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Advocate

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October 2011

When disaster strikes

United Methodist churches respond
with volunteers who are
'first in, last out'

***"We envision faith communities
where all God's people are
welcomed at table, nurtured
and transformed to be
Christ to others in the world."***

— Virginia Conference Vision Statement

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ON THE COVER: Hurricane Irene

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National award-winning newsmagazine
USPS 660-740 ISSN 0891-5598

Published monthly by Virginia United Methodist Communications, Inc., an agency of the Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. Periodical postage paid at Glen Allen, Va., and at additional mailing offices. The Virginia United Methodist Advocate is owned by Virginia United Methodist Communications, Inc.

POSTMASTER: Send changes of address to Virginia United Methodist Advocate, P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058. Editorial and business offices are located at 10330 Staples Mill Rd., Glen Allen, Va. Mailing address: P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058. Telephone: 1-800-768-6040, ext. 110; local (804) 521-1100. Fax: (804) 521-1173, E-mail: <advocate@vaumc.org>. Office hours are 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Those who do and do and do unto others



Neill Caldwell
Editor

I swear I didn't order up Hurricane Irene — much less an extremely rare Virginia earthquake — to put a special emphasis on this month's feature topic, the conference's agencies of disaster response. Some things I trust to God's own timing.

I just wish God had not been planning for our house to be without power for eight days. OK, I know some people fared far worse, and that my generation is the first to be unable to sleep without central air conditioning, but still as I watched the work crew (in from Roanoke, thank you very much) climb the pole to restore my lights and cable television, I thought about how much we depend on others in times of crisis.

Once the power was restored and we neared the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, I heard dozens and dozens of stories of personal responses to those moments of terror, and was reminded again of that terrible day. I think it's the Blanche DuBois character in the play "Streetcar Named Desire" who says "I have always depended on the kindness of strangers..." Well there are times that we all do, whether it's as simple as asking directions or as critical as getting out of a burning building.

On the afternoon of Sept. 11, we drove out to the Chickahominy Fire Station between Richmond and Ashland to see a new memorial to the victims of the terror attacks 10 years ago. The monument contains just a short piece of I-beam from the World Trade Center's North Tower, but that small piece of steel had the power to draw hundreds of firefighters, Scouts, elected officials and regular folks like me because of where it came from, what it represents.

Thankfully, such man-made tragedies are still rare, at least in the United States. But weather (and seismic) events seem to be happening more commonly. Fortunately, for people like me, there are those who are ready to respond to the call to help, no matter what it requires.

And many of those who respond are United Methodists. It's something we do well as a church and denomination, one of our strengths. And something Virginia United Methodists do very well. Members from our many churches fan out, not just across the Commonwealth but to every corner of the world, to help others. We're often first on the scene, and usually last to stay until the job is done. We have excellent organizations in place at all levels to provide an organized and efficient response.

On the night of Sept. 11, Bishop Kammerer told the audience at a memorial service that just about every religion has some version of "do unto others..." — the simple idea that we should treat people the way we want to be treated. Some might call it "good karma" or "what goes around comes around."

We call it "the way of the Lord."

Neill Caldwell

Conference Disaster Response Team is there to help

I heard it said at a meeting once, “we are not going to have any disasters in our district!” This year we have had severe winter storms, tornados, earthquakes and hurricanes that have impacted the entire conference in one way or another.

Several years ago, Virginia Annual Conference members approved the first conference Disaster Response Plan to comply with *The Book of Discipline*, as well as out of necessity because of the disasters that had affected the Commonwealth. Ever since, the conference Disaster Response Team has grown to become an integral part of the mission and ministries of the conference.

The conference Disaster Response Plan itself is a fluid, living document always being evaluated, tested and, when required, changed to reflect lessons learned, not only in Virginia, but also from across the world. There is an old saying that goes, “those that fail to plan, plan to fail.” The Virginia Conference has a Disaster Response Plan. Failure is not part of the plan! The plan has proven to be effective and it has been used by other annual conferences as a template as they develop their own disaster response plans.

Conference and district Disaster Response Teams are made up of volunteers, clergy and laity who are called to this ministry by their desire to serve those in the midst of crisis. All who serve on disaster response teams make a commitment to be the hands and feet of Christ during situations that are at many times life threatening, physically dangerous and emotionally difficult. Time and again, they are ready and willing to leave their own homes and families and go where they're needed. They willingly sacrifice time and personal expenses to live in tents, sleep on floors, eat cold meals and work long hours in areas that are without basic services, just so they can help others put their lives back together following a disaster.

Just this year, conference Early Response Teams (ERT) and United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) teams have deployed across the Commonwealth to communities that have experienced disasters: Gloucester, Dinwiddie, Pulaski, Washington County, Norfolk, Emporia, James City County, and the list goes on. No matter if it's putting tarps on roofs, cleaning out flooded basements, removing debris or helping someone rebuild their home, the members of your Disaster Response Teams give of themselves so that others may find hope in the midst of crisis.

All disasters are local. Since one of the wonderful things about The United Methodist Church is that we have churches at almost every crossroads, we are uniquely situated to provide disaster response to our neighbors and communities. The true blessing comes from the fact that as we are a con-

by Bob Pihlcrantz



(Above): A conference Disaster Response Team put a tarp on the roof of this hurricane-damaged house. (Left) You'll see the conference Disaster Response Coordinator's car quickly on the scene where needed following any disaster.



nectional church, no one church has to share the challenge of response and recovery alone.

Everyone has a part to play in disaster response: local church member, pastor, district superintendent, conference staff and beyond. Each of the 16 districts within the conference is required to have a district disaster response coordinator and team. That allows the gifts and graces of the community of faith to be utilized to help the communities rebuild following whatever destructive event takes place. If a disaster depletes the resources of the local church or district, the conference stands ready to assist using its assets such as ERTs, equipment, case management, and spiritual and emotional care. If the event is catastrophic and beyond the abilities of the conference, we can call on United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) for assistance, which makes national resources available to help, including financial assistance, disaster kits and UMVIM teams.

The Virginia Conference is also a member of the Virginia State Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) <www.VAVOAD.org>. This partnership provides cooperation, coordination, communication and collaboration with other faith-based organizations so that we can provide the best possible solution in any given situation.

The United Methodist Church is well-known in emergency management circles for being able to respond, to provide relief and to assist in long-term recovery. We will be there until the last nail is driven in the last house to be rebuilt following a disaster. □

— The Rev. Robert M. Pihlcrantz is the conference Disaster Response Coordinator.

Virginia Conference's new UMVIM team coordinator brings plenty of mission experience

The mother of all birthing kits is now on Virginia's team.

Julie Warren, a ball of energy with blonde hair and a British accent, is the new conference coordinator for United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) teams. And Virginia may never be the same.

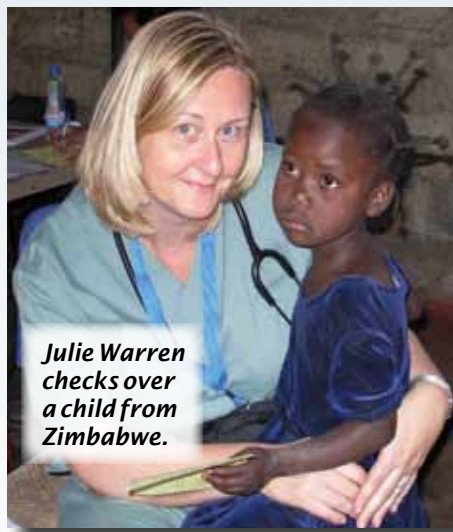
Warren has been a lay worker on the staff at Woodlake UMC for a year as director of Congregational Care. Before her husband's work brought her to Virginia, she was UMVIM coordinator for the Central Texas Conference.

"I was a member at First UMC in Mansfield, Texas, where the pastor challenged us to be in mission," Warren recalls. "I went to the first meeting and pretty soon was in charge of the church's Africa missions." Warren got very involved in Zimbabwe with a group called "ZOE Ministry," a North Carolina-based orphan empowerment outreach. Warren also has led teams to Liberia, Zambia, South Africa and Mexico.

Her background is in nursing, which has meant that most of her teams offer medical care in some way. She's been a nurse in behavioral health, labor and delivery, psychology, and also has worked in the management side of nursing. Her "mum" back in East Sussex, England, was a night nurse, and Warren had her own small nurse's outfit at age 5.

Warren was part of a surgical team to Liberia, and while there, was looking at what The United Methodist Church is doing in terms of health care. In Monrovia, she met with officials from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and other groups.

As part of that trip, her team purchased delivery kits to give out to pregnant Liberian women. She wondered why United Methodists could not simply create them and save money. Warren did the research and developed a prototype which the United Methodist Committee



on Relief (UMCOR) approved. Each kit contains soap, latex gloves, plastic sheeting, string, a razor blade and two receiving blankets, all at a cost of less than \$8. These birthing kits* from The United Methodist Church have dramatically cut down infant mortality rates where they're being distributed.

Warren was excited to be coming to Virginia because she was well aware that the conference is a denominational leader in mission. "I was receiving e-mails and getting connected to Virginia even before I came, and had heard about all the things that Virginia does in mission," she said. "Then I sent one little e-mail out and now I have recovery teams coming out of my ears."

Warren's philosophy is to do mission in a relational and sustainable way, and not in a paternalistic way. "We need to stop doing 'mission trips' and start doing 'relationship trips.' We need to empower people in the local church, equip and inspire them and help them realize their purpose in mission... to reach people in the farthest corners of Virginia with the message that you can't get caught up in results because it's not about you. It's about building relationships with love.

"It's not 'Burger King' mission – any way you want it," she adds. "The United Methodist Church has a great connective system in place that funnels down from GBGM [General Board of Global Ministries] to UMCOR and to the local churches. We have missionaries in place and teams already on the ground."

Warren has a focus on health care, of course, specifically child care, healthy maternity care and childbirth and the fight against diseases such as HIV and malaria.

"Mission can arrange hope in areas where hope has died," Warren says. "Somewhere in Africa someone is offering a prayer for help. We can offer that help needed to answer their call."

She also tries to educate people on obstetric fistula care; it's an injury to a woman's birthing canal most often caused by an obstructed labor. It's repairable, but only 20 percent of the women in Africa have access to this kind of advanced surgery.

This summer, Warren took 15,000 birthing kits to Old Mutare Hospital in Zimbabwe and helped evaluate the facilities' needs, which are many. The hospital has one doctor and is basically falling apart. "It's across the street from Africa University, but yet never receives any teams," Warren says.

There are still sobering statistics for Africa, she says, including 40 percent unemployment and male life expectancy of just 34 years. These kinds of numbers keep sending Warren back to far-flung places around the globe.

"Whether you're 3 years old or 100 years old there's a place for you in mission," she said. "To me it's giving voice to the voiceless. ... If it's not right in the global community, it's not right in my community." □

— Neill Caldwell

*For birthing kit instructions, visit <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umcor/getconnected/supplies/birthingkit/>.

Church teams continue to work to relieve suffering and poverty in Haiti after 2010 earthquake

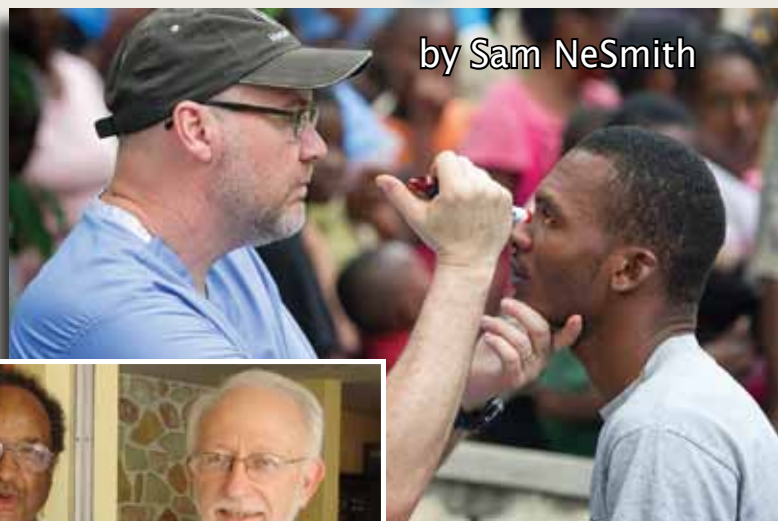
On Jan. 12, 2010, Haiti experienced a devastating earthquake that resulted in a horrific loss of life and property. Many questioned how Haiti, already an impoverished nation, could possibly recover from this disaster.

In the hours following the earthquake, United Methodists kept a prayerful vigil for three United Methodist leaders who were trapped in the rubble of the Hotel Montana: Jim Gulley, United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) agricultural consultant; Samuel Dixon, a top executive for UMCOR; and Clint Rabb, leader of United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM). Gulley survived and continues his work in Haiti. Dixon and Rabb died from their injuries. The network of relationships planted by these three men and other church leaders provided a foundation for our mission outreach in Haiti.

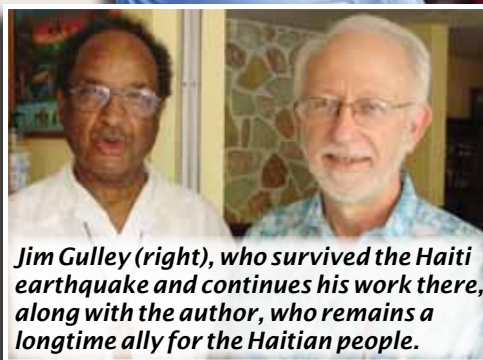
The misery of my Haitian brothers and sisters touched my spirit with sadness. An inner voice kept saying "I've got to go to Haiti and stand with my brothers and sisters." My response to this compelling call was "Lord, send me." Since then, I have participated on two mission teams to Jeremie with the Rev. Jack Martin, another mission veteran of the Virginia Conference, and led two UMVIM teams, in March and April, through the Haiti Response Plan to Banique, a community impacted by a large influx of disaster victims.

The Haiti Response Plan was launched in April 2010 by UMVIM and UMCOR leaders to assist with disaster recovery and rebuilding efforts. By design, the plan is "a Haitian driven mission" in which UMVIM teams work "with" and not "for" the Haitian people. The Haitian Methodist Church identifies priority sites – mainly schools, clinics and multi-use facilities – for rebuilding by UMVIM teams. Local Haitians are hired to work along with UMVIM teams on each project.

What did our UMVIM team do in Banique? We worshiped with our Haitian friends, had Bible school with the children, continued work on a stone wall surrounding the school and completed the roof of the school. Other teams followed us to continue the rebuilding, thus assuring continuity of the project. The satisfaction that we experienced from our successful work was tinged by scenes of reality. We saw an assembly of 250 students at the school, all wearing yellow shirts and standing in line to receive instruction from the principal. Outside the perimeter of the school stood seven children, a little bedraggled, with uncombed hair and tattered clothing. I watched these unfortunate ones for a long time, as they stood motionless watching the other children and looking very sad. They were unable to attend school because their families did not have the few dollars required for enrollment. The principal



by Sam NeSmith



Jim Gulley (right), who survived the Haiti earthquake and continues his work there, along with the author, who remains a longtime ally for the Haitian people.

(Above): A United Methodist doctor examines a man in Haiti following the devastating earthquake. (UMNS photo by Mike DuBose)

explained that this financial need is the norm, not the exception, for many Haitian children.

The earthquake recovery in Haiti has been slow and disappointing. In the national capital, Port-au-Prince, we saw rubble, mounds of debris and trash and many tent cities, the dwelling of the million homeless. The smells reminded me of the open sewage conditions I experienced while visiting refugee camps in Kenya years ago. What impressed me was the resilience and hopefulness of the people. I will continue to lead teams to Haiti to keep alive the mystical flame of the Holy Spirit among us. We were able to touch raw humanity in its most dire circumstances and our touch enlivened their countenances. We shared our love with them, we were Christ to them, we were the church. This is what God's mission is all about.

Our church's longtime relationship with those in Haiti enabled our mission agency to put into place immediate disaster relief efforts and made possible the assignment of UMVIM teams on the ground within six months of the earthquake. A year or more after the earthquake, the country has yet to receive the recovery monies promised by donor countries. Haitians are remarkably resilient people, but they are suffering. We cannot forget them! United Methodists, we were in Haiti before the earthquake, we have not left, and stay we must! □

– The Rev. Sam NeSmith, retired, lives in Richmond when he is not out of the country making one of his more than 90 career mission trips.

Bellamy UMC becomes command center following tornado in Gloucester

by
Ashley Sindle

On April 16 at 7 p.m., Gloucester received an unexpected and terrifying surprise. A tornado gouged a path of destruction eight miles wide through roads, neighborhoods, forests, businesses, churches and a middle school. Although it took only a few minutes to pass, the tornado left in its wake three casualties, more than 60 injured, \$8.5 million in damages and an overwhelming cry for help.

Bellamy United Methodist Church would become a crucial part of the answer. For three weeks immediately following the tragedy, Bellamy opened its doors while encouraging anyone and everyone to become active participants in piecing Gloucester back together.

Prior to the tornado, in February, a large fire in Gloucester left many properties damaged and one family completely homeless. When Bellamy UMC sent out members to help, Pastor Ken Waclo saw an opportunity to increase his congregation's participation in mission. It became the responsibility of Wes Winfree, head of the Disaster Relief Team for Bellamy, to create a structure allowing the congregation to be an effective part of disaster relief. To do so, Bellamy joined forces with active governmental programs, giving them permission to use the church's parking lots and building as a home-base for response teams, volunteers, donations and victims. Jane Wenner, the local Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) coordinator, would collaborate with Winfree for several weeks ironing out the agreement — just in time for the tornado strike.

In the aftermath of the tornado, Bellamy organized its free space into a one-stop-shop for Gloucester. "People came for everything from clothing and food, to school supplies and hot meals," recalls Winfree, "which was convenient, since most victims relied on others for transportation." With roadways blocked and cars damaged or imprisoned within debris, people were counting on others for help. With the wide range of provisions available, Bellamy was the hub of activity. Donations rolled in and delivery trucks rolled out while people stepped up for their neighbors, donating time, belongings and money. Even Easter was celebrated with 150 baskets assembled, wrapped and delivered to the neighborhoods affected.

One group deserving recognition for their incredible involvement was the Hospitality Group of the church. These women, led by Marsha West, were in the kitchen dishing out meal after meal for weeks.

"They were already working when I arrived in the mornings, and stayed until operations shut down in the evenings," said Wenner. "They never turned away a hungry family or volunteer."

Thanks to having one central location, the aftermath cleanup was far more efficient. Bellamy was named as the local relief center through radio stations, television broadcasts and newspaper reports. As a result, nearly everything filtered through Bellamy UMC's doors: youth groups, families, churches and even members of Gloucester's junior varsity football team, who arrived to help. Members at Gleaning Baptist Church gave daily from their own kitchen; Chick-fil-A donated 100 sandwiches daily; Home Depot sent out crews; Wal-Mart donated supplies; Coca-Cola sent two tractor-trailers with drinks; and churches and families lined up around the building



Bellamy members pose in a swing set they built for two families whose properties saw a lot of damage from the April tornado in Gloucester.



(Left) The kitchen crew at Bellamy UMC prepared many meals for those families affected by the tornado and for volunteers working to repair damage.

to donate.

"Best Way Construction Company devoted their workers to an entire day for cleanup," said Wenner, in awe of the numbers of volunteers. "Bellamy Church went above and beyond. Three weeks later when all operations had moved from the church grounds they continued to ask, 'What else do you need?'"

There were more than 800 volunteers that came through Bellamy in the weeks following the tornado.

Winfree and Wenner recounted the same memorable moment surrounding a family who had lost their home in February. The family called after the tornado and insisted on helping. They also donated some of the very items they had been gifted months ago, as well as new items they had purchased since. It was a powerful moment for the church to see the family give back to the community out of gratitude for what they had received. □

— Ashley Sindle is a recent graduate of Shenandoah University who lives in Gloucester.

Towns and churches assess Irene's damage

From North Carolina, where the hurricane made landfall on Aug. 27, to New England, where sections of Vermont experienced the worst flooding in a century, Irene sparked evacuations by hundreds of thousands, swamped shoreline communities and inland river towns, and cut electric power to nearly 6 million people. At least 38 deaths in nine states were blamed on the storm.

The Rev. Robert Pihlcrantz, conference Disaster Response coordinator, said Irene caused “significant wind damage in areas around James City County, Williamsburg and Richmond. There are lots of trees down with requests for chain saw work and debris removal. There was significant flooding in the Willoughby Spit/Pretty Lake area of Norfolk. The majority of reports of damaged churches came from Arlington and Alexandria districts, and they were reporting damage from the Aug. 23 earthquake, not the hurricane.”

Pihlcrantz added that conference Emergency Response Teams (ERT) are on standby and equipment has been strategically pre-positioned in support of the ERTs and, possibly, United Methodist Volunteers In Mission support later. Also, the Tennessee Conference sent two truckloads of drinking water to support Virginia Emergency Management requests.

Meanwhile, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) is processing grant requests from the New York, Eastern Pennsylvania and Greater New Jersey conferences. The Rev. Tom Hazelwood, head of UMCOR's U.S. Disaster Response, noted that “the extremes” of Irene were represented by the damage around Morehead City, N.C., where it first came ashore, and the inland flooding in Vermont.

Hazelwood acknowledged that while Irene's potential harm “was overhyped” – particularly for the mid-Atlantic and New York City – church members should not assume there is little need for relief efforts. “We’ve got some areas that were pretty devastated,” he said.

Hurricane Irene killed four in Virginia; all deaths were connected with falling trees in the storm.

Virginia farms sustained at least \$60 million in crop losses and damage.

Meanwhile the 5.8-magnitude earthquake in central Virginia destroyed more than 30 homes and forced two public schools to close. Shock waves toppled chimneys and gravestones near the epicenter outside Mineral and shut down Dominion Resources' North Anna nuclear power plant 11 miles away. Louisa County officials estimate the Aug. 23 quake caused as much as \$90 million in damage in the county, said Mineral Town Manager Willie Harper. (Mineral UMC's sanctuary is currently closed due to structural damage caused by the earthquake.)

Structural damage forced Louisa County school officials to close the county's only high school and a nearby elementary school. “We lost space for 2,000 students and we found space” at other schools after the quake “rudely interrupted” the new school year, said Superintendent Deborah Pettit.

Pettit and other county officials said the buildings won't likely be reoccupied for at least two years. □

Early Response Teams are crucial part of the disaster response plan

Following a disaster, news reports and TV coverage can be overwhelming. Our emotions watching everything unfolding before our eyes is difficult, and we grow sad and frustrated about our inability to reach out to the survivors, who often ask “where is God in all this?”

Early Response Teams (ERTs) provide a caring presence in the aftermath of a disaster, becoming the hands and feet of Christ. ERTs are empowered by God's spirit to help survivors deal with major disruptions in their lives. These volunteers reassure survivors that the church cares about them and provides visibility and reassurance.

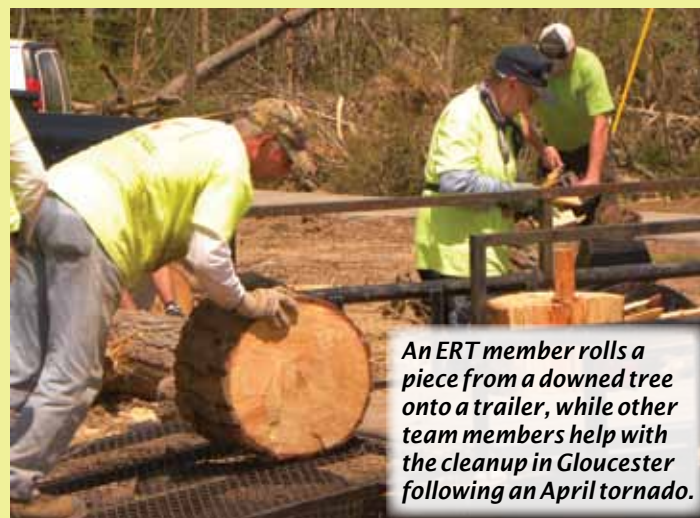
ERTs are trained under very specific guidelines which enable them to be productive and caring, causing no further harm or burden to the affected community. While there are specific tasks assigned to early response teams, no task is more important than the people each team serves.

ERTs were first created by The United Methodist Church in the mid-1990s after Hurricanes Hugo (the Carolinas, Virginia and other states) and Andrew (Florida). Today the Virginia Conference has more than 300 trained ERT members, and is constantly increasing the number by holding training classes throughout the Commonwealth.

Teams only deploy when instructed by the Virginia Conference Disaster Response coordinator. During the spring 2011 storms, the Virginia Conference Disaster Response Team deployed ERT teams to Pulaski, Dinwiddie, Washington County and Gloucester helping survivors stabilize their property while observing survivors' needs and reporting those to the local operations.

Providing these teams speeds the response to survivors, as United Methodists are usually “first in” and “last out” when disaster strikes. □

– Michele Michaelian, ERT coordinator and trainer for the conference and a member at Courthouse Community UMC in Virginia Beach



An ERT member rolls a piece from a downed tree onto a trailer, while other team members help with the cleanup in Gloucester following an April tornado.

Virginia Conference equipment has helped people all over the country

by Frank Jennings

When Hurricane Floyd struck southern Virginia in September 1999, the Virginia Conference had a new untested plan, a small but willing Disaster Team and no resources. Since then we have greatly added to the Disaster Plan and Team to cover response and recovery.

There are now duties and responsibilities outlined from the bishop to the local church. We also now have at our access one conference Disaster Response Trailer, five Regional Trailers, one Early Response Trailer, one Debris Trailer, one Utility Trailer and a 45-foot Shower Trailer. Each of these has come as a result of the gracious work and donation of United Methodists across the Virginia Conference.

The Regional Trailers have a tool inventory sufficient to tear down and rebuild a house by hand. They also are equipped with supplies to be a mini respite care center with canopy, table, chairs and even the box of tissues for disaster counseling.

God's love in action has allowed us to not only utilize these resources in the disasters affecting our own conference, but also has made it possible to reach out to our sister conferences throughout the Southeastern Jurisdiction and beyond. We have had a Virginia Conference Disaster Response Trailer on site in Virginia and in every state that borders the Gulf of Mexico

and states like Iowa and Tennessee.

This doesn't just mean the occasional United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) trip, but it means assignments that have lasted more than five years after Hurricane Katrina for one trailer. Or the record for service is our 45-foot shower trailer built and donated by the Petersburg District the year after Katrina. It was sent to Gulfport, Miss., and then on to Baton Rouge and Lake Charles in Louisiana and now is on-site outside of Nashville. In each of the situations, the trailer is used as a love gift with no charge for rent. The one condition we do make is, return it in the condition and inventory received. This is also true for local churches and UMVIM teams using the trailers. Borrow them, use them, and return them ready for the next deployment and remember disaster has the priority.

This kind of hospitality has not gone unappreciated. In most cases it was shared with conferences that are like we were in 1999 with no resources. It has prompted duplication of tools, trailers and the process of sharing them.

It also has caused many expressions of gratitude and prayers of thanksgiving. Alan Miller, the disaster work coordinator of the Texas Conference, received a trailer after Hurricane Ike in 2008 and it was picked up this past spring 2011 in time to respond to the tornadoes in the Gloucester area in our York River District.



The Rev. Frank Jennings (nicknamed the "Disaster Pastor") loads cleaning buckets and other supplies onto a truck bound for Texas.

Miller said it best: "God's love was seen in the trailer you loaned us so that thousands of volunteers could help rebuild hundreds of homes. God bless you and if ever you need help in Virginia, I hope we're the first in line." □

— The Rev. Frank Jennings is the conference Disaster Response Team Equipment Coordinator.

For a detailed list of the conference Regional Trailer inventory...

...visit the Virginia Conference Web site at <www.vaumc.org>, under "Ministries >> Mission and Global Ministries >> Disaster Response"; then click the first item, titled "conference-wide efforts." The inventory list is on pgs. 52-54 of the "Disaster Response Plan."

For details on how to borrow a disaster response trailer, contact the Rev. Frank Jennings at (757) 536-0010 or e-mail <umdp@cox.net>. □



Regional trailers are packed and ready for travel to assist where they're needed.

Value of disaster response volunteers can't be overstated

by Terry Raines

As you well know, several areas of our Commonwealth were affected by a series of tornadoes in April. The result was much destruction, debris and human need. What you may not be aware of is the overwhelming response of assistance that has come from congregations and individuals in the Virginia Conference.

Countless volunteer hours have been offered moving debris, covering damaged roofs with tarps, doing construction to repair and rebuild homes and offering comfort and care to troubled persons. Your conference Disaster Response coordinator, the Rev. Bob Pihlcrantz, your team leaders and team members are all to be commended for the outstanding organization and service offered. Their willingness to make themselves available and their compassion have been an inspiration for many.

The value of disaster response volunteers cannot be overstated. In addition to the relational value of their presence and care, the service of volunteers multiplies by at least two the value of monetary donations received for disaster assistance. An example of this can be seen in Pulaski County, where new houses are being built by volunteers for a cost of approximately \$45,000. The estimated assessment value of these homes, when completed, is \$100,000. Because of the efforts of United Methodist Virginia Conference Disaster Response and of other faith-based and voluntary organizations, more families can be helped with the relief funds received.

On behalf of my colleagues here at the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), Emergency Management personnel in the affected jurisdictions and most of all on behalf of the individuals and families who have been helped along the road to recovery, please receive my sincere word of thanks to your conference for supporting disaster response and to all who have gone to serve. Your efforts are appreciated! □

— Terry Raines is Volunteers and Donations coordinator for the Virginia Department of Emergency Management



New houses to replace tornado-damaged homes such as this one in Pulaski are being built by disaster response volunteers. (VDEM photo)

UMCOR keeps promise to spring storm survivors

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) is keeping its promise to stand with tornado, storm and flood survivors, who this spring have experienced historic challenges.

In less than eight weeks, UMCOR disbursed about \$250,000 dollars in emergency grants to 15 United Methodist conferences across the United States. Most are in the South and Midwest, where many of the storms struck and survivors seek to piece their lives back together.

In that same period, more than 9,300 cleaning buckets have been shipped to devastated areas from depots of the UMCOR Relief-Supply Network, including from Sager Brown Depot in Baldwin, La.

The Rev. Tom Hazelwood, UMCOR's U.S. Disaster Response executive, reiterated that UMCOR remains firm in its "absolute commitment to walk alongside these annual conferences, these local churches and communities" that have been affected by severe weather.

"We absolutely will be there with them," he said, even as he noted that funding for U.S. Disaster Response, specifically the 2011 Spring Storms Emergency Advance, remains very low.

Hazelwood offered his remarks from tornado-ravaged Joplin, Missouri, where the May 22 tornado is now considered the most destructive on record.

Missouri Bishop Robert Schnase, in a letter to the Council of Bishops, noted that "Tom Hazelwood from UMCOR was on the ground in Joplin within 24 hours" of the tornado's touch-down.

"It's part of UMCOR's mandate, as an organization, to be the relief and development arm of the church, and we want to be present," Hazelwood said of Joplin and other areas where UMCOR staff have been, such as North Carolina and Alabama, in the immediate aftermath of devastating storms this spring.

Since early April, storms, tornadoes, record flooding, and wildfires fanned out across the United States, affecting particularly the South and Midwest. Hazelwood called the 2011 storm season "extraordinary."

In the wake of a severe weather event, UMCOR's U.S. Disaster Response team provides presence, consultation, emergency grants, and training in early response to disasters and provision of spiritual and emotional care to survivors.

Further down the road, Hazelwood said, UMCOR helps rebuild and repair homes and provides training in case management, "so the communities can know how to work with their sisters and brothers who have been affected by the storms."

With so many weather events that have been so destructive this year, UMCOR is facing its own historic challenge to raise sufficient funds in order to be present where needed, not only in the wake of storm or flood but over the long haul of recovery.

"Funds at UMCOR are extraordinarily low right now, and this severely limits our capacity to act quickly and effectively during times of tragedy. Your help is appreciated," Schnase wrote.

You, too, can help by giving to 2011 U.S. Spring Storms, UMCOR Emergency Advance #3021326. □

— Linda Unger, staff editor and senior writer for UMCOR



Virginia

Angie Williams leaves conference staff to take newly created position with UMFS

Angie Williams, who served as the conference director of Children's, Youth, Young Adult and Higher Education Ministries, left her position Sept. 9 to take a newly created position with UMFS (United Methodist Family Services) to oversee volunteer development.

"I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity I have been given over the last seven years to serve our conference," said Williams. "The experiences with which I have been blessed will forever remain a part of my spiritual and professional development."

"Angie has vast energy, passion and commitment for youth and young adults," said Bishop Charlene Kammerer at a reception honoring Williams at the United Methodist Center in Glen Allen. "She has been a great team member. While she is a perfect fit for the position at UMFS, she will be keenly missed by us."

Williams said she left the conference staff in order to be able to spend more time with her husband and two adopted daughters. "As most of you know, ministry with young people is my deepest passion. However, I have found it increasingly difficult to reconcile this with the fact that the two young people who need me most in the world (my children) often get only the leftovers of my time and energy."

Williams noted that in her new job she is still using her gifts for ministry with young people. "I am working to oversee volunteer development for the vast array of ministries and services offered by UMFS to support the right of every youth to live in a safe and nurturing environment at home, in school and in the community."

Williams has been instrumental in



During an emotional farewell to conference staff, Angie Williams thanks her husband, Jeff, for his support during a reception held in her honor by the staff, which included Bishop Charlene Kammerer who presented Williams with a special framed print titled "Hope is the Child — Love is the Gardener," (shown at right) for Williams' years of dedication to children and young people of the conference.



developing youth leadership training events for the conference and, most recently, participated in the introduction of VocationCARE and the new LEAD event for youths. She also has worked for the last two years with the Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministries to develop evaluation and accountability systems for campus ministries.

"For over seven years, Angie has helped to form the lives of young people across the Virginia Conference," said the Rev. Marc Brown, director of Connectional Ministries. "She has

been a tireless servant of the gospel who has organized new ways of thinking for children, youth, young adult, and higher education ministries that will shape the future ministry of our annual conference. We pray for God's blessings for Angie and her family as she begins her new responsibilities with UMFS."

The Personnel Committee of The Common Table is interviewing for the position of director of Ministries with Young People. □

LEAD participants call experience 'life-changing'

In August, 29 youths from throughout the conference gathered together in Roanoke for LEAD, a nine-day intensive leadership immersion for student leaders.

This was the first year for LEAD, which was created as a new leadership training event to replace YAC and VUMDYLA, the previous weekend leadership retreats sponsored by the Virginia Conference Council on Youth Ministries.

The first three days of the event were spent working with participants to understand vocation: identifying their strongest gifts and deepest passions, discovering how their gifts and passions intersect with the needs of the world, and then responding to God's call to ACT on and live out their discoveries. The event began with a scavenger hunt in Roanoke's downtown area to learn about the needs of the community. Worshiping on the top of a parking garage and also on the top of Mill Mountain were ways to signify the embrace of the community and the offering of participants' lives and gifts in relationship with the community.

From the beginning of the event, the youths were challenged to explore God's calling on each of their lives. After a weekend of discernment, participants picked one of three tracks: worship, spiritual formation or mission. These were designed to immerse the youths in opportunities to enact their faith through servant leadership over five days.

The mission team spent the week serving the surrounding area in a variety of ways. Youths in this track had the opportunity to work at a battered women's and children's shelter to landscape the playground, to prepare and serve a meal at the rescue mission, to do a river cleanup, to volunteer at the Salvation Army's day camp, to work to clean up a local church, and to put in compost bins and build a gate at the community garden. They were able to see and respond to many different needs of the community.

Team members agreed that the most impactful part of the week was serving lunch to people at the rescue mission while the LEAD participants themselves fasted. It challenged each of them to think about what it would be like to be hungry. So many of the individuals they were serving had been filled with hunger unsure from where their next meal would come. The youths were thankful for the opportunity to be humbled and to have a small taste of what many people endure each day.

Spiritual formation track participants spent the week exploring their own faith and connecting with God while developing skills and learning about ways to help themselves and others grow spiritually. The group spent time praying, journaling and studying. At the beginning of the week, they looked at their own faith journeys. Later, they had the opportunity to interview pastors about spiritual disciplines and their calls to ministry. The group also participated in intentional community, looking at interactive ways to connect and grow. Each participant also looked at the importance of Bible study and spiritual disciplines for faith formation. They had the opportunity to pick a favorite text and create a Bible study around it. The group spent an afternoon in silence, which allowed them to explore the importance of silence in life and how to use that time to listen to God.

Worship track members spent the week exploring how to lead worship, examining different forms of worship and developing their musical talents. They visited the Taubman Art Museum to better understand the artistic and creative side of worship. They also visited St. Andrew's, a Catholic church in Roanoke, to explore how some architecture is

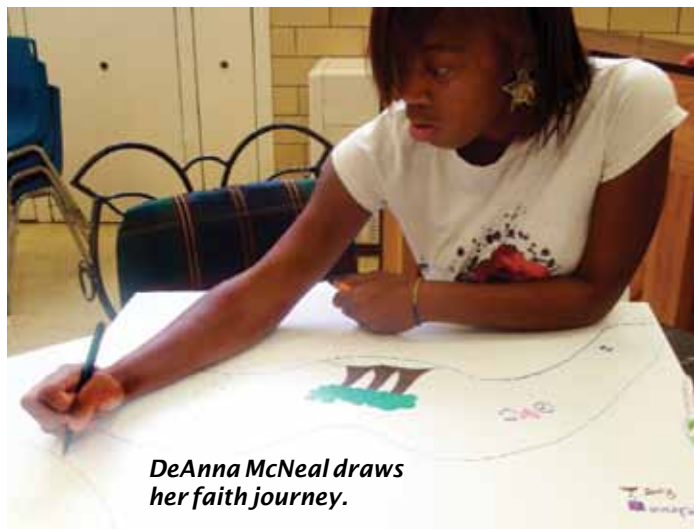
used to worship God. The group studied the Psalms of David and, at the end of the week, had the opportunity to write their own Psalms. Worship track participants also studied music theory, did creativity exercises and practiced music in order to cultivate their spiritual gifts in music. Finally, the group used photography and technology as ways to be further involved in the creative leadership of worship.

All LEAD participants fasted one day out of the week, engaged in a community mission/service project, and led worship for the Salvation Army regardless of which track they chose. They also all led the worship service on Sunday before they departed. The event ended with a culminating weekend of "design studio" or "world café" where participants create action plans and covenants for making a difference in their districts and local communities. They each spent the last day reflecting on how they were going to take what they had learned at LEAD and use it to make a difference in the world on a daily basis.

"LEAD was an eye-opening experience full of supportive people who helped me realize what God has been calling me to do," said Casey Heinlien.

"The nine days I spent at LEAD were a life-changing experience and really opened my eyes to the plan God has for me," said Cameron Roark. □

— Devon Maust, summer intern for Virginia Conference Ministries with Young People



Bishop Kammerer, Richmond mayor participate in Sept. 11 memorial service

United Methodist Bishop Charlene P. Kammerer joined an interfaith service marking the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, and talked about the courage it takes to meet people who are not like us and treat them as if they are.

"If we are persuaded that it is our Maker's plan for our lives to be enriched, enhanced and deepened by people who are not like us, we are more likely to risk encountering 'the other,'" said Kammerer. "We have learned in these last 10 years that demonizing or objectifying 'the other' as subhuman gives people permission to do violence and make war. Surely honoring and respecting 'the other' as an equal child of God can be a key to rejecting war and to building peace."

Kammerer made the remarks at an interfaith service held at Temple Beth-El in Richmond on the evening of Sept. 11.

"My Christian tradition and the Holy Scriptures have taught me that we are all made in the image of God," the bishop added. "We have all been given life — a sacred gift. The purpose of our lives is to worship and please our Creator. We are brothers and sisters together because we are children of God. We are called to live in ways that make for peace and be reconciling toward one another."

Bishop Kammerer also mentioned the times when she has been criticized by her own United Methodist and Christian communities about spending time in dialogue with persons from other faiths.

"What people don't realize is that interfaith dialogue most often works to deepen one's faith, not diminish or destroy it," she said. "In conversation with persons whose convictions are quite different than my own, I end up learning more about my own convictions and religious tradition."

Rabbi Martin Benifeld of Temple Beth Ahabah reminded the audience how Muslims have experienced fear and mistrust in the 10 years since the attacks. "Since 9/11 we have circled our American wagons to protect us from our enemies. But to find our enemies we have cast a wide net: to Iraq, Afghanistan and also at home. Since antiquity, Jewish law has



(Right): Bishop Charlene Kammerer speaks at an interfaith Sept. 11 service at Temple Beth-El in Richmond. (Above): Richmond Mayor Dwight Jones speaks. The flag on the pulpit contains the names of all those killed on Sept. 11, 2001.



taught that every human being is created in God's image, with a spark of the divine. Everybody's blood is the same color."

Imam Ammar Amonette of the Islamic Center of Virginia said that some try to justify the horrible and evil and suffering they inflict on other people, but quoted the Quran with a message of hope: "The good deed and the evil deed cannot be equal. Repel evil with that which is better..." "We cannot fight inhumanity with inhumanity," the imam said.

The Rev. David McKee, a Presbyterian pastor and current president of the Virginia Council of Churches, said that many people question where God was in those horrible events of 10 years ago. "The place to look for God is in the compassionate responses of our neighbors to the suffering. God is with us and we need not be afraid."

Richmond Mayor Dwight Jones

also spoke, recalling that on Sept. 11, 2001, he voiced a prayer: "God, if we didn't need you before, we sure do need you now." Jones, a Baptist minister, spoke of holding on to hope while maintaining memories of the despair and sadness of the terror attacks. □

— Neill Caldwell

Former director of Credit Union, Liz Riggleman, dies

Elizabeth "Liz" Giannini Riggleman, 92, died July 25 at The Hermitage in Richmond. Liz devoted more than 35 years to the Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church: on the Board of Christian Education, in the Treasurer's Office and with the Virginia United Methodist Credit Union, where she served as director during the last decade of her career. In retirement, she worked part-time as a receptionist at The Hermitage and ultimately made it her home. □

UMCOR grants made big impact on area around the Pentagon after 9/11 attack

At the Pentagon in Arlington, you have to know where to look to find any sign of the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attack. The limestone shell of the world's largest office building was repaired in a matter of months following the early fall morning when American Airlines Flight 77 plowed into the huge structure.

In the neighborhoods around the Pentagon, however, there are still signs of the fallout of the terror attack 10 years ago. Shops and restaurants are closed; buildings within sight of the Pentagon are empty, some with "for lease" signs posted in dusty windows.

Signs of ministry done in the area are less tangible, of course. But thanks to more than \$1.1 million from the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) in the form of "Love in the Midst of Tragedy" grants following 9/11, ministry was done that has made an important impact in the area.

In the days and months after the attacks, the northern Virginia area near the nation's capital was particularly hard-hit, says the Rev. Herb Brynildsen, program coordinator for the Virginia Conference's Alexandria District. "Reagan National Airport was closed, the tourist industry declined significantly, and security tightened. Jobs were lost, short-term employment opportunities dried up, identity questioned, foreign-born individuals suspect."

"The loss of life following the terrorist attacks was tragic," Brynildsen says. "The loss of our sense of security and normalcy was significant. Our economy shaken; our lives changed. For the most vulnerable – the mentally ill, the homeless, the working poor, the immigrant, the jobless, the underemployed – the effects and aftermath of Sept. 11, 2001, were more intensified and devastating. The means to feed families, pay rent, and access needed health care was lost. The mentally ill were more anxious and their illnesses more pronounced. People were desperate and hopeless."

Through a grant to the United Methodist Board of Mission in Northern Vir-

ginia, UMCOR brought hope and Love in the Midst of Tragedy to hundreds of "secondary" economic victims of the attacks. Funding to Rising Hope United Methodist Mission Church, GRACE Ministries, English as a Second Language and other immigrant ministries, Just Neighbors legal services and Phoenix Rising meal program of Franconia UMC enabled these ministries to offer God's love in concrete ways: food distributions; help with rent and housing; assistance with medical, drug and hospital expenses; job training; English language skills to enhance employment opportunities; legal services and documentation for immigrants; assistance in navigating social services; pastoral care; spiritual and mental health counseling; programs for children and youth, and worship opportunities.

"Needs were met, hope restored, God's love experienced in the midst of tragedy," said Brynildsen. "There are many stories of those who were served and how they have shared their blessings – remembering with joy how God blessed them when they were most desperate."

At Rising Hope, a ministry that had been started to help Alexandria's Route 1 corridor's homeless population, the church found itself working with people who weeks before had good paying jobs.

"We used it to bring support to secondary victims who lost work when so much business was suspended in the hotel, tourist, restaurant, travel industry," said the Rev. Keary Kincannon, pastor at Rising Hope. "Baggage handlers, cab drivers, waiters and waitresses all lost work. There was a ripple effect down into the very low-income community. We had a surge in requests for food and other forms of emergency support. There was a lot more anxiety among the people we serve, many who already are unstable because of their mental health conditions."

Rising Hope used the grant money to support the community in very tangible ways: food, prescriptions, utility bills, transportation, support with rent.

The legal aid organization Just Neigh-

bors also received support through a "Love in the Midst of Tragedy" grant to assist area immigrants who were caught up in the wake of 9/11. "In the atmosphere

of fear and confusion that surrounded immigration issues after the tragedy, Just Neighbors offered reliable information and support," said Rob Rutland-Brown, executive director of Just Neighbors. "Attorneys met with clients and accompanied them to immigration interviews in court. Volunteers assisted with various facets of the work, always demonstrating compassion and empathy for their immigrant neighbors."

The grant supported several projects of Just Neighbors services, including a staff attorney who focused on assisting immigrant children in the U.S. unaccompanied by parents or adults, and an attorney to assist with employment opportunities and community economic development. Just Neighbors celebrated its 15th anniversary this summer.

"The weeks and months that followed the attack upon the Pentagon on Sept. 11 were an incredibly challenging time for the people and churches of Northern Virginia," said the Rev. Steve Jones, who was Arlington District Superintendent at the time of the attacks and now serves as superintendent of the Richmond District. "There were few people, or churches, who did not have a member, neighbor, friend, co-worker or fellow student who lost a loved one in the attack. Our United Methodist churches of the Alexandria and Arlington Districts sought to find ways to help their members and their community; in doing so, it was a tremendous help to have the assistance of UMCOR." □

– Neill Caldwell



The Rodriguez family was one of many helped by the Just Neighbors legal aid organization.

Survey says conference's smaller churches feel left out

Small-membership churches across the Virginia Conference are feeling a disconnect between their district, the conference and the general church, according to results of a survey by the Small Church Initiative.

Many respondents to the survey feel that because of their small size their concerns are not heard, help they need is not available and resources are not in place. And there is a feeling that the local church exists

to support the districts and conference, not the other way around.

When asked what strategies their small church would be willing to try to become a "more vital congregation," 75 percent said a "strong plan for ministry," and 64 percent mentioned cooperative parish ministries, partnerships with nearby congregations. But respondents were very much opposed to sharing a pastor with another congregation (16 percent in favor), merger with another similar-sized church (11 percent approved), merging with a larger church (2 percent in favor), and closing so a new ministry could be born (1 percent in favor).

The questionnaire was sent out in May to clergy and lay leaders serving conference churches with average worship attendance between 50-150. Results were posted on the conference Web site in September. The survey was developed by the Small Church Leadership Initiative Task Force to assist the task force in developing a strategic plan designed to address opportunities for expanded networking, support and leadership development for churches in the target group.

Three quarters of respondents said their church demonstrates radical hospitality, passionate worship and generous giving; two-thirds of respondents said their churches practice

mission and service and extravagant generosity.

Leadership development was cited by two-thirds of those taking the survey as the most important area for the conference and district to support the

laity. Ninety-two percent of respondents said they had been to a district training session in the past year. Half said they had been to a conference-sponsored training event, and just under half had participated in the Lay Servant Academy (formerly

the Lay Speaking Academy).

Other notable findings:

- Terms like "tax," "burden," and "obligation" were often used to describe apportionments by clergy respondents, but these terms were not mentioned at all by the lay leaders who responded.
- Accordingly, there is frustration over financial demands on the local church. There is a clear call for more education and interpretation from all levels of the church as to the importance of connectional giving.
- Two-thirds named "financial issues"

as the biggest source of stress for their church. Other issues mentioned included generational conflict (including worship styles), attracting young people, economic situation in the community, dealing with change, and lack of understanding of United Methodist polity and beliefs.

- It was clear that all must change language which gives the impression that there is something wrong with the small church. Efforts toward empowering the small church and putting their pastors and laity into leadership on district and conference levels are needed, as well as "rebranding" resources to lift up the value of the small church. All churches must be seen as being equally valued, respondents said.
- Three-quarters of respondents said their church provides a parsonage, but 27 percent of those said their parsonage did not meet minimum standards set by the conference.

Following its August meeting, the Task Force developed recommendations for a strategic plan which were presented to the Cabinet and Common Table at September meetings. More information about the details of the strategic plan will be shared once the document has been adopted by these two groups. □



Small-membership churches such as this one often feel left out.

Virginia United Methodist Foundation launches new interactive Web site

The Virginia United Methodist Foundation launched its new Web site, <vaumfgifts.org>, the end of August. This interactive Web site provides local churches and conference agencies with free resources, including more than 300 pieces of planned giving and estate planning literature that can be used for bulletin inserts, special emphasis and stewardship campaigns.

The site also features an electronic newsletter that the Foundation began sending to clergy and laity in September. This weekly newsletter includes articles on current topics, donor stories and gift and estate planning suggestions. "The Foundation now offers a new service of helping local churches with capital campaigns," said Deal Tompkins, Foundation president. "The new Web site has information about this. We are excited about these new services which we will talk about at the district workshops this fall and winter."

For more information, contact the Foundation office at (804) 521-1120 or 1-800-768-6040, ext. 120, or e-mail <dealtompkins@vaumc.org> □

Shalom Farms continues to expand in size, output and ministry

The growth at Shalom Farms can be seen, felt and counted in ways beyond rows of collard greens...but that's a good place to start. From the few small beds United Methodist Urban Ministries of Richmond planted less than three years ago, the farm has expanded to more than two acres, including a berry orchard.

The farm already has exceeded last year's harvest and by the end of the fall, Shalom Farms will have produced more than 25,000 pounds of organically grown produce. That's roughly 60,000 servings of fresh fruits and vegetables headed to thousands of people in neighborhoods across Richmond without access to fresh food.

The partners and communities where the produce ends up have grown as well. One of those new communities

is Fulton Hill neighborhood, in partnership with the Neighborhood Resource Center. With cooking classes four days a week and an onsite garden, the center is a perfect partner. In addition to frequently supplying produce for cooking classes, hot meals and a food pantry, Shalom Farms has begun a weekly youth-run farm stand, where on Thursday afternoons a team of youth learns about business and agriculture while selling produce from Shalom Farms and from their own garden.

This growth has been the result of support from a variety of places. Westview on the James, where the farm is located in Goochland County, continues to be an integral and supportive partner. Hundreds of Westview summer campers spent time each week at the farm, and Shalom Farms produce could be found every week on the camp salad bar. And whether it's a visit from Richmond District United Methodist Women or Vacation Bible School children, there were groups at the farm almost every week.

The farm also added 12 full-time residents – a rooster and 11 laying chickens – which are now able to roam the pasture and woods freely. These chickens, as well as the addition of bee boxes and a greenhouse, are not just helping the productivity of the farm. They've also made the farm a more comprehensive learning lab for volunteers and partners.

Shalom Farms will soon be working with Gallery 5 <gallery5arts.org> in the Jackson Ward neighborhood of downtown Richmond to spread the word about the work in new and creative ways. Starting on the "First



(Left): Children get some tips about planting from a Shalom Farms volunteer. (Below): Youths drop seeds into a tray of soil to start the growing process.



Friday" art walk in October and going throughout the month, Shalom Farms will be curating an exhibit at Gallery 5. The exhibit, titled "The Art of Growing Community," will explore how Shalom Farms and its partners work to grow more than just food. All proceeds from sale of the art will benefit Shalom Farms.

As hunger and unemployment remain high, access to healthful foods in urban Richmond remains low. United Methodist Urban Ministries of Richmond seeks support from individuals, churches and organizations from across the conference to continue making this ministry possible. Volunteering at the farm, taking offerings or making financial contributions to Shalom Farms, hosting speakers and keeping Shalom Farms in your prayers are just some of the ways to support the ministry. You can follow the work being done and find out about upcoming events at <facebook.com/shalomfarms>, <www.shalomfarms.org>, and on Twitter at <@shalomfarms>.

For more information, contact director Dominic Barrett at <dbarrett@umumr.org> or (804) 592-6151. □

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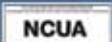


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Mission Mentors announced for local church use

The Virginia Conference Board of Global Ministries has provided Mission Mentors training for the following persons. They are available to speak in local churches and at other events. Mission Mentors can help your congregation explore how to expand an already established mission program or offer resources on how members can become more involved in mission.

Name	District
Carl Ennis	Alexandria
Jack Martin	Alexandria
Wendy Breseman	Alexandria
Sonja Flye Oliver	Arlington
Joanne Maughlin	Arlington
Stan Maughlin	Arlington
Joan Wasserot	Charlottesville
Laura Anderson	Charlottesville
Judy Worthington	Eastern Shore
Darlene Amon	Elizabeth River
Andrea Gaines	Elizabeth River
Diane Hassell	Farmville
Susan Lewandowski	Fredericksburg
Linda Ray	Fredericksburg
Karen Franklin	Fredericksburg
Bob May	Harrisonburg
Barbara Lewis	James River
Julie Warren	James River
Donna Mott	James River
Robert Blinn	James River
Cheryl Lafferty	Richmond
Dan Ivey	Richmond
Dot Ivey	Richmond
Gibby Elder	Richmond
Jason Stanley	Richmond
Rob Monolo	Richmond
Bob McAden	Roanoke
Jean Broyles	Roanoke
Linda Cornelius	Staunton
Esther Mabry	Staunton
Hunter Mabry	Staunton
Steve Weedling	Staunton
Sue Ann Salmon	Staunton
Bill John	York River
Christopher Burgess	York River
Glenn Rowley	Trainer
Judy Fender	Trainer
Jay Hanke	Trainer

For more information, contact the office of Mission and Global Justice at <mission@vaumc.org> or (804) 521-1144 or 1-800-768-6040, ext. 144. □

Society of St. Andrew Christmas card artist, Annis McCabe, dies

Annis Trout McCabe of Bedford died Aug. 16 at her home, surrounded by her family. She was a longtime friend of the United Methodist-related hunger relief agency Society of St. Andrew and lent her support to the organization from the time of its founding. She created Christmas card designs from 1993-2010, and the sale of her cards generated more than \$1 million for the Big Island-based organization.

McCabe grew up in Concord, N.C., received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Virginia Commonwealth University, and continued graduate work at Arrowmont School of the Crafts,

Penland School of Crafts and Hollins University. She was a faculty member in the arts departments of Lynchburg College and Randolph-Macon Woman's College, an educator at the Lynchburg Fine Arts Center, the Sedalia Center and in her own Blue Feather Studio.

Since 1989, her creative efforts were focused on art for liturgical spaces, and her commissions appear in numerous Virginia churches. □



McCabe

V I R G I N I A ' S B U S C O M P A N Y

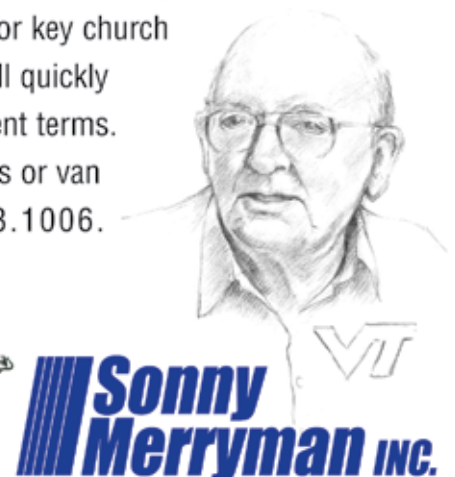
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Upcoming Events – for all ages!

OCTOBER

Westview AfterHours, Oct. 28–30.

Westview on the James, United Methodist camp in Goochland. This event, for 7th- to 10th-graders, is a camp for teens who like to stay up all night and sleep late. Join the Westview staff for camp activities, worship, Bible study and more. Cost: \$95/person. For more information and to register, visit <westviewonthejames.org>. **Registration deadline is Oct. 20.**

NOVEMBER

UMMen Spiritual Retreat, Nov. 4–6.

Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center, Blackstone. All men are encouraged to attend this 34th Annual Virginia Conference spiritual retreat. Keynote speaker will be the Rev. Rob Renfroe, pastor of Adult Discipleship at The Woodlands UMC, an 8,500-member congregation just north of Houston, Texas. The retreat topic will be “More,” because “there is more going on in this world than most men know, their mission is more important than they can imagine ... and what God desires to do through them is more powerful than they would ever dream.” To download a registration form with costs and deadlines, visit the “Events Calendar” at <www.vaumc.org>. For more information, contact David Bean, vice president of Spiritual Life, by e-mail at <david_bean@vawp.uscourts.gov>, or by phone at (540) 718-2752, or visit <www.vacumm.org>.

DECEMBER

‘Single Again’ Retreat, Dec. 2-4.

Camp Overlook, Keezletown. Join this retreat at Blessings Lodge to explore the trials, the hurts, and the loneliness of being single again, and search for the road that leads to healing and wholeness. Participants will join with others who have found themselves single again through separation, divorce or death. Brief presentations, small group reflections and expressive

worship will help restore body and soul. For more information, call (540) 2MY-CAMP or e-mail <campoverlook@gmail.com>. Cost: \$105 includes lodging, meals and program supplies.

Winter Camp, Dec. 9–11. Westview on the James, United Methodist camp in Goochland. This event is for 7- to 15-year-olds. With a variety of activities and a focus on Advent and what it means to wait for Christ’s birth, this weekend is the perfect way to connect with the meaning of Christmas. Cost: \$109/person. For more information and to register, visit <westviewonthejames.org>.

‘Walk to the Manger’ & retreats for all ages, Dec. 16-17. Camp Overlook, Keezletown. Register for the census, become a shepherd, hear the angels proclaim the good news, visit a young couple and their special child and help point three kings toward the treasure they seek. Overlook Retreat and Camp Ministry in Keezletown presents an interactive Nativity from 6 to 8 p.m., Friday, Dec. 16. Tours start continuously. The perfect way to reflect on why we celebrate Christmas! Turn your manger visit into a retreat. Youth groups can visit the holy family and then enjoy an overnight experience in newly renovated cabins before a Saturday morning tubing trip at \$52/person. Individuals, couples and families can stay overnight at the bed and breakfast at Blessings Lodge after their trip through Bethlehem. \$99 per room (bedding for four or more on the floor). For more details and registration information for both overnight events, contact the camp office at (540) 2MY-CAMP or <campoverlook@gmail.com>.

Winter Camp, Dec. 27-28. Camp Overlook, Keezletown. 6 p.m. Tuesday through 6 p.m. Wednesday. The stars are never brighter and the fireplace is never more delightful than winter

on Overlook’s side of the mountain. Open to 4th- through 10th-graders, bring a friend and delight in a number of camp activities with a winter twist and a Christmas flavor. The program is staffed by counselors and staff from summer camp. Highlights: “Walk to Manger Christmas Experience,” “Jumbo Christmas Cranium,” favorite camp games like “Gladiator Ball,” sugar cookie decorating. Cost: \$48 registration fee includes snacks on Tuesday, breakfast, lunch and snacks on Wednesday, and program materials. \$5 discount per child for two or more from each family.

FEBRUARY 2012

United Methodist Day at General Assembly, Feb. 2. State Capitol, Richmond. This annual event is for all United Methodists concerned with issues before the Virginia General Assembly. Sponsored by the Virginia Conference Board of Church and Society, Conference Legislative Network and United Methodist Women, UM Day gives congregations a vehicle for reaching beyond themselves and introduces them to the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church in a meaningful way. More information will be available in the “Events” section of the Web at <www.vaumc.org> closer to the date.

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Nation & World

Churches deal with flooding after Lee's advance; Texas deals with wildfires

In the wake of Tropical Storm Lee, United Methodists are contending with the damage from floods – and flames.

While the storm's heavy rains cut a soggy path across Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, the Carolinas and into Virginia, Lee's 50-mile-per-hour winds whipped wildfires in parched Texas as well as in parts of Louisiana.

"My real worry is just having funding to be able to help," said the Rev. Tom Hazelwood, the executive in charge of the United Methodist Committee on Relief's (UMCOR) U.S. disaster response. "We were short and we got a little money in to help with the spring storms, and now we've got all of this, and we have to ask people to give again for a different set of circumstances."

Hazelwood spent most of early September coordinating response to the fire-ravaged parts of Texas, which has been undergoing a severe drought since last fall. Among the responders are UMCOR-trained spiritual and emotional care teams.

In Bastrop County, about 30 miles southeast of Austin, a blaze has burned more than 33,000 acres and claimed the lives of two people.

"A cold front arrived at the same time as the winds from Tropical Storm Lee, and with the drought conditions here, the low humidity and the high winds, any little spark became a huge fire," said the Rev. Andy Smith, pastor of First UMC of Bastrop. At least 16 families in his congregation have lost their homes. More than 30 families, Smith said, still do not know whether their homes are damaged or lost.

The community is drawing together in other ways. First United Methodist and other area churches have been

collecting gift cards, linens, clothes and personal items for evacuees. First UMC was shelter to five families. The church building is not in peril and now hosts lunch each day for evacuees.

Fires across Texas have destroyed more than 1,000 homes.

Elsewhere in the Southwest Texas Conference, Cedar Creek UMC has served as shelter for families forced to flee wildfires.

Lee spawned tornadoes that damaged hundreds of homes and knocked out power to hundreds of thousands of people in several states. The storm's remnants churned toward the northeastern United States, already sodden after Hurricane Irene.

In parts of the southeast, some United Methodist churches reported minor flooding, and some households were still dealing with power outages. In Calhoun, Tenn., a tree fell on the roof of Spring Creek UMC and dam-

Clanton Chapel UMC in Dulac, La., had about four inches of water in the entryway and bathroom areas of its preschool. (UMNS photo by the Rev. Kirby Verett)



Donessa Arapi wades across a flooded area of Norfolk near the Lafayette River. (The Virginian-Pilot photo)



A sign at Bee Creek UMC directs residents affected by the Spicewood, Texas, fire (6500 acres burned, 37 homes destroyed and 30 damaged) to the church for assistance. (Southwest Texas Conference Web photo)



aged one of the church's Sunday school classrooms. But the Rev. Mary Parson, the church's pastor, said the congregation plans to share worship space with a nearby Baptist church that lost its building in a fire ignited by lightning from the storm. □

— Heather Hahn,
United Methodist News Service

'Bold' changes proposed for church structure

Members of the Connectional Table have endorsed five proposals that would change The United Methodist Church's structure and funding.

East Ohio Area Bishop John Hopkins, the Connectional Table's chair, called the proposals "far-reaching."

"What we're trying to do is simplify the church and integrate it more," he said. He added that the changes are intended to help the general church's programs and resources better serve the needs of annual conferences and local churches.

The proposals are the result of the church's "Call to Action" process, adopted by the denomination's Council of Bishops and the Connectional Table in their fall 2010 meetings.

The 60-member Connectional Table coordinates the denomination's mission, ministries and resources, and it is responsible for recommending changes in agency structures. The body voted to recommend:

- Making "necessary changes" to allow for "a just, reasonable and compassionate process" for low-performing clergy to leave the itinerancy.

- Consolidating 10 of the denomination's 13 general agencies into five offices that will be part of a new United Methodist Center for Connectional Mission and Ministry. The center will have a 15-member board of directors, which will be accountable to a 45-member advisory board that will "represent the diversity and inclusiveness of our church." Under the recommendation, the consolidation will take place in two phases and be completed by 2014.

- Forming a special study task force to determine the optimal organizational structure and business model of the United Methodist Publishing House and the United Methodist Board of Pension and Health Benefits, both "fee-for-service" organizations. The task force is to make its recommendations by the end of 2013.

- Having the General Conference authorize the board of the new United Methodist Center for Connectional Mission and Ministry to study the most

effective ways to fulfill the mission of the church. Under this proposal, the board would evaluate programs and spending at all levels of the church and ultimately could direct the reallocation of up to \$60 million during the 2013-2016 quadrennium.

- Forming a task force that would conduct a denomination-wide financial

changes come to pass.

Illinois Area Bishop Gregory Palmer, the convener of the Interim Operations Team, expressed confidence that the changes will help the church promote vital congregations and address the decades of membership decline in the United States. "I think some bold directions have been embraced,"

Palmer said. "We're looking at a much more nimble structure (i.e. as in the Center for Connectional Mission and Ministry) that creates some new possibilities of coherence and flexibility."

Just about every category of church leadership will be affected by the proposals.

The first recommendations dealing with clergy follow on the heels of a number of church studies questioning the sustainability and effectiveness of

job guarantees for ordained elders.

The denomination's current process to dismiss incompetent clergy is unwieldy, said Washington Area Bishop John Schol, a Connectional Table member. "When we talk about this as bishops, we all recognize that there needs to be a process," Schol said. "This isn't just a decision that's made by a bishop or district superintendent that we don't think a person is appointable, so now they are no longer appointable... The problem now is the process is so cumbersome and takes so much effort and eventually must be approved by all the clergy that this person might be friends with. It's a process that just doesn't work."

The Rev. Kim Cape, the top executive of the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry, told the Connectional Table that the 2008-2012 Commission to Study the Ministry will likely include an end to "security of appointment" for elders. □

— Heather Hahn,
United Methodist News Service



Bishop John Hopkins leads the Connectional Table in processing a report on possible church restructuring. (UMNS photo by Mike DuBose)

analysis and initiate proposals for a more equitable and effective apportionment system across all annual conferences. Apportionments support ministries at the conference and General Conference levels.

The role of General Conference in guiding the work of the church remains paramount in the new model. "We really feel that General Conference sets the values of our church, not a board of directors," Hopkins noted.

The Connectional Table took up and refined the recommendations as part of the multiyear "Call to Action" process, which has found that the status quo of a shrinking and aging U.S. church is "toxic" and unsustainable.

The suggested changes originated with the Interim Operations Team, a group of laity and clergy working with denominational leadership to implement the "Call to Action" recommendations.

The recommendations will be drafted into legislation for the 2012 General Conference, which has final say on whether these structural

Commission members outline final Study of Ministry report

Doing away with security of appointment, further streamlining the candidacy process and allowing ordination when educational requirements are completed are among the major changes proposed by the Study of Ministry Commission.

Members of the commission, who have prepared legislation for General Conference 2012, outlined their proposals to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry's Board of Directors during its recent meeting in Nashville.

The commission members said the aim of legislation is more grace and freedom and fewer rules, more accountability to the gospel and less conformity to an outdated, bureaucratic system, with more participation from young people and less rhetoric about our good intentions to include and engage younger people.

The Rev. Jay Williams, a 30-year-old provisional elder who serves on the study commission, spoke about the decision to do away with the practice of commissioning and separating full conference membership from ordination. "The practice of commissioning has not been well understood or accepted. We don't know what it means," he said.

If the commission proposals are approved by General Conference 2012 delegates, elders and deacons could be eligible for ordination as soon as they complete their educational requirements, and after serving a minimum of two years as a provisional elder or deacon, they would be eligible for full conference membership.

Bishop Grant Hagiya said the commission members have gotten more negative feedback about this proposal than almost anything in the report. "I came into the last meeting thinking we should retract early ordination. Jay [Williams] argued passionately for it. It hit me that this is not my future. We are forging things that will affect them, not us. The future is not ours; it is our young adults, young clergy and laity."

"If these younger clergy and laity step up, we really can have a viable future," Hagiya said.

Bishop Hagiya also urged board members who are delegates to General Con-

ference not to vote the whole package up or down based on one or two things they don't like. He suggested that delegates consider approving part of the legislation, even if not all of it is acceptable.

The Rev. David Dodge said that security of appointment for elders has proved a major stumbling block for missional appointments. "We have clergy who have proved ineffective and the ways of dealing with them are cumbersome. Removing the security of employment allows bishops to deploy clergy more appropriately to do missional ministry," Dodge said.

In order to ensure that women and racial-ethnic clergy are treated fairly, the commission proposed that the Jurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy meet annually to review and evaluate the commitment of their bishops to open itineracy.

Other legislation proposed by the commission would:

- Require annual conferences to have a vocational discernment coordinator charged with making the candidacy process more inviting and accessible, strengthening the candidacy mentoring program, and giving guidance and training to mentors.
- Require all candidates for licensed or ordained ministry to attend an orientation to ministry conference in their annual conference. This common experience will begin to build collegiality and understanding among the varieties of set-apart ministry.

Read the full report of the Study of Ministry Commission at <www.gbhem.org/ministrystudy>. □

— Vicki Brown, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

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Anxious churches consider 'Call to Action'

The conference room at the Vital Congregation Intensive at this summer's School of Congregational Development was filled with 30 people eager to discuss the denomination's new "Call to Action" and the implications for their congregations.

The Rev. Marc Brown, director of Connectional Ministries for the Virginia Conference; John Southwick, director of Research at the General Board of Global Ministries; Jeff Stiggins, executive director of the Florida Conference's Center for Congregational Excellence; and Michael Roberts, director of Connected in Christ of the Arkansas Conference; led the group through two sessions to help define what it means to be a vital congregation, provided models for developing vital congregations, and offered strategies for using the "Call to Action" as a building block for developing Christ-centered church communities.

There was initially a sense of anxiety from participants who were looking for opportunities in a plan that, on the surface, to many seemed unrealistic. One pastor commented, "My

job is to connect and draw people into mission. This plan feels like there is a lack of balance...it's all about metrics and not about ministry."

Others expressed concern that their congregations didn't believe the church was in decline and do not see the need to change and work for transformation and renewal. The session leaders worked with the group and discussed different ways to address the concerns while developing strategies.

While the "Call to Action" does not define vitality, it assumes that a vital congregation is living out the mission of The United Methodist Church to "make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

Pointing to Philippians 2:1-4 as a snapshot of vitality, Brown asserted that the "Call to Action" encourages congregations to be Christ-like in how the "rubber meets the road" when looking at how to change the culture of the mission field. Particularly for pastors, the "Call to Action" is an invitation to faithfully equip laity, connecting their lives to a larger biblical story of faith and empowering

them to move forward with vision and inspiration.

Brown encouraged pastors to be intentional in their preparation for preaching. "Pastoral leadership has the mind of Christ," he said. "Take the authority to create a God-sized vision for your congregation... Ask yourself if you have more energy when you leave worship than when you arrived."

Stiggins explained that a mix of traditional and contemporary worship choices is best for congregations with more than 350 people (but not necessarily for those with smaller congregations) and emphasized that the choices must be relevant to the people being served. For all congregations, according to Stiggins, bringing secular realities together with God's story will have the biggest impact on the congregation.

While music and multimedia may contribute to an engaging worship experience, it is more important to plan for an environment of inspiration.

Stiggins pointed to some guidelines for planning dynamic worship:

- Work with a planning team that includes a number of creative, passionate people.
- Draw from broader tradition of history of worship such as lighting candles or altar calls.
- Talk with God in a way that is participatory.
- Plan a unifying theme that carries through the sermon, prayer, music, Sunday school and Bible study.
- Tell the big truth and connect it to what to do next. People don't know a truth until they have acted on it. Offer ways for the congregation to act on what they have heard in worship.
- Limit announcements to three at the beginning or the end of worship. Church should not feel like a commercial.
- Commit to excellence in worship, environment and hospitality. □

— Melissa Hinnen, United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries



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Dissatisfied with Presbyterian Church, evangelicals consider making a new path

Readers of a group calling itself “Fellowship of Presbyterians” have begun to add details to a proposal for creating a new body – which they describe as more a movement than a new denomination.

The group plans to hold a “constitutional convention” in Orlando Jan. 12-14 to make more formal decisions on structuring such an entity and proposing overtures to the church’s 2012 General Assembly.

What comes from that January meeting could be key for Presbyterian congregations, pastors and individual worshipers who are trying to decide whether, as a matter of theological conviction, the time has come to leave the Presbyterian Church, PC (U.S.A.).

In August, 1,900 Presbyterians jammed into hotel meeting rooms in sub-urban Minneapolis for the Fellowship’s meeting. Many of them are profoundly troubled by the church’s decision earlier this year to change ordination standards and remove a requirement from the denomination’s *Book of Order* that those being ordained practice fidelity if they are married or chastity if they are single. The idea of creating a new reformed body is one of several possibilities that Fellowship organizers are considering. Other possibilities include creating nongeographic groups of like-minded Presbyterians within the PC (U.S.A.).

The Rev. John Crosby, pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church in Edina, Minn., told the Minneapolis meeting that the Fellowship already has created a legal structure for a new entity and will make additional decisions at the January meet-
ing.

“This new body does exist,” Crosby said, “but it’s an empty warehouse right now.”

But from the presentations, some details of how things might shape up are beginning to emerge. A new body would allow “dual citizenship, at least in the near term,” Crosby said. In other words, people involved in it would both be in the new body and would retain some de-
gree of affiliation with the PC (U.S.A.).

The new body would be more like an association and less like a denomination – meaning “less control and command, more vision and mutual support,” Crosby said. But it would have enough structure so the PC (U.S.A.) could dismiss congregations to it. And it would have the ability to ordain ministers.

Why do folks want another entity in a post-denominational age, in a world that already has 35,000 denominations world-wide and about two dozen Reformed denominations in the United States? Because, according to the Fellowship’s leaders, what’s happening now isn’t working – the PC (U.S.A.) has not grown for 40 years, and back-and-forth voting by the General Assembly on controver-
sial issues isn’t working.

“Continuing on the current path is fu-
tile,” Crosby said. “It’s a dead end. We’re
not going to play that game anymore.”

He also said that “mainline Christian-
ity is dying.” □

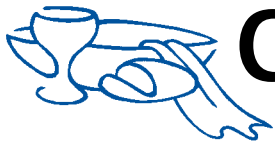
— Leslie Scanlon, *The Presbyterian Outlook*

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

Publication Title: Virginia United Methodist Advocate Publication No. 660-740
Issue Frequency: Monthly Number of Issues Published Annually: 12
Annual Subscription price: \$15
Mailing Address of Publication: Virginia United Methodist Communications, Inc.,
P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058
Contact Person: Neill Caldwell Telephone: (804) 521-1113
Mailing Address of Publisher: Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church,
P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058
Name and Address of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Virginia United Methodist
Communications, Inc., P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058
Editor: Neill Caldwell, P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058
Owner: Virginia United Methodist Communications, Inc., P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058
Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Per-
cent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None
Tax Status: The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt
status for federal income tax purposes has not changed during the preceding 12 months.
Publication Title: Virginia United Methodist Advocate
Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: September 2010

Extent and Nature of Circulation:

	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a) Total Number of Copies (Net press run)	5,969	5,506
b) Paid Circulation (by Mail and Outside the Mail)		
1) Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions	5,113	4,766
2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions	141	262
3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS	253	3
4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS (e.g. First-Class Mail)	318	342
c) Total Paid Distribution (sum of b-1,2,3, & 4)	5,825	5,373
d) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (by Mail and Outside the Mail)		
1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies	35	35
2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies	0	0
3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g. First-Class Mail)	6	2
4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (carriers or other means)	60	63
e) Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (sum of d-1,2,3, & 4)	101	100
f) Total Distribution (sum of c & e)	5,926	5,473
g) Copies not Distributed	43	34
h) Total (sum of f & g)	5,969	5,507
i) Percent Paid (c divided by f times 100)	98%	98%



Clergy & Diaconal

Deaths

The **Rev. John Wesley “Wes” Inge Jr.**, 94, retired elder, died Sept. 1, 2011. He began his ministerial career in 1941 at Huddleston. He went on to serve Annandale, the Concord Circuit, Stanleytown, Mechanicsville and as director of the Wesley Foundation at Old Dominion University. Wes was a professor at Ferrum College until his retirement in 1982. During his retirement, he served as a supply pastor at Burnt Chimney, Pleasant Grove (Martinsville), and St. James (Ferrum) UMCs.



Inge

He was preceded in death by his four brothers, Carl Clayton, Harvey Odell, Alver Edgar and Aubrey Lincoln Inge. Survivors include nieces, nephews and cousins.

The **Rev. Donald H. Traylor**, 76, retired elder, died Sept. 2, 2011. He began his ministerial career in 1959 at Shady Grove (Spotsylvania). He went on to serve Shady Grove (Henrico), Epworth (Thaxton), as associate at Fairfax, then Colonial Ave., West End (Portsmouth), McKendree (Norfolk), St. Mark's (Petersburg), Raleigh Court, Asbury (Harrisonburg) and as superintendent of the Portsmouth District. He retired in 2000.



Traylor

Survivors include his wife, Nancy; son, Robert Traylor; daughter, Kelly Jackson; grandchildren, Carter Traylor, Emily Jackson and Grant Jackson.



Long

The **Rev. Jenus G. “J.G.” Long Jr.**, 91, retired elder, died Sept. 5, 2011. He began his ministerial career in 1944 at Potomac. He went on to serve Monterey, Capeville, Epworth (Thaxton), Pleasant Valley (Herdon), Forestville, Onancock, Haygood, St. Mark's (Petersburg), Culpeper, St. John's (Staunton), St. Mark's (Arlington), Calvary (Halifax) and Stuart. He retired in 1983.

Survivors include his wife, Vernelle; his two children, Patricia Long and Victor Long; and his three siblings, Joseph Long, Inez Bryner and Virginia Goddard.

The **Rev. William Henry Acosta**, 82, retired elder, died Sept. 13, 2011. He began his ministerial career in 1953 as associate at First (Hampton). He went on to serve Northumberland, Mathews, Chamberlayne Heights, St. James (Richmond), Foundry, Norview, Berryman, Immanuel (Alexandria), as associate at Aldersgate (Alexandria), as chaplain at the Virginia United Methodist Children's Home, then served Moseley Memorial, Oakton, Fort Hill and St. Stephens (Alexandria). He retired in 1993.



Acosta

Survivors include his wife, Marilyn; two daughters, Nancy and Elizabeth; one son, Robert; 10 grandchildren; one brother, Edgar Acosta; and two sisters, Grace Acosta and Margaret Ellen Goldsborough.

Leo Wise Atkeison, widow of the Rev. Gordon Atkeison, died Aug. 1, 2011.

Hannah Nkrumah, mother of the Rev. Emmanuel Nkrumah, died Aug. 20, 2011. Emmanuel is pastor of Ghana Wesley United Methodist Mission Congregation, Arlington District.

June K. Failes, mother of the Rev. Walter B. “B” Failes Jr., died Aug. 15, 2011. “B” is senior pastor of Thrasher Memorial UMC in Vinton.

David Thomas Gochenour II, father of the Rev. Bob Gochenour and father-in-law of the Rev. Kathy Gochenour, died Aug. 27, 2011. Bob is pastor of Chestnut Memorial UMC, York River District, and Kathy is pastor of Zion UMC, York River District.

Bettianne K. Falduto, sister of the Rev. Art Woltz, died Aug. 26, 2011. Art is pastor of Bethany UMC (Gloucester Point), York River District.

Charles D. “Chuck” Stockton, husband of Kathryn Hughes Stockton and brother-in-law of Bishop H. Hasbrouck Hughes Jr., died Aug. 29, 2011. Bishop Hughes is retired and living in Williamsburg.

Mike Martin, brother of Mary Dale Newsome and brother-in-law of the Rev. Kenny Newsome, died Aug. 27, 2011. Kenny is pastor of Pender UMC, Arlington District.

Paul Troutman, stepfather of Neill Caldwell and stepfather-in-law of the Rev. Lynne Caldwell, died Sept. 1, 2011. Neill is editor of the *Virginia Advocate* and Lynne is pastor of Brookland UMC, Richmond District.

John Wesley Edwards, father of John Edwards, died Aug. 4. John is director of United Methodist-related Camp Westview on the James in Goochland County.

(News of Church Leaders
continued on pg. 30)



Local Church



▲ The Girls Teen Circle at **St. Stephen's UMC**, Alexandria District, celebrated with graduates in June. The group includes two young men who also participated.



▲ The Rev. Bill Walker and 18 others from **Epworth UMC** of Aylett, Fredericksburg District, made their first-ever mission trip to the Christian Children's Community Center in Horntown on the Eastern Shore. They painted a classroom, playground equipment, pavilion, stained a deck, exterior doors, ramp for persons with handicapping conditions and planted flowers. They also held Vacation Bible School for two age groups.

Youth of **Providence UMC** in Yorktown hosted a church dinner and talent show with proceeds going to tornado relief efforts in Gloucester. A large crowd enjoyed such diverse talents as singing, piano playing, dramatic readings, poetry, dance and artwork. A total of \$348.50 was raised. Later, the Rev. Doug Akers, Anne and Andy Bowes, Jean Blount, Kim Frisbee, Ed White, Andy Landrum and Dave Warner braved the heat to work clearing debris in tornado-damaged Gloucester.

In anticipation of General Conference next year, four United Methodist pastors serving six churches in Mathews County recently conducted a four-night workshop series on United Methodism to help area congregations better understand how the denomination is structured, what United Methodists believe, and how we make important decisions about our lives together. Workshops focused on four themes: history of United Methodism, led by the Rev. David Magruder of **West Mathews Charge**; United Methodist structure, led by the Rev. Suzanne Gibson of **Central UMC**; "What We Believe," led by the Rev. Bill John of **Salem UMC**; and "Our Social Principles," led by the Rev. Chuck Winner of the **Bethel-St. Matthew Charge**.



▲ **Watson Memorial UMC** in Chatham, Danville District, held a successful Vacation Bible School. Pictured: Cody Jones, Tuesdee Miller, Sadie Jones and D.J. making tie-dyed T-shirts.

United Methodist Women at **Central UMC** in Mathews County, York River District, held its second annual "Christmas in July" program to benefit the Mattaponi Healing Eagle Clinic. Church members donated items for the clinic's wish list and also \$1,150 to be deposited at the clinic's prescription account at the West Point Pharmacy. The church was decorated for Christmas, a potluck dinner was held with turkey and all the trimmings.



▲ A mission team from **Main Street UMC** in South Boston, Farmville District, traveled to Douglas County, Georgia, and worked on three homes that had been damaged by floods. Two weeks later a follow-up team returned and finished up so the families could return to their homes.



▲ "Creation Exploration" Vacation Bible School was held at **Central UMC** in Richmond, led by Callie Van Torn from Blue Sky Fund, who organizes the Oak Grove Elementary School third-grade Explorer trips to Camp Westview on the James in Goochland, and Deb Griffin, who works with an afternoon gardening club at the school. Central's Pastor Tom Sweat was active with the camp all week, and Bob Argabright and Mary Hetzel, from Trinity UMC, provided transportation for most of the 35 children who attended. The children are members of Central's Sunday afternoon Kids' Club and students from Oak Grove Bellemeade. Growing and eating healthful fruits and vegetables was one focus. Included was a visit to Shalom Farms at Westview and to Tricycle Gardens, an urban farm. Pictured: campers at Shalom Farms.



▲ With temperatures topping 105 degrees on the weekend of July 23-24 on the Northern Neck, John-Liam McClain (right) and his dad, the Rev. Bryan McClain, of **White Stone UMC**, sold ice-cold lemonade and ice pops to hot and thirsty passersby, raising money to send to Haiti and Japan via United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). John raised \$135 in just a few hours.

The United Methodist Women's Mission Seekers Circle of **Memorial UMC** in Appomattox recently held a luncheon and silent auction to benefit the Appomattox Literacy Intervention Program, which supports the "Spot and Dot" book buses, which travel the county bringing the gift of reading to children.



◀ **Brad-dock Street UMC** in Winchester had a successful Kits For Conference campaign earlier this year.

Church members could donate a layette kit for \$25 or a birthing kit for \$10 to honor a loved one. On Mother's Day, the names of all the donors and their honorees were listed in the bulletin. The totals for the project were 92 layettes and 71 birthing kits. Pictured are co-chairs Nancy Berlin and Susan Creasy, who shopped for all the items and packed the kits.

Warwick Memorial's 'Operation 757' campers 'Live the Love'

In July, 33 middle and high school youths flooded the Celebration Center of Warwick Memorial United Methodist Church with the excitement of mission on their hearts. Last year, the Rev. Megan Saucier started a mission camp with her own youth group when she was serving as associate pastor for Youth and Young Adults at Warwick Memorial UMC in Newport News. Her vision was simple, but profound: she wanted to teach the youth that there were people right in their own community who needed to be shown God's love in a tangible way through mission, and that there was something they could do about it. Yes, they were young, but they could help and be in mission in ways that they never imagined were possible.

After Saucier piloted this camp, and the youth had such a great experience, she joined forces with a team passionate about youth on the Peninsula and her own church in order to see her continued vision come into fruition. This year the mission camp was opened to all United Methodist churches on the Peninsula, and four additional churches participated. Although Saucier was appointed to Heritage UMC before the camp this year, her vision of mission was realized all across the Peninsula due to the co-directors Keith Bradley and Dave Powell and the support of the body of Christ at Warwick Memorial UMC.

Each day, the young people began with breakfast together early in the morning, then packed up their gear and went out into the parking lot to pray before they left for their mission project of the day. Projects included packing food for families at the Virginia Peninsula Food Bank, making health kits for the Lackey Free Clinic, doing yard work and painting in extreme heat conditions for those in need, folding and sorting clothes for LINK of Hampton Roads, and partnering with the CERT to help clean up debris from the recent tornado in Gloucester.

After the teams completed their projects for the day, they came back and ate dinner in community. Each night consisted of worship led by the band *This is Luke* from Tennessee and preaching by the Rev. Brian Sixbey. After worship, they met in their small groups and had a time of devotion and sharing.

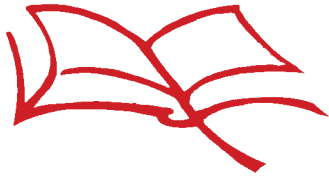
On July 31, the Operation 757 campers led worship at The Lampstand Emergent Worship Service at Warwick Memorial UMC, where they shared their testimonies and partook in Holy Communion together. The Rev. Jessie Squires gave a meditation on their Scripture verse for the week, John 1:4:21, which states "The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also."

Over the course of four days, these youths of the York River District "lived the love." □

(Right): Members of the youth group pack food for families at the Virginia Peninsula Food Bank.



(Left): Community Outreach coordinator Kelly Cash gives campers a tour of the Lackey Free Clinic.



Living the Word



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:
The Rev. Elizabeth S. "Beth" Anderson currently serves as an associate pastor at Messiah UMC in the Alexandria District. She received a B.A. in English from Birmingham Southern College; has served as a US-2 Missionary; and earned her Master of Divinity from Candler School of Theology, Emory University, before entering the Virginia Conference in 2006. Beth is married to the Rev. Kevin A. Anderson, also an associate pastor at Messiah UMC, and together they have two children: Grace, 4, and Sophia, 3.

October 9, 2011

Who is wise?

Ecclesiastes 9:1-18

Today's lesson confounds our understanding of the world. Today it seems that the loudest person is the one heard and those with the most money get what they want. Yet the Teacher tells a story of a poor wise man who delivered his city. Ecclesiastes 9:16 declares, "Wisdom is better than might; yet the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heeded."

He delivered his city against a great king. Might is not what succeeds, for the "quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouting of ruler among fools." (Eccles. 9:17). What seems most powerful to me is that while the quiet, poor, wise man saves his city, we are told "no one remembered that poor man" in verse 15. The loud shouting is what draws attention, but what good is that? What does it accomplish? What bridges are built in this effort? What is most important: to be remembered for being a "shouting ruler among fools" or to be a quiet, poor, wise deliverer?

Wisdom sometimes comes from the most unexpected source. Growing up, I was a camper for eight years and later a counselor at Camp Hat Creek, a Christian summer camp in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Campers came for a week for swimming, hiking, crafts and campfires, learning about God and themselves. As a counselor, I was continually blown away by their profound thoughts and provoking questions. They forced me to go deeper in my faith and to listen more acutely to the voice of God calling me to ministry. They were not seminary educated, they did not hold degrees,

wealth or accolades. Their wisdom came as quiet questions willing to see and explore a life unfettered by anything other than God's grace. Our camp director, at the beginning of the summer, encouraged us to remember their names, to know them, notice them, and not to let them disappear from our lives.

Are we overlooking wisdom that comes from someone we regard to be a "poor" or "quiet" source? Are we dismissing a deliverer? Could we be missing out because we do not heed a powerful word from an unexpected person? Are we listening to shouting fools or quiet wisdom? Take the time to see, hear, heed and remember wisdom when it is right in front of you, no matter the source. □

October 16, 2011

Seize the day!

Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:7,13

The wise teacher of Ecclesiastes teaches us that all of life is "vanity" or "meaningless," depending upon the translation of your Bible. Does this teacher have good news for us? Yes! We are not to be consumed with worry, rather we should "banish anxiety from your mind and put away pain from your body" (Eccles. 11:10). Life is finite, and that is not a bad thing. If we had forever to live in this life, would we set out to accomplish the goals God sets before us? For most of us, knowing we have a deadline gets us moving.

We also need to remember we are finite. Ecclesiastes 12:1 encourages "remember your creator in the days of your youth." God's creation awakens us to remember who we are and who God is. We take our place in the grand scheme of creation, remembering just how finite we are in all of

God's vastness.

January of my freshman year of college I had the opportunity to sail for a month on a 175-foot schooner with 20 other students, working the ship ourselves with a crew teaching us. We sailed from St. Thomas to Grenada and back.

My first semester at school had just been mediocre; I had not met many friends or jumped into experiencing all the opportunities that were available. Early one morning I had the dawn watch from 3 to 6 a.m. Crisp clear night surrounded me, and it seemed as if our boat was the only thing in the world. Ocean, a pitch black night painted by stars, and very small me, was all I sensed in the moment. In the midst of all this immeasurable beauty of creation, God revealed that infinite opportunities were before me, laid out by our powerful creator. I was small, but God was calling me to be part of this big world. It was time to get moving and participate more fully in this wonderful world.

God has not called us to a mediocre life. God has called us to respond to God's creation with awe and reverence, to respond to God's grace with obedience, to respond to God's love with love, and to respond to God's call with deep gladness and joy. Do not sit idly by. God is calling us, no matter how small we are, no matter how much time we have. What are we waiting for? □

October 23, 2011

Loving more

Song of Solomon 4:8-5:1

Many have called the Bible God's love letter to us. The Bible shares God's overwhelming love for all creation and the power of God's redemptive love in sending God's son Jesus Christ. Over and over we learn that God's love is inclusive – for all people. In our text for today, we learn of a different kind of love – an exclusive love shared between two people in a committed, intimate, covenant of marriage. God calls us to love – we are called to love

God with all our heart, all our soul and all our mind, and we are called to love our neighbor as ourselves. Song of Solomon reveals an ideal love between a man and a woman and also illustrates God's love for humanity.

It may seem odd to think of God this way. In fact, when we read Song of Solomon we may be surprised such love poetry is in the Bible! But the truth is God is crazy about you! God loves you more than you'll ever be able to understand! God loves us with the strength of covenantal love. God loves us with eternal vows that are unbreakable.

Whenever I counsel couples in premarital counseling, I look for something in particular. Usually, sometime in our conversations, one or both of the couple will say to me, "He makes me want to be a better person" or "I feel like the best me when I'm with her." This is the kind of love God calls us to in our faith. When we are fully giving ourselves over to Christ, we are the best we could ever be. When you're holding fast to the hands of Jesus, you will not slip.

Does being in a relationship with Jesus ignite in you a desire to love more – to be better? When you are responding to the powerful love of Christ, you want to grow and give and be the very best you that is possible – not because you're not already good enough – but because you are so loved, the love flows over into a response of even more love. □

October 30, 2011

Blessed to be a blessing

Matthew 5:1-12

Earlier this year, I stood on the Mount of Beatitudes with a group from my church and we read Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

Here Jesus sat down and taught, sharing these nine beatitudes of blessedness. He had no catchy title or sermon series to draw people there. He didn't send out a mailer to say "Nine Ways to Succeed in Life" or "The Nine Things Everyone Must Know." He didn't stand up and shout; he sat down and shared a description

of what blessedness looks like, an understanding of the attitudes and character disciples of Jesus exhibit.

Blessedness isn't about getting richer, thinner, moving faster, or focusing on personal success. Blessedness is about acknowledging that we ourselves are poor in spirit; we rely on the Spirit of the Lord to flow in and work in us. Blessedness is about taking blinders off so that we can mourn over the sin in the world, see the oppression all around us, and respond to it with mercy and justice. Blessedness is filled with a life of servanthood as we live out a life of meekness, humbly living as God's children living in a right relationship of righteousness with God and others. Blessedness is a life filled with compassion and seeking to sow seeds of peace in all we do. Blessedness will require strength in the face of persecution, because God's purposes are contrary to the world's.

Too often we only see the bleak and worrisome distractions. I am thankful for Edgar, one of the custodians at our church. Every day when I see him and ask, "How are you Edgar?" he always says, "I am blessed!" Each day Edgar intentionally recognizes that blessedness is a way of being, not a destination which he can achieve. Edgar is a blessing to me; his blessedness is contagious. These beatitudes are not just pretty words, they are the powerful truth of what a life of blessedness looks like. Edgar knows this and I pray that each of us may live into the blessed life of Christ and be a blessing to others! □

Holiday closings announced for conference offices

Offices in the Virginia United Methodist Center, located in Glen Allen, will close at 1 p.m., Wednesday, Nov. 23, and will remain closed Thursday and Friday, Nov. 24-25, in observance of the Thanksgiving holidays. Offices will reopen Monday, Nov. 28.



Letters & Commentary

Using Facebook appropriately as a ministry tool

Facebook has become a part of everyday life for many across the world. In 2010 it was the most visited site on the Internet. There are almost 100 million users in the United States and an estimated 750 million worldwide.

Many pastors find Facebook a useful tool for connecting with other clergy, church members and potential members. And since 35 percent of all Facebook users in the U.S. are between the ages of 18 and 25, and over two-thirds are under the age of 35, it is properly viewed as an important way of connecting with younger people.

A number of resources can help with the basics. *Facebook for Churches: the Care and Feeding of a Page*, by United Church of Christ minister Eric Anderson, explains basic terminology (such as the difference between a “profile” and a “page”) and describes the essential elements of a congregational Facebook page. *Facebook for Pastors*, a free ebook by nonprofit marketing expert Chris Forbes, discusses how common Facebook features and applications can be used to connect with people, expand evangelistic outreach, and build faith. And pastor/blogger Dan Navarra’s *Ten Ways to Use Facebook in Your Ministry* provides a series of practical suggestions for making Facebook posts timely and relevant.

But caution is warranted. Pastors must learn to manage Facebook and other social media in ways that allow personal interaction with friends and family without hindering their ministerial calling, especially when moving from one church to the next. They should invest time in learning to use Facebook appropriately. New Facebook users should allow themselves time to see how others interact through this social media, to master proper Facebook etiquette, and to become familiar with the use of group and fan pages.

Here are a few tips to help assure that your Facebook presence reflects positively on your ministry on a day-to-day basis and in times of transition:

Wall posts. Wall posts are meant to allow others to share in your life’s journey, which will have its ups and downs. But a pastor is a public figure. Everything you say, do, “like,” share, and click is made public on Facebook. So avoid the temptation to share daily frustrations, vent about church issues and members, or discuss situations best kept private. Even if you have restricted the access to your wall, your comments might be re-posted or read in a way you did not intend. Before posting anything, consider how others might read and interpret the post. United Methodist Communications has on its Web site a brief *Social Media Etiquette*

Handbook to help you steer clear of some common pitfalls and embarrassing situations when using Facebook and other social media.

Maintaining boundaries. Some people create multiple Facebook accounts, allowing them to use one for their professional networks and one for their personal networks. Some pastors have adopted this practice to keep what happens in their personal life separate from what happens in pastoral ministry. However, this practice violates Facebook’s policy that no individual may have more than one account. An alternative is to maintain a single personal account, but create a separate Facebook page to carry out pastoral interactions.

Friending church members. Keep in mind, before you friend a church member, you need to be willing to friend them all. Friending only certain church members can cause division in the congregation.

Pastoral transitions. What should pastors do about church members who are Facebook friends when moving to a new pastoral assignment? Members from the previous congregation may be watching to see if their old pastor posts affectionate notes about the new church, and clergy are watching to see if comments are made about their celebrated departure. If former parishioners remain as Facebook friends, remember you are no longer their pastor. Just as your personal relationship must change, your contact through social media sites must change as well.

Some moving pastors choose to “unfriend” everyone from their former church, eliminating the temptation to continue to act as their pastor. Another alternative is to move previous church members to a list with limited access to your profile. People on this list would not be able to see new wall posts or pictures of your life in the new church. United Methodist pastor Jeremy Smith has posted detailed instructions on using some advanced Facebook settings, such as creating sublists for different categories of friends and setting different levels of access to segregate Facebook friends from past churches. Whichever option you choose, it is important to state clearly in advance how you will handle this transition to avoid hurt feelings.

Avoiding the overuse of Facebook. Facebook can easily be abused by posting status updates too often, commenting on others’ status updates or pictures too frequently, and repeatedly “liking” or “poking” others. It can easily become a distracting and potentially addictive waste of time if you endlessly scan the personal profiles, past comments, and pictures of others. Limit the amount of time you spend on

**Commentary by
Thomas G. James**

Facebook, and never use it as a primary tool for getting to know your congregants.

Complying with denominational expectations. Increasingly, denominations and judicatories are issuing guidelines on the use of social media by pastors and other religious professionals. The Virginia Conference recently approved social media guidelines for clergy. □

— Thomas G. James is resource manager for the Lewis Center for Church Leadership. A graduate of Wesley Theological Seminary, he is a provisional elder in the Virginia Conference.

Ecumenism vs. Universalism

Ecumenism is defined, in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, as: “The organized attempt to bring about the cooperation and unity of all believers in Christ.” I believe that most of us would agree that this is a virtuous endeavor. In the same dictionary, *universalism* is defined as: “That doctrine which asserts that all men will eventually be reconciled to God.” Universalism is heresy and your September issue stunk of it. The Rev. Brian Siegle asked on pg. 6, “What would Mr. Wesley think of the multireligious expressions of today,” and suggested that we take a look back at what Mr. Wesley might have thought. Rev. Siegle goes on to entirely misrepresent one of Mr. Wesley’s sermons. “Catholic Spirit” was without a doubt about ecumenism and not about universalism.

I encourage everyone to read for themselves and look at the questions that Mr. Wesley asked in the sermon. One in particular I will quote, “Does thou believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, ‘God over all, blessed forever’ is he revealed in thy soul? Dost thou know Jesus Christ and him crucified? Does he dwell in thee, and thou in him is he formed in thy heart by faith having absolutely disclaimed all thy works, thy own righteousness, hast thou submitted thyself unto the righteousness of God which is by faith in Christ?” How do you think a Muslim would answer these questions? If you really want to know what Mr. Wesley thought about Muslims, why don’t you read something that he wrote specifically about them: the “Works of John Wesley, Volume 9,” “The Doctrine of Original Sin” or his sermon, “The Way To The Kingdom.” It is not hard to find out what Mr. Wesley thought, but your magazine did not tell it.

You also had a blog post in that issue from <www.bridgetv.com> on pg. 9, saying that “Muslims worship the same God as the Christians.” I know that there are many United Methodists who believe this, but it goes against the Doctrinal Standards of The United Methodist Church, which by the way, is still the standard for what we believe. [¶103.Section 3] “Article I—Of Faith in the Holy Trinity.” Do the Muslims worship a Triune God? “Article XX—Of the One Oblation of Christ, Finished upon the Cross.” Do the Muslims worship the God whose Son died for the sins of the world? We United Methodist are not universalists. John Wesley was not a universalist and the Bible does not teach this heresy either. □

— The Rev. Alan Murphy,
Local Pastor at the New Hope-Southall Memorial Charge

We can achieve tolerance without losing our particular identity

Although I appreciate the apparent desire to foster tolerance, I am concerned that the *Advocate* chose to reprint a blog post [September 2011, pg. 9] from an Islamic Web site as if it were the product of competent scholarship. The article contained a number of questionable assertions, the most notable of which is the claim that Christians and Muslims worship the same God. Of course this is nominally true in the sense that both religious traditions, along with Judaism, can trace their history to the God of Abraham. But Christians know God as Trinity, one God in three persons (explicitly denied in the Quran, surah 5:73). Christians also believe in the doctrine of the Incarnation, which means, among other things, that Jesus is rather more than a mere prophet, as claimed by the Quran. And I believe that in his prayers Jesus addressed God as “Abba,” (rather than the generic “El”) and *Abba* is a relational word freighted with theological meaning.

So we do indeed worship the same God if we are willing to modify the Lord’s Prayer and give up the doctrines that define the God we know in Christ. This is a bridge too far. We can achieve tolerance without losing our particular identity. □

— The Rev. Jim Noland
Reveille UMC, Richmond

Thank you for eye-opening articles in September issue

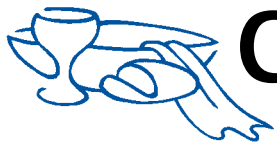
Bravo! Thank you for the several articles on remembrance of 9/11 and ways to promote peace and cooperation in the world [September 2011 *Advocate*]. Thank you for the article treating misconceptions about Islam; many have been mentioned in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* and other publications. Many items were familiar; the new, eye-opening one states that Muslims must believe in the Divine Birth and Jesus’ miracles. If only we could get more people to subscribe to the *Advocate* and read articles like this! I look forward to signing up as many people as possible for this informative news magazine. Keep up the good work. □

— Arline Shafer, Advocate campaign representative,
Greenwood UMC, Richmond District

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Clergy & Diaconal

(Continued from pg. 23)

Births

Liesel Emelia Suerdieck was born Aug. 5, 2011, to James and Cortney Suerdieck. She is welcomed by her big sister, Caitlyn Emma, and her grandparents, the Rev. Chris Suerdieck and husband, Keith. Chris is a retired elder, living in Emmitsburg, Md., and affiliated with St. Matthew's UMC, Alexandria District.

Charles Grant Gladson Rumburg was born Aug. 9, 2011, to the Rev. Rebecca Rumburg. Rebecca is an elder in full connection serving Saint James UMC, Staunton District. Proud grandparents are the Rev. Reggie Rumburg and his wife, Glenda. Reggie is an associate member serving Carmel-Coles Point Charge, Fredericksburg District.

Brock Alexander Lough was born Sept. 11, 2011, to the Rev. Robert D. Lough and Dr. Andee Lough. Robert is pastor of the Pembroke Charge, Roanoke District.

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A Celebration with Millie Cooper — Millie Cooper, retired diaconal minister and director of Youth Ministries for the Virginia Conference from 1977 until her retirement in 1984, celebrates her 90th birthday. Along with family and friends, the following Christian Educators attended: seated, from left: Laurel Trego, Betty Watts, Millie, with her dog, Mitzi; back row: Jeanette Benedict, Mary Sue Swann, Carol Uzzle, Susan Cutshaw, Sandra Stanley, Arlene Hewitt and Annette Pomeroy. Prior to Cooper's position as director of Youth Ministries, she also worked for the conference in various positions from 1969 through 1977. She currently resides in Newport News.

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**Charlene Payne
Kammerer**
Bishop of the
Virginia Conference

Those among us who work in disaster response ministries are often our unsung heroes/heroines. My experience over several decades is that these persons and groups often remain out of the spotlight and out of the glare of a camera. Yet, because of the sacrificial labor of these persons and groups, new life is made possible out of destruction, devastation and hopeless situations.

We have recently witnessed an earthquake and a hurricane, all in one week, here in Virginia. Our teams were well trained, positioned ahead of the storm, to be ready to respond with recovery and cleanup, leading to rebuilding. I have been so impressed with the quality of our volunteers who do this work and remain behind the scenes.

I had the extraordinary privilege of serving as chairperson of United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) during the 1992-1996 quadrennium. I was elected by the board of directors of our General Board of Global Ministries. Less than two months after the election, Hurricane Andrew struck in Miami and South Florida. At the time, I was a pastor in Tallahassee, Fla. I made numerous trips back and forth, often with church member volunteers, as we made our response to the catastrophic damage. For all the years I had championed the ministry of UMCOR, I still had no idea how effective and long-lasting is the imprint of this special ministry of our connection as United Methodists. Living through more than five years of working with UMCOR assistance in Hurricane Andrew's wake, I came to be an even greater advocate of this ministry.

UMCOR is able to be so effective because the funds available for this year's natural disaster recovery came from donations last year. It makes a huge difference in our deployment capacity when the funds are already in place. We also have long-cherished partners with whom we work. It is no secret that UMCOR will often be one of the last standing relief organizations in place when disaster has struck.

I often hear United Methodists say that UMCOR doesn't get enough news coverage. While I agree with this assessment of which groups get a lot of credit, we do not do this work for the news coverage. We do it because we are called by God to help our neighbors, near and far. We believe that we will see and know the face of Christ in our brothers and sisters whom we encounter and with whom we labor for a better tomorrow. I simply want to say a warm THANK YOU to all who are working, even now, in public and quiet ways, to bring relief and hope to all who are affected by disasters and tragedies beyond their control. Thanks be to God for you!

Grace and Peace,

Charlene Kammerer

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Deadlines

The *Virginia Advocate* is published once a month. The deadline to submit news and ad copy for the November 2011 issue is Oct. 3. For more information on future deadlines, contact Peggy Cribbs in the *Advocate* office or visit the Web.

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 (please no more than one item per issue). Color photos 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* reserves the right to edit all letters.

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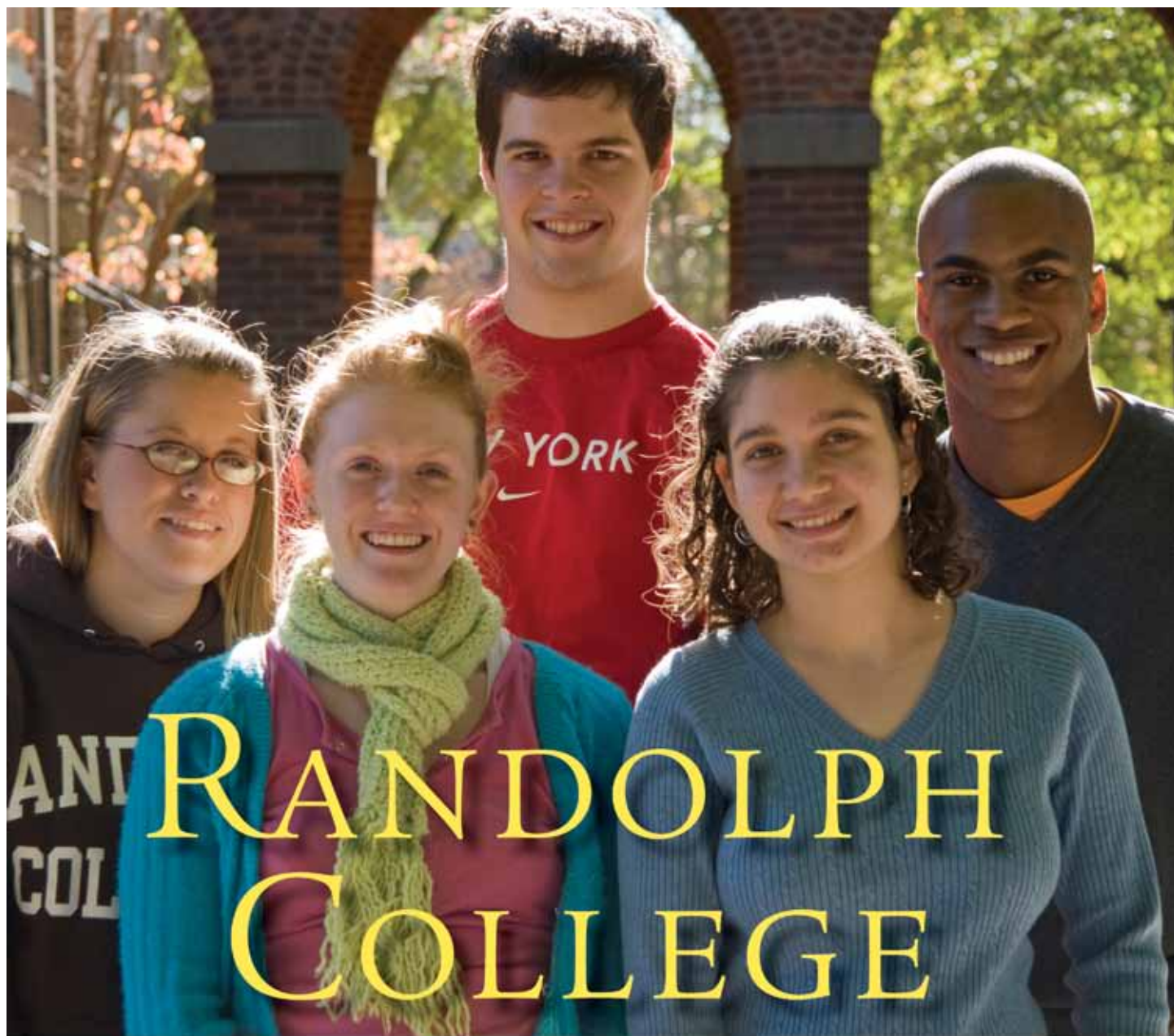
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