

Advocate



Connecting with the



Virginia Advocate

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

PILLOW TALK



Madeline Pillow
Editor

Such a
little thing

I want you to try something with me.

Look at your hands.

We've all done it before — looked at our fingerprints, wondered about how ours are unique from every other person's.

Fingerprints are formed in the mother's womb, when developing babies touch around their surroundings. The pressure of this action creates what is known as "friction ridges" that stay with us through the rest of our lives.

Scientists don't know exactly when they form — sometime around the 10th week, and they are completed by the end of the fourth month.

Such a tiny little thing. A part of your mother. A part of your Creator.

"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb." (Psalm 139:13, NIV)

These tiny little things, this small detail is just another connection to the Creator who imagined and formed us.

In our society, these markers identify us as individuals, especially in a court of law.

At the recent 5 Talent Academy event, keynote speaker Andy Crouch called those assembled to remember their role as image-bearers of Christ and to also, as leaders, allow others around them to live into their roles as image-bearers.

Now more than ever, we need to be image-bearers. We need to be the "right" kind of Christians: loving, nonjudgmental and light-bearing.


The squabbling for supposed power in our churches, issues between pastors and committees and the calls for society to meet our "standards" are just holding us back.

While our fingerprints remind us of our individuality, they are also visual reminders of a creative, innovative and all-encompassing God who made us in similar likeness.

Shouldn't they remind us that we are called to something greater? Greater than pettiness, church politics and the exhausting need to be right? Wouldn't we rather call all (and I mean *all* people) to their fullest and most wonderful selves?

Bear your light. We are not called to the same course of life, and we are not called to an exclusive "church club."

Our church is around us, and we are image-bearers wherever we go.

Fingerprints. Such a little reminder that our purpose and mission is so much bigger than where our focus usually is. Be where God has placed you to be an image, to emulate what we really believe. 

Madeline



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Local Church News

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

Letters

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

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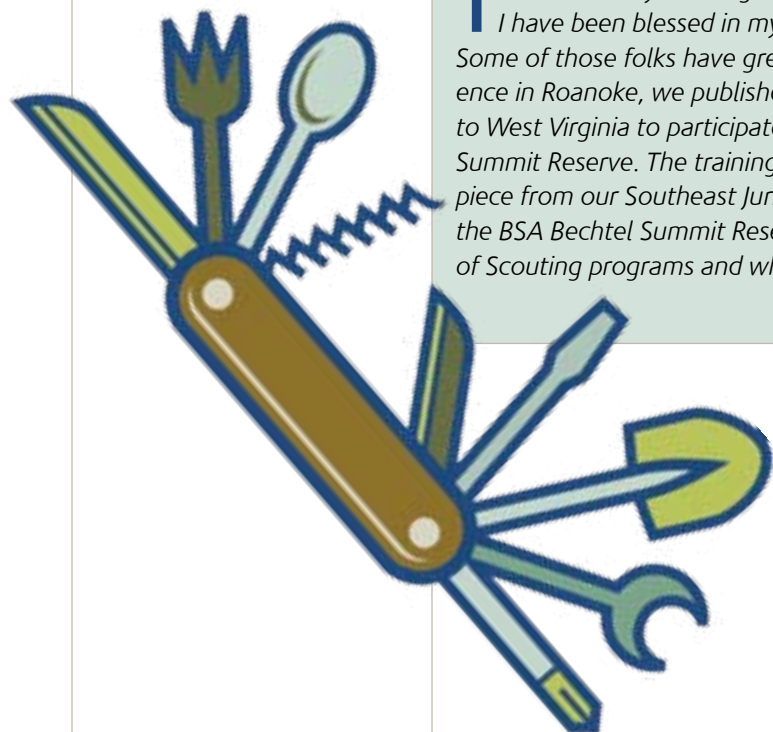
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LETTERS



There are many blessings representing Scouting Ministries in the Conference and beyond. I have been blessed in my years in Scouting to meet some great folks around the country. Some of those folks have great stories to share. Several months ago, after Annual Conference in Roanoke, we published an article that was shared with me there. Afterwards, I drove to West Virginia to participate in the very first training event of any kind at the BSA Bechtel Summit Reserve. The training was for United Methodist Scouters. Below is an inspirational piece from our Southeast Jurisdiction Scouting Coordinator, Bill Byrd, who was the leader for the BSA Bechtel Summit Reserve training. Through his words, I believe you will see the value of Scouting programs and why your local church should have and support this ministry.

—Bill Chaffin, Virginia Conference Scouting Coordinator

The untapped resource of scouting ministries in The United Methodist Church

By Bill Byrd

Churches are called to reach out to their neighbors, receive them as they are, help them relate to God, nurture and equip them, and then send them back into the world to make it a more loving and just place in which to live. You can probably think of at least one way your church already answers this calling and ideas for more.

Many United Methodist congregations have an already planted, but often untapped or under-developed resource for reaching out: the investment of the church in Scouting Ministries. Statistics indicate that of the youth who join United Methodist Scout troops, 25 percent are United Methodists, 25 percent are members of other denominations or faiths and—here's the fascinat-

ing part—50 percent come from unchurched families.

For half of our Scouts, then, their involvement offers the potential to have a positive experience with the church and develop a relationship with Jesus Christ. It makes sense for us to connect more deeply to the Scout troops that already meet in our buildings and whose charters we hold.

Crucial engagement

As I look around my office, I'm quickly reminded of the impact Scouting has had on my life and the life of my family. On the desk is a 2002 Cub Scout Day Camp token, and on the walls the true story of our family's Scouting experience: Cub Master Plaque, Silver Beaver Award, Benefactor Donor Plaque, our son's Eagle Rank announcement from 2010 and his Good Samaritan Award presented in 2015. The awards and plaques are all, every one of them, centered on Scouting activities held at a United Methodist Church.

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LETTERS

My Boy Scouting adventure began at a United Methodist Church in Springfield, Mo. Our family didn't attend the church, but I was invited to participate in the troop. It was a great experience, although the church didn't embrace the troop—we merely met there without further support or involvement from the congregation.

Sadly, that church no longer exists. I truly believe if they had taken a different approach with the young people who spent time in their building, the fate of the church could have changed.

Fast forward to today. To grow, a church must not only keep current members but also cultivate new disciples. Scouting can play a part in that cultivation, but from my experience, many clergy and church leaders either do not understand or appreciate the impact a Scouting program can have on a church. While many UMCs have embraced Scouting, a sizable number behave more like that church in Missouri: missing out by not fully incorporating and supporting it.

The Christian share of the U.S. population is declining, while the number of adults who do not identify with any organized religion is growing, according to an extensive survey by the Pew Research Center. More and more youth and

young couples are disenfranchised with organized religion, while others are simply trying to find a place to fit in. The future of the United Methodist Church depends on many factors, and I feel strongly that Scouting is one of those factors.

Prime opportunity

We must embrace our Scouting programs and encourage scouts and their families to experience all the church has to offer. Doing so can help us stay true to the church's mission of making disciples and transforming the world, starting with our own communities.

Typically, boys and men of a Scout troop do not all attend the same school, live in the same neighborhood or attend the same church, if they attend church at all. But for one reason or another, they have come together to participate, giving clergy and church members a prime opportunity to reach these families.

This reality recently hit home for me in a new way. As I mentioned earlier, one of the pieces of Scouting memorabilia on the wall in my office is my son's 2010 Eagle Scout announcement. He was in a group of boys that started their adventures together as Cub Scouts, and most earned their Eagle rank.

My son loved Scouting

and took full advantage of its activities. In August 2015, he died unexpectedly. Following his death, my family realized the true impact Scouting had, and still has, on our family. Of the nearly 400 people who attended his funeral, more than half knew him through their connection to Scouting and came to support our family.

Many of these young men and their families were not members of the church when they started Scouting. Yet as their Scouting involvement grew, so did their involvement in the UMC.

The opportunities are there for us to grasp. A Scouting program can be a building block for the future of the UMC—if churches jump in with both feet. If we do our jobs correctly, youth of today become leaders of tomorrow, and they will want to be part of a church. What better place is there than where they've already experienced adventure and opportunity and God's grace in action? 🍀

— Bill Byrd serves as Scouting ministries coordinator for the South Central Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church.

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COMMENTARY

Innovating worship through divine inspiration

By Nancy D. Whitfield

Even as a contemporary worship leader, I longed for something more. A lifelong Methodist steeped in the historic traditions and rituals of the church, my creative urges, which I believe to be divinely inspired, went unsatisfied. The questions lurked around every corner. Why couldn't worship be something more than the expected? Why did we have to do things in the

same order? The list of questions was endless, and from personal conversations with others, I knew that there were people out there who could or should be connected to the body of Christ, but were not because the style of worship felt so foreign or constraining to them. God start-

ed working on those questions in me over a decade ago while I was serving as the contemporary worship leader in a Methodist church. I first tasted the possibility of creativity in worship when the associate pastor there began to incorporate activities for the congregation.

On one Sunday, individuals were invited to press a small piece of clay into a larger project which ended up being a cross, complete with the fingerprints of all those whom God had made in His image.

The most impactful Sunday was on Palm Sunday. It was during this service that the associate pastor walked to one of the six large window alcoves, picked up a hammer and drove a nail into a block of wood. The sanctuary reverberated with each strike of the nail, with some people visibly reacting to the unexpected sound inside what was usually a reasonably predictable environment. After several blows with the hammer, she turned and invited people to hammer their own nails at the other similarly equipped alcoves. There was a stunned silence and at first, no one moved; however, in a few moments, one brave soul stood up and approached another alcove, picked up a nail, and began to hammer. The sound waves pierced the room, echoing from

wall to wall, ceiling to pew. Another person rose and followed suit. Before long, there were lines at each of the alcoves with people waiting to use the hammer, and the entire sanctuary was alive with the constant sound of hammering, the cadences clashing as each person drove a nail to a different rhythm.

The promise of this unique service evaporated as the pastor relocated, and I felt the call to step away from leading worship to finish a Master's degree. Searching earnestly, I could not find a place to worship that engaged people in this way.

Several years went by, and after completing a Master's degree and doctoral degree, a return to leading worship became possible within a new job. This was not the run-of-the-mill worship leader position. This position would partner with the associate pastor at a mid-sized United Methodist church to launch what was termed an "Emergent Worship" service — a service in which people are engaged in worship and actually participate in the worship experience. This was to be far more involved than just reciting a congregational response, singing some hymns or standing in line to receive Holy Communion.

The development of the Emergent Worship service



COMMENTARY

was an incredibly exciting adventure. Suddenly, the expectations of traditional worship were tossed away. The canvas was untouched, clean and open, and anything was possible for this service. There were, however, few outside resources or models available for starting this type of service. The greatest resources proved to be divine inspiration and the creativity that sparked within the relationship that the associate pastor and I developed.

This kind of service involves the use not only of the sacred but of the secular, too. It addresses topics that traditional services might not only shy away from but would probably run from. In fact, the initial question that we asked was, “What is it that we cannot do in traditional worship?”

This query became the catalyst for creative forces in developing the worship service. We adopted the position that there was nothing, absolutely nothing, that is beyond God’s redemptive power, so just about anything could be used in worship. In addition, people are told that, no matter who they are, where they come from, or what they might have on their hearts, there is “grace in this place.” We are a place where grace-filled people meet imperfection head-on.

The “emergent worship service” addresses topics that traditional services might not only shy away from but would probably run from. In fact, the initial question that we asked was, “What is it that we cannot do in traditional worship?”

The initial efforts involved establishing an identity for the service. The UMC uses various colors for each of its church seasons, but none of the seasons use orange. This non-liturgical color became the theme for the Emergent Worship service. Fittingly, the service was launched in October, just as the orange pumpkins were showing up all around the neighborhood.

The ultimate question underlying this entire endeavor was, “How does one innovate worship?”

The approach to planning and developing the service is an organic one. All the elements of the service are considered and planned to advance a single theme. Unlike many churches with contemporary services in which there

is a block of praise music, then preaching, and then a couple of closing songs, this post-contemporary worship service is fully integrated with a common thread running through every element. All things planned are intentional.

The traditional sermon is replaced with a short homily, and all the speaking — from the welcome to the sending to the transitions between worship elements — reinforces the theme and message of the service. The music, while often sacred or popular contemporary, is diverse and deliberately interwoven as a bridge between service elements. Secular music is also used on occasion, reinforcing the concept that anything and everything can be redeemed and made holy by God. Songs have included tunes from Michael Jackson, the Byrds and Pharrell Williams.

Every week, this worship service includes activities in which attendees participate. One of the staples of the service is the written prayer time. During the service, people are given the chance to write out their prayers — on orange cards, of course — and place them in a basket. The pastors then privately read and echo the prayers during the week. Besides the obvious purpose, these prayer cards

(Con’t. on next page: “WORSHIP”)



COMMENTARY



("WORSHIP," con't. from previous page)

also become the barometer by which the needs of the congregation are measured. What are people praying about? How might we address these in a future worship series?

One of the most impactful and edgy series was intended to respond to some real-life circumstances in the community. It was entitled "Taboo Topics in the Church." Over four weeks, we discussed sensitive and serious issues: suicide, abortion, capital punishment and physical and


We adopted the position that there was nothing, absolutely nothing, that is beyond God's redemptive power, so just about anything could be used in worship.

mental disabilities. Each week, the worship space was set with a full-length mirror. At the top were the words, "Lord we pray..." People were invited to write names on the mirror who were impacted by these subjects. As they approached the mirror to write, individuals saw not only their own reflection in the mirror, but also the names overlaying their reflection which served as a reminder that these issues are present in our lives, and we have the opportunity to courageously

face them within the promise of God's love. Each week, we discussed the United Methodist Church's official stance on the subject, and invited people to be in prayer and to interact with others, all in an attitude of grace.

The truth is that my own prayers were answered in finding this worship opportunity — a place to lead worship where innovation and creativity flourish in a vibrant setting, where God is first, and everyone is welcomed and valued.

Can there be innovation in worship? Absolutely there can, and there

is. And God, the ultimate Creator of all, is at the helm. Worship does not have to be rote and routine. God's inspiration is unlimited, just as God is infinite, and we can infuse our worship with God's inspiration to reach people who desperately need Him. 

— Dr. Nancy Whitfield is a worship leader, musician, consultant, author and speaker who is passionate about innovating worship and building healthy, collaborative teams. She currently serves as the Emergent Worship Leader at Larchmont UMC, Norfolk. She can be reached at nancy@leaderslightship.com. She would like to acknowledge the Rev. Sarah Evancho and the Rev. Pamela Gable for their influence and valuable collaboration in pioneering innovative worship experiences.

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The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Historic celebration of first American property deeded to Methodism

By Carole Poland

Along the pathways of the cemetery on the Old Stone Church site in Leesburg, Va., grave-stones stand as reminders of some of the earliest members of the congregation that worshipped there beginning in the 1760s on what was the first property in America deeded for a Methodist meeting house. Known as Leesburg Station, the first church building was replaced with a larger stone building in the late 1780s as the congregation grew.

On Sept. 10, 2016, members and friends of The Old Stone Church Foundation came together on the site to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the deeding of the property. The history of the site is woven not only into the history of American Methodism

but also of the surrounding area. Established in hope and destroyed by human intransigency, the building is no more. Hope was revived by the vision and determination of those who recognized the importance of the site and worked to bring it back to its original intent as a Methodist meeting place and as a witness to our heritage as United Methodists.

In her greetings to those assembled, Bishop Sharma Lewis lifted up the day's events as a time to celebrate Methodism and pointed to the history of the site as ultimately one of bringing people together. The history of the site since 1975 gives witness to that sentiment.

The Old Stone Church site, as it became known, has experienced a rebirth of sorts. The Foundation

is committed not only to the preservation of the site but to the spreading of the Gospel. The site has hosted worship services, ordination services, music programs, Sunday school classes and confirmation classes, as well as historical tours. Its tranquil prayer garden draws many to come for reflection and renewal.

Keynote speaker, the Rev. Clarence Brown, cautioned that as we celebrate history, we must look at it critically. The story of the congregation that was established at Leesburg Station presents a microcosm of the history of American Methodism. The errors of the past must not be repeated. Going forward, he noted that we have a ministry of reconciliation.

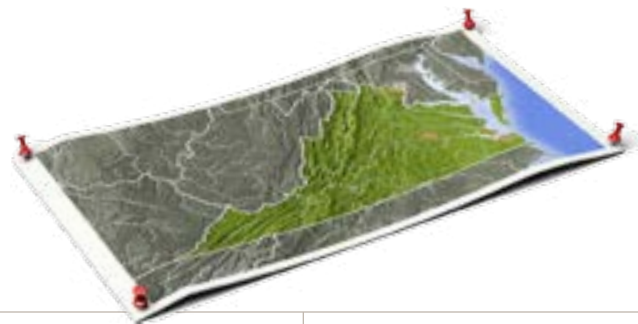
Leesburg Station witnessed visits from many of early American Methodism's leaders and was the site of

important conferences that helped shape Methodism. Tragically, during the 1840s, the congregation split over the issue of slavery, foreshadowing its demise. Eventually, one faction left to form what became Leesburg UMC, while another faction formed what became Mt. Zion UMC. By the 1890s the stone building had been abandoned, and in 1901, the property was sold by court order and the building demolished. For the next 60 years, the privately-owned site took on an alternative identity as the landscaped side garden for the house on the adjoining property. That was not the end of the story.

In 1961, the Methodist Historical Society of the Virginia Conference was able to purchase the site. An archeological study conducted in 1965 unearthed the original foundations of both early church buildings. Today a brick walkway follows the outline of the foundations, reburied for their protection. In 1975 the Virginia Conference Historical Society established The Old Stone Church Foundation to maintain, protect and interpret this important part of American Methodism. 🍷

— Carole Poland was president of The Old Stone Church Foundation from 2002-2004 and from 2006-2009.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



5 Talent Academy event focuses on ministry outside the Church's walls



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Watch this video to
learn more about the
event.

Andy Crouch, executive editor of *Christianity Today*, was the keynote speaker at the 5 Talent Academy event held on Oct. 4.



By Madeline Pillow

“Good leaders create spaces for other people to act. Your job as a leader is to give people the capacity for meaningful action,” said Andy Crouch, keynote speaker for the 5 Talent Academy event held on Oct. 4. Andy Crouch is executive editor of *Christianity Today*. He also has authored several books including *Strong and Weak: Embracing a Life of Love, Risk and True Flourishing*.

Around 600 clergy and laity attended the event at Ebenezer UMC in Stafford or watched the live stream at 10 satellite locations.

Crouch surmised that the problem with our society is that the definition of these “good leaders” does not describe leaders that communities want. Crouch emphasized that a good leader is someone who is able to combine both authority and vulnerability, using the example of Jesus’ ultimate vulnerability in being born in a stable.

Too often, Crouch said, people would rather retreat back into safety where there is no change or growth, or they would rather have ultimate control, which leads to machine-like

actions and situations of injustice for those with no power.

Crouch also led participants of the event to consider how culture affects the way leaders in the church carry out ministry. The church, Crouch said, has the opportunity to identify how vocations can shape a person’s identity and what it means for people to be cut off from meaning and dignity.

After a morning spent with Crouch, participants broke out into peer groups to discuss Crouch’s talk with one another.

Bryson Smith, pastor at St. Paul’s UMC in Staunton, saw this time as integral to the 5 Talent Academy experience.

“You get an opportunity to gather with your peers and colleagues and to see what’s going on around the church. That’s crucial for those of us in ministry,” said Smith.

Grace Han, associate pastor of St. Matthew’s UMC in Alexandria and member of the 5 Talent Academy leadership team, also emphasized the importance of the satellite locations and of the connections that these events form.

“There is power for me that all of us from around

the Virginia Conference gather together to participate and worship together, to listen to our speaker together and to engage together because we acknowledge that we are one in the body of Christ. We are one conference,” said Han.

Following the peer groups, participants had time for a final Q&A with Crouch.

About 5 Talent Academy:

5 Talent Academy came out of the All Things New initiative and seeks to equip and revitalize churches around the Virginia Conference.

The 5 Talent Academy is a group of like-minded pastors and laity across the Virginia Conference who are committed to learning the tools and techniques to have healthy, fruitful congregations. Members of this community learn new ways to increase worship attendance, professions of faith, faith development, ministry to the poor and stewardship.

There is no cost to the church to join the 5 Talent Academy – just a commitment to grow in fruitfulness and multiplication of ministries centering on worship, mission, discipleship, evangelism and stewardship. To learn more about 5 Talent Academy events, visit www.vaumc.org/5talent.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

Almost 1,000 United Methodists attended Bishop Sharma Lewis' welcome service at Reveille UMC in Richmond on Saturday, Sept. 17.

Bishop Lewis' official start date as the episcopal leader of Virginia was Sept. 1, but this service marked her covenant with the Virginia Conference.

The traditional service was filled with music and liturgy to welcome Lewis, the first African-American bishop to serve as religious leader of the 1,169 local churches and 327,647 United

Methodists in the Virginia Conference.

The service included a colorful procession of nearly 200 participants, including clergy wearing robes and red stoles, educational institution presidents wearing academic regalia, participants carrying symbols of the office of bishop and acolytes carrying candles and banners.

During the proceedings, Bishop Lewis was offered the signs of episcopacy, covenanted herself to the Virginia Conference and its members and shared her Response to

United Methodists attend Bishop Lewis' celebration service

the Charge as bishop.

The event was live-streamed and is still available for viewing at:

livestream.com/VAUMC/Celebration.

The bishop's Response to the Charge can also be found and shared with local churches at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWGCHPsY12w



(Top left) Bishop Lewis alongside the Rev. Tom Berlin worships during a choir anthem.

(Top right) Bishop Lewis spoke about stirring up the gifts in the Virginia Conference during her Response to the Charge.

(Bottom left) Attendees worship during the service's proceedings.

DISCIPLES HELPING TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD



▲ On Sunday, Oct. 16, **Fairfields United Methodist Church in Burgess** celebrated contributions made by Frances Hurst in her 89 years of active membership in the church. Frances, now 98, was confirmed as a member of the church on Oct. 16, 1927.

Frances has always been a very active and stalwart member of the church. She still attends church regularly. If a member misses a Sunday, Frances calls to see if help or prayer is needed. For many years, she was the first to arrive with a hot meal at the home of a member who was released from the hospital. She has also invited many new residents to come to Fairfields to worship.

Frances, along with her sister, Betty Covington (who has since passed away), were long-time teachers in the Northumberland County School system, serving a combined 70 years between them. The church established a scholarship fund — the Covington/Hurst Education Fund (CHEF) — honoring Frances and her sister. This fund has provided about \$75,000 in scholarship support to local students since its establishment in 2003.



▲ Six visitors from the **Blacksburg United Methodist Church covenant partner church, Spring of Life United Methodist Church in Kiev, Ukraine**, visited the Blacksburg congregation from Sept. 21 through Oct. 2. The visitors included the pastor, his wife and four members of their congregation pictured here with Roanoke District Superintendent Kathleen Overby Webster.

The overall purpose of this visit was to continue to strengthen the relationship between the two congregations. Activities included visiting areas of interest in the region, a driving tour of the Blue Ridge Parkway, a tour of a local tomato farm operation and a visit to the Floyd Country Store. They shared with each other in numerous meetings, Bible studies, Sunday school meetings, meals in homes and speaking at worship services on Sundays. This helped educate both Blacksburg UMC members and the Kiev guests about each other's customs and religious activities, so that both groups can continue to partner and be in ministry together on behalf of the greater United Methodist Church.

Over the past two decades, Blacksburg United Methodist Church has developed a strong partnership with the Spring of Life United Methodist Church in Kiev. In recent years, the Blacksburg congregation has also given approximately \$300,000 for the purchase of facilities to support the work of Spring of Life United Methodist Church and the St. Luke's Family Center in Kiev.



▲ Stop by **Sydenstricker UMC in Springfield** on the first Wednesday morning of each month and you will witness a community effort to feed the homeless in nearby Washington, D.C. that has been going on for more than 30 years. Led by Sydenstricker members, volunteers from

DISCIPLES HELPING TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD

area congregations come together to make thousands of sandwiches to be distributed to the homeless through Martha's Table. Martha's Table, a D.C.-based non-profit, provides meals and learning activities for more than 300 children each day. Each day 1,200 to 1,500 meals are served to homeless people from McKenna's Wagon which serves sandwiches, soup, fruit and beverages. Martha's Outfitters has over 15,000 visits annually and provides clothing to the needy.

Sydenstricker has donated 2,500 to 4,000 sandwiches every month for the last four years, totaling more than 155,000 since 2013. In July of this year Vacation Bible School coincided with sandwich day. More than 120 children from VBS participated along with about 50 of the regular participants and made 5,555 sandwiches, the second highest monthly total to date.



▲ **The Fredericksburg District** just held their annual clergy retreat Sept. 27 and 29 and focused on "Recreation, Renewal, and Rest." The retreat was held at Mt. Bethel Retreat Center



in King George, Va. The retreat leader was the Rev. Gary Heaton, lead pastor of **Green Memorial UMC, Roanoke**.

▲ On Sept. 6, **Historic Oxford United Methodist Church, James River District**, was honored with a plaque, listing them in the National Register of Historic Places by the Department of the Interior. Oxford was founded in 1922, in Suffolk's Historic West End and is a great example of new Gothic Revival architecture. A special thanks goes to Katherine Hobbs (pictured above) and Virginia Lee Hope for all the work they did to get the plaque installed.

In late 2015, the "Friends of Axton Eagles" group formed and was able to supply food for the children over the holiday break as well as books for the summer reading program. This group is a new mission of **Granbery UMC and the Axton Charge- Beckham, Irisburg, and Carroll Memorial UMC on the Danville District**.

Since then, they have partnered with the school to supply other requested items for the students and special treats for the teachers. The latest request was met as the group

gathered donations of tissues, markers, earbuds, Band-Aids and hand sanitizer for the beginning of the school year. The "Friends of Axton Eagles" see this mission with the school as a first step in creating a visible presence in the community. Pictured below are Mr. Ben Boone, principal of Axton Elementary School and Patricia Young, school volunteer and co-chair of "Friends of Axton Eagles." ▼



TECHNOLOGY TIPS



Engage your church with gratitude

By Laurens Glass

It is a spiritual practice of many religions and a hallmark of Christianity: gratitude, giving thanks showing appreciation for all that we have and the wonderful world God gave us. Gratitude journals and lists are all the rage in popular culture, but how often do we plan thankfulness as an activity of the church? Here are several ideas for bringing people together in the joyous practice of gratitude.

Facebook

Use your church's Facebook page to post what your church is thankful for. A custodian? The choir? Your soup kitchen volunteers? An historic sanctuary? The new park-

ing lot? Post daily Bible verses about giving thanks or mindfulness — "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Ask Facebook friends to add a word or photo every day of the month or week. Create a web page of members' thankful thoughts and share a little more grace on your church's website.

Tweet your thanks

Use your own Twitter account to post what you are thankful for. Your staff? Your conference? Your child? The Beatles? It is a great way to spread a spirit of gratefulness and for others to get to know you a little better. Challenge pastor friends, staff members or others to tweet thanks

as well. Tag them in a note of appreciation.

Out of the mouths of babes

Children's perspectives are so honest and unique they provide excellent food for thought for adults and kids alike. As a Sunday school project, have children draw pictures of things (people or pets) for which they are thankful. Ask them to bring photos or images cut from a magazine of things they appreciate and ask them why they are grateful. Their reasons will no doubt amuse and inspire.

Grateful groups

Sometimes when adults get together, we can focus on the problems — oops, *challenges* — we have. It is easy to complain about what is not going well. What if you started a meeting by asking everyone to share something that is going right? Perhaps plan a meeting or Sunday School class around gratitude — only. If you host dinner clubs or small groups, ask each member to share what they appreciate most in life in place of saying grace. Let gratitude be your prayer.

Post it

Not everyone is on Facebook. Well, OK, my mother's not on Facebook, but as an added visual for your



Come, Ye Thankful People ...



EVENTS

office, why not clear a bulletin board or put up a presentation board for "thank you notes." Just write, "What are you thankful for?" at the top, put out lots of large sticky notes and some pens and see what happens.

Thanks for a soldier or shut-in

Churches are often a main connection to community for members who cannot be physically present in your congregation. Visits or phone calls are wonderful, but why not send also a note expressing that you are thankful for them? Everyone needs to feel needed. Someone who is ill or not able to be there to lend a hand will know their membership, prayers and support are still needed and appreciated.

Give thank you cards to your staff

Have you told them lately that you love them? Make it official with a card. And, no, I don't work for Hallmark!

Let us thank God

Gratitude is an amazing lens through which to view the world. When we focus on our blessings, we tend to be happier. When we realize how much we possess, we tend to be more thoughtful of those who have less. When we talk about the good together, we tend to appreciate each other more.

Being grateful is really about being more mindful. Perhaps this mindfulness will help us all to focus on the abundance in our lives and how we can share it with others. This November, engage in gratitude. And, remember, it only takes about 30 days for a new practice to become a habit. Thanks be to God! ☺

— Laurens Glass works for
United Methodist Communications.

October

Conference UMW Annual Meeting Oct. 28-29, Good Shepherd UMC, Richmond

Theme is "Growing in Blessedness." Keynote speaker is Elizabeth (Lisa) Lamb Nichols, a deaconess serving as executive director of Henry Fork Service Center, a facility in Rocky Mount, Va., that provides Christian education, educational enrichment, recreation and experiences in the arts to more than 100 students throughout the year. More information available at www.vaumw.com/events/annual-meeting/.

November

Diaconate Day Apart Nov. 7, Good Shepherd UMC, Richmond

The Day Apart's theme will be "The Deacon and the Sacraments" as we discuss changes made at General Conference on this issue. This event has been approved for 0.5 Continuing Education Units, to include full participation during the day and an advance reading of the book "Deacons in the Liturgy, 2nd Edition" by the late Episcopal deacon Ormonde Plater. The book is a little over 100 pages. You can purchase a copy through Amazon: <http://amzn.to/2d1JoE3>. Register by check or credit card: <https://www.etches.com/202928>. For more information contact Jason Stanley at JasonStanley@vaumc.org.

Online Lay Speakers Training Nov. 7, Virginia United Methodist Center, Glen Allen

The class, led by Jonathan Page, pastor of Fieldstone UMC in Christiansburg, will offer tools around the preparation and delivery of an effective sermon. Whether you've never delivered a

sermon before or you are a seasoned pro, this time will be a good opportunity to reflect on the preparation process of preaching. This course is designed for lay leaders, pastors, student pastors who have not completed formal preaching training, pastors seeking a basic refresher course and others who are called upon to preach in a pastor's absence. If you'd like to become a stronger preacher, this course will offer a step in the right direction!

The training will be available for 180 days for on-demand learning 24/7, with the ability to start and stop any time you wish. This class is required for those seeking lay speaker certification and can be used as a recertification class for lay servants. The fee for the event is \$30 for online training and free for attending the live event.

If there are any questions, please call or write Marge Sharp, the ODL registrar. (757) 871-2809 or registrarODL@vaumc.org. Register online at <https://www.vaumc.org/pages/events/2016-events/onlinelayservantraining10-8-16>.

January

Conference Legislative Network Celebration

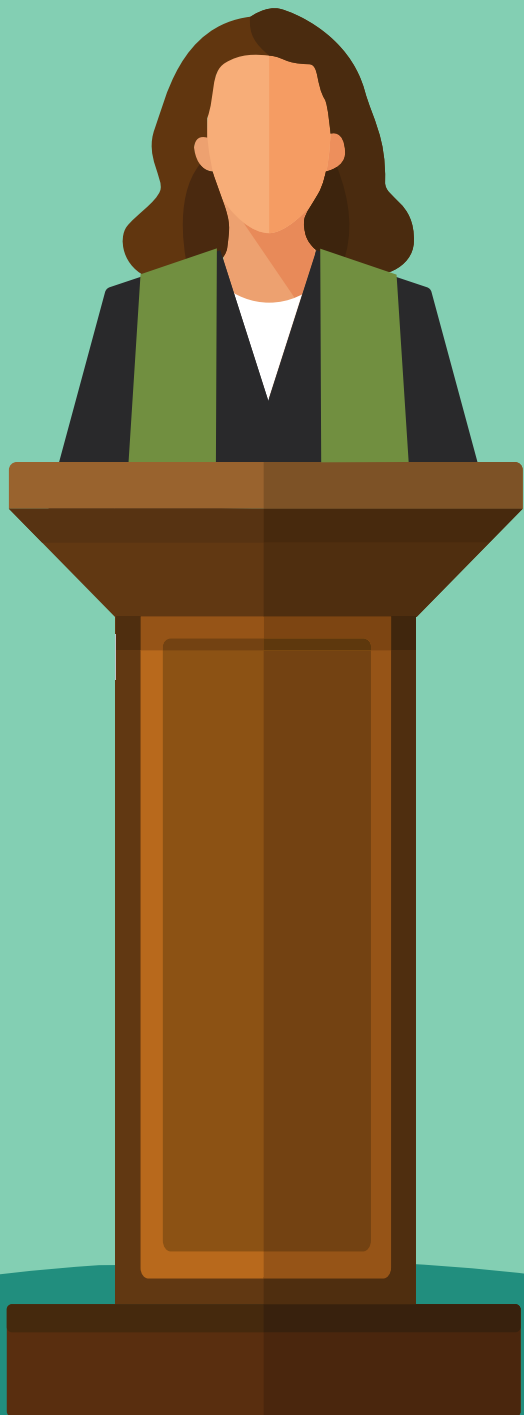
Jan. 14, Centenary UMC, Richmond
A celebration of the 25th anniversary of United Methodist Day will be held at Centenary UMC (411 E. Grace Street, Richmond, Va.) Saturday, Jan. 14, 2017. For more information, please contact Randy Harlow at crhncboy@aol.com.

THE CALL TO MINISTRY



A SECOND CAREER





The call to any vocation can surface at any time in a person's life. For the stories that follow in this feature, you will hear from clergy from around the Virginia Conference about their calls to ministry following a prior career and how these careers inform their present ministries.

“What is God going

CHURCH PLANTER'S MINISTRY AIDED BY FORMER CAREER

By Mike Davis



I am one of those, what used to be rare but now is becoming rather common, second career clergy. It has been a pleasure to get to know so many people with whom I share a similar calling to active clergy and see the wide variety of paths that has brought them to this point in their lives. I know educators, Navy captains, lawyers, businessper-

sons, musicians, pilots, nurses, a few hobos and everything in-between. We all finally heard the call or most often were ready to listen to the call that we had been pushing aside for many years. Some of us left very successful careers, some left our passions, some left behind addiction and some left behind family. What I have found is that for most of us, we are living a life, most likely in a place that we never expected, following God's voice in ways that we never thought possible, yet able to see how God has taken us, each one, on a different journey using the "first life" we had to serve our God.

As a young man, I first heard God's calling to follow, having completed my degree in music, teaching in the public school for a short while, then entering into the retail music business as an educational consultant. Being married with my first child on the way, I opened my first business part-time while working at night and keeping my day job. Soon I left the security of my day job and opened the new business full time, waiting tables or working at the 7-Eleven store at night. It was about that time that I felt God nudging me to go in a different direction, to become a pastor. How wrong could that be? The nudging became stronger.

Since joining there as a teenager, I had been very active at my home church Washington St. UMC in Petersburg, Va. One day I was in the church and passed by the senior pastor's office, the door was open and he was sitting there very upset. He was 70 years old, just weeks away from retirement, having served over 40 years in the ministry. I

entered the office asking him what was wrong, and he told me that he and his wife had no place to go. The salary had not been great, they had no savings, and in a few weeks they had to move out of the parsonage and had no place to go. Here I was, a new father with new business, looking to build a life for my wife, son and myself and this is what it would be like in 40 years. I turned off God's voice in my head, my heart and my soul.

I had grown up in a middle class home, watching my parents struggle financially, and at the same time creating a home filled with love and the love of God. I had already decided that I wanted to create a home filled with love but without the financial struggle. Certainly becoming a church pastor was not the answer, so I devoted my working life to being able to never having to struggle to pay my bills, and being able to buy most anything that I wanted for my family. After opening several businesses, buying one that had gone bankrupt twice and making them all somewhat successful, at the age of 45 I had reached my goal. I was running three businesses, and financial worries did not exist. I was not wealthy but living the good life as a successful businessman: a beautiful family, big house and nice car.

One day as I was hanging Christmas lights on the outside of that big house, God's voice came back to me again, one that I had not heard for many years. That voice asked me, "Are you happy in your life?" My answer was yes! Then, "Have you reached the goals that you set for yourself?" After thinking about it, I realized that my answer was "Yes, I have!" Then the voice said, "Are you now ready to listen to me?"

Seventeen years into my ministry, I am a church planter serving in the sixth year of a new church in the Farmville District, Journey UMC, a Missional Faith Community. The emphasis at Journey is to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ in our community. As I look back, I can see that God has placed me where I could use the experiences of my earlier work to make a difference in our community. Even though Journey is a relatively new church, we operate

(Continued on page 24: "DAVIS.")

g to do with that?"

PASTOR DISCOVERED MINISTRY AFTER A FAITHFUL STEP IN HIS LIFE

By J. Adam Sowder



This summer as Braddock Street UMC said goodbye to our Calling 21 intern Amy Robertson, she preached a message about being true to our identity in Jesus Christ, as she lifted up the exploration of her call to ministry. A story she shared had to do with her process of self-discovery, which included her need to switch majors at Shenandoah Univer-

sity. As part of that major change people would ask her, "What are you going to do with that?"

I expect many of us have been asked that question when it comes to making life choices. I know when I told people I was switching from an English major to Anthropology people asked, "What are you going to do with that?" I had hopes, but I did not know. I did know that I needed a job, so I went to work with my brother, a real estate broker. He helped us start the Sowder Brother's Real Estate Team. We worked in residential new construction and development in Winchester, Va. We even had a theme song on the radio and experienced great success.

Imagine the questioning when, with joy in my heart, I told family and friends I had been accepted to Wesley Theological Seminary. People asked, even with some disappointment, "What are you going to do with that?"

My first pastoral appointment was to the Boyce-Millwood-White Post Charge on the Winchester District. Boyce UMC had been disciplined in faith to work hard and save the money from years of spaghetti dinners to build a fellowship hall. Applying my Anthropology degree in the planning process, my experiences from the new construction work, and in partnership with the people of Boyce UMC the fellowship hall was built.

I have clear memories of that building process, the celebration of its opening, and the ways it became a center for the small church and community in which it resides. One favorite memory was the opportunity to read to the

children of the charge at a Christmas gathering. As I write this article I am preparing to return to that congregation to help them celebrate their 100th anniversary as a local church. No doubt we will share a meal in that space that was built together.

When it comes to reflecting on our calls and how they develop and change, maybe we should reframe the questions people ask and the questions we ask ourselves. Perhaps the question to reflect on is not, "What are you going to do with that," but "What is God going to do with that?"

Christians should always be reflecting on and sharing our sense of calling. For clergy, the Call interview is not the end of this lifelong process. Will we be open to the Holy Spirit and willing to find out what God is able to do through our questions of calling?

In my own continued discernment, I understood the need to engage in additional education. I have gone back to Wesley Theological Seminary to work on a Doctor of Ministry Degree with the focus on Transformative Leadership in Wesleyan Perspective. It is part of a new relationship with Wesley House, Cambridge, England. These tracks are excellent for anyone exploring a similar discernment (just be prepared for people to ask questions.) As for me, I may not have the answers, but I believe this is the next faithful step in discovering what God is able to help me do in response to divine grace. 🍷

—The Rev. J. Adam Sowder is the associate pastor at Braddock Street UMC in Winchester.



“Use me wherever an

MINISTRY HAS TAUGHT PASTOR ABOUT POWERFUL LIVING

By Katie Gooch



What did I learn from my previous career that informs my ministry today? That there are a lot of people in this world with diverse gifts and passions and each of us is a vital part of the Body of Christ. Ordained ministry is not the only calling or the ultimate calling - it is one of many and the Holy Spirit works in tremendous ways when we


discover and value one another.

My previous career as a communications consultant taught me a lot about budgets, strategic planning, communications and how excel spreadsheets can increase effectiveness (and can be really fun!). This has proved invaluable to my ministry as an associate pastor, an executive pastor and now as a campus minister. But more than anything else, I learned how important it is for everyone on a team to know their gifts and how important they are to the work of the whole.

In my work as a consultant, I worked with people whose passions ranged from credit unions to military information technology. Their skills were in everything from video editing to craft brewing. Every time I worked on a new project, I learned just how diverse people can be. Working with leaders who were able to turn all of that diversity into healthy productive teams was a great experience. One of my bosses was tasked with managing a group of strong personalities from a variety of ages, backgrounds, sexes and races. He took the time to get to know each of us, helped us realize our gifts and celebrated how our work was an essential part to the overall task at hand. It was powerful to be a part of a potentially explosive group of people who worked together to become a healthy, life-giving team.

As a pastor, I am continually amazed at the diversity of God's creation. And honestly, it can be tempting to think of this as more of a burden than a blessing. I don't get to

choose who walks through the sanctuary door. All the different personalities and backgrounds can be frustrating. But everyone is a child of God, we each play a vital role in the church's great commission to embody the Kingdom of God, and I am called to help every person who walks through the door experience this truth. In fact, if I don't and I put all the pressure on myself to do the work of the church, can it really be considered the Body of Christ or the church at all?

The challenge of walking with someone on their journey to discover their role in the Body of Christ was an essential part of my calling to ordained ministry. My pastors and lay leaders did this for me, and the impact on my faith proved immeasurable. I felt called to ordained ministry to do the same for others. It is painful for both the church and the individual when someone serves in a church role only because the position needed to be filled, but it had nothing to do with their gifts and passions. But it is a Holy Spirit moment when a community helps to identify an individual's gifts and passions, and they have the opportunity to put those gifts and passions toward service to their church, community and God. God has called us to live into the latter. My previous career allowed me to experience how much time, care and intentionality such a responsibility can demand, but my experience in ordained ministry has shown me just how powerful living as the Body of Christ can be. 

—The Rev. Katie Gooch is director at the VCU Pace Center.

d whenever you will.”

CALL TO MINISTRY BEGAN FOR PASTOR IN A BIBLE STUDY

By John Hall



It all began in a Disciple One study. “John, I see the gifts of apostolic ministry, teaching and administration in you,” said one of my fellow Disciple classmates. Then one after another expressed their recognition of God’s grace and gifts in my life. My mind raced back to my junior year in high school when I shared with my youth pastor, the Rev. Ben Nelson, a “call”

from God to prepare for pastoral ministry. Now, nearly 30 years later, God’s grace reached out to me again through my Disciple brothers and sisters.

Through training as a Certified “Lay Speaker,” Stephen Minister, and facilitator of Disciple small groups, God’s call became clearer. During this time I was working in a marketing and broadcasting career. Was God calling me to “leave” this career of various advertising messages, many written to persuade and convince the consumer of a particular service or product, to proclaiming God’s message of love and grace — the message of hope, forgiveness and new life?


Needless to say, it took quite a period of time to respond to God’s leading, but through the encouragement of my wife, my sons, family and brothers and sisters in Christ, and most importantly, through God’s enabling, I was able to work part-time at a Richmond television station as an “on-air” announcer and marketing director, and serve part-time as a licensed pastor at a Richmond church, and begin the five-year Course of Study program through Duke Divinity School.

In the very early stages of discernment and seeking God’s will, I remember saying this to God during a time of prayer, “God, if this is your will for my life (pastoral ministry), I want to give my life totally and completely to you — use me wherever and whenever you will. I pray I will always follow where you guide me.” Today, I am beginning my 19th year at Bethel UMC on the Richmond District. God

has allowed me to serve in several servant leadership positions on the district level, and also in the conference. I have seen each opportunity to serve as another affirmation of God’s call upon my life. Psalm 86:11 is a foundational prayer for me: “Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart to revere your name.” (The New Interpreter’s Study Bible-New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha)

I truly believe God uses our life experiences as a basis for witness and ministry. My career in broadcasting and marketing has helped me to stay focused upon current affairs in the community, the country, and around the world, as I bring these “news events,” sometimes, forward into my sermons. My experience as an announcer and writer of advertising copy has certainly helped in proclamation and teaching from the pulpit, sermon preparation and writing. In moments of pastoral care, now and then, someone will share with me, “Pastor John, I feel like you are one of us — you have walked where we walked — traveled where we have traveled — dealt with temptation as we were tempted.” I may not have had the same exact experience of this individual, but we all deal with our humanity (like the movie title from the late 60’s, “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly”), and by God’s grace, we are not alone in this journey. The church, the Body of Christ, is still called to “give a cup of cold water” — to help quench our thirsts with God’s refreshing truth and love. We respond to God’s love and grace in our own lives by serving others, whenever and wherever we can through God’s love.

I read a few years ago in a spiritual direction class these words from the late Dr. Gerald G. May in his book, *Addiction & Grace*, “Hope can sometimes be an elusive thing, and occasionally it must come to us with pain. But it is there, irrevocably. Like freedom, hope is a child of grace, and grace cannot be stopped . . . “Hope will not be denied, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts.” (Romans 5:5)

Grace cannot be stopped — God’s grace. Let’s remember this wherever we find ourselves serving God today. 

—The Rev. John Hall is an associate member in the Virginia Annual Conference.

Devotions from General Conference 2016-based scripture

LIVING THE WORD



Beverly Nelan is a retired United Methodist pastor having served 10 years as a local pastor. She graduated from Wayne State University with a Bachelor of Science in Special Education in 1964. She received a Master of Arts in Education from University of Iowa in 1966. She finished the Course of Study in 2008 from Duke University. Among her other accomplishments and degrees, Beverly was a middle school special education and reading specialist for 16 years as well as principal of Seoul International School in South Korea for five years. She is currently the chairperson of Board for Abukloi Secondary School 501(c)3 since 2013, a Stephen minister and supervisor coordinator for Chester United Methodist Church (CUMC) in Chester. She enjoys singing in the chancel choir and Joy Singers at CUMC.

November 6, 2016

Window for the world

Revelation 21:3-8 (NRSV)

Christians throughout history have suffered persecution because of their faith in Jesus Christ. The writer of Revelation assures these believers that an age is coming without suffering — no more death — just the faithful living in communion with God forever. However, for those who do not remain faithful, their fate is separation from God forever. The writer tells the people that their belief in God will be worthwhile, so keep up the faith as God is all powerful and will someday eradicate evil. He speaks of the lamb, Jesus, who died on the cross and now lives in glory. The world would have killed him, but God raised him from the dead (John 5:6-10). This is real proof of God's power.

How do we, the believers, remain faithful in this world plagued by anxieties, hardships and fears? Stop and consider yourself as a window — a window that your family, friends and work colleagues look through to see Christ. How do you look as a window? Is your window filled with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control? (Galatians 5:22 NIV) These are the characteristics that the Holy Spirit is producing in those who are living as believers.

I began a high school (2013) in Rumbek, South Sudan with a small 501(c)3, called Abukloi ("We can" in Dinka). It is a high school of 276 students today. I am very proud of these students whom I think are great examples of windows for the world. They live as faithful believers in the midst of extreme hardship, violence and famine. Most of the students are orphans, due to the long war in South Sudan, which killed their parents and grandparents for acknowledging Jesus Christ as their Savior. Angelo Maker, founder of Abukloi and a Lost Boy himself, witnessed the killing of his mother, sisters and brothers at the young age of 7, because they raised their hands stating they believed in Jesus Christ.

Today South Sudan is an independent country, rich with oil and minerals. Their language is English and their religion is Christianity. You may

have read about the violence in South Sudan, but if you were to visit Rumbek you would have a different experience than is portrayed in the news. As this nation grows there are tremendous challenges as people compete for power from within the country and abroad.

Why are these Abukloi people windows? In June 2016 our students and teachers along with Angelo and 18 other Lost Boys from the U.S., Canada and Australia held a peace conference in Rumbek with all the tribal chiefs and government officials discussing the way forward. This conference resulted in a peace agreement in Rumbek with all chiefs and the government signing. For several tribal chiefs this was the first time they met face-to-face to discuss and pray about their differences. Much forgiveness was shared at this conference. The people at this signing are truly windows for the world, and the peace has held until this day in Rumbek. A testimony and witness of faith in Jesus Christ — a window of peace, justice, cooperation and tolerance. All eyes will be on Rumbek to see how they are able to live united in the face of extreme poverty and famine. They eat only one bowl of porridge a day and survive. On Sunday, under the trees, the churches are filled with people for more than two hours of worship and praise — no coffee or donuts served here. How well would we praise the Lord in the midst of starvation?

They are truly following the greatest commandment spoken by Jesus, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Matthew 22: 37-39 NIV)

November 13, 2016

Christian hope

Revelation 21:9-14, 22-27(NSRV)

I begin writing this devotion with 40 days left before the election of a new president of the United States. Many people in the U.S. hope for change which has brought about a re-engagement of people discussing the democratic process. Many are critical of the government and



their inability to work for the common person. We see racial divide, job loss, a shrinking middle class, disease, lack of health care, insecurity and fear of violence at home and abroad.

Young and old are engaged in this election, and yet, can good come from an election with two unpopular candidates? It is easy to discuss the faults with our system, but it is another thing to come up with meaningful long-term solutions. Usually solutions come from visionaries, not bureaucrats.

Henri Nouwen suggests that more is required of us. It involves the practice of solitude and prayerful reflection and “that the contemplative life is like hearing a different drummer” (*The Genesee Diary*, p.48). In solitude and prayer, we can shut out the noise of our world and receive God’s wisdom. It does not mean we will come up with an idea that will change the world, but we can listen to God and change ourselves by listening to a different drummer. Through practice and determination, we can make small changes around us. The promise that we will live eternally in the presence of God brings us great hope in this world and the next. It is not about health, wealth and happiness, it is all about becoming the people God created us to be in this life.

November 20, 2016

Competition versus cooperation Revelation 22: 1-7 NRSV

Today we live in an age of competition. Competition seems to be a virtue. We must be better than the next person. We are all about success and achievements. Our self-worth is dependent on our accomplishments.

We strive for better paying jobs,

a larger house, a different neighborhood, more technological toys, better stocks and faster cars. If we just had more money, power or status, we could be more secure and comfortable. Yet we know in our hearts that competition and riches do not bring lasting joy. Competition becomes the enemy of cooperation, bringing division to our families and workplaces. We even see this in our churches. Lack of cooperation makes us ineffective, hostile and fearful.

In John’s world he describes the new Jerusalem with a river of life-giving water, the tree of life with 12 crops of fruits and leaves that will be used to heal the nations. Just think — believers from around the world will be healed and find a place in New Jerusalem. Perfect cooperation is our hope, putting aside our selfish ambitions for us as individuals and as nations. Think of what the world will be like with no war, no terrorists, no hackers, no food shortage, no fear, no anxiety, no judging, no sickness and no addiction. This is God’s gift to us: a holy city that meets all our needs, where goodness and beauty prevail. The throne of God and the Lamb will be in the city, and God’s servants will worship him. Are you a servant that will be there? If so, the impossible dream will happen for you and me.

So now continue your spiritual journey, as there is much work to do. It is our job to offer Christ’s gift of salvation to all around us by the way we live and cooperate with others. Will you spread this wonderful gift of Christ so more will journey to the New Jerusalem?

November 27, 2016

Living water: Pass it on Revelation 22:13, 17 NRSV

I love the book *Breakfast on the Beach* by Mark R. Jordan. If you love the ocean as I do, take this book with you. I hope it inspires you. Nothing is better than a cup of coffee, a comfortable chair, God and the rolling waves. As I sat at the edge, I prepared a sermon on Habakkuk reading his complaints to God about how much longer will injustice and violence continue. How long will the evil people prosper and the good suffer? (Habakkuk 1:1-4) It sounds like our complaints today. Why doesn’t God answer Habakkuk’s prayers? God says he will do amazing acts. He is in control and will judge evil in his own time. My eyes wandered to Habakkuk 2:14 which says, “But the Earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” As I sat on the beach watching the waves, it was easy to experience the glory of God. It is a fantastic place to worship. From the edge of the ocean, it is easy to see God’s cathedral.

It is a place to relax and forget the work-a-day world and just refresh one’s soul. For me it is a place to meet the Savior, to feel the crisp breeze against my face and slip into a prayer-filled hour of companionship with the Lord of creation, the living water. His companionship will outlive the sea. The Lord satisfies my hunger and takes away my thirst while serving me that first cup of delicious coffee. What a way to start the day!

Receive the water of life without cost — it is free. Christ is everything we need. Christ is complete, nothing else is required. Christ is the Alpha and

(Continued on pg. 25: “LIVING WORD.”)

CLERGY & DIACONAL



DEATHS

Dr. Paul Salbert died after an undetermined medical emergency while vacationing on the island of St. Lucia. Paul was the husband of **the Rev. Janet Salbert** who serves as a pastor at Grace UMC in Manassas. Please be in prayer for the family and the couple's sons, Eric, Ives, Jay and Daniel.

Jonathan David Coleman, 54, of Crozet, Va., died Sept. 28, 2016, at the Cardiac Care Unit of UVA Medical Center in Charlottesville, Va. Jon was the son of the late **Rev. Gerald Price Coleman** and **Martha E. Coleman** of Crozet. He is the sister of **the Rev. Nancy Coleman Johnson** (Emmanuel UMC, Amherst) and brother-in-law of **the Rev. Bruce Johnson** (Manor Memorial, New Market).

Mary Ruth Ellis Forstall, 59, died at her home in Lovettsville, Va. Sept. 29, 2016. She is survived by her husband Tony; her three children, Charlotte, Joseph and Elizabeth; her sisters, Dr. Cheryl Vaiani and Suzi Chase; and her brother Dr. Patrick J. Ellis. Mary Ruth left a trail of love and warmth as she accompanied her husband in his work as a pastor in the United Methodist Church and at Susanna Wesley Pre-school, Gloucester, Va., and Woodley Hills Elementary School in Fairfax County, Va., where she was employed.

Celeste Newman Smetana died Sept. 27, 2016. Celeste was the daughter of **the Rev. M. Douglas and Phyllis Newman**. Doug is a retired elder in the Virginia Conference, having served many churches throughout the conference as well as serving as district superintendent of the Peninsula and Norfolk districts. Celeste was a member of Greene Memorial UMC in Roanoke.

Ettie Jo Bearden, 70, wife of **the Rev. William Bearden**, died Sept. 25, 2016. Rev. Bearden is pastor of the Iron Gate Charge. A Celebration of Life service was held on Oct. 8 at Fishersville UMC in Fishersville.

Jimmie Green, 78, died Sept. 2, 2016, with family by his side. He dedicated a large portion of his life serving in third world countries as a volunteer with International Voluntary Services and as a Foreign Service Officer with the United States Agency for International Development. After returning to the United States, he operated the family farm and later moved his family to Winchester, Va., where he worked as a carpenter building custom homes. Jimmie was a dedicated and devoted member of Braddock Street United Methodist Church serving many years as conference president of the United Methodist Men, while also volunteering with Heart Havens, Kairos Prison Ministry, Wycliffe Bible Translators and countless other faith-based organizations. Jimmie is survived by his daughter, Rachel Green (Alexandria); two sons, Daniel Green (McLean) and Timothy Green and his wife (Stephens City) and four grandchildren.

BIRTHS

The Rev. Meghan Roth Clayton and **Josh Clayton** welcomed their son, **James Eno Clayton**, on Sept. 11, 2016, at 12:34 p.m. Meghan is pastor at Salem UMC in Mathews, York River District.

The Rev. Allie Rosner Bass, pastor of Arlington Temple UMC, and her husband **Jon** welcomed the arrival of their daughter **Evelyn Rosner Bass** on Sept. 20, 2016.

(“DAVIS,” continued from page 18.)

many missions, including a full-time thrift store, and a weekend “back-pack” food ministry for children in the elementary and middle schools. This year we purchased 14 acres of land with a restaurant, a 1950’s style motel and garage. Renovations are underway to make Journey Community Center fully accessible, and we expect the first building to be open by the end of the year. The building will house our Worship Center, the Thrift Store and Journey Station Restaurant. In a later phase our plans include developing the motel into a place for transitional housing for the community and the garage into a youth center.

It is so easy for me to see where God was patient with me when I did not respond to His call, and how God has used the experiences and lessons that I learned throughout life to grow the Kingdom in my community. 🍷

– The Rev. Mike Davis is a church planter and president of the Fellowship of Associate Members and Local Pastors.

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(LIVING WORD, continued from page 23.)

the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end (Rev 21:13). There is an invitation in verse 17 for you and me: "The Spirit and the bride say come. And let everyone who hears say come. And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift. The Spirit is Christ and the bride is the church. We must join together to invite others who are thirsty for the Gospel. Each of us has been commissioned to invite others. When others accept the gift of salvation, they become ambassadors to spread the Gospel. Jesus said in Matthew 28:18-20 (NRSV): "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Hear the words of the Hymn "Pass It On" (United Methodist Hymnal, page 572):

"It only takes a spark to get a fire going, and soon all those around can warm up in its glowing. That's how it is with God's love once you've experienced it; you spread his love to everyone, you want to pass it on. I wish for you, my friend this happiness that I've found; you can depend on him, it matters not where you're bound. I'll shout it from the mountain top; I want my world to know; the Lord of Love has come to me, I want to pass it on." (Vs. 1 & 3) ☞

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FROM THE BISHOP



Bishop Lewis and the Extended Cabinet

Seated, from left, Wayne Snead, Larry Thompson, Bishop Sharma Lewis, Alex Joyner, Danny Kesner. Standing, first row, from left, Mark Ogren, Seonyoung Kim, Janine Howard, Dave Rochford, Kathleen Overby Webster, Rob Colwell, Jeff Mickle, Tom Joyce, Meredith McNabb. Back row: Cathy Abbott, David Dommissie, Tommy Herndon, Scott Davis, Bob Parks, Pete Moon, Ted Smith, Marc Brown.

Stir up the gift of God which is in you.*

Get ready for Bishop's Chat and Chew events coming to your district! These events will take place starting in November and ending in June 2017 and will be listening sessions for Bishop Lewis to hear from both clergy and laity. Contact your district office to learn when your session will be.

* 2 Timothy 1:6

ONE LAST WORD



Be joyful in hope



Be patient in affliction



Be faithful in prayer

Romans 12:12



United Methodist Day at the General Assembly

25th Anniversary
1992-2017

Grand Celebration

Saturday, January 14, 2017
Centenary United Methodist Church
411 E. Grace St., Richmond, VA 23219

Registration required.

Lunch at 12:00 Noon
Program at 1:00 PM in the Sanctuary
Dedicated to the memory of
Leona Bailey and Elvira Shaw

Special invited guests; video prepared for the
occasion; choral presentation;
time of remembrance; keynote speech by
Jim Winkler, former GBCS CEO;
looking to the future; our social creed

United Methodist Day & Continuation of Anniversary Celebration

Thursday, February 2, 2017
Host church: Bon Air United Methodist
1645 Buford Rd., N. Chesterfield, VA 23235

Registration r.equired.

For more information & to register ONLINE at
www.vaumc.org.
Click on Conference Calendar and
Dates of Events.