

Advocate

LIVES OF SERVICE: Ministries Outside the Church's walls



Advocate survey inside.

Connecting with the



Virginia Advocate

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

FROM THE EDITOR



Madeline Pillow
Editor

More than
Sunday

So, there's this thing that we all do on Sunday morning—it's church.

But as Christians one of the worst things we can do is act as if attending one service on the same day every week is all that we should expect from ourselves.

Church is where we fuel up at the gas station and rejuvenate for the journey of the next week: stretch out our muscles before getting back on the road (prayer), enjoy good company and conversation while on the road (fellowship) and grab some Cheetos for the road (pastor's words of wisdom).

But we shouldn't hit cruise control when leaving our churches on Sunday. Grab the wheel in two hands and get ready to be an active driver.

In our issue this month, we have a tangible reason to reach for the wheel throughout our week—because so much is happening outside our church walls. In our double feature, we look not only at military ministries but also chaplains in a variety of settings to see the work they are doing and how they are showing Christ in ways that require more than just pew-sitting.

What unites these two ministries is that they are about people meeting others right where they are.

Many of the featured military ministries started because members noticed there was a need in the community that the church could fill. These ministries have and are helping veterans and their families, current armed forces, and Afghan translators.

Chaplains comfort those, sometimes on their worst or even last day. They work long hours and can find themselves in war zones and surrounded by loss and grief.

These lives of service for those in need and for American armed forces are reminders to let your gifts flow from outside the Church's walls to find places of need and people in need.

This month, let's remember the faces and people who go outside our church's walls to show Christ to others. Let us push ourselves to see the hurting and needy hearts in our communities and be driven to find ways to help.

Don't let four walls hold you back. 

Until our next issue,

Madeline



P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058

Phone: 1-800-768-6040 or
804-521-1100

Fax: 804-521-1174

E-mail: advocate@vaumc.org

Website: www.vaumc.org

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Deadlines

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Advertising/Tributes

Rates for advertising and tributes are available upon request.

Local Church News

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

Letters

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

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The *Virginia Advocate* Staff

Linda S. Rhodes | Virginia Conference Director of Communications

Madeline Pillow | Editor

Cathryn Huff | Graphic Designer

Pam Culler | Administrative Secretary

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LETTERS

Forbidding acceptance?

In the September *Advocate*, H.O. "Tom" Thomas, on behalf of the Virginia Conference Evangelical Fellowship, accuses proponents of full acceptance of homosexuality of creating a potential fourth schism in Christian history.

There's the Great East-West Schism of 1054, and there's the Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century. I don't know what Thomas and his cited source, Professor Abraham, consider the third: was it between Paul, the Ebionites, and the Gnostics; the Chalcedonians, Nestorians, and Euytchians; the Jansenists; the Donatists; or, within Protestantism, the Puritans, the Anglicans, the Lutherans, New Light vs. Old Light Presbyterians, Particular and General Baptists, Shakers, Unitarians . . . you may catch my drift. United Methodists are arguably a schism within a schism, heirs of John Wesley's decision to begin ordaining and to enable a departure from the Church of England.

Within our own denominational history, there are multiple divides: the O'Kellyites, the Methodist Protestants, Methodist Episcopal (North) and South, the Nazarenes, the Free Methodists, Wesleyan Methodists, Southern Methodists, Assemblies of God..

In each schism, all sides claimed their opponents to

possess "an ignorance of Holy Scripture, a denial of the burden of God's Word and a naivete of the gravity of our divide." Opponents of the abolition of slavery, of the inclusion of the unordained as voting members of Annual Conference and of women's ordination, justifiably claimed Scriptural and traditional authority for their positions.

What we are experiencing today is neither the first nor the last time such a thing will happen in the Body of Christ. We are Israel, wrestling with what it means to hold on to God.

I commend Brother Thomas and his kith for their honesty in submitting Petitions 6 and 8 to General Conference, which would pave the way for clergy and congregations to embrace schism. On the other hand, I find it ironic that the same people who seem to be preparing the exit should accuse others of being the schismatics.

Whatever General Conference decides – or fails to decide – about homosexuality next spring, people will leave The United Methodist Church. That has been happening for quite a while now. Some leave because they see us as too liberal, others because we are too conservative. That leave-taking can be both appropriate and tragic, but it is not a new thing.

In the 10th chapter of Acts, the apostle Peter is confused by a dream in which he, good kosher Jew, is commanded to eat

unclean food. He refuses but is told, three times, not to call filthy what God has made clean. Simultaneously, a Gentile, Cornelius, is told by God in a dream to summon Peter to his house. As Peter is preaching, the Holy Spirit falls on the entire shrimp and pork-eating, uncircumcised household. Peter realizes that despite the witnesses of Scripture and of Jewish tradition, God has already included these strangers in the community of faith. Grasping that God is doing something new, Peter decides he might as well baptize everyone, because God has already poured out the Spirit upon them.

Brother Thomas is not wrong that there are passages in Scripture and a weight of authority to justify his position. Peter claimed the same, as have many over the course of history about other issues. Others of us – and I include myself – not only read the Bible differently, but believe that in pouring out Scripturally defined gifts for ministry and the fruits of the Holy Spirit, God has proved that what we called filthy is, to God, clean. Who are we, in Peter's words, to forbid acceptance?

Faithfully,

– J. Brooke Willson

Retired clergy, Richmond District



Saint Peter baptizing Cornelius, Francesco Trevisani (1656-1746)

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.

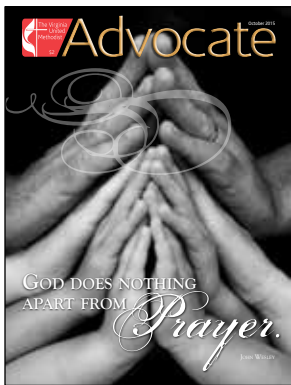
Thank You!

To Larry Davies for an exceptionally well done article on the shootings in Roanoke/Smith Mountain Lake area. Life is fragile for all of us, BUT God is still at work and we are not defeated. Thank you, Larry, for pointing that out in a very well-written, concise and biblically accurate way.

Thank you to the *Advocate* staff for including the article. It was contemplative, thought-provoking and biblically informative. Thank you for sharing quality articles like this with us all.

God Bless!

– Frank Jennings, pastor, Covenant UMC, Elizabeth River District



Keep up the good work!

I enjoy so much reading the *Advocate*. You and the staff make it so interesting, and it is always so full of conference information. The Virginia UMC Conference is so fortunate to have this publication. Keep up the good work!

– George H. Bergdoll
Appomattox



Drive-thru prayer

Monday mornings at 5:30 a.m., my alarm clock starts blaring. For a split second, I am thinking, "This can't be. I am a retired senior and should be able to sleep until I wake up on my own time." Ah, but I need to be at church by 6:00 a.m.

Four members of the Willing Workers Circle of Greenwood United Methodist Church, Glen Allen, Va., gather in the church parking lot with our folding beach chairs. We wait patiently from 6-8 a.m. for people to drive-in and tell us why they need us to pray for them.

It is hard to pinpoint the success of our ministry. Sometimes we are there for two hours and not a single person stops. However, who knows how many pass us and it starts them thinking about why we are there? Then they begin to say their own prayer. Many vehicles that pass blow their horns to acknowledge us. I guess I might not be the only one that is awakened early because some of the trucks have those awesome-sounding air horns which gives the neighborhood a jolt. We are even close enough to the street to see drivers throw

up their hands to wave at us.

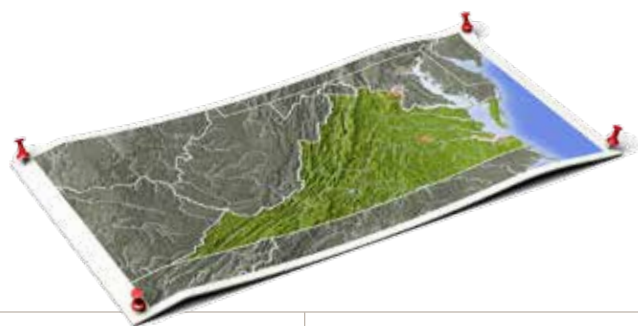
One of our four ladies keeps a record of people that drive thru for prayer. We have had several repeat persons. This gives us the opportunity to chat with the drivers about the outcome of previous prayers.

Most people come by car, but we have also had a dump truck, pedestrian and motorcycle. It was interesting to talk with the motorcycle rider because he seemed to know more about what was in the Bible than most of us. We are fortunate to even have a few people stop to offer up prayers on our behalf and the mission we have undertaken.

What do we get out of spending time sitting in a parking lot during the hot summer or cold winter mornings? Giving to others without expecting anything in return is a wonderful feeling. We show people that pass by that Christians are doing something, no matter how small, to counteract evil that surrounds us and dominates the nightly news. And, the four of us ladies have formed a friendship that brings us joy.

– Nancy C. Yearly is a member of Greenwood UMC in Glen Allen.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Students gather on Shenandoah campus to 'Rethink, Reclaim, Renew'



By Madeline Pillow

About 80 students from Virginia college and university campus ministries met at Shenandoah University Sept. 25-26 for RE3 (pronounced "RE-three").

RE3, standing for "Rethink, Reclaim and Renew," encouraged students to focus on what they need to rethink in their own lives, what the church needs to rethink and what old practices can be reclaimed for

Sarah Bessey encouraged students at RE3 to be open to change.



renewing the church today.

Throughout the event, attendees met students from other campuses and participated in worship, small groups and student-led TED-style talks.

Speaker for the event was Sarah Bessey, award-winning blogger and writer, who spoke for two sessions on Friday, Sept. 25, and on Saturday, Sept. 26.

As speaker, Bessey helped guide the students toward topics that they would reflect at length on in their small groups throughout the weekend: what they needed to rethink in their faith journeys as well as what could be reclaimed and renewed.

"It is a key thing to rethink. It is a sacred part of your life. There is no gold star for stagnating in your faith," Bessey said.

Bessey encouraged students to be open to change and not to be afraid. "My faith has really changed over the years and that used to scare me," she said. "It used to scare me to think that things might change, that I might change what I believe. And now, to be honest, it scares me more when I meet people who say that they have never changed."

Change, she said, is often a result of what she calls a "holy disruption."

"I find that the Spirit often sweeps into my preferences and my opinions with a very holy disruption. Just when I think that I have it all settled, everything set, I never have to change, I

never have to evolve, this is it, this is the right answer, once and for all, indexed in three-ring binder, the Spirit sweeps in."

Bessey said she believes that if a person's theology doesn't change over time, there must be a lack of attention. "Your theology, what you believe about God, how you understand the world, should change in response to the work that God is doing in you and through you as you move through this world," she said. "You are not here to be unmarked and unchanged."

Bessey also told attendees about her own faith journey and a time that she called "her wilderness" that was filled with doubts and questions. This is a time, she told students, during which you leave behind your baggage as a Christian and from the Church as you walk with God and learn and practice alongside Christians with different beliefs and practices.

"You start leaving this trail behind you and this littering of the contents of your baggage and slowly, and I have to admit, sometimes bitterly, your walk through the wilderness becomes very unencumbered. And you'll sit sometimes by the trail that you are walking and cry over these lovely and poisonous things that you are leaving behind," Bessey said.

But these things that are left in the wilderness, Bessey continued, are part of the journey. Things that

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



About 80 students gathered at Shenandoah University for RE3.

"I find that the Spirit often sweeps into my preferences and my opinions with a very holy disruption. Just when I think that I have it all settled, everything set, I never have to change, I never have to evolve, this is it, this is the right answer, once and for all, indexed in three-ring binder, the Spirit sweeps in."

would be cast aside, she said, include cynicism, apologetics and doctrinal statements and carefully constructed personas all to reach an end you might not have expected.

"Often you don't know it but when you're pushing through your wilderness, it's that you're pushing through to deliverance," said Bessey.

RE3's planning committee planned the event to help brand campus ministry in Virginia. Through use of social media and recordings of the RE3 sessions, organizers hope students who weren't able to attend will join the conversation. They also want to open the possibility of partnering with schools in other countries.

Michelle Hettman, a senior at Virginia Tech and part of the planning committee, said she hoped that through the event people connected and shared what campus ministries and

Christians look like going forward on campuses and in the world.

"There's not a lot of spaces for us to be able to share throughout the whole state and the whole conference with that," Hettman said, stressing the importance of the event.

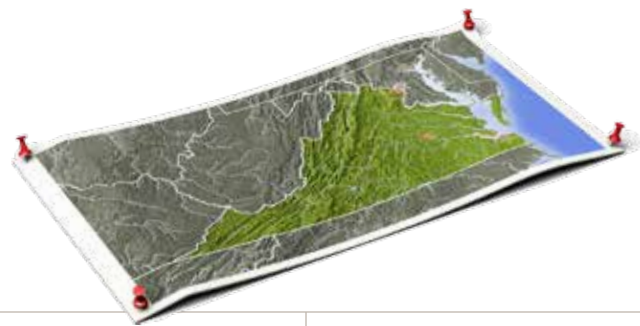
The Rev. Bret Gresham, campus minister at the Virginia Tech Wesley Foundation, said he hopes the conference will "encourage students to make a difference in the world after the event and to share their stories and live out their faith in the context of their lives."

Each student paid \$10 to attend, and all proceeds benefitted the Virginia Conference Imagine No Malaria initiative.

To find out more about the event, visit www.re3va.org.

— Madeline Pillow is editor of the Virginia United Methodist Advocate.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Churches gather at the starting line

By Bill Pike

In 2010, the Mission Committee at Trinity United Methodist Church, Richmond, heard a presentation proposing the creation of a 5K run/walk. Believing the novice who made the presentation wasn't blowing hot air, the Mission Committee gave approval to develop the event.

Experts in developing 5Ks say it takes three years for such an event to be able to stand on wobbly legs. Sept. 12, 2015, marked the fifth year of the Mission Footprint 5K.

With approval granted, volunteers formed a com-

mittee filled with running and walking enthusiasts who were eager to assist. This included a member who had served as the director of a 5K race in Fredericksburg. His prior knowledge was invaluable in helping that first year.

Early in our work, it became clear that designing the course, meeting safety requirements from our police department, contracting with a timer and securing corporate sponsorships were initial key targets. In the church's neighborhood, designing a course that kept participants off the main streets was important, and then we submitted the course route to the police department for approval.

Other important as-

pects of the event were having a professional timer ensure that the post-race award ceremony was accurate as well as securing corporate sponsors, whose financial contributions are critical in offsetting the cost for staging the event.

Next, we focused on publicity with our congregation, the neighborhood and Richmond community. T-shirt design, implementing a registration process, recruiting volunteers and lining up nourishment for the post-race were also on our agendas. Weekly meetings kept us focused, and we were able to keep pace with our race director's checklist.

The first running of the Mission Footprint 5K on Saturday, April 9, 2011, was a success with 210 participants. We learned quite a bit that first year, especially in the areas of advertising and registration.

That learning curve continued into our second year, and even though our numbers were down to 178 participants, we still managed a successful race. But we also found in that second spring, we were competing against other 5Ks and popular family events. With some reservation, the 5K committee moved the event to September with a goal of recruiting the three churches within our neighborhood to join us in 2013.

On Sept. 7, 2013, the running of the third annual Mission Footprint 5K occurred, and we had a new partner, River Road Church,

The Mission Footprint 5K race raises money for local nonprofit organizations.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

Baptist. Members from both churches were on the 5K committee.

During one summer meeting, a River Road member suggested we might include a friendly competition to see which church could register the most participants from their congregations. At the end of the event, the pastor from the church with the most participants would be awarded the Golden Foot trophy.

Pastor Larry Lenow, from Trinity UMC, and Pastor Mike Clingenpeel, from River Road, filmed a video where they humorously challenged each congregation to participate. Both appeared on the "Virginia This Morning" show through the local CBS affiliate to promote the event.

In 2013, our participants rose to 229, and at the post-race ceremony, the Golden Foot trophy was awarded to Trinity pastor Larry Lenow whose congregation apparently took with great seriousness the threat of hour-long sermons. While disappointed in not winning the trophy, in his post-race remarks, River Road pastor Mike Clingenpeel did give credit to the Baptists for providing perfect weather.

Our partnership with River Road Church, Baptist, continued in 2014. Once again, Pastors Lenow and Clingenpeel did their best to fire up the congregations, but the Golden Foot Trophy stayed at Trinity despite gains from our



Despite a torrential downpour, 219 runners participated in this year's Mission Footprint 5K.

Baptist friends.

On Sept. 12, 2015, the fifth running of the 5K took place. We were excited that another neighborhood congregation, Third Church, decided to join us. This meant the competition for the Golden Foot trophy would be more intense. Corey Widmer, senior pastor at Third assured us his congregation was ready to compete.

That morning just as the 5K was about to start, a torrential rain downpour soaked everyone, but 219 participants toughed out the rough start. By the time the last participant crossed the finish line, the rain had stopped, and the award ceremony continued.

Even though Trinity registered the most participants for the third straight year, the Golden Foot Trophy was awarded to Pastor Clingenpeel, who is retiring in November and

has been a solid supporter of the 5K.

Our 5K is more than a trophy competition. Since its inception, over \$15,000 has been given to local nonprofits for their exceptional work in meeting the needs of our communities. 🏃

-Bill Pike is director of Operations at Trinity UMC, Richmond District. Pictures courtesy of Bill Pike.



EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY



Help kids express faith through art

Undoubtedly, all parents who take their children to Sunday school regularly receive an arsenal of art projects: three-dimensional paper puppets, craft stick crosses and glitter masks that shed on the pews before being abandoned under the backseat.

Research shows that every individual learns differently. Many children grasp concepts better through tactile and visual projects. Here are some ideas you can encourage in your children's education department.

Enhance the experience of children's choir.

Buy inexpensive canvases available in multi-packs at arts-and-crafts stores. Make sure you buy a large enough canvas (at least 8.5 x 11 inches) because children tend to overestimate the amount of space they

will need for their art. Have the children choose their favorite song and ask them to paint either:

- ❖ The main idea (for instance, the Nativity scene in "Away in a Manger"); or
- ❖ Their favorite part of the song (such as "The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay").

Introduce art into your church's Sunday school area.

Find a professional artist in your congregation or community to sketch a large mural in your elementary Sunday school area. Ask him or her to designate which colors should be used (almost like paint by numbers). Then enlist the help of older children to do the painting. This mural is sure to be a sentimental source of pride for those children as they mature.


Incorporate art with music.

For a different exercise, set up mini-easels in the

education area. Play some of United Methodism's powerful songs such as "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today" and "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" – both by Charles Wesley – and ask the children to paint what they feel. Encourage them to express thankfulness, awe, joy and sadness through color and images. Abstract artwork can be a powerful expression of human emotions as well as a moving testimony to one's faith.

Enjoy a parade with confirmation banners.

Have each year's confirmands work together to illustrate their group's favorite Bible verse on a large banner. Parade this banner in on Confirmation Sunday. After a few years, your church will have enough banners for a representative from each class to carry the banner into the sanctuary, in remembrance of their class's confirmation.

Make sure these artistic endeavors don't go the route of that discarded Sunday school project. Display the canvases on a wall in a prominent area of your church building. Let the children see that you admire their faith and value their creativity. Through these artistic pursuits, you will help your church's youngest express their feelings about God and the church. Just as importantly, you will demonstrate your congregation's love for them. 

– United Methodist Communications



EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY

'Project Sundays' aid mission at Peakland UMC, Lynchburg

Peakland UMC in the Lynchburg District has taken the idea of children's art projects one step further through its "Project Sundays." The first Sunday of each month, preschoolers through second graders combine to work on a mission project.

Kara Byrne, chair of Peakland Children's Ministry team and Sunday school teacher, says the idea came from their Vacation Bible School program last summer where they focused more on whole group crafts to benefit greater causes like the local pediatric ward and animal shelter. By creating "Project Sundays," they extended the message of mission past the week of VBS.

"I jokingly call it 'Sweatshop Sunday' because we usually form an assembly line to get a lot accomplished in a little time. The kids love that Sunday for various reasons: the creativity, the ACTIVE-ity, the charity, the variety. After we share a lesson from the Bible that goes with our project, we explain who we are going to help and how. We say a prayer for the people receiving our gifts, and then, we get to work," Byrne said in her online blog.

Some of the activities they have completed:


October 2014:

Knowing that many students in the local school do not have the money or motivation to provide their own school supplies, the church partnered with teachers to keep them stocked with basics. Church members bought the items and Sunday school children separated them into two piles: one for the beginning of the year, and one to restock teachers mid-year. They also added cards of encouragement for the teachers.

November 2014:

Using a mess-free painting idea, children made fall tree posters with a Bible verse for homebound members of the church. (Isaiah 40:8)

February 2015:

"When thinking of people that needed a showing of love in February, I thought of the women who had no one to show them love," Byrne said. "We decorated white lunch bags and added soap, washcloth, candy, gum and a colorful card with Bible verses about God being a refuge for our local battered women's shelter." 



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DISCIPLES HELPING TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD



▲ During the summer, **Skipwith UMC, Richmond District**, hosted a “Lunch and Learn” every Wednesday in July to provide meals and to get to know their neighbors. This pilot program connected them with more than a dozen neighborhood families and engaged multiple middle and high school youths as helpers while serving a hearty lunch and celebrating good character traits through the Fruit of the Spirit. During this time, the children read stories, blew bubbles, made crafts and had ice cream. The church is already making plans to expand this successful endeavor next summer.



▲ On Sunday, Aug. 30, **Leesburg United Methodist Church, Winchester District**, celebrated the start of a new school year with the annual “Blessing of the Backpacks.” All children were encouraged to bring their school backpacks with them to church that day for a special back-to-school blessing and to receive a “Blessed Backpack” tag. The blessing serves as a reminder to the kids that God is

To have your church or church organization featured in the “Disciples helping to transform the world” section, e-mail your story and photos to MadelinePillow@vaumc.org by the first of the month. Stories should be approximately 100 words, and photos should be 300 dpi jpgs.

always with them —as they get dressed and ready for school, as they get on the school bus, as they go about their day in class, as they play at recess, as they make their way home from school, as they do homework at night and prepare for the next day — God is with them. We pray for all children, teachers, staff and administrators throughout this school year. May God guide them, guard them and shine grace upon them.



Willmore photos

▲ **The Alexandria District** celebrated its 75th Anniversary at **St. Stephen's UMC, Burke**, on Sept. 19. District Superintendent Jeff Mickle noticed that the celebration was held just in time as Year 76 began October 1. The current 53 district churches and district office were highlighted in chronological order, from 1774 to today, along with a presentation of their uniquely-crafted banners. Rev. Dr. Raymond Wrenn reflected upon the history of “The Great Alexandria District,” and Bishop Young Jin Cho gave a powerful message on the district moving forward, humbly guided by the Holy Spirit. Following lunch, the Alexandria District History (1939-2014) booklet, edited by Myra Lindsey, was distributed.



▲ The Chester community was invited to join the membership of **Chester UMC, James River District**, for an afternoon of Gospel on the Green featuring food trucks, games and music. The Chester Village Green is an open space, multi-purpose park in the heart of Chester used for a variety of festivals and concerts. On Sunday, Sept. 20, following three worship services at the church at 8:30, 9:45 and 11 a.m., the congregation and their guests began to assemble on the Village Green. An assortment of food trucks were already present. The bouncey house went up and the

kids were engaged in a variety of yard games. At 1 p.m., the Chester UMC children's choir, Faith on Fire, opened the concert with their enthusiastic cherub voices. Then special guest and Gaither Family regular Allison Durham Speer presented an hour-long concert of gospel music. The Chester UMC Chancel Choir was invited on stage to join Allison in "Believe the Impossible" and Chester UMC music director Josh Wortham matched Allison note for note in "Because He Lives." While it is difficult to count people who are up and moving around and sitting on the balconies of senior apartments overlooking the Green, it is estimated that the event drew a crowd of 275-300 people. It was a beautiful late summer afternoon to celebrate community, music and the Holy Spirit. ▼



Go Nuts! at Nutzy's Rotary Funn Run 5k

**Benefits UMFS
December 5**



Register online:
www.nutzyrotaryfunnrun.com
\$35 for individuals & strollers
\$17.50 for those 17 and younger

Runners, walkers, kids and parents with strollers welcome. Be sure to high five UMFS staff at the halfway mark of the course, where we'll host the water cooler spot. Funn Runners will celebrate with us at the Finish Line Party and Funn Costume Awards.





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IMAGINE NO MALARIA

100,000+ LIVES SAVED!!!



“This is a great day,” said Bishop Young Jin Cho when he received the news from Maria Maxwell, Imagine No Malaria field coordinator, that the Virginia Conference had surpassed its goal for the Imagine No Malaria initiative. “Thank God for all the churches,” Cho said, “from the little children to all the others

who joined this effort.”

As of Sept. 30, VAUMC churches raised \$1,005,364.30 for Imagine No Malaria, saving more than 100,536 lives and exceeding the conference goal of raising \$1 million to save 100,000+ lives.

This initiative started at the 2014 Annual Conference, supported by clergy and laity, to save 100,000+

lives from malaria, a deadly but preventable disease.

To celebrate the achievement, Karen McElfish, Mount Olivet UMC, Arlington District, made a one-of-a-kind stole for Bishop Cho, created from an ‘Every Life Save a Life’ t-shirt, the theme of the initiative. 🍌



Maria Maxwell presents Bishop Cho with a one-of-a-kind stole made from an “Every Life Save a Life” t-shirt by Karen McElfish.





EVENTS

November

5 Talent Academy: "Stir Up the Fire: Wesley's Way of Making Disciples."

Nov. 10, Ebenezer UMC, Stafford

This faith development event is focused on small group ministry and will be keynoted by the Rev. Dr. Jim Harnish. "Stir Up the Fire" will be hosted live at Ebenezer UMC in Stafford and will be live-streamed to nine other conference locations. The cost is \$25 and .5 CEU will be offered. Group discounts are available. More information and registration can be found online at vaumc.org/5Talent.

Middle School Retreat

Nov. 13-15, Eagle Eyrie, Lynchburg

During this weekend retreat, youths are challenged to grow as disciples of Christ through worship, Bible study and small groups while building friendships with others from all over Virginia. For more information, contact Becky Tate at BeckyTate@vaumc.org or call **1-800-768-6040, ext. 139**. The fee is \$125 person; if paid after Oct. 30 the fee is \$135. Follow this link to register online: www.vaumc.org/pages/events/2015-events/2015-middle-school-retreat.

Clergy Ethics II Training- Fredericksburg District

Nov. 18, Wrights Chapel UMC

All clergy and church professionals are required to attend an Ethics II Training event in the current quadrennium (2012-2016). Register online at www.vaumc.org/pages/events/clergyethicsiitraining11-18-15. Registration is required 48 hours prior to the event in order to ensure sufficient materials are available for all participants. A \$12 fee includes lunch or \$5 for no lunch. Refunds will not be processed once registration closes, 48 hours prior to the event. If you do not have a credit card to register online, e-mail Kristen Seibert in the Center for Clergy Excellence, kristenseibert@vaumc.org. For more information, contact the Center for Clergy Excellence at **(804) 521-1126 or 1-800-768-6040, ext. 126**.

December

High School Retreat

Dec. 4-6, Eagle Eyrie, Lynchburg

During this weekend retreat, youths are challenged to grow as disciples of Christ through worship, Bible study and small groups while building friendships with others from all over Virginia. For more information, contact Becky Tate at BeckyTate@vaumc.org or call **1-800-768-6040, ext. 139**. The fee is \$125 person; if paid after Nov. 20. Fee is

\$135. To register online, go to www.vaumc.org/pages/events/2015-events/event_2015highschoolretreat.

Wounded Hearts, Healing Love

Dec. 4-6, Camp Overlook

Have the circumstances of life returned you to singleness, perhaps through separation, divorce or death? Plan now to join a special time apart with other singles to explore the trials, hurts, loneliness of being single again, and search for the road leading to healing and wholeness. Cost is \$105 per person (some financial assistance available). More information and registration can be found online at www.campoverlook.org

Walk to the Manger

Dec. 18, Camp Overlook

Overlook will again present Walk to the Manger—a live, interactive nativity experience. Spend an evening reflecting on the true meaning of Christmas. Meet the shepherds, hear the angels announce the good news, visit a young couple and their Holy child and help point a few kings toward the treasure they seek. Tours will begin continuously from 6 to 8 p.m. The experience will last about 30 minutes. Dress warmly, wear sturdy shoes and keep children with a responsible adult at all times. For out-of-town guests, this program will be followed by Walk to the Manger Bed and Breakfast. Couples, families and individuals can warm up at Blessings Lodge enjoying the fireplace and a private room at this post Walk to the Manger event. A time for reflection, fun activities and snacks on Friday evening. Breakfast before departure on Saturday morning, Dec. 19. Details are online at www.CampOverlook.org.

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Outside the walls:



The serving life of chaplains



Outside the brick and mortar of a church are lives needy in many ways. Chaplains are clergypersons who are appointed by the bishop to be that caring minister for these lives in the community.

According to the *Book of Discipline*, one of the ways that ordained clergy serve God is through ministries of “witness and service which extend Christ’s love and justice.” (§343.1)

In this feature, learn about the journeys of chaplains in the areas of hospitals, hospice, academia, prisons and military.

Chaplains have generally received endorsement of the church through the United Methodist Endorsing Agency (UMEA), General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) and are deacons, elders or licensed local pastors.

According to GBHEM, this endorsement is a process and a relationship meant to conclude readiness for pastoral ministry in a specialized setting. Chaplains fill 16 different civilian settings and can serve in all areas of the military.

No matter their placement, chaplains find themselves counseling those directly in need and working closely alongside advocates like doctors and institutional staff.

To learn more about chaplaincy in the United Methodist Church, visit **www.GBHEM.org/chaplains**.

Read on to learn more about these calls and lives of service from the chaplains themselves.

God in the hallways



Rev. Patrick Pillow, chaplain at Chippenham/Johnston-Willis Hospitals in Richmond

As part of the United Methodist path to ordination and the requirements of my seminary (Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond), I am currently enrolled in a full unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at MCV in Richmond. As part of my clinical placement, I have been assigned to the Chippenham/Johnston-Willis Hospitals in Richmond.

I was told by many people with previous CPE experience to allow this internship to “break me, mold me and enhance my ministry.” Now that I have completed the first quarter of this four-month journey, I can tell you that CPE has indeed changed me in ways I never thought possible.

Personally, I like to know expectations, dates, times, schedules and locations from the onset, and so I found the first two weeks to be a whirlwind of confusion, intimidation and uncertainty. Rather than having to become familiar with one hospital (which is not easy for anyone who has tried to navigate MCV!), it was a challenge to learn two hospitals at Chippenham and Johnston-Willis. Not only are they at separate locations along the Midlothian Turnpike, but they are also very different in specialties, culture and ethnic makeup. Chippenham specializes in behavioral health (Tucker Pavilion), the PEDS unit and their state-of-the-art cardiac unit at Levinson Heart Hospital. Johnston-Willis is renowned for its work with terminally ill patients at Thomas Johns Cancer Hospital and their specialty in neurological cases and Gamma Knife technology.

My duties as a chaplain are wide-ranging. Other than hospital consults, we actively walk the halls, engaging visitor and staff member alike. As my two supervisors, the Rev. Jennifer Collins and the Rev. Jesse Ramage say, “this is our parish...these people are our congregants. This is God’s sanctuary.” We interact with patients and staff of all beliefs and backgrounds and meet them in a common place: the place of gentleness, love and respect. While no one may

remember our names, what we did or how we prayed, they will remember how we made them feel. This presence, this sense of companionship in the midst of sadness, is key to everything we do.

Other than my struggles with getting acclimated to the location and staff at each facility, the toughest part of this process has been accepting the mantle of pastoral authority in ALL situations, both the joyful and the heartbreaking. As human beings, it is easy for us to become controlled by our emotions. For many of us, the hospital is not a place that we frequent or desire to be around. As someone who falls into that category, it was important to remember that Christ has walked these hallways and is present with every person there. As a hospital chaplain, it is my responsibility to be that presence in every situation I encounter.

All of this came to the forefront on my first day as an

“Allow this experience to touch you;
allow the Holy Spirit to take you to
places that you might shy away from.

Some of the greatest life-changing
experiences happen when we allow
ourselves to be ‘broken open’ before
God and creation.”

on-call chaplain. During my first hours at the Johnston-Willis emergency room, we had two code neuro calls arrive at the hospital. Both cases were severely traumatic for the families, and the prognosis for each patient was not positive. As I sat with the family that afternoon, the surgeon explained just how complicated the procedure would be to save their loved one. He could make no guarantees that it would be successful but promised to do all in his power to save them. While all of this was happening around me, I distinctly remember thinking “what in the world can I possibly say that will do ANY good in this situation?” Once the surgeon left, I did the only thing any of us could do at that time: look to God in prayer. Over the course of that prayer, God lifted this family up, and a true Spirit-presence existed in that room. I realized just how great a weapon prayer is for good. The ability to call out to God in all situations is a tool we should always cherish and seek to improve upon.

A little over an hour later, I returned to the pastoral care office burnt out: spiritually, mentally and physically exhausted. I did not know where to turn or how to even begin to process what I had seen. I turned and looked at the wall

(Continued on page 28: “PATRICK PILLOW”.)



Not just about death

Rev. Pam Meeuwissen, chaplain at Mary Washington Hospital in Fredericksburg

My journey in this ministry did not proceed as I thought or planned. I began my journey into ministry in 2001. When preparing to retire from teaching in the public schools, I enrolled at Wesley Theological Seminary. I believed that I was called to ministry as a deacon with emphasis on discipleship. In summer 2004, I enrolled in a full unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at Mary Washington Hospital in Fredericksburg. CPE Interns were assigned various hospital units, but we were also assigned two hospice patients – one in their private home and one in a nursing home or assisted living. During this experience, I became passionate about end of life and hospice care though I had no prior experience with hospice and only minimal experience with the dying process. This part of my ministry walk, as have others since, proved the promise in Jeremiah 29:11: “I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord...”

Soon after I finished that first CPE unit, a part-time position opened at Mary Washington Hospice. This opportunity caused me to slow down and listen to what the Lord wanted me to do between this new opportunity and my then-current position on the staff of Rising Hope United Methodist Mission Church. I had to discern the difference between need and calling. This time was instrumental as I was molded into the disciple that God intended.

Ministry in hospice is one where it is important to meet people where they are and to be in relationship with them. It is also about supporting their efforts as they reframe their hope in the midst of dying. It is about having a caring attitude and being a non-anxious pastoral presence so the patient has quality end-of-life care coupled with the dignity they deserve. It is about being the hands and feet of Christ while walking the journey with them. I find that being invited to sit with family members and friends as they anticipate that last breath of a loved one is a precious, humbling experience, for it is a very personal journey. Along with that invitation is a trust that is beyond understanding. Being a chaplain in the hospice setting is to be in a place where I am blessed to serve.

It is a privilege to be included in a very personal journey as people transition from life as we know it here on earth to their eternal life with their Lord and Savior. As I look back, I am in awe of the opportunities God has afforded to me. I have walked the end-of-life journey with many patients and families, their paid caregivers as well as members of the hospice team. The hospice team includes a registered nurse, a medical social worker and optional services selected by the patient or patient's representative. The optional services include spiritual care or chaplain, a personal care aide and at Mary Washington Hospice can include a massage therapist,

music therapist and art therapist.

As a chaplain, it is my position to embrace people while walking with them. We share joys and sorrows, tears and smiles, ups and downs, anticipation and disappointment. Support is shown through providing opportunities for spiritual connection and life review. My ministry is about assisting, supporting and encouraging patients and families while walking with them. My patients range in age from birth to 104 years of age. They have cancer, congestive heart disease, renal failure, dementia and many more terminal illnesses. One drawback in hospice is the fact that while relationships grow quickly, they also tend to be short.

Hospice is not just about death. It is about living every day under the best possible conditions. It is about finding grace in dying, about helping the dying patient receive comfort and quality end-of-life care and about maintaining their dignity. It is about providing the care needed no matter how long that is. I have patients for varying lengths of time from minutes to as long as five years in one case.

United Methodists are known for singing our faith. One of the joys for me is to start singing with a patient and looking up to see many residents walking or wheeling over to sing along. This is especially notable with dementia patients. They may not be able to speak a clear sentence, but they can remember every word of the hymns. Recently I asked a 90-year-old man if I could read Scripture to him. He told me what passage he would like to hear and then began reciting. I stopped to listen and he recited the last two chapters of Revelation. This brought tears to my eyes and the eyes of his daughter. What a witness!

“It is a privilege to be included in a very personal journey as people transition from life as we know it here on earth to their eternal life with their Lord and Savior.”

I also provide quarterly memorial services in many facilities. These services help provide closure for staff and residents as well as family in the community. The memorial services reach to the entire community as we include all residents who died in the facilities not only the hospice patients. Families have begun attending these services in addition to their private services so they can come alongside the facility and hospice staff in sharing grief and reframing hope. Once a year I plan a community-wide memorial service which, for the first time, in 2016 will be open to the entire Fredericksburg community not just hospice.

(Continued on page 28: “PAM MEEUWISSEN”.)

Morale and morals



In the opening ceremony for the Gold Star Mother's Day in Sept. 2014 in Charlotte, N.C., 108th Training Command (IET) Maj. Ann Tang, chaplain, gave the invocation. (Photo courtesy of: www.army.mil/article/135191.)

Rev. Ann On-Lin Tang, chaplain in the U.S. Army

My consideration to enter the ministry in the military started with the encouragement from my older brother who has been in the active Army as a soldier for over a decade. During my seminary year, I had the privilege to be trained as a hospital chaplain at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., where I tackled my personal issues through the chaplaincy program. After I was ordained as a deacon in June 1996, I joined the Army Reserve as a chaplain.

During the candidacy process to become an Army chaplain, just like the process of ordination, I had to attend the Chaplain's Officer Basic Course at Ft. Jackson, S.C. First and foremost, I had to learn how to be a soldier – drill and ceremony, rules and regulations, process and procedures and so forth, and then, of course, as a chaplain – pastoral care and counseling, dos and don'ts. One thing that distinguishes the chaplain from other vocations in the military is that, by law, we cannot bear arms, which means that we are non-combatants and are protected by the Geneva Convention.

As a military chaplain, I am the eyes and ears for the commander for the needs of his/her unit. On the one hand, I serve as a member of staff to carry out officers' duties. On the other hand, I am also a religious advisor for the unit


concerning beliefs and practices of different world religions as well as an observer for the unit's morale and moral climate. I have conducted workshops and briefings on different issues, such as promoting equal opportunities, helping prevent sexual assaults and suicide and conducting relationship building.

Since December 1996, I have been fulfilling my once-a-month weekend duty while pastoring different churches in the Virginia Conference. I am grateful that all my appointed congregations have graced me with their understanding and support while I worked as their full-time pastor and needed to take time off to fulfill my military duty and education.

In the past 19 years, I have served in a linguist unit, as a circuit rider in the area command that covers the northeast region of the United States and as a hospital chaplain in various Army Medical Centers. I was deployed overseas in 2003-2004 to Iraq facing war first-hand. Since then, I view life with different lenses, and I am convinced that it was only by the presence and the protection of God that I returned home from Iraq unharmed. But the deployment took a toll on me. I prayed for God's guidance. There were so many things that I had experienced during the deployment, and these issues had to be tackled before I could help a congregation to tackle theirs. Bishop Pennel allowed me to take a year of hospital chaplaincy training to help resolve those areas of need.

In 2009, Bishop Kammerer appointed me full-time to the U.S. Army. I was assigned to the unit in the Pacific and have experienced first-hand the destruction and devastation of natural disasters, especially the tsunamis and earthquakes that destroyed the lives and properties of many soldiers and their families and the locals of the land. And in the midst of these tragedies, I ministered to them and worked very closely with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to help restore the new normal to these affected places.

I changed my military assignment to Charlotte, N.C., in 2011. I have continued to minister to the full-time Army Reservists, their families, civilians, military retirees in different Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and local area American Legions to give support with memorials and funerals. I also had the opportunity to visit with three World War II veterans in the nearby areas and ministered to all military personnel who came through the United Service Organizations (USO) at the Charlotte-Douglas International Airport.

As I am looking back and reflecting on my ministry these past 19 years, I praise and thank God for mercies, strength and protection to fulfill the double duty as a pastor and as an Army Chaplain. 

-Ann On-Lin Tang is a U.S. Army chaplain.

Finding the body of Christ together

Rev. Jennifer Vestal Moore, chaplain at Randolph College

“I don’t ever want to go into ministry!” I still remember saying those words to the parishioners at the church my dad was serving as I was heading off to college. They were all sure I would follow in the footsteps of my father (a UMC Elder, NY Conference) and my mother (a highly sought-after Christian educator). As determined as those parishioners were that I should go into ministry, I was determined not to.

Only God knew that 27 years later I would be on the journey to becoming a chaplain. In that time, I moved to Virginia to work in my chosen field, but God’s constant call on my life soon prevailed. I first served as a youth director (over 12 years) and then entered extension ministry through the good work of the Society of St. Andrew. In the midst of serving the church and growing a family, I headed back to the classroom numerous times to focus on the education and skills that I would need for the next place God would have me serve.

One day during my annual meeting with my District Superintendent, I joyfully said, “I want to do creative ministry!” Everyone on the Lynchburg District knows that if you say those words to District Superintendent Rev. Larry Davies, you better mean it.

Larry knew of my experience and education in student ministry. He knew of my passion for the poor and feeding the hungry, and he knew that I would say “Yes” to whatever he suggested. (Saying “Yes” is a hereditary trait I learned from my God-loving, Kingdom-serving parents!)

Larry had a grand plan and a new vision for partnership between a college and a local church. Since this cooperative ministry was a new model of ministry, it took a couple of years to work through the process and details. Larry worked hard to hammer out all the details and get approval for moving forward, and I took the frustrating road of patience, which is never an easy road for me. However, this time, patience did lead me to serving two amazing churches on the South Brunswick Charge on the Farmville District, where I was encouraged in my faith and grew in ministry with loving and thoughtful parishioners.

In October 2015, I began my third year serving as the part-time chaplain at Randolph College in Lynchburg. I find great joy and excitement working with college-age students as we plan spiritual life programs of worship, Bible study and mission opportunities. I’m also very visible for official college events, offering the invocations, prayers and benedictions. I meet with students regularly in strategic-planning sessions to help them adjust to college life and move further in their goals for the future.

Meanwhile, at Bethany UMC in Rustburg, where I was appointed in July 2015, I preach, teach, attend meetings, visit, counsel and perform all of the other pastoral duties that all appointed pastors serving a local church are required, expected

and find joy in doing.

The most exciting part of my ministry, however, has been finding ways for the church and the college to work as the body of Christ together. I have been extremely blessed to watch these two ministries blossom both individually and in partnership with one another. Randolph College’s premiere all-women’s A Cappella group shared its gift of song during Bethany’s World Communion Service. After worship, the college students spoke to the youths of the church about college life and their faith. Both the Randolph College community and the Bethany Church community join together regularly in work, prayer and praise to serve the hungry through the Food for Families program at Parkview Missions (an Advance Special and Lynchburg District UMC mission).

In November, a student from Randolph will be celebrating with the Bethany congregation her appreciation of being the recipient of numerous United Methodist scholarships, which have allowed her to receive a high-level education as she looks to the future with hope instead of a heavy financial debt. She will also use her God-given talent and sing for the congregation that morning. Meanwhile, Bethany is also in the process of hiring a Randolph student as a substitute pianist for the church. In December, the Bethany community will be invited to enjoy



Moore (middle, standing) with some members of her church, Bethany UMC, providing a back-to school breakfast for the Rustburg High School faculty.

the sights and sounds of Randolph’s chorale and orchestra during the college’s annual Lessons and Carols Vespers Service. Additionally, some of Bethany’s parishioners will travel to the Maier Museum on the campus of Randolph College, where they and students from the college will enjoy the beautiful art exhibit together.

There are certainly challenges that all chaplains and campus ministers face that are unique to the college setting. In the church, we live by the Bible and are guided by the *Book of Discipline*. At the college, it is important to recognize, appreciate and reach out to the great diversity of the student population. Seeking out inclusive language is mandatory and demonstrating

(Continued on page 25: “JENNIFER MOORE”).



MILITARY MINISTRIES AND

By Madeline Pillow

According to the *Book of Resolutions*, though United Methodists oppose war and urge nations to find peaceful means of conflict resolution, the Church “honors, supports and upholds in our prayers those men and women who serve in our armed services and, in addition, honors and supports those United Methodist clergy who serve as chaplains.” (Resolution 5061)

On this stance, United Methodists support the men and women in uniform and with concern for these people in the communities, military ministries began within the Virginia Conference.

“WE REALLY NEED TO DO SOMETHING. IT IS A CALLING TO HELP THESE SOLDIERS BECAUSE I JUST KNOW THAT THERE’S GOING TO BE SO MANY OUT THERE THAT WILL NEED OUR HELP.”

For Liz Sherman, a member at Centreville UMC, Arlington District, military ministry started 10 years ago because of her husband. He felt that God was telling him to somehow help the armed forces through their church, a conclusion that Sherman found out of character for her very logical husband.

“I thought that maybe he was ill, he’s losing it and I thought maybe he needs to take a break from work. But he held my hand and said, ‘We really need to do something. It is a calling to help these soldiers because I just know that there’s going to be so many out there that will need our help,’” said Sherman.

So the couple called the church: not knowing where to start but feeling led to try. The church wholeheartedly put their trust and support behind their idea, and the couple then met with the service ministry at the church to make a plan.

They started making an impact when they asked their

local community for help. Contacting Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C., they started helping the soldiers directly by gathering clothes and shoes for injured soldiers who had none and buying DVD players to give the soldiers something to do.

At Fisher House Foundation, a not-for-profit that provides housing to military and veterans’ families at no cost while a loved one is receiving treatment, Centreville and Sherman’s military ministry dabbled in construction. “They needed to build wheelchair ramps into the Fisher House because they weren’t prepared for the number of wounded soldiers coming back. We gathered everyone at church and found a few who knew how to build a wheelchair ramp. Our church engineers said they just needed money for nails and wood,” Sherman said.

In the last several years as deployments have slowed, the military ministry has also seen a change. “We are dealing with new problems. The first 10 years was about injuries, and now we are dealing with long-term effects,” Sherman said.

Because of this, the ministry is looking to grow with new ideas to meet needs of soldiers with post-traumatic stress, caring for veterans’ families and caregivers and new groups to help like Afghan translators.

But no matter the need, Sherman continues to see how willing her church is to help, a miracle ministry in her eyes.

“I think what impressed me so much about our church is that they give a lot,” she said, “and they donate a lot of time to raise money and not once do they ask for recognition. They are like the silent heroes. They just give and never ask for anything in return.”

CREATING A COMMUNITY

At Christ Church UMC, Alexandria District, the military ministry started when church members recognized the needs of military families in the area and the need for recognition of military throughout certain times of the year. Bill Shugarts, a member and Vietnam veteran, heads up the ministry, and he along with others noticed that more could be done for active military. Starting with what he calls “prayer and care,” they prayed over the names of the deployed and sent care packages.

But the ministry continued to grow from an idea with no budget or funding to something more. In the last five or six years, the ministry became more strategic and the church added its military ministry to a part of its commu-



ADVOCATE FOR VETERANS

nity service, says associate pastor of Outreach and Service, Monica Reynolds.

Reynolds, who was also in the military, says that the church, in its planning, starts off the year by projecting what they can do for the military in that year. They plan for 50 percent of their efforts to be allocated toward an organization or an event that benefits the military with the rest of the expenses going toward efforts that are relational and interactional.

"We really want people to interact with people because so few of the population has served in the military. And that gap between those in the military and what they are experiencing and the general population is probably the widest it has ever been in our nation's history," said Reynolds who notes that the issues veterans and their families face require this interaction to be better-educated.

Reynolds recognizes that the Northern Virginia area is unlike other high-military areas in that there is a lack of a sense of community. She feels that Christ Church can give that sense of community to these families.

They provide a Wednesday Night Warrior dinner to give soldiers a chance to leave the Fort Belvoir facility for dinner and fellowship. They also participate in the Wreaths Across America program that successfully places a Christmas wreath on every grave in Arlington Cemetery. Working with the Wounded Warriors Battalion at Fort Belvoir in Alexandria and the USSO, the ministry builds relationships with active listening and simply by being present.

Training has also been offered at the church in order to educate people about PTSD and the effects of war. "People are hurting, and we are not even recognizing it," Reynolds notes, although such education has taught them things they did not expect.

"We have learned to be aware and to be a safe place to start. We learned that sharing can actually make things worse for them [veterans] if they do not also have professionals to help them process. Sometimes we need to consult with experts instead of just doing what we think might help," said Reynolds.



Shugarts lends his talents by leading wounded warriors through "healing tours" and photography courses where they can view sites such as Arlington Cemetery. "To me, it's living out your faith," Shugarts says.

The photography classes started as a pilot program in 2014 and were a success with books donated from National Geographic. Repeated this year, Shugarts took five of his students to National Geographic for an exclusive tour. The experience meant more than just photography, said Shugarts.

When asked about this work, Shugarts sees the answer as two-fold. "As a Vietnam veteran, we weren't treated well, and I want to make up for that. And if you have a faith component in your healing, you are ahead of the game. The beauty of that is that the faith component can be in layers. It is not about beating folks over the head – it is about living it. And in living it, little things like taking them to Arlington to be next to the grave of someone they served with – that's powerful."

FINDING "GOD INCIDENTS"

At Messiah UMC, Alexandria District, the military ministry began after Sept. 11, 2001. Ruth Lapointe had never heard of a military ministry, but because of the church's proximity to the Pentagon and Fort Belvoir in Springfield, she thought there had to be something they could do.

Going to her pastor after church one day, Lapointe asked whether she thought they should have a military ministry, and several dozen voices behind her – all retired military – gave the response "yes."

She started with the idea of care packages after reading an article in the *Washington Post*. Going on a leap of faith, she asked the congregation to send names and addresses of deployed persons.

"I still remember that first care package mailing – I think we got 17 addresses, and we decided to send each deployed person two boxes," said Lapointe. "The first name I ever got was a female soldier who had been brought over in the Vietnam Baby Drop, and she had been adopted by American parents. Her name was Hope. I have never forgotten that. I thought, 'That's a sign – that's definitely a sign.'"

They have two annual events at Messiah: the care package mailing once a year and a Memorial Day wreath-laying event. Though the church had always had a Memorial Day wreath-laying, Lapointe put it at a time that would be



better-attended and included Boy Scouts from the church in the ceremony.

The rest of what the ministry does is ad hoc. Lapointe is often contacted at the deployed service members' request. Things that they sent included items for soldiers to give to children, from Beanie Babies to school supplies and clothes for an orphanage in Iraq. They have sent coffee and mugs to a chaplain to set up a coffee room in Iraq; they have sent baby clothes to a unit delivering babies in Afghanistan; and they've sent supplies to a reserve unit that was building schools in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The church has worked with the Fisher House Foundation, a homeless shelter for women veterans and the Northern Virginia Military Ministry Outreach (NVAMMO).

With a very supportive team and pastor as well as resources, Lapointe said it wasn't hard to say yes to everything they have been asked for. "We have the privilege of having a large church. At Messiah, you have enough people and enough contacts. You have more resources than you realize, and it's not always monetary. Usually, it's just muscle and the availability of a truck."

CHURCHES WORKING TOGETHER

While many churches are working on separate projects, several have come together in official and unofficial group capacities to make a bigger impact.

Northern Virginia Military Ministry Outreach (NVAMMO) is one such group. Formed by Bill Shugarts and Keith Saddler, a member at **St. George's UMC, Alexandria District**, the group was created in February 2013. Their mission statement highlights that they are "committed to using our combined strength to support our returning military and the loyal indigenous personnel who assisted our coalition in Iraq and Afghanistan."

The coalition is made up of nine churches, eight of which are United Methodist: Centreville, Messiah, Sydenstricker in Springfield; Grace and Buckhall in Manassas; Pender and St. George's in Fairfax; and Christ in Fairfax Station.

Together these churches, all volunteer-driven, have held fundraisers for the Wounded Warriors Project at Fort Belvoir and have hosted veterans and their families on "healing tours."

Their largest project has been in assisting the nonprofit group, No One Left Behind, that helps Afghan interpreters who assisted the United States during combat. As a result of their service, they have been targeted alongside their families by the Taliban. The group focuses on helping assist these families who are relocating to the United States through housing, employment and cultural adaptation.

According to Ruth Lapointe, as a coalition they felt

soldiers' needs were being met by a variety of different organizations and No One Left Behind could be most effective by helping translators.

For Shugarts, it's a story that is still of importance to United Methodists though it was a large story last year in the church. "Christians need to see churches coming together and living out the great commission and commandment, and that's what we're doing. It's not about Muslims or Christians. It's about human decency." It's about decency toward people that Shugarts sees as veterans just as much as American soldiers.

The first translator the group was able to help, Hameed,* touched all the churches involved. (Find out more about his story at <http://www.umc.org/news-and-media/churches-step-up-to-help-afghan-interpreters>.)

For Liz Sherman, it was realizing that her church could come together to help such a big cause. For Monica Reynolds, it was important that the ministry helped make others aware of what was happening as a result of America's interaction in the Middle East and that Hameed is making such a turn-around.

Lapointe found "God incidents" through her church's military ministry as well as through the work of NVAMMO.

For her, one of those moments was in procuring work clothes for Hameed, the NVAMMO's first translator. A friend of hers was getting rid of some of her husband's suits – suits that Lapointe hoped that Hameed would be able to wear, although she wasn't sure.

"I went to meet Hameed for the first time and the only thing I knew about him was that he was tall. Well, he tried on the first suit and it fit him like a glove. I call it the miracle of the 44 long. Because all of us gathered just looked up at the heavens in this apartment and said how could this be? That the length of the pants is perfect and that the length of the shirts are perfect. What are the odds? That someone would donate clothes to me and the next day they fit perfectly someone who needs these clothes."

The group is now planning a fundraiser dinner for Nov. 6 to benefit No One Left Behind.

MILITARY AND THE CHURCH

For Reynolds, the military ministry points to something about Christians as well. "There is something very compelling about people who are willing to serve a cause greater than themselves, to give up their own freedom even when it may cost their own lives. This is what our military members do! If we were to remove the war part of the equation and substitute it with love instead, this is exactly what we are called to do as followers of Christ. We are called to put God's desire for a just and united creation ahead of our

(Continued on page 25: "MILITARY AND THE CHURCH")



GraceInside saves lives from the inside out

By the Rev. Lynn Litchfield

What in the world made you want to be a prison chaplain? My one-word answer is always, “God.” I had always felt deeply for those theologian Deitrich Bonhoeffer said have a “view from below” – those who never see the world from a position of power or strength. Jesus calls those folks the least of these. So when desperation for a job led to a promise to God that I would go anywhere, God sent me to prison.

I served a brand new maximum security women’s prison for more than 11 years as the sole chaplain assigned there by GraceInside, the nonprofit that has assigned Christian chaplains inside Virginia’s prisons for the past 95 years. Prison chaplains in Virginia get to be a hybrid of Christian pastor and community chaplain. Preaching, teaching, pastoral care and counseling are the primary duties of the job. When a woman finds out her 12-year-old daughter was killed by a drunk driver, it is the chaplain’s job to step in. We also oversee and coordinate volunteers who facilitate other programs and religious traditions.

Working inside a closed compound for so many years allowed me the unique opportunity to get to know the struggles and joys of many women isolated from their families. I quickly learned about the tremendous impact of every issue of social justice – racism, sexism, poverty, domestic violence, addiction, homelessness, human trafficking, immigration and so many more. All of them come together in a prison environment.

Yet, it is that coming together that made the work so beautiful and powerful. Broken lives were healing every single

day. I had a front row seat to the transformations God was making real in front of my eyes. I watched people bloom. I got to nurture their souls. I wondered at the endurance of the human spirit. We created a church honoring the multicultural, diverse theologies among our Christian sisters with respect for those who were on another path. We created a community of people who grew to believe they were more than the worst thing they have ever done. We saved lives.

I now visit with some of those women in person and on Facebook as they have left behind the confines of prison bars. It isn’t uncommon for someone to write and thank me for saving their lives. But it wasn’t me. I was only a tangible representation of an intangible love. I wanted them to know God loves them. God believes in them. God has better for them. Expressly because of the brokenness in prisons, you can find the mightiest and most powerful growth. It starts on the inside – and works its way out!

People in prison can and do change. Every. Single. Day. God, through the love of Jesus Christ, transforms.

I want to be part of the solution. So I go to prison.

I got a note from a former offender, “You believed in me. No one had ever believed in me before. You gave me hope that God might believe in me. Then maybe I could start believing in me. Then my family – then my church – then my community. It all started because you believed in me.”

I wrote back, “My sweet friend, I still do.” 🍷

– The Rev. Lynn Litchfield is director of Development at GraceInside, a chaplain service for Virginia prisons.

(“MILITARY AND THE CHURCH,” continued from page 24:)

own selfish desires. It’s a strange, sad paradox actually,” Reynolds said.

These military ministries have allowed for a respectful dialogue with the military community. They allow the opportunity to assist Afghan interpreters, they have shown the need for awareness about post-traumatic stress and the long-term consequences of war on both military members and their families that Reynolds says “can be translated into a living, breathing, relevant ministry opportunities.” They have allowed churches to partner together, not just as stand-alone churches, but as a coalition seeking to love and serve its community and its needs better. 🍷

*For his safety, his first name only is being used.

– Madeline Pillow is editor of the Virginia Advocate.

(“JENNIFER MOORE,” continued from page 21:)

the love of Christ through our actions takes priority over the spoken word.

As I reflect on the joy of ministry, and, specifically, the ministry God has called me to, I am so thankful for a cooperative spirit between Randolph College and the amazing people at Bethany UMC. I am thankful for a creative and visionary district superintendent. I am thankful that The United Methodist Church is open to change and trying something new. I am especially thankful to our amazing God who can bring all of this together for the glory of God’s Kingdom. It continues to amaze me how God continues to work on our hearts and in our lives even when we have made the emphatic statement, “I don’t ever want to go into ministry!” 🍷

– Rev. Jennifer Vestal Moore is chaplain at Randolph College in Lynchburg as well as pastor of Bethany UMC, Lynchburg District.

Devotions from International Lesson Series

LIVING THE WORD



Rev. Dr. Sandra Benton Plasters is the pastor at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Chesapeake on the Elizabeth River District. She is a graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University (Political Science) and Wesley Theological Seminary. She blogs at: sandibentonplasters.com. She is married to the Rev. Mike Plasters who serves as pastor of Deep Creek United Methodist Church. They have a daughter.

Nov. 1, 2015

**Who is in Charge
Acts 12:1-11**

I suspect that many of us won't experience having someone act violently toward us. Yet, King Herod had James killed and, according to verse 3 of Acts 12, "it pleased the Jews." After murdering James, Peter was put into prison. We may not know what it is to be wrongfully arrested and held in a state prison, but we know the feeling of being trapped in a situation beyond our control.

The situation may be economic. It may be that we feel stuck in a relationship. Sometimes we hinder ourselves. We know we need to make changes. We need to change how we spend our time, talent or resources. We know we have a problem that has taken over our life, but we continue to let the thing have control over us. The thing can be a substance, activity or an emotion. We allow the thing to spin a web around us so that we find ourselves unable to break free. We are trapped. It takes more and more of our lives to the point that we cannot seem to breathe.

When the situation seems impossible, we are called to pray. Invite the church to pray for you. God hears our prayers. Prayers are not to inform God of the situation. God already knows what is happening. It is sharing our thoughts and concerns. It is an acknowledgement that we depend on God to be present and working in our lives and the lives of others.

When we open the lines of communication, we are inviting God to act in our lives. We are trusting God to act, and we are acknowledging that we choose to live with God, rather than ourselves, in control. Lives are transformed by sharing our lives with God. God responded to the prayers of the church in Acts 12, and God still responds to prayer. Peter was led out of his imprisonment by an angel. We can be as well. When we pray and invite others to pray with us, then the thing, the relationship or the economic situation can be overcome. Through our prayers, God is invited into our lives to deliver us from whatever imprisons us. God provides a way for us to be freed.

Nov. 8, 2015

**Grace Saves
Acts 15:1-12**

Every family has its own way of doing things, and my family is no exception. In our family, we sliced cake differently than most people. Most people slice a cake the same way they slice a pie. The slices are a wedge with a small point in the center and a larger amount on the outer edge. We did things differently. We would slice a round cake like a loaf of bread, with all of the cuts in the same direction. The first piece was mostly icing, which was great if you wanted a lot of icing. The pieces would become larger and larger. As you reached the middle of the cake, the pieces were huge, and the pieces were divided. It was not unusual to get a piece that had no part of the circumference of the cake. This meant very little icing.

When I was in my teens, I asked if I could cut my birthday cake. I asked if I could cut the cake any way that I wanted. (It was a carrot cake, and I wanted both cake and icing.) My mother let me. I remember the gasp from my mother and my aunt as I sliced the cake in half. I then cut the cake like a pie, in wedges. Some in the family decided that I was our official cake cutter after that.

It was just cutting a cake. It did not change the taste of the cake. It was a way, a new way, of doing things. Sometimes the church needs to consider if we are doing things in the best way possible. The early church had such a discussion. There was a question of circumcision. Is it required? Paul and Barnabas took the question to the Council of Jerusalem. Some thought that circumcision should be required for salvation, but others realized and argued it is grace that saves.

Grace is what matters, not the action of people. The action of people is a response to grace. When we make decisions about what should and should not happen in our churches, our homes, or our lives, are we putting human action above grace? Are we saying appearance or the way we have always done something matters more than what God is doing? Maybe we need to open ourselves to new ideas and look beyond the things people do.



Nov. 15, 2015

In the Middle

Acts 16:1-15

Personally, I love having a plan. I like waking up and knowing there is a schedule for what will be happening. Throughout the day, I check various things off my list: the appointments I've kept and the tasks accomplished. But it is not enough to be focused on our own personal plan for our days and our lives. God calls us to be open to the possibilities of what God wants us to accomplish during the day.

At St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Chesapeake, we have Life Essential Ministry. This ministry includes a food pantry that is open four days a week, with needs varying greatly. Sometimes the need takes a long time and sometimes just a short time. My role is to be present whether interpreting bills, praying with people, offering counseling about family situations, suggesting resources to meet needs beyond our capabilities, enforcing procedures and policies, encouraging volunteers or making sure we are compliant with our covenants. Some days I am able to work through my plan for the day, but I find my time and energy redirected often.

Paul and Timothy were redirected. They had plans to deliver the decisions from the Council of Jerusalem, and then they were to continue on their way. But God redirected them to Macedonia where they met and shared their faith with Lydia. She and her household were baptized; this was not part of Paul and Timothy's original plan.

We never know what God's redirection might lead to in our lives or the lives of others. By allowing God to redirect our paths, we may find a way to share our faith, offer hope and shine the light of Christ into a life that is hurting. When we are willing to let go of our plan to follow God's plan,

then we are given the opportunity to be a part of something larger than our own plan. We are given the opportunity to share faith and be vehicles of God's plan.

Nov. 22, 2015

Handle Your Part

Acts 17:1-25

I have never been an athlete. Most of my sports experience has been as a spectator. When my daughter was younger, I would take her to basketball practice and wait on the sidelines. The coach would drill the team in doing their part of plays. Each player was to concentrate on their part of the play. Do your job, and let other team members worry about their job, the coach would instruct. They were not to try to be in charge of anybody else. I thought this was brilliant! Far too often we get caught up in what other people should be doing. Or we sit in judgment of what they should not be doing. In fact we get so busy thinking about the other person's part that we lose focus on what our part is supposed to be.

For example, I know a woman who monitors her Facebook account very closely. She monitors who "Likes" her pictures and posts. She monitors to the point that she has started complaining about a certain Facebook "friend" who never "likes" her pictures. The woman complains that she "likes" all of her friend's pictures so she is owed "likes" on her pictures. She is keeping score.

The apostle Paul shared the message of God's grace. Some he shared the message of grace with claimed grace for themselves. Some continued to worship at the altar of an unknown God. He could not force them to accept grace; we don't make decisions for other people. We do our part in sharing our faith and inviting others to accept grace. It is up to each individu-

al how they will respond.

Life is not about keeping score. It is about doing our part. It is about sharing the gift of God's grace no matter the other person's response. It is fulfilling our role on God's team rather than worrying about how anyone else is doing. It is about responding to God's grace by sharing our faith, no matter what the response. It is about supporting friends on social media or in real life without keeping score. It is about realizing that it is not about us, but it is about the Kingdom of God.

Nov. 29, 2015

Encouragement

Acts 18:1-11, 18-21

This past September my daughter started eighth grade at a brand new school. Before the first day of school she had no friends at the school. She knew no one in her grade. She only knew two other kids that will be attending the school. This is enough to make many of us anxious. We would be concerned about learning our way around a new building, but we would especially be concerned about making friends.

Making friends requires talking to new people. It requires starting a conversation and taking a risk. The risk is rejection or ridicule. The possibility of rejection or ridicule is so large in our mind that many of us will let that fear hold us back. We let that fear keep us silent. We let that fear inhibit us from inviting others to church. We let that fear keep us from mentioning our faith because we are afraid we might offend someone. We stay silent rather than risk what might happen.

God tells Paul in Acts 18 and tells us not to be afraid. We serve God who conquered death, so a small risk of our personal comfort is very small indeed. God will provide others to support us in our mission. God pro-

(Continued on pg. 28: "Living Word.")

CLERGY & DIACONAL



DEATHS

Dale Hay, father of the **Rev. Stephen D. Hay**, pastor of Asbury UMC, Harrisonburg District, died Sept. 7, 2015. The Rev. Clarence Brown shared that Dale Hay was instrumental for many years in assisting churches in the Northern Virginia area with financing and purchasing.

Mrs. Anna Ford, mother of the **Rev. David V. Ford**, pastor of Southview UMC, Roanoke District, died Sept. 7, 2015, in Nashville, Ga.

Mary Jarrell Daughdrill, 88, died on Sept. 13, 2015. She was active at Haygood United Methodist Church, Elizabeth River District, and served in a number of leadership positions on the Norfolk District and in the Virginia Conference. Her memorial service was held Sept. 27 at Haygood UMC.

Services were held on Sept. 29, 2015, for **Arthur Owens**, brother-in-law of **Rev. Jose Saldana**, pastor of Wesley Chapel UMC, Alexandria District.

(“Living Word,” continued from pg. 27.)

vided Priscillia and Aquilla to Paul. He found people who shared a common bond, their trade as tentmakers. God will provide friends in our lives who will help us share our message. God provides people to offer us encouragement and support in order for us to share the message of faith.

My daughter has school friends, and she was not ridiculed or rejected. We are now in the season of Advent, a season of preparation. How are

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(“PATRICK PILLOW,” continued from page 18.)

seeing a familiar verse framed in the corner: “...but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.” The Lord was present in the ER that day and is present in all aspects of our lives.

Fulfilling my CPE requirement while being a full-time minister is a challenge indeed. However, I am very thankful to the staff and congregation at Chester UMC for being so supportive of me during this time. I know that I have changed for the better in my first month as a chaplain; changes that will improve my ministry in ways I never thought possible. CPE is not a pleasant experience, but it is one that I encourage you to tackle with relish and desire. If you are preparing to do this as part of your ordination, or feel led to serve as a volunteer at your local hospital, allow this experience to touch you; allow the Holy Spirit to take you to places that you might shy away from. Some of the greatest life-changing experiences happen when we allow ourselves to be “broken open” before God and creation.

– Patrick Pillow is a chaplain at Chippenham/Johnston-Willis Hospital and is associate pastor at Chester UMC, James River District.

(“PAM MEEUWISSEN,” continued from page 19.)

Part of the journey toward chaplaincy as a United Methodist includes being endorsed by our United Methodist Endorsing Agency. This process includes answering questions in writing and going to Nashville to be interviewed by a committee of chaplains. The UM endorsing agent invites endorsed chaplains to serve as presenter and interviewer. In 2013 I was invited to participate in that capacity. This experience was a time of growth and enlightenment in my own ministry.

Recently while sitting vigil with a daughter, her mother was experiencing terminal agitation and this stressed the daughter. The daughter and I began to sing the patient's favorite hymns. The patient went from being restless and unresponsive to calming and attempting to open her eyes. At which time the daughter gave the patient permission to “do what she needed to do.” The patient relaxed and within a short time went on to be with the Lord. This time together allowed the daughter to accept that her mother knew who she was and whose she was.

– Pam Meeuwissen is a chaplain at Mary Washington Hospice.

you preparing to share the message of God? How are you receiving and offering support from friends to proclaim your faith? During the Advent season we are offered many holiday celebrations with friends, family and co-workers where we have a chance for greater social interaction. We can prepare for these social interactions by bolstering our courage to share our personal faith. If Paul could and did face the Jewish leaders in the synagogue, then we can face those in our daily lives. 📖

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FROM THE BISHOP



Why prayer?

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

November is another beautiful month, but soon we will feel that winter is approaching. Trees will lose their colorful leaves as they prepare for the coming of a long winter season. This month, we will celebrate Thanksgiving Day. Families will gather at their dinner tables to remember and share God's grace and blessings given to us this year. It has been another year full of many experiences and memories of God's love and grace. Of course, not everything has gone well and smoothly, but God's inseparable love has been with us and helped us. Let us give thanks and praise to God!

Last month, I wrote about why prayer is important in our lives. Prayer is the essence and foundation of the Christian faith. The God in whom we believe is an eternal God and is still

alive. To know and to have faith in God means having a relationship with God. Prayer is our communion with this living God. This month, I will continue to write about the importance of prayer.

Today we are in desperate need of prayer thinking of our churches. As we know, we, The United Methodist Church, have been declining continuously for the past 40 years. We have tried many plans and programs to turn around our churches, but so far we have not seen any significant fruit yet. And we are becoming an aging church. The average age of a United Methodist Church member is now 57 years old.

Our mission field, the world, is changing rapidly. The U.S. is becoming more religiously diverse, and many people say that this land is no longer a Christian country. Another outward challenge we face is the fast pace of technological development. This development is having a huge impact on our daily lives, our values and our ways of communication. Relevance to our changing world has become a major concern in today's church and its ministries. In addition to these outward challenges, internally The United Methodist Church is divided and struggling over the issue of homosexuality.

Now, the road before us is not clear, and we are worrying about the future. We are facing many challenges today, and we feel the need to respond to our critical situation. Is there a way to overcome the difficulties we face today? Where can we find an answer to the challenges? What does the Bible tell us about the way of overcoming crises?

I am convinced that the time has come for us to go back to the basics of our faith. This is the time to go back to our Lord. Of course, our thoughtful planning and creative programs will help the churches to move forward to some degree. But this will

not provide us with a fundamental solution to our situation because our issue today is more than a lack of planning and programs. I believe that our bottom line issue is a spiritual issue. It is a faith issue. We truly need a renewal and revival of our churches. We need to rediscover the spiritual vitality of our churches.

Here we find the need for prayer. Without prayer, there is no way to rediscover the spiritual vitality we need. Without prayer, we cannot discern the plan of our Lord who is the owner and the head of our churches. Many of us think that we can do many things apart from the Lord; that we just need to ask our Lord to bless our finalized plan, like marking it with a rubber stamp. But this approach will not work.

In the Bible when the people of God faced challenges and crises, they always returned to the Lord. They repented of their sins before God and shouted to the Lord for help. They humbled themselves and sought help from God. God always listened to their cries and helped them and led them to a new future. I know many people worry about the future of our churches, but not many people seriously pray for God's help.

We are now facing a storm, but our Lord is in our boat. Now is the time to cry out to the Lord! Now is the time to humbly seek the wisdom and guidance of our Lord. Now is the time for us to truly honor and respect the Lordship of our risen Christ.

So, why prayer? In this time of challenges and crises, why not prayer? 🍷

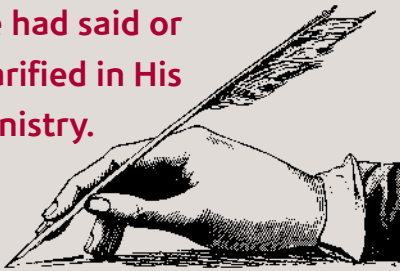
In our Lord,

Young Jin Cho

ONE LAST WORD

We asked our READERS

to share their thoughts
and fill in the bubble
about this graphic of Jesus,
whether serious or funny,
to see what you wish
He had said or
clarified in His
ministry.



"The one time I leave the door open at my house and my mom says, 'What's wrong with you? Were you born in a barn?'"

"See, it's really this simple. Just love and let yourself be loved and we will all be blessed together."

"And another thing – you can't change your Facebook privacy setting with just a post in your timeline. Truly, I say unto you – it's a hoax, people."

"Pay little attention to the Internet, it's mostly a broken toy."

"I will never get tired of telling you how much you mean to me. I love you."

"Chill out. I got this."

"With all the diversity around me, you figure they would have gotten mine right! I guess we can't upset the white evangelicals."

"And when people tell you that you can't wear your Chacos to church, tell them I told you to come as you are..."

"A child's life matters."

"Remember children, not all ideas by your elders are bad – give them a listen and a try. You may find something in them you like."

"Parents, can we make sure your children go before they come unto me. Somebody, can I get a towel?"

"The kid says she wants a wagon and an EZ Bake Oven for MY birthday. What's that all about?"

"Not going to church because of hypocrites is like not going to the gym because of out of shape people."

"I believe that children are the future."

"Work extra hard on choosing a great quadrennial emphasis." (Followers: What's a quadrennium, Lord?)

"Hey, guy on the right...you still have some burrito in your beard."

"And lo I say unto the man to my left, dude, that is one sweet beard! You look like Santa. Who's Santa? Well, um...how do I explain this..."

"I have created for you an earth where there is plenty of food and water for everyone, men who find cures for diseases, materials for shelter. Why has man created so much suffering for the little children? This is not what I asked of you. Why are the wealthy using so many of the resources I have given to everyone? SHARE!"

"Thou shalt not covet. Except beards. And I want one like Santa over there."

"You know, a lot of people tell me I look like Matt Moffitt."

"And after all that time I spent posing for the picture, the artist changed my ethnicity because he said: 'You'll be more relatable!'"

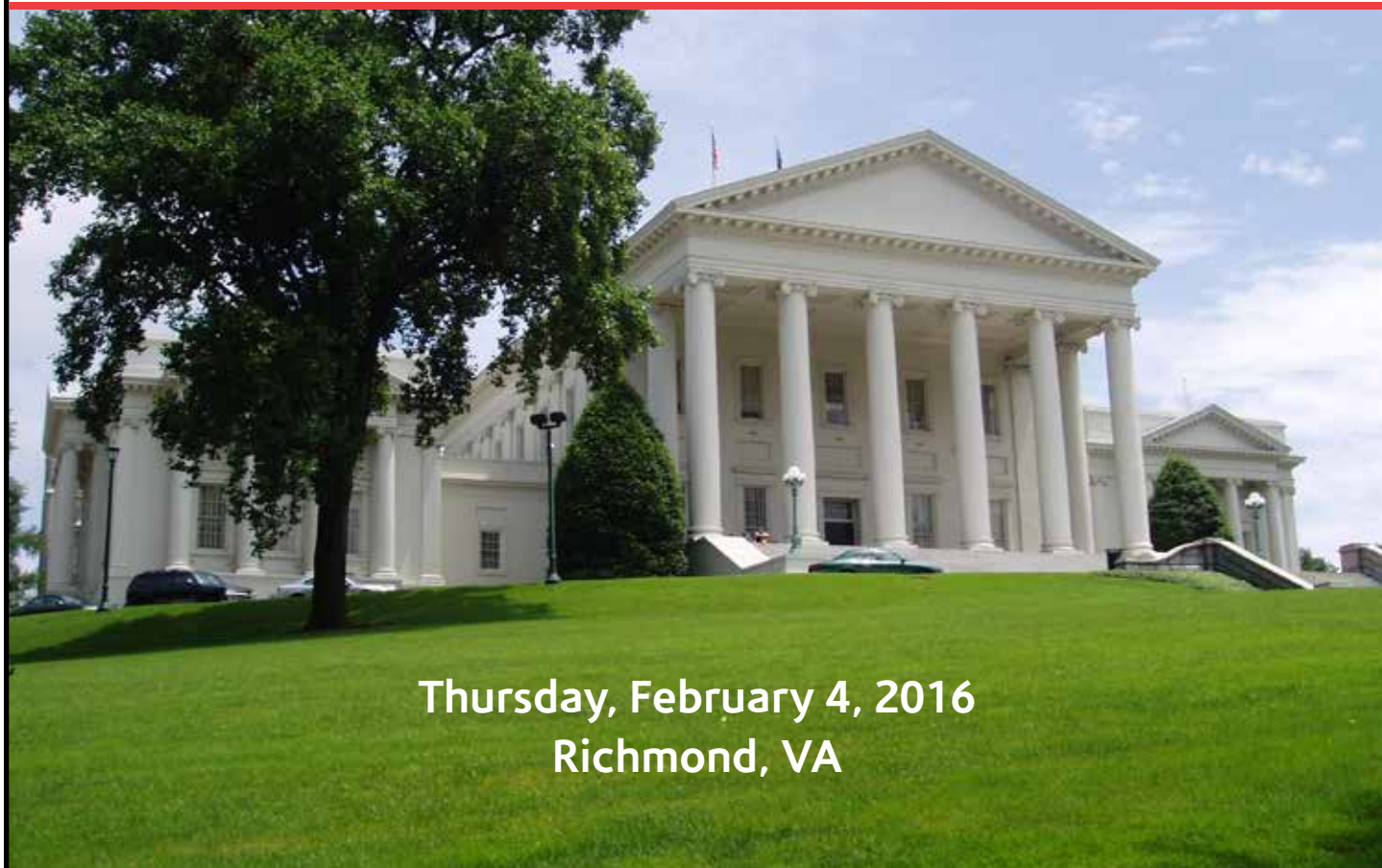
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Hotel rooms for February 3 are available at the Hyatt Place, 201 Arboretum Place, Richmond, 23236, near Bon Air UMC. Rooms for our event are available for \$89/night (single or double). Call (804) 560-1566 to make your reservation and mention "United Methodist Day" to receive this special room rate. The deadline for hotel reservations is Wednesday, January 13, 2016.