
Spiritual values of the Boomer generation

In his book, *Boomer Spirituality: Seven Values for the Second Half of Life*, Craig Kennet Miller shares that the Boomer generation has seven values that characterize it. These

ACCORDING TO PEW RESEARCH CENTER:

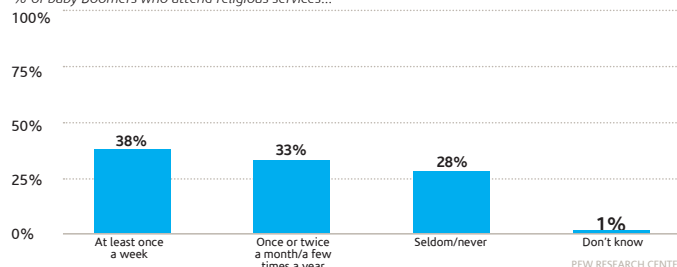
Importance of religion in one's life among baby Boomers

% of baby Boomers who say religion is...



Attendance at religious services among baby Boomers

% of baby Boomers who attend religious services...





values include brokenness, loneliness, rootlessness and self-seeking, which represent Boomers' spiritual roots. Other values are godliness, supernaturalism and wholeness, representing their unique search for God.

Miller, who is a staff member with The General Board of Discipleship, shared in his book that during the Boomer generation, the structure of the traditional family has fallen by the wayside. For the church that celebrates family life, this shift makes this organization one of the most affected.

The Boomer generation is also facing the decision of how best to care for their aging parents whether in-home care, a retirement or rest home or having them move in with them. The decision is not an easy one.


Miller said, in the Boomer's second half of life, churches will have a second chance to connect with them. But churches will have to meet the Boomers in their questions about meaning and purpose and teach them how to pursue God.

Boomers inside and outside the church

In an article, the Rev. Dr. William Randolph, former Director of Aging and Older Adult Ministries for Discipleship Ministries, said that Boomers inside the church are asking themselves, "What does the church have to offer me?" Boomers ultimately want to know that their time and participation in church will matter, Randolph said.

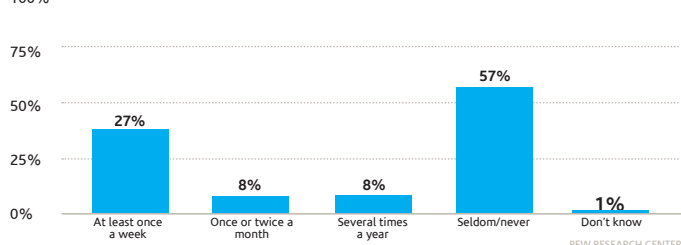
Randolph further shared that Boomers outside of the church might be wondering where the church is making an impact on the outside world.

By combining these two perspectives and their corresponding questions, Randolph said you might end up with different questions such as, "Where can I serve in the church to help it make a difference in society?" or "Where can the church make a difference in my life?"

Read more of this feature to learn how individuals and churches are embarking on Boomer ministries. 

— Madeline Pillow is editor of the Advocate.

Frequency of participation in prayer scripture study or religious education groups among Boomers
% of baby Boomers who attend prayer group...



Making Jesus accessible

Did you catch "Jesus Christ Superstar," which aired on Easter Sunday 2018? It was a restaging of the musical by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice that is loosely based on the Gospel account of the last week in the life of Jesus Christ.

In his book, Craig Kennet Miller shared that the original rock opera was the "most important religious event" in the early 1970s, asking questions that boomers at the time were asking about their faith and Jesus.



Boomer ministry inspires at local church

By Forrest White

At Bethany UMC in Rustburg, a small town in the shadows of Lynchburg, a concept rooted in the Wesleyan tradition resonated so much with the Boomers of the church that it spread to other age groups as well.

It is what the Rev. Jennifer Vestal Moore, Bethany's pastor, simply calls "Table Church."

It began in the summer of 2016, with church members gathering at a local restaurant for lunch, in part for fellowship but also for another reason.

"To show everyone that church members actually like each other," Moore said, with a laugh. "And that we want to support our community."

But, soon, there was something much deeper, Table Church.

"The conversation at the table revolves around the question, 'How is it with your soul?'" Moore said.

With the answers to that question comes accountability, she said, taking Bethany members back to our Methodist roots, to John Wesley's vision for small groups as a place for accountability.

"Sunday mornings in churches are very much, 'Hi, how are

you?' and out the door at 12:02," Moore said.

"When we get together for Table Church, we really get to know each other. We develop a deeper discipleship with God and a deeper relationship with each other. We have found out the most wonderful things about each other, things we never would have found out on a Sunday morning or at a church fellowship dinner. A side blessing is we've gotten to know each other's gifts."

In addition to the centering question, Table Church also includes a time for members to share about specific needs. How can the church help you? Do you need someone to cut your grass? Do you need someone to bring you a meal after that upcoming surgery? Do you know of someone else with a need that might be met by a person gathered at the table?

Each gathering always includes a time of prayer – "right there in the middle of the restaurant," Moore said – as those attending open up about their joys and concerns. There may also be a couple of announcements about the larger life of Bethany UMC.

The original "Lunch Bunch" evolved out of something that wasn't working so well – coffee with the pastor. Only the women of the church attended. Once the gathering spot changed to a local restaurant, husbands joined their wives,



Churches around the country have found success with the concept of church around the table. Photo courtesy of Jennifer Vestal Moore.

and retirees whose wives were still working came as well.

Out of Bethany's first Table Church, primarily for Boomers, came similar gatherings for young adults, for those already meeting for Bible study, and for working adults and families. One group travels monthly to Danville for "Mariachi Monday" at a Mexican restaurant, where they meet up with the elderly mother of a church member to minister to her needs as well.

Moore, who also serves as chaplain at Randolph College, calls herself an organizer by nature.

"I am such a planner, so organized and detailed," she said. "In worship planning I think, 'We need to do this at 8, this at 8:05, this at 8:15.' For Table Church, we don't come with an agenda. We know we're going to eat. We know we're going to pray. We know we're going to ask 'How is it with your soul?' But we have allowed the Holy Spirit to take hold of these groups and drive the conversation. There is never any lull."

Churches around the country have found success with the concept of church around the table, where members sit face to face, sometimes sharing Holy Communion and always seeking to live into a deeper relationship first with God, then with each other. This concept offers hope for churches facing an uncertain future because of dwindling membership.

In 2013, North Grafton UMC in Massachusetts had only five members. They voted to close and sell the church building. UMC leaders sent a church planter and, soon, Simple Church was born.

If you visit their website – www.simpleumc.org – you'll find lots of good insight into this church, how it supports itself, what United Methodists believe and an invitation, from Zach Kerzee, the founding pastor:

"Simple Church is a network of dinner churches across the country with dozens of affiliate congregations and two branches in Massachusetts. Want to join us for dinner? We'll set a place for you."

Moore said she believes Bethany's Table Church concept would work well at churches of all sizes.

When asked what one piece of advice she would give to church leaders interested in giving it a try, she doesn't hesitate.

"Invite the Holy Spirit and allow the Holy Spirit to lead."

You can reach the Rev. Jennifer Vestal Moore via email at jenmo7@aol.com. 🍷

– Forrest White is a news associate with the Virginia Conference Communications office.

Myths attributed to Boomers

There are many myths often attributed to Boomers. Here are just five such myths:

- 1. Boomers are all alike. FALSE.** Boomers are a diverse, multi-faceted and complex generation.
- 2. Boomers are all college educated. FALSE.** While Boomers have the greatest rate of higher education, more than 25 percent of Boomer men and 23 percent of Boomer women have at least a college degree, 75 percent do not have degrees.
- 3. Boomers are spoiled, self-centered, and materialistic. FALSE.** While Boomers have always acted in ways that are contrary to the behavior of the Builder Generation that preceded them, Boomers consider family and friends the most important and satisfying aspects of their lives.
- 4. All Boomers went to Woodstock. FALSE.** Approximately 500,000 people attended this famous musical event in Bethel, New York, in August 1969, a very small fraction of the total generation.
- 5. Boomers are not interested in faith concerns or spirituality. FALSE.** Boomers are looking for ways to find meaning and purpose in their lives. They are open to religious and spiritual engagement.

– Discipleship Ministries of The United Methodist Church





Mission trips offer way for Boomers to show active Christian love

By Forrest White

When she retired in 2015, healthy and strong, Cheryl Dashiell considered the blessings of her life and felt a call to spend more time serving others.

A lifelong United Methodist, she heard of the denomination's short-term mission arm – United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) – only shortly before retiring. Her church in Manassas, Buckhall UMC, was small and sent youth mission teams, but not adult teams.

When she discovered the Virginia Conference was engaged in disaster recovery ministry – helping survivors of the 2016 tornado outbreak – Dashiell reached out in search of a team to join.

The Conference connected her with a team from nearby Grace UMC Manassas, and she joined its members to serve in Tappahannock in the fall of 2016.

Dashiell was hooked.



She had found a way to live out her calling. “Besides getting the satisfaction of helping others, I met some wonderful people, those we served as well as the members of the team,” Dashiell said.

She joined another church team serving in the Evergreen community in 2017 and completed UMVIM team leader training soon thereafter.

Back at Buckhall UMC, Dashiell enthusiastically shared her experiences with the congregation.

Interest grew and, this spring, she led a team of 11 from her home church to Virginia Beach to help with recovery in areas hit hard by Hurricane Matthew's flooding waters in October 2016.

With one exception, members of that team shared something in common with Dashiell – they are so-called Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964.

Boomer ministry: the desire to share blessings

It is not uncommon for Boomers to fill many of the roster spots on adult short-term mission teams.

But it isn't simply a matter of having more time or, perhaps, more resources for this generation of servants.

“I think others have experienced what I have – the realization that we've been incredibly blessed and a desire to share our blessings with others,” Dashiell said.

“When you're younger, you don't always have that perspective.”

At Cave Spring UMC Roanoke, Boomers fill about 90-95 percent of the church's adult mission teams, which usually focus on disaster response, according to Terry Altizer, co-chair of the church's mission design team.

“Most of the volunteers are retired,” Altizer said. “This is a way to feel meaningful again. It gives personal satisfaction when helping others. It keeps people active and their minds alert ... It provides opportunities to learn new skills from others.”

Another Manassas church – St. Thomas UMC – has a thriving short-term mission ministry for adults.

It, too, resonates with the church's Boomers, offering them the chance to see God at work in and through their lives.

“We witness the power of God guiding our team,” veteran team leader Cliff Farrar of St. Thomas said. “Letting God lead us has always served us well. We accomplish so much more than we would be able to do individually. I have never had a team member who didn't feel that our time and effort was worthwhile.”



As churches seek ways to be in ministry with and to the Boomer generation, short-term mission ministry gives adults opportunities to practice Christian love in action. A verse of Scripture central to the UMVIM ministry is I John 3:18: "Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."

In addition, mission teams provide members a chance to grow as disciples, whether they are traveling across town, around the world or to all places in between.

The latest edition of the UMVIM team leader handbook from the Southeastern Jurisdiction added a sixth best practice – Spiritual Formation – to five nuts-and-bolts practices listed in previous editions, acknowledging the importance of being intentional about growing in faith.

The handbook reads, in part: "Embarking on a mission should encompass a spiritual journey for you and your team that requires prayer and devotion before, during, and after you travel."

Ways to serve on mission trips

Construction remains the most common work task of short-term mission teams; however, domestic and international teams also serve in areas such as: public health/medical missions, Bible school/evangelism, education, agriculture, fresh water and, of course, disaster recovery.

Whatever the team's charge, there is almost always a way for you to serve, even if you want to join a construc-

tion team and you don't know one end of a hammer from the other. For instance, UMVIM folks can tell you ... If you're fortunate enough to recruit someone to be in charge of meals, that person is always team MVP.

Betty Whitehurst knows church missions as well as anyone, having been a missionary in Cuba and Chile and an advocate for and trainer of both short and long-term missionaries at the conference and jurisdictional levels, along with her husband the Rev. Walt Whitehurst.

She tells the story of a woman, nearly 90, who served with a construction team.

"People asked, 'What on earth do you do?'" Whitehurst said. "She said, 'My job is to sit on the porch and rock the babies.' You never know what's going to be needed."

Indeed, short-term missions, whatever the task, are always about the people first and the project second.

Farrar traces his love for serving back nearly 30 years to Hurricane Hugo, which slammed into the South Carolina coast in September 1989. He traveled to Charleston to do some repair work on his sister's home.

"She volunteered my help to others in the area!"

These days, you'll find Farrar looking for ways to help others and organizing teams to serve, often in areas affected by storms.

He plans to keep doing so, as long as he is able.

"I am a firm believer that works are a part of faith and that you cannot have one without the other," he said.

Whitehurst has heard a common refrain from those who found their way to short-term missions as older adults.

"They say, 'Look what we've missed out on,'" she said.

"Walt and I often hear, 'I got so much more out of it than I gave.'"

Altizer encourages those who haven't yet been part of a short-term mission team to do so, even if it means joining a team from another church as Dashiell did twice before leading a team from her church.

"Short-term missions provide meaningful opportunities for reaching out to our community, the world and to each other by being Christ's hands and feet in service," Altizer said. "In doing so, God reaches back and touches our very own souls."

For more information on United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) and the role short-term missions can play with Boomers of your church, contact Forrest White (forrestwhite@vaumc.org) who also serves as UMVIM Coordinator for the conference. 📧

– Forrest White is a news associate with the Virginia Conference Communications office.

LIVING THE WORD



On her Twitter profile, Martha Stokes describes herself as “a member of Generation Jones trying to figure this UMC faith thing out.” As a GenJoneser, she is a one of those latter half Boomers who is yearning to live a life of faith that matters. Martha serves as the Director of Church and Community Relations for Pinnacle Living. She and her husband, Steve, are part of the church family at Shady Grove UMC in Glen Allen.

May 6, 2018

Psalm 89, Psalm 96, Psalm 100-101, Psalm 105, Psalm 132

“Called to Sing of God’s Love”

Three things stand out in today’s readings from the Book of Psalms. The first is the reminder over and over of God’s faithfulness to every generation. From the opening verse of Psalm 89 to the closing lines of Psalm 132, we hear the psalmists continually call upon the steadfast love and strength of God, a faithfulness that will see us across life’s journeys from youth to elderhood.

Our call to sing that story is the second thing that catches my attention: to sing of God’s steadfast love, loyalty, justice; to sing a new song; to make a joyful noise and to come into God’s presence and go forth with singing. The music of our faith is important to me. I’ve heard my mother tell people many times that I’ve been singing in the church choir since I was in the womb.

My earliest memories of church are of standing in the pew in my little black patent leather shoes so that I could sing the hymns next to my grandmother. I wanted so badly to be big enough to sing with my daddy in the choir. My greatest praise and most heartfelt prayer often are expressed through song. When it comes to our singing to God, the message of the Psalms is clear: we are not to keep this story of God’s faithfulness and love to ourselves. We’re called to sing and in this case, it doesn’t matter whether we can carry a tune or read a note of music. It’s the song of God’s love in our hearts.

Finally, the word “ALL”: all generations, all of creation, all day long, all the earth, all God’s wonderful works. How incredible is God’s providence and grace in our lives! How incomprehensible is God’s abundance and generosity! How inconceivable is God’s diversity in our world, yet we often fail to acknowledge the marvelous bounty.

May we continually sing the story of God’s steadfast love and faithfulness to all people of every generation.

May 13, 2018

2 Samuel 11-12, 1 Chronicles 20

Are You Willing?

The stories from David’s life remind us that one of our most loved Old Testament heroes was not flawless. In fact, many of the most loved stories from the Bible prove to us that God can use us to do God’s work even in our times of greatest weaknesses. Despite his skill and diplomacy, there were signs of crisis in the political world under David’s rule. Along comes a prophet, Nathan, to confront David with simple but powerful words and voice the consequences of his behavior.

Each of us has our own sins that we carry throughout our lives. Too often we want to only remember the times when we are heroic, full of life and basking in the spotlight. We want to live a life of faith like the young courageous underdog David who took a simple rock and slayed a giant. We don’t want to face the times of failure, the moments when we recognize that our decisions and actions may not glorify God.

In those times we have to remember that there is grace. A loving God cares for us no matter how undeserving we may be. Yet, there are consequences: our Wesleyan heritage teaches that this grace comes with a price. God will not save us unless we respond to show that same unconditional love and model the teachings of Jesus in our world today.

One of the first “religion” books I purchased for college still sits on my bookshelf. *Remember Who You Are: Baptism, a Model for Christian Life* (1980) was written by a young Assistant Professor of Liturgy and Worship at Duke Divinity School by the name of William H. Willimon. A line in his chapter on “The Cleansing Bath” remains with me to this day: “Our sin is so entrenched within us, even the best of us, that only a lifetime of change will root it out.”

We always have more repenting to do, more turning back to God. We will always need the truth-speaking Nathans in our lives to guide us. We must also recognize that the process is lifelong. As Willimon also wrote, we “continue



to have some more repenting to do, some more letting go and letting God do God's work in us." Are you willing?

May 20

Psalm 5, Psalm 38, Psalm 41-42
One Affliction after Another

Country music burst into mainstream music when I was a child in the 1970s. One of the defining songs was written by Joe South and sung by Lynn Anderson.

*"I beg your pardon
I never promised you a rose
garden
Along with the sunshine
There's got to be a little rain
sometimes
I beg your pardon
I never promised you a rose
garden."*

The spirituality of Boomers was shaken during our youth and young adult years by war, societal unrest and economic downturn. Even today, we search for significance and values in a complex world.

Many of us were entertained by youth ministries rather than being taught how to be disciples. Some have never healed from responses of the church, or a lack of response, to the issues of the world as we came into adulthood. We have questions about meaning and purpose as we age that require hard inner work. Some of us are mature disciples, long active in our local churches, who don't see how the church is helping us to continue to grow spiritually. We long for a safe place to ask questions about our faith, lament what is happening in our lives and world, confess our weaknesses, plead to God for guidance and healing.

Today's Psalms are petitions to God for these same things. The psalmists

describe one affliction after another, begging God for help. These Psalms encourage us to be honest and open with God. I will confess that many times I cry out to God that I am lost. All I have are questions. For me, it all comes down to being strong enough in my faith to struggle with the questions, all the while realizing that there may be no definitive answers. I have to be secure enough in my faith to allow my understanding of God and what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ in the world today to grow and change. So... maybe the defining song of our generation now is not "Rose Garden" but "Hymn of Promise":

*"...in our doubt there is believing
...unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see."*

*(Words and music by Natalie Sleeth, 1986,
United Methodist Hymnal #707)*

May 27

1 Chronicles 26-29, Psalm 127
Singing of God's Faithfulness


God works through people in unique and amazing ways to impact our faith journeys. Whether we label ourselves gatekeepers or officers, civic officials or concerned citizens, we are called to build God's kingdom here on earth.

As I write, I'm hearing the advertisements for *Jesus Christ Superstar Live* airing Easter Sunday. Suddenly I'm back in the junior high class at Fieldale United Methodist, Danville District. Mrs. Brown was my Sunday School teacher. She was one of those prim and proper ladies who seemed "very old" to me, but based upon her age when she died, Mrs. Brown must have been only about 50 when she was my Sunday School teacher. Her courage in reaching out to a group of teenag-

ers and making church relevant to our world will never be forgotten.

Mrs. Brown knew that several of us in our class loved music, and that our lives could be impacted by making the connection to our Christian values. *Jesus Christ Superstar* was one of the most popular Broadway musicals and movies of the time. Leading up to Easter, she went through the musical with us, making the connection to the Gospel story so that we would understand. She clearly demonstrated the courage to buck tradition with a bunch of teenagers — doing something in church to help us stay connected at a time when many youth fall away.

I'm sure her actions as she cast aside the standard Cokesbury curriculum were the major point of discussion at more than one meeting of the Council on Ministries. But I stayed in church because of people like Mrs. Brown.

Just as the chapter 29 of 1 Chronicles closes with a summary of David's reign, how will the summary of your life be recorded? We have the opportunity — no, we have the mandate — to make sure the story of our lives of faith are ingrained in the hearts of the generations that come behind us. No matter what our age, our mission is the same: to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We might have to change our titles, adapt our roles or even step outside our traditions and comfort zones to make it happen, but it will happen. Hopefully the first thing that people will remember about us is that we lived in the certainty of God's steadfast love and faithfulness. 

The Living Word devotions will coincide with the 2018 Bible Reading Challenge from Bishop Lewis. Find the May schedule on pg. 27. Find all 2018 readings at www.vaumc.org.

CLERGY & DIACONAL



DEATHS

William Lansing Ayres, 88, a United Methodist minister for 40 years, died March 22, 2018 in Blacksburg, Va. His last appointment was at Sudley UMC. He retired in 1991.

Edith Flippo Durrett, 83, of Ashland, Virginia, died March 11. She was married to the **Rev. James Henry Durrett**, who preceded her in death.

Jewell Fannin Haddock Blackburn, 96, died March 8 in Jacksonville, Fla. She was married to **Bishop Robert M. Blackburn**, bishop of the North Carolina and Virginia conferences of The United Methodist Church, who preceded her in death.

Irene Jones Gravitt of South Boston, Virginia, died March 4 at the age of 85. She was a member of Main Street United Methodist Church and attended Mt. Cana United Methodist Church. Survivors include her daughter Dianne and son-in-law **the Rev. A. Randolph "Randy" Holmes** who serves at Mt. Cana UMC.

Elinor Marion (Fall) Willis, 91, of Stuarts Draft, Va., died March 3, 2018 in Fishersville. She was married to the **Rev. David S. Willis Jr.**, who preceded her in death.

The Rev. Ray Hazlett, a United Methodist pastor retired from the West New York Conference died March 16,

2018. He was the father of **the Rev. Tim Hazlett**, pastor of Oaklette UMC in Chesapeake.

Bill Gentry, husband of the **Rev. Kay Barstow Gentry**, died March 5, 2018 at UVA hospital. The Rev. Gentry is the pastor of Mt. Tabor UMC in Harrisonburg.

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Notice: The *Advocate*, due to the increasing number of entries for this section each month, will only publish death notices for individuals rather than full obituaries. To have additional information published, please contact the *Advocate* office at advocate@vaumc.org or mail to c/o Communications Office, P.O. Box 5606 Glen Allen, VA 23058-5606. The Communications Office receives obituaries from a number of sources, but to ensure we receive a particular notice, please contact us with copy.

ONE LAST WORD

AND THEN GOD answered:
“WRITE THIS.

WRITE WHAT YOU SEE.
WRITE IT OUT IN

**BIG
BLOCK
LETTERS**

SO THAT IT CAN BE read
on the run.

THIS vision-message is a
witness
POINTING TO WHAT'S
coming.

IT aches for the coming
IT CAN HARDLY wait!

AND IT DOESN'T LIE.
IF IT seems SLOW in
coming, wait.

IT'S on ITS way.
IT WILL come RIGHT on

time.

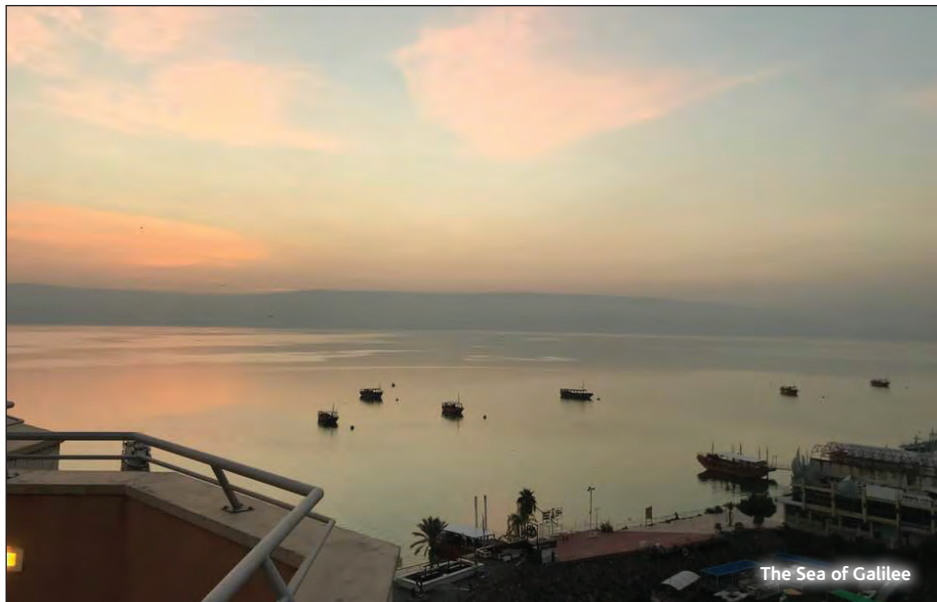
HABAKKUK 2:2-3 THE MESSAGE



FROM THE BISHOP



Take a look at
Bishop Lewis'
journey to the
Holy Land.



The Sea of Galilee



Anointing tour guide Mr. Jimmy



With sister Leontyne Buggs



Bishop Lewis in Masada



Bishop Lewis praying at the Western Wall



The Garden of Gethsemane



The Church of St. Catherine of Alexandria

Bishop's Bible Challenge readings for May

May 1	2 Sam. 5:1-10, 1 Chron. 11-12
May 2	Psalm 133
May 3	Psalm 106-107
May 4	2 Sam. 5:11-6:23, 1 Chron. 13-16
May 5	Psalm 1-2, 15, 22-24, 47, 68
May 6	Psalm 89, 96, 100-101, 105, 132
May 7	2 Samuel 7, 1 Chronicles 17
May 8	Psalm 25, 29, 33, 36, 39
May 9	2 Samuel 8-9, 1 Chronicles 18
May 10	Psalm 50, 53, 60, 75
May 11	2 Sam. 10, 1 Chron. 19, Ps. 20
May 12	Psalm 65-67, Psalm 69-70
May 13	2 Sam. 11-12, 1 Chron. 20
May 14	Psalm 32, 51, 86, 122
May 15	2 Samuel 13-15
May 16	Psalm 3-4, 12-13, 28, 55
May 17	2 Samuel 16-18
May 18	Psalm 26, 40, 58, 61-62 64
May 19	2 Samuel 19-21
May 20	Psalm 5, 38, 41-42
May 21	2 Samuel 22-23, Psalm 57
May 22	Psalm 95, Psalm 97-99
May 23	2 Sam. 24, 1 Chron. 21-22, Psalm 30
May 24	Psalm 108-110
May 25	1 Chronicles 23-25
May 26	Psalm 131, 138-139, 143-145
May 27	1 Chron. 26-29, Psalm 127
May 28	Psalm 111-118
May 29	1 Kings 1-2, Psalm 37, 71, 94
May 30	Psalm 119:1-88
May 31	1 Kings 3-4, 2 Chron. 1, Ps. 72

ENRICHING
LIFE'S
JOURNEY

CELEBRATING
70
YEARS



Celebrating 70 Years of Enriching Life's Journey.

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