

Imagine No Malaria

Conference gets
behind malaria
eradication effort



Connecting with the



Virginia Advocate

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

FROM THE EDITOR



Neill Caldwell
Editor

**Nothing But
Nets
on steroids**

About 15 years ago Lynne and I went on a mission trip to Trinidad

(I know... suffering for Jesus). I had to come back early and took a flight that went from Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad, to Guyana on the South American mainland, then on to Miami. In Georgetown, Guyana, the empty seat beside me was filled by a man from the Seattle area who worked as a mining consultant and a lot of stuff – what seemed like all his worldly possessions. I remember he was sweating profusely and didn't look very well. He went on to tell me he was heading home early because he had come down with a serious case of malaria.

I guess my expression must have given me away, because he immediately added "oh, but don't worry, it's hard to catch. You have to be bitten by a certain kind of mosquito ..."

Like the one hiding there in all your gear, I thought, but didn't say that aloud.

It was an unsettling experience. At home I seem to attract mosquitos, I guess because I am so sweet. I've been in several third world countries where the threat of catching malaria from those infernal insects is very real, but normally when we Americans travel anywhere we get shots or take medicine that protects us from illnesses like malaria.

People who live in third world countries are not so lucky. They need protective bed nets to keep them safe from mosquito bites and all the problems that they cause. Hundreds of millions of people are still infected each year and many of them die, especially children.

The first weekend in September, at a book festival in North Carolina, I ran into Rick Reilly, author and sportswriter, who came up with the original idea of Nothing But Nets. As he was walking by me I literally grabbed his arm so that I could thank him and tell him that I was part of The United Methodist Church. In 2007, The United Methodist Church became a founding partner of Nothing But Nets along with the United Nations Foundation, Sports Illustrated and the NBA. I got to have a wonderful and fairly lengthy conversation with Rick about the nets effort and his trips to Africa.

From its involvement in Nothing But Nets, The United Methodist Church created Imagine No Malaria. Think of Imagine No Malaria as Nothing But Nets on steroids, because it takes things a step further. Not only are we providing nets, we are also providing doctors, nurses, educators and researchers in the effort to eradicate malaria from our planet. That's not just a bold goal, but an actual possibility. With better education and prevention, and better public health facilities in the areas where malaria is still a killer, we can get rid of it.

The fight to eliminate malaria around the world is an area where our denomination has a very positive record, and it can only get better with your participation. 🍷

Neill Caldwell



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

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

Fax: 804-521-1174

E-mail: advocate@vaumc.orgWebsite: www.vaumc.org

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Local Church News

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

Letters

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

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(Cover) Photo by Mike DuBose for United Methodist Communications

(Above) District Superintendents join Bishop Cho to introduce the "Every Life Save a Life" (Imagine No Malaria) campaign at Virginia Annual Conference in June.



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The *Virginia Advocate* Staff

Linda S. Rhodes | Virginia Conference Director of Communications

Neill M. Caldwell | Editor

Cathryn Huff | Graphic Designer

Pam Culler | Administrative Secretary

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COMMENTARY

A tale of four churches (Part 1)

By Larry Davies

It's no secret that most churches in America are declining. Thom and Joani Schultz, authors of "Why Nobody Wants to Go to Church Anymore" provide alarming statistics:

- ❖ Every year, more than 4,000 churches close, and approximately 1,000 churches start. Of 350,000 churches across America, only some small and large are showing signs of growth.
- ❖ The percentage of congregations characterized by high spiritual vitality dropped from 43 percent in 2005 to 28 percent in 2010. In 2000 about a third of congregations exhibited excellent financial health, but by 2010 that number plummeted to 14 percent.
- ❖ In a recent study, the combined membership of protestant churches

declined 9.5 percent while the U.S. population increased by 11 percent.

- ❖ Church attendance is shrinking. While 40 percent of Americans say they attend church every week, the actual number is closer to 20 percent.

Yet some churches are thriving despite the gloomy numbers. What are they doing that I could learn from? Recently, I visited four churches that defy the statistics and are thriving in the midst of decline. I have several successful churches among those I supervise, but I chose four that are not connected with me in order to see them as any other visitor coming for the first time.

Two of the churches are located where I live in Lynchburg. I know and respect each of the senior pastors. Two churches are near Atlanta. All four churches influenced me over the years with their creative ministry and leadership ideas.

Blue Ridge Community Church in Lynchburg

Pastor Woody Torrence has more than 2,000 people attending four services each week. Most of those attending are middle-aged or young who either stopped attending church years ago or never attended. Their vision is to help people move closer to God. They were a small church that made a big decision in 1991: They changed their name to reflect a new location, and they radically modified their format to be more attractive to unchurched people. Now they are one of the larger churches in the area.

Tree of Life Ministries in Lynchburg

Pastor Mike Dodson also has over 2,000 people attending three weekly services. When you enter the building, the first thing you notice is hundreds of flags reflecting virtually every country around the world. The flags represent their desire to reach everyone with the gospel. They hope

(Bottom left): Worship band at Blue Ridge Community Church in Lynchburg; (bottom right): worship at Tree of Life Ministries in Lynchburg.



COMMENTARY

to accomplish that mission by being creative, innovative and demonstrative in their method of delivering the gospel message and helping everyone mature in their relationship with Jesus Christ.

Roswell United Methodist Church in Roswell, Ga.

Pastor Mike Long has just under 2,000 people attending two weekly services. During the 1990s, I learned about Roswell UMC because of their innovative ministry with Divorce Care Groups and Single Adults. In their welcome statement: "Every person is on some kind of journey in this life. Whether new to the community or new to God, join us as we journey together." Their vision is making disciples for Jesus Christ who invite, grow and serve together. "As disciples our goal is to walk in His steps offering our prayers, presence, gifts and service."

North Point Community Church in Alpharetta, Ga.

Pastor Andy Stanley has over 30,000 people attending multiple services in many different locations. On the main campus I attended, there were several thousand people crowded into two large amphitheatres. Their mission is about creating a church that unchurched people love to attend and to lead people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. "We have created environments and experiences to help you grow as an individual and as families. We believe sustained life change happens best in the context of community."

At all four churches I experienced...

- ❖ Generous hospitality, from parking lot greeters to welcome stations to coffee bars;
- ❖ A casual, relaxed atmosphere that encouraged informality in dress and attitude;


- ❖ Stimulating worship services with engaging music and challenging messages;
- ❖ Numerous opportunities to be involved in helping others within the community or world-wide.

But there was "something" more...

Each of the churches possessed "something" that had nothing to do with size but everything to do with attitude. Thinking back, I regularly witness this "something" in many churches I already work with. I suspect that if I visited four other healthy churches, I would find this "something" there as well. This "something" has no denominational ties and is seldom taught as a class in seminary.

I saw "something" in the parking lot attendant who stepped away from his area to make sure my car lights would turn off, then walked with me to provide directions. There was the couple who sat beside us in worship. They had

a daughter living in our area. Then unprompted, they shared how much the church meant. There was the woman at the 'Welcome' area who took extra time to provide information but then shared how her life changed. The "something" wasn't noticeable at first but became more evident with each church visited.

This "something" is what I learned and hope to share with other churches. Next month, I will try to share this special "something" with you. 

-The Rev. Larry Davies is superintendent of the Lynchburg District.

(Bottom left): Youth worship at Roswell United Methodist Church in Roswell, Ga; (bottom right): After-church gameday celebration at North Point Community Church in Alpharetta, Ga.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Fredericksburg District Heartwood Center ministries no longer just a vision

"If you want to make a difference in this community, you need to round up the teenagers and offer them some daytime activities to keep them out of trouble."

A Hartwood Volunteer first responder

Members at Rehoboth UMC prepared a meal for the Teen Day Camp.



By Dan Deitze, Gayle Porias and Teresa Smith

"Daddy, Daddy, we'll have food this week!"

When the volunteer who was carrying the food box out to the car heard the child's exclamation, it was confirmation that the Fredericksburg District's vision and plans were on target.

The children were receiving food as a result of one of the new Heartwood Summer Ministry programs. The Heartwood Summer Ministry began in June with a food distribution ministry for families who participate in the Federal free and reduced lunch programs at school, Vacation Bible School and two mission camps for teenagers.

The weekly food distribution program provides

nutritious snacks, fresh fruit and vegetables, easily prepared entrees, juice, cereal, peanut butter, jelly and bread. More than 50 students participated and more are expected as the word gets out. Volunteers from Fredericksburg District churches have donated food and money, sorted and packed boxes, welcomed guests and carried boxes to vehicles, as well as listened to and prayed with individuals. Linda Hyson from Mount Horeb UMC and Frances Vaughn from Eastland UMC are the food ministry coordinators. Although the main purpose is to provide needed food for children, Hyson always reminds us "it's also about the relationships" that we are forming in the community.

Mission camps for teenagers were led by Powell Smith from New Hope UMC. Powell and his adult volunteers are focusing on character-building activities, group-building activities, local mission work such as volunteering at a homeless shelter, recreation and spiritual formation. One of the volunteers at the camp was impressed with how the ropes course encouraged the campers to work together to find solutions and provided opportunities for budding leaders to emerge and practice leadership skills. Using his

extensive camping experience, Powell designed the ropes courses, coordinated daily local mission excursions and designed and led daily Bible studies, among many other tasks.

Vacation Bible School was offered in August for children ages 5 through fifth grade.

How did all this begin?

Many years ago, the former Ashland District purchased a 24-acre parcel of land in the Hartwood community, nine miles west of Fredericksburg on Route 17. The goal of the Ashland District was to plant a new faith community, but the effort didn't succeed. With the creation of the Fredericksburg District in 2011, many began to ask what would become of the property. In the spring of 2012, the Rev. Ted Smith, the Fredericksburg District superintendent, proposed a 40-day season of prayer, inviting district United Methodists to ask God how the property could be used to transform lives, respond to community and world needs, and bring glory to God. The 74 congregations of the district were provided with demographic data, daily scripture readings and encouragement to journal responses to the prayer. After that period of prayer, the responses were submitted to district leaders and published in the district newsletter. The overwhelming response was the vision of a community center and mission

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training center.

With the clear vision established for the property, the district Mission Board discussed and approved a recommendation to construct the community center and mission training center. The recommendation was sent to the district Connectional Ministries Team, which approved it unanimously. The Connectional Ministries approval led to the creation of a Construction Team and a Summer Ministry Coordination team. Since the date of construction approval, a number of steps have taken place to make the vision a reality including vision casting meeting, development of local ministry partnerships, fund-raising for the summer ministries, creation of promotional documents with the help of the Virginia Conference Communications office, guidance from the conference staff, and guidance from Stafford County government officials.

When asked where the Fredericksburg District will get the estimated \$6 million to complete such a bold venture, district leaders have responded with "we don't have six million dollars but God has much more than what we need; in fact, we know that if we stay faithful and focused on the vision, God will provide the dollars." Thus far this belief has been tried and tested in the response to the summer ministries. In developing the budget for the summer ministries,



THE HEARTWOOD Center

the total cost identified was \$8,000. In a very short time, responses to appeals for summer ministry funding exceeded \$13,000. This may not be a sign or guarantee that \$6 million can be raised, but it has been a source of inspiration and confirmation that God is leading hearts and minds into acts of generosity.

Following the \$13,000 came an additional gift of \$35,000 from Salem UMC, which will be directed to the construction phase of the vision. The generous financial donations have been equally matched with extravagant gifts of time and other resources. In fact, the Heartwood ministry teams ceased to be amazed when the England Run library staff began bringing persons to food distribution and for prayer and counseling. We also continue to receive inquiries from local non-profit agencies asking how they can join in the ministry partnership.

Heartwood Summer Ministries became more


than a Fredericksburg District summer program and construction project. It has become a community effort between district congregations, local groups, Hartwood Presbyterian Church, Hartwood Elementary School PTA, the England Run Stafford County library, and Stafford Junction, (a faith-based nonprofit agency empowering children, youths and their families in Stafford County).

"The Heartwood ministry has experienced an outpouring of sharing the love of Christ with children, youths, and their families," said the Rev. Gayle Porias of Mount Horeb UMC. The community support began with two Boy Scout troops that blazed a hiking trail and placed mulch at the Heartwood site. A local retirement community held two food drives for the summer food program. The suggestion of a mission camp for teenagers and additional support came from the Hartwood Volunteer Fire Department.

District Superintendent Smith went throughout the community to talk with local folks about the vision for a ministry and building construction. The Fredericksburg District refers to these meetings as vision casting conversations. In the vision casting conversation with Hartwood Volunteer first responders, one of the participants said "if you want to make a difference in this community, you need to round up the

teenagers and offer them some daytime activities to keep them out of trouble." So, district leaders took the suggestion and incorporated it into the ministry plan.

This fall the district will host a town hall-style gathering to share the results of the summer ministry, seek feedback regarding possible 2015 summer ministry needs and share information about building construction plans. The Heartwood construction team is also in the process of soliciting bids from building contractors and preparing the necessary paperwork to address zoning issues and secure a building permit. The district leadership team anticipates beginning major fundraising efforts in the late fall or early winter. Contrary to the anxieties of some Fredericksburg District congregations and members, fundraising will not be sought through district apportionments. The district will gladly accept "second mile" gifts from within (or beyond) the district, but will seek out major gifts to cover both construction costs and ongoing operating costs.

This is the blessing that has become the Fredericksburg District Heartwood Center vision. It has proven to be a blessing throughout the district, the region and beyond. Thanks be to God! 

-Rev. Gayle Porias serves Mount Horeb. Rev. Teresa Smith serves New Pathways Ministry and New Hope. Dan Dietz is the district lay leader.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



October events to focus on effective communications and prayer



Dr. Maria Dixon Hall will lead the next 5 Talent Academy



Dr. Wendy Miller will be the featured speaker at the "Lord, Teach Me to Pray" event in October.

5 Talent Academy

Dr. Maria Dixon Hall is not one to mince words.

"People are not coming to our churches or filling our pews because we are BORING," she recently told the *United Methodist Reporter*. "Rather than giving them the fount of living water in a way relevant and contextualized to their own reality, we give people stagnant homilies or self-help sermons devoid of any realistic attachment to the awesome and life-changing revelation of Jesus Christ. Frankly, our services and our preaching is not compelling enough for most people to miss 'Meet the Press,' 'SportsCenter,' or a 'Law & Order' marathon. We simply have forgotten that the gospel of Jesus Christ requires us to TELL THE STORY of Jesus Christ in the language of the people. Don't forget that George Whitefield didn't have a PA system or a Power-Point, yet he could compel thousands of working class people to give their lives to Christ by preaching the beautiful simplicity of the gospel."

No, the leader for the

next 5 Talent Academy teaching session, doesn't sugar-coat. With a background in both the church and in business, Dixon Hall tries to show how the church can learn from the business world about how to communicate more effectively.

"Evangelism, Communication and Church Growth" will be offered on Saturday, Oct. 4, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at Floris UMC in Herndon, and broadcast to nine additional locations across the conference.

Dixon Hall, associate professor of Organizational Communication at Southern Methodist University, will explore evangelism through the lens of solid and fruitful communication practices.

As a professor, Dixon Hall focuses on organizational strategy and planning. She has a B.S. in marketing from the University of Alabama; an M.Div. and a Th.M. in homiletics from Candler School of Theology; and a Ph.D. in organizational communication from the University of Missouri. She also spent time working for Dow Chemical Co.

Dixon Hall told Duke Divinity School's *Faith & Leadership* that she came to it because she wanted to understand the church not from its sermons but from the communication that happens between

weekly worship services.

"I wanted to understand how we talk Monday through Saturday," she said. "Not just how the congregation talks, but the staff meetings and the denominational meetings and the worship meetings and the letters that pastors send. I wanted to understand those and then see how they translate to how the church is perceived broadly."

She gives The United Methodist Church low marks.

"We have a culture of niceness. We avoid conflict, so we are not able to hash things out. Our leaders are not able to hash out these very complex issues, and so in turn, they're unable to help the body of Christ and the people who are called Methodists hash them out. When an organization doesn't have a way of engaging in conflict, then they have to find a place to do it, and unfortunately, that's what General Conference has become.

"We don't tell our own stories well. ... Human beings are storytelling creatures. From the time that we are born, we are moved and motivated by stories. United Methodists have become poor storytellers. We no longer can tell our congregation where they fit in the story of Christ. We no longer can communicate the difference that Christ has made in our lives and in the world, and we are unable to tell people why they should be a star-



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ring member in this story.”

“Our district superintendents and our bishops are so overtaxed they don’t get a chance to know the people they’re serving with,” Dixon Hall added. “We’ve created an adversarial relationship between the clergy and the leadership, which turns into an adversarial relationship between the pew and the pulpit.”

For more information, visit www.vaumc.org/5Talent. Live-stream sites will be: Blacksburg UMC, Franktown UMC, Timberlake UMC in Lynchburg, Fairview UMC in Danville, Woodlake UMC in Chesterfield, Bridgewater

UMC, Francis Asbury UMC in Virginia Beach, Macedonia UMC in White Post and St. Luke’s UMC in Yorktown.

‘Lord, Teach Me to Pray’

Another major conference-sponsored event this fall will be “Lord, Teach Me to Pray – Practical Applications for Prayer,” which will be offered Saturday, Oct. 25, at St. Thomas UMC, Manassas. The speaker will be Dr. Wendy Miller, professor emeritus of Spiritual Formation at Eastern Mennonite Seminary (EMS) and adjunct faculty at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill., and Perkins School of The-

ology in Dallas.

“Jesus models a rhythm of prayerful retreat and outward engagement in his own life,” said Miller. “It can be very helpful for people to slow down and move away from an overloaded schedule and life and open up to God, the world of the spirit, their own soul.”

Miller earned her B.A. from Iowa Wesleyan College, an M.A. in church leadership from EMS, and studied at the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation and did further work at General Theological Seminary. She has taught at Eastern Mennonite since 1991, and her previous experience includes serv-

ing as a chaplain at Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community and as associate pastor of Bethlehem (Pa.) Mennonite Church. She’s the author of three books – *Learning to Listen: A Guide for Spiritual Friends*, *Invitation to Presence* and *Jesus, Our Spiritual Director: A Pilgrimage Through the Gospels*, – all published by Upper Room. She also writes an online column on the Eastern Mennonite website called “Soul Space.”

To register, visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org under “Events” and the date. 📅

Conference welcomes new director of Inclusivity and Lay Leadership Excellence

Cheryl Edley-Worford is the new Virginia Conference director of Inclusivity and Lay Leadership Excellence, effective Sept. 2.

The announcement from the Personnel Committee for the Common Table for Church Vitality said that “Cheryl brings a unique blend of education, experience, and gifts that fit the ministry requirements of the director of Inclusivity and Lay Leadership Excellence.”

She will relate to the conference Board of Laity and Board of Discipleship, Commission on Disabilities, Commission on Status and Role of Women, Commission on Ethnic Minority Concerns and Advocacy, Lay Servant Ministries, Older Adult Council, Camp Rainbow Connection and will be the point person for Discipleship Circles.

Edley-Worford is an adjunct psychology instructor for Central Virginia Community College. She has been a counselor/consul-

tant and director of Multicultural Education for Randolph-Macon Woman’s College (now Randolph College), chaplain for United College Ministries, and counselor for Winston-Salem State University in North Carolina. In addition, she served as a U.S.-2 mission worker in establishing a new United Methodist campus ministry at Winston-Salem State.

Her educational background includes a Bachelor of Arts from Duke University, an Educational Specialist degree from James Madison University and a Master of Theological Studies from Wesley Theological Seminary.

Edley-Worford is a member of Jackson Street UMC in Lynchburg, where she’s been a lay speaker, youth group leader and Sunday school teacher.

She and her husband, Peter Worford, have a son, Joel, who is a freshman at Longwood University. 📅



Cheryl Edley-Worford is the new Virginia Conference director of Inclusivity and Lay Leadership Excellence.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Shalom Farms helps close the 'food gap'

By Claire Mills

As I approached Shalom Farms on a cloudy summer morning, I immediately caught sight of volunteers harvesting crops. Others carried buckets of just picked peppers, tomatoes and squash down the rows at the community farm project of United Methodist Urban Ministries. The yield from the lush green fields in Goochland County has been feeding the hungry in Richmond's inner city since 2008. But these days, Shalom Farms is harvesting more than fresh food for low-income residents.

"We are increasing access to healthy food in urban Richmond. Of the 85,000 pounds of produce we will raise this year, more than 35,000 pounds of it will go to FeedMore for its Central Virginia Food Bank, Meals on Wheels and Kids Cafes. The rest of it will go to our partners in the city where Shalom Farms is helping to close

the healthy food gap," Dominic Barrett, director of Shalom Farms, said.

Shalom Farms is closing the food gap with creative initiatives that build relationships with people who lack access to fresh healthy food. They partner to manage Youth Run Farm Stands that bring kids "good experiences with good food" in underserved neighborhoods. With Bon Secours, they offer the Prescription Produce Plan that fills prescriptions with fresh food, healthy recipes and cooking classes. Now in its second year, the Prescription Produce is reaching 60 households and nearly 300 people. In July, residents from Creighton Court came to Shalom Farms to learn more about fresh food and ways to prepare it.

Shalom Farms is strengthening these programs to help fulfill its mission. "Thousands in Richmond lack access to healthy food," says the Shalom Farms mission statement. "Many also lack the tools and resources to prepare and share it. Shalom Farms seeks to collaboratively transform the Richmond food system so that all people have access to good food – food that is good for our bodies, good for the environment, and good for our communities."

Before the farm fresh bounty reaches its destination in Richmond, most of the planting and harvesting at Shalom Farms is done by community volunteers. They are the hands and

the feet that are making a difference. Their work on the farm helps bring affordable fresh produce to low-income communities through food pantries, after-school programs, pop-up markets and educational activities.

"At the heart of what we are doing is engaging churches in mission," Barrett said. "It's beautiful to see different churches, different denominations, different faith groups working side by side in a shared theology of growing and sharing good food. We are blessed that so many churches want to support us. It's really the only way we can survive."

On the day that I visited the farm, volunteers from two churches in South Richmond were pitching in to pick vegetables and pack them in crates. Among the group from Woodlake UMC were a mother and daughter team, Rand and Lillian Mauck. Working in the garden is something they enjoy together at home.

"Picking vegetables is something we can also do together at Shalom Farms, and my daughter learns how we can help the community," Rand said. "It's a tangible way to help others. We touch the vegetables that will be on someone's dinner table."

Laurie Cigal, another member of the team from Woodlake UMC, really enjoys supporting the work to feed people who don't have access to

Rand and Lillian Mauck, mother and daughter from Woodlake UMC, pick tomatoes at Shalom Farms.
Photos by Claire Mills.



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healthy food. "I keep thinking about how thankful families will be to get this food," she said.

Volunteers from The Brandermill Church were busy picking squash and zucchini. Even though a heavy rain the night before had left the fields muddy, they didn't seem to mind.

"This is our intergenerational mission," said Tammy Tipton-Nay, director of Children and Family Ministries at The Brandermill Church, which sends a group once a month to volunteer at Shalom Farms. "We start in February and witness a beautiful picture of the whole cycle from seed to harvest," she said.

Last Christmas, the congregation at The Brandermill Church raised funds for a gift of \$19,000 to support the spring planting at Shalom Farms. This summer, here they are harvesting produce grown from the

seeds that they helped to plant. Then they carefully pack the vegetables in crates that are loaded onto a truck headed to Richmond.

It's not exactly a miracle with baskets of loaves and fishes. But as I watched the crates of red juicy tomatoes and sunny squash pile up at Shalom Farms, I marveled at the glory of the garden. I could imagine this food restoring health and wholeness to families one meal at a time. I thought about the mom who wants to feed her children fresh vegetables but doesn't have a grocery store in her neighborhood. Or the diabetic who lives in public housing and struggles with poor health but doesn't know about healthy eating practices. For them, the bounty of Shalom Farms is a godsend. 

-Claire Mills is founder and editor of the website, faithinrichmond.com.

New plan offered to help reach Africa University endowment goal

The 2013 Virginia Annual Conference voted to establish a \$1 million endowment for Africa University. The endowment was to be created over a three-year period, which will end in 2015. The Rev. Steve Hundley presented the proposal at conference and then moved to the Western Jurisdiction to become director of Connectional Ministries for the California-Pacific Conference.


"The original plan was to collect one dollar per member from the local churches in the conference. To date less than \$10,000 has been sent from the churches and there is a question as to whether all churches have been fully apprised of the plan," said Judge Willard Douglas Jr., who with the Rev. Clarence Brown have developed a new plan to reach the goal by 2015 Annual Conference.

"The new plan is for 1,000 members to contribute \$1,000 by Annual Conference next summer, or 500 couples giving \$2,000 each," says Douglas. "We are calling on persons to go the second mile because we don't want their contribution to their respective churches to be minimized. We are also asking the district superintendents

to relate this plan to their Charge Conferences."

Located in Zimbabwe, Africa University celebrated its 20th anniversary last year. Nearly 5,000 men and women have graduated from the university. Africa University is the first fully accredited, United Methodist-related institution on the African continent established by the action of General Conference and the first private university in Zimbabwe. The majority of faculty and administrative staff are Africans, who serve alongside visiting educators from the United States, Europe and around the world. The cost of educating a student at the University for one year is \$5,600, which covers tuition fees, room and board, medical care and Student Union fees.

Checks can be made payable to the Virginia Annual Conference with a note on the reference line that it is being designated for the "Africa University Endowment." They can be sent to the conference Treasurer at Virginia Conference, P.O. Box 5605, Glen Allen, VA 23058.

For more information, go to www.support-africauniversity.org. 

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Blackstone's bio-mass furnace is up and running



After nearly two years of planning, the Blackstone Conference and Retreat Center (Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center) has installed a new bio-mass heating system that generates heat for the center while saving thousands of dollars in expenses.

Two dilapidated oil-fired boilers were replaced with a system capable of producing two million BTUs of heat per hour while resulting in a savings of approximately \$8,500 per month and the elimination of almost all carbon emissions.

This system is designed to burn a variety of different fuels: wood chips, wood pellets, wood biscuits, sawdust, even grass. During the past several months Blackstone has experimented with

different fuels in an effort to find the most efficient and economical fuel. Air intake and fuel mix are adjustable to allow optimization of combustion and heat generation. The furnace has a built-in triple smoke recovery system to maximize thermal efficiency.

Unlike the prior boilers, the new system is no longer dependent on expensive heating oil. Fuels for the bio-mass system are available locally and are all renewable energy sources.

In 2012 Blackstone's Board of Directors first considered the bio-mass solution to address a host of problems arising from its old boilers. One boiler was not operational and the other required frequent maintenance. Spiraling costs of heating oil accentuated the need for a new approach to heating

the 110,000 square foot center. The Board approved moving forward with the bio-mass heating system even though it was the first of its kind and size to be installed in the region.

As part of the installation package, the old boilers were removed and the boiler house was renovated to accommodate the new furnace and operating equipment. The old smoke stack was replaced and the boiler building was reconfigured to provide a maintenance shop upstairs. Additionally, space was added to accommodate wood chip fuel and provide an automatic feed system, adding wood or grass into the boiler as needed.

To enhance efficiency, valves were installed allowing heat to be

directed to a specific wing and floor of the building. In the past, heating the center meant heating the entire four-story building. The excess heating capacity has been directed to the indoor swimming pool (through a heat exchanger), allowing the pool water to be maintained at a constant 88 degrees Fahrenheit.

The initial cost of the system was much greater than purchasing a replacement oil-fired boiler, but as an incentive to undertake the additional capital expenditure, the U.S. Department of Agriculture provided financing. Additionally, the financing package allowed the center to include existing debt so that the cash flow was greatly improved for the center's operations. 🍀

-Glen Huff

Blackstone launches appeal for 'Partners'

The Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center at Blackstone is seeking "Partners" to help upgrade facilities and expand services.

"We've been providing services and facilities for retreats and conferences for Virginia United Methodists for more than 60 years," says the Rev. Tommy Herndon, chairman of the Blackstone board, "and we want to continue that ministry for children, youth and adults, clergy and laity."

Blackstone is asking local churches and church groups, as well as individual United Methodists, to become "Partners" in supporting the center's ministry. About 80 percent of the annual budget is met by user fees from groups which use the facilities, but the remainder must come from gifts and contributions. The center is also dependent on gifts and contributions for renovations.

For more information, call the center at **(434) 292-5308** or Jim Bergdoll, the "Partners" coordinator, at **(757) 477-7657** or email jbergdoll@vwc.edu.

EVENTS



OCTOBER

5 Talent Academy

Oct. 4, Floris UMC, Herndon (and live streamed throughout the conference)

Registration is now open for the 5 Talent Academy “Evangelism, Communication and Church Growth” event on Saturday, Oct. 4, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at Floris UMC in Herndon, and broadcast to nine additional locations across the conference. Maria Dixon Hall, associate professor of Organizational Communication at Southern Methodist University, will explore evangelism through the lens of solid and fruitful communication practices. Registration is open to all Virginia Conference churches regardless of affiliation with the 5 Talent Academy. Visit www.vaumc.org/5Talent to register; **registration deadline is Sept. 19**. Registration is \$25 per person and includes lunch. Live stream sites are: **Blacksburg UMC, Franktown UMC, Timberlake UMC in Lynchburg, Fairview UMC in Danville, Woodlake UMC in Chesterfield, Bridgewater UMC, Francis Asbury UMC in Virginia Beach, Macedonia UMC in White Post and St. Luke’s UMC in Yorktown.**

Mid-Size Church Lead Pastor event

Oct. 16, Good Shepherd UMC, Richmond

This event, with the theme “Leading Your Congregation to New Life,” will be a time for the mid-size church lead pastors (average worship attendance between 150-349) in the Virginia Conference to gather for networking and learning. The Rev. Jim Harnish, a United Methodist minister from Florida and author of “You Only Have to Die,” will be the speaker. The cost is \$25, which includes lunch. For more information contact Pat Hickman at PatHickman@vaumc.org.

‘Lord, Teach Me to Pray’

Oct. 25, St. Thomas UMC, Manassas

“Lord, Teach Me to Pray – Practical Applications for Prayer” will be offered again in October. The main speaker will be Dr. Wendy Miller, professor emeritus of Spiritual Formation at Eastern Mennonite Seminary and adjunct faculty at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill., and Perkins School of Theology in Dallas. Visit the conference website at www.vaumc.org under “Events” and the date.

Large Church Lead Pastor gathering

Oct. 28, Roslyn Retreat Center, Richmond

This annual event offers clergy a time of networking and learning for the large church lead pastors in the conference. Registration for this event will be open to pastors only if

your average weekly worship attendance for 2013, as recorded by the Cabinet, is more than 350. The Rev. Dr. Lovett Weems, director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary, will lead the event. The cost is \$25, which includes lunch. Questions may be directed to Pat Hickman at PatHickman@vaumc.org.

Virginia Chapter PAUMCS event

Oct. 29, Virginia United Methodist Center, Glen Allen

Experience your conference connection as speakers from the conference Board of Communications address the need to communicate in a technology-infused world, including social media, website design, web hosting and blogging. For more information, contact Bev Myers, the Professional Association of United Methodist Church Secretaries (PAUMCS) Virginia Chapter president, at BevMyers@vaumc.org or call **1-800-768-6040, ext. 134** or **(804) 521-1134**. You can register on the conference website at www.vaumc.org under “Events” and the date.

NOVEMBER

Middle School Retreat

Nov. 14-16, Eagle Eyrie, Lynchburg

For more information, contact Becky Tate in the Office of Ministries with Young People, at BeckyTate@vaumc.org, or call **1-800-768-6040, ext. 139** or **(804) 521-1139**.

New Church Leadership Institute

Nov. 17-19, United Methodist Center, Glen Allen

The New Church Leadership Institute is for pastors both discerning a call to be a church planter and/or seeking ways to offer revitalization for existing congregations. It can help the participant discern their ministry style by offering clarity in ministry competencies, core behaviors and spiritual gifts. For more information contact the Rev. Mark Ogren at MarkOgren@vaumc.org or call **1-800-768-6040, ext. 156**.

DECEMBER

High School Retreat

Dec. 5-7, Eagle Eyrie, Lynchburg

For more information, contact Becky Tate in the Office of Ministries with Young People, at BeckyTate@vaumc.org, or call **1-800-768-6040, ext. 139** or **(804) 521-1139**.

DISCIPLES HELPING TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD



▲ Over the past four years, the **Keezletown** and **McGaheysville UMCs** have teamed up to package 80,000 meals for Stop Hunger Now. Tanya Eppard, a member at Keezletown, has coordinated the project.

recognizing the service each gives to the church and, most importantly, to God. Each honoree received gifts and a certificate. The Man of the Year was James Jordan, the treasurer for the charge and church, a member of the choir and always willing to serve in whatever capacity is needed. Brenda Goad was recognized as Woman of the Year (pictured); she is Missionary Treasurer, choir member, a mainstay in the kitchen, cleans the church and sets up Holy Communion. The Rev. Kelvin Edwards Sr. is the church pastor.



cost for items in the snack pack is \$6,000 per school year. Items are then packed in a 1-gallon Ziploc bag and delivered to school, where they are discreetly placed in the student's backpack by their teacher. Pictured, Robins and Ruby Ingram. ▲



▲ Members and guests formed a prayer circle around **Thrasher UMC** in Roanoke on Sept. 7. They started praying while facing the church, then turned outward and prayed for their community and the world.



▲ **Halesford UMC** recently held its Men's and Women's Sunday celebration. Halesford UMC selects a Man of the Year and a Woman of the Year,

The "snack pack" program at **Salem UMC** in Diggs was recently blessed during worship service by the Rev. Brian Johnson. Mary Jo Robins is the oldest member of Salem UMC at 95, but you would never know it by how much she contributes to the church and the United Methodist Women. In 2010, Robins brought up the idea to begin a program for underprivileged children in Mathews County Public Schools. The program began by providing 20-22 children over the weekend with nutritious snack packs. Currently the program provides 40-50 elementary students with snack packs every Friday during the school year. This program is supported by donations from the congregation, the local community and grants. The average



▲ **Mount Pleasant UMC** in Roanoke marked the end of a summer-long children's Bible school with a Celebration Sunday. Wonderful Wednesdays began in 2013 with three children. This summer, 72 children participated! Boys competed against the girls to raise money for missions in Africa. Pastor Robert Stutes completed three challenges after worship on Aug. 24 –



getting a “Mohawk” haircut, getting dunked in ice water, and then being slimed! The director of children and youth ministries is Heather St. Clair.

▲ **Main Street Church, South Boston, Farmville District**, recently hosted Eagle Scouts Cycling Across America. Thirteen Eagle Scouts from Troop 165 in Fredericksburg were on day 59 of a 4,000-mile journey across America to raise awareness of the value of exercise and healthy living. They started in California and ended their journey in Virginia Beach. Pictured, the riders pose with Pastor Ed Rigg (center).



▲ Every summer for the last 12 years, youths from several churches gathered each Wednesday night for “Jesus and Java,” with refreshments, Bible study, worship and service. This

year, the group raised money for the Imagine No Malaria campaign during an eight-week study of Romans. Attendees came from **Calvary UMC, Beverly Hills UMC, Galloway UMC, Sudley UMC, Graham Road UMC, Friendship UMC** (the host church), **St. John’s UMC** and **Bruen Chapel UMC**. On the last night, attendees dressed up as insects and celebrated raising \$400 for Imagine No Malaria!

After visiting Costa Rica in 2013 and learning about Seeds of Hope, a Christian shelter for girls ages 8-17 who have been sexually exploited, Sandra Haynie, a member of **Cheriton UMC**, started a mission project to raise funds for the facility. She, along with church members Stephanie LeMond, Bonnie Lewis and Nancy Parks (calling themselves “The Chalky Chicks”) repainted more than 30 pieces of furniture and raised more than \$1,900 at the annual Spring Fling



fundraiser. Together with the Easter Lenten offering collection of \$355, a check for \$2,280 was sent to Seeds of Hope, the first shelter of this kind in Costa Rica. More information about Seeds of Hope can be found on the website www.seedsofhome.com. Pictured, from left: Parks, LeMond, Haynie and Lewis.

On Friday, Oct. 24, **Sudley United Methodist Women** will hold their Annual Turkey/Oyster Dinner and Bazaar. This year will be the 91st consecutive year that the event has been held. The bazaar will be open from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Sudley UMC is located at 5308 Sudley Road, Manassas.

The 62nd Annual Harvest Day, with the theme “Touch a Child’s Life, Change a Future,” will be held Nov. 11 at **Trinity UMC in Richmond**. For more information, contact Dee Clements at (804) 270-4404 or dee.clements@verizon.net. Trinity UMC is located at 903 Forest Ave., Richmond.

▼ The food pantry at **Heritage UMC, Elizabeth River District**, is working to serve the needs of the community. With a dedicated team of more than 50 volunteers, families are served each second Saturday of the month, plus a countless number of others who come during the week. With the support of church members, family, friends, other local churches and the Elizabeth River District, the church has fed the hungry of Virginia Beach for more than eight years.

Beating Malaria, one



Photos by Mike DuBose for United Methodist Communications

household at a time



By Carrie Madren


For Bilyatu Luther, a widow who cares for her four children and two extended family members, malaria has been a constant menace. Luther, who lives in Nigeria and works as a cleaner earning less than the national minimum wage, has felt the financial burden as well as the emotional strain of malaria – sometimes taking each child and dependent to the clinic as many as three or four times in the rainy season.

Last year, Luther and her family received three insecticide-treated bed nets from the Rural Health Center in Zing, and now make noticeably fewer visits to the health clinic for malaria treatments.

“I want to extend my sincere gratitude to the donors for providing these humanitarian services at virtually no cost,” says Luther, whose family is among the many who have received mosquito nets and training through Imagine No Malaria.

Since 2008, the Imagine No Malaria program, implemented by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), has worked to fight malaria and prevent malarial deaths. Their efforts have organized and trained some 11,600 local people in villages and communities. These people reach and teach neighbors about this fatal – and fully preventable – disease through educating, distributing nets, providing health care and other means.

(Continued on next page)



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The stakes are high: Hundreds of thousands of adults and children die from malaria each year. Ninety percent of malaria-related deaths occur on the African continent. Children younger than age 5 and pregnant women are the most susceptible. However, through teaching families about the causes of malaria and supplying them with free bed nets, United Methodists are turning the tide and saving lives.

Because malaria continues to kill at a high rate in Africa, programs have been at work in Sierra Leone, Angola, Zimbabwe and Democratic Republic of Congo ... and beyond.

Neighbor to neighbor

When Imagine No Malaria's staff begins work with a community, local leaders help identify potential trained supervisors, who, in turn, recruit community volunteers to go door to door. It is neighbors talking to neighbors, explains Nyamah Dunbar, UMCOR senior program manager for Imagine No Malaria.

"The local volunteers are invested in the program. ... These are people who will see [the families] more frequently and be able to reinforce that message long after the [UMCOR] programmers have left," she continues. Community health volunteers receive training in how to do household registration, conduct surveys, teach the causes of malaria, prevent mosquito breeding by eliminating standing water, correctly use and maintain the insecticide-treated mosquito nets and prevent infection in other ways. After bed-net distributions, volunteers and community leaders follow up with families.

At the same time, UMCOR works with the hundreds of churches, schools, hospitals and clinics operated by The United Methodist Church in Africa to make sure they have needed malaria diagnostic tests and affordable medicines.

All of these components are part of Imagine No Malaria and UMCOR's comprehensive integrated approach to malaria prevention, which includes net distribution, volunteer training and investment in infrastructure. Key is the training of annual conference health boards, which spearhead all anti-malaria activities in the conference. Currently, 13 UMCOR-trained annual conference health boards span 16 African countries. This comprehensive, integrated approach makes it possible to achieve and sustain gains in the fight against malaria.



Dispelling myths

While those living near urban areas often already understand how malaria starts and spreads, those in rural areas tend to know less about the disease and its connection to mosquitoes. "They have some basic knowledge and can tell you when the trends are, but they don't know that it's the female Anopheles mosquito looking for blood to feed her eggs," Dunbar says. Malaria has been around for so long, she continues, that many people simply view it as part of the rainy season.

"There are a lot of myths out there [about malaria]," says Jennifer Schumacher-Kocik, malaria grants officer for UMCOR. Some people believe eating certain fruit causes malaria or evil spirits bring on sickness.

Volunteers learn how to build on people's knowledge, separating fact from fiction. Then they teach families how to prevent malaria and use the bed nets properly. Imagine No Malaria and UMCOR have distributed some 1.2 million insecticide-treated nets across Africa. The World Health Organization calculates a total 136 million nets distributed overall in 2013.

Communities also reinforce malaria prevention and treatment knowledge through skits, plays and music – "anything that we can do to get them engaged in how they can retain the messaging around malaria," says Dunbar.

Today, efforts by Imagine No Malaria and others have halved malaria's impact from just a few years ago. The efforts of UMCOR staff and health volunteers – with the support of individuals and churches around the world – continue to reach people like Luther across Africa. 🍌

-Carrie Madren is a freelance writer based in Great Falls. This article first appeared in Interpreter magazine's March/April 2014 edition.

Our Faith In Action.

Answering a call to battle malaria

By Maria Maxwell

I am humbled by the opportunity to serve as the Imagine No Malaria field coordinator for the Virginia Conference. As I share my story with you, it is my hope that your heart will be stirred to consider how you can be in service to Christ through Imagine No Malaria.

When I first heard about the opportunity to serve with the initiative, I had butterflies in my stomach. I was so excited. It was like Christmas morning, and I was 8 years old again! I had a strong urge to truly consider what this might look like in the scheme of my family and my current job as a preschool teacher. After much prayer and discussion with my husband and kids, we decided that I should apply for the job. When I shared with my kids that the Rev. Glenn Rowley had called and offered the position to me, they both said it was the happiest they had ever seen me!

The bottom line is that I love kids and would do anything for them to succeed. I am passionate about children learning about Jesus and his love for them. I want them to have opportunities beyond what some of their circumstances may dictate.

In June, it began to be a reality for me that the position to serve as a field coordinator for Imagine No Malaria would be my opportunity to effect change for children not just here in my immediate influence but also for children an ocean away. God had stirred my heart for a cause much greater than I could have ever imagined.

Following a call requires some measure of faith. Hebrews 11:1, says faith is being sure of what we hope for. It is being certain of what we do not see. Sometimes we have those moments where we question our ability, or how we felt God leading us, or if somehow we misinterpreted the call. I began to have those feelings of self-doubt and anxiety while training in Nashville with the INM team. I was challenged by the sheer volume of money that would need to be raised to accomplish this task of saving so many lives. I was burdened by the fact that unless I was successful in helping spread the word, thousands of children would never see their next birthday. My faith was deeply lacking. I had to dig deep into my faith and rely on praying friends and a



faithful husband to see me through that doubt.

Sometimes we lack faith to see how God could do the impossible through each one of us. We understand our limitations all too well. But God is so faithful even when we are wavering! He supplies all our needs and reminds us that our faith isn't in what we have to offer, it is in Christ and what God can offer. He showed me it is not what I can do, but what Christ can do through me.

And that friends is why we can have hope!

Imagine No Malaria is an organization of HOPE. It is an effort that I am so thankful to be a part of and invite you to share in that HOPE with me. We have an opportunity to put our faith into action and join others of our faith in an extraordinary effort to end preventable deaths caused by malaria in Africa. For some children, help arrived too late,

We can help children see their next birthday and prove to the world that "where you live should not dictate whether you live or die." (Bono)

but that does not have to be the reality for other children. We are invited to be a part of ending a disease that claims the life of a child every 60 seconds and offering hope to literally thousands of children and their parents.

This year the Virginia Conference is set to save 100,000+ lives. Our challenge is to live into the "+". (How fitting that Bishop Cho was our "+"!) Let's do our part in the Imagine No Malaria Initiative and help the church reach its goal. We are 85 percent there! We can make a difference in our global future. We can help children see their next birthday and prove to the world that where you live should not dictate whether you live or die

I can't wait to see what God does through our conference. I have been inspired by what churches are doing already. From a pastor sitting on the top of her church, to children's lemonade stands, to youth sleep outs, to community festivals... churches and individuals are stepping out in faith to answer a call to save lives. A call that will bring hope to thousands! ☞

-Maria Maxwell is the conference's Imagine No Malaria field coordinator. Her husband, Mike, is the pastor of New Life UMC in Midlothian.



Imagining and connecting

By Glenn Rowley

It's not hard for me to imagine malaria because I've had it!

On two occasions I have endured the debilitating fever and head and body aches brought on by contact with a mosquito carrying malaria. It is not pleasant and it took me at least three weeks to resume my daily activity without fatigue and headaches. But, because I had access to treatment within hours of diagnosis, my life was never in danger.

For many of our friends during our years of mission service in Africa, malaria was a routine part of their lives



during the rainy season, and their greatest fear was that their children would contract the disease. Because of their small bodies, malaria could become life-threatening within hours if undiagnosed or if they did not have the treatment readily available.

It is harder to imagine NO malaria because it is such a pernicious and adaptive disease. There have been many treatments developed over the years and, as those medications were utilized more and more, the mosquitos have adapted and become resistant to the treatment. But, the global health community continues to fight to find new ways of not just developing anti-malarial drugs but also addressing the root cause of the spread of malaria which is poverty.


When you do not understand the cause of the disease (the bite of an anopheles mosquito), your community does not have resources to reduce the breeding grounds of the mosquitos (standing water); you don't have money to purchase screens for your house or bed nets as barriers to the mosquitos; or you have not received health education to recognize the early symptoms of malaria, especially in children before it is too late for traditional treatment. Any or all of these reasons and others exist in malaria regions where people want to protect their children and themselves from this disease, but their poverty prevents them from knowing or having what will keep malaria from taking life.

Imagine No Malaria is more than a compassionate initiative of our annual conference this year. It is a way for us to connect with our sisters and brothers in sub-Saharan Africa in a tangible way that saves lives – more than 100,000 to be exact. Already, children, youths, young adults, campus ministries, Sunday school classes, and a myriad other faith communities are planning, mobilizing and living into the challenge of Every Life Save A Life!

But don't imagine no malaria if you feel it is one more plea for money. Don't imagine no malaria if it is only because the Bishop or your district superintendent or your pastor want you to do it.

Accept the challenge of Imagine No Malaria because five children died while you were reading this article.

Paul shares in 2nd Corinthians 4:16: "So we're not giving up. How could we! Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without his unfolding grace" [The Message].

Let's imagine no malaria, saving lives, and personally as an expression of our discipleship participate in God's unfolding grace! 

-The Rev. Glenn Rowley is the conference director of Justice and Missional Excellence.



Faith on the Roof: Virginia pastor finds unique way to raise funds for Imagine No Malaria

By Neill Caldwell



BROSVILLE, Va. - Through storms and wet and dark of night, the Rev. Faith Weedling kept her promise to spend one hour on the church roof for every \$100 her church raised for Imagine No Malaria. She expected to be there "a few" hours.

Only "a few" became 38, thanks to the generosity of her church folks at Brosville UMC and those at the two-point charge that her husband, the Rev. Steve Weedling, pastors. The churches raised \$3,825 for Imagine No Malaria, The United Methodist Church's effort to eliminate the disease that kills a person every minute around the world.

And the "roof" became a sturdy railed platform reached by a long staircase/ladder, with a backyard recliner, tent and all the supplies she needed. Still, when the lightning started crackling on Saturday evening, Weedling considered the better part of valor and came inside for a time, joining the big church-wide supper that had also moved inside to the church fellowship hall because of the weather.

Weedling had to start her stunt at 8:30 p.m. on Friday in order to be able to finish at noon on Sunday, or the close of the weekly worship service, which she conducted from her rooftop perch.

By the time Sunday morning worship was held it was bright and sunny, and a crowd filled the chairs set out across the lawn and parking lot. Weedling preached her weekly sermon from her rooftop perch, and Danville District Superintendent the Rev. Janine Howard led the Great Thanksgiving over Holy Communion.

"One man was able to attend for the first time in quite a while because (worship) was outdoors," said Howard. "His wife brought him and they parked the car close enough to the action to allow participation in everything. We took him com-

munion 'curbside.'"

"Faith was a trooper, though, until the end," said Maria Maxwell, Virginia Conference field coordinator for Imagine No Malaria. "She offered her Sunday message from the rooftop and I believe inspired a community in the process. Faith is a blessing beyond measure! God's calling on her to support Imagine No Malaria not only encouraged her faith, but the faith of those she serves and ministers to on a daily basis. Thank you seems so small for the effort and excitement they all poured into this awesome cause for the sake of many in Sub-Saharan Africa."

"Brosville UMC and Faith's husband's churches, Wesley Chapel and Rock Springs, could not have been more welcoming to the conference staff and families that attended the dinner held Saturday night in honor of the event," Maxwell added.

The truck and traffic sounds from nearby Highway 58 kept Weedling awake during the nights, but she continued to post on Facebook: "Sounds from the Brosville UMC roof: 2:30 a.m. - hoot owl; 3:30 a.m. - dogs barking; 4:30 a.m. - rooster crowing." ... "What do you do at 3:15 when you're on a roof and wide awake? - pray, of course! ... Prayed for many drivers who went up and down 58 during the night. Tonight I may rethink the ear plug suggestion."

The whole thing was a big event for this small Pittsylvania County community located between Martinsville and Danville, just above the Virginia-North Carolina state line.

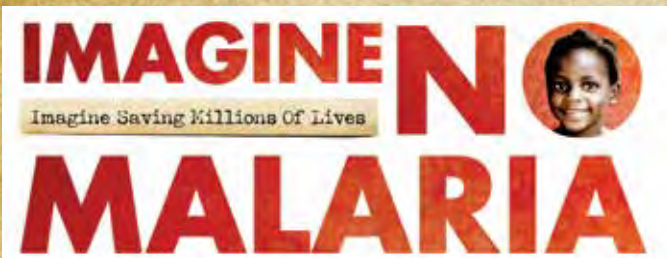
"These three churches have really rallied around her," said Pastor Steve Weedling. "It's lit a fire under them."

"There's also been a lot of publicity around the community," added Faith Weedling. "We've had people who only occasionally visited our church who have been really involved in this. In fact they've said 'I don't do church, but would be glad to be involved in stuff like this.'"

"The focus has changed from 'we can't do that' to 'let's do

(Continued on page 33: "Faith")





Malaria is a parasite that is transmitted to humans through the bite of the female anopheles mosquito, which feeds at night. The parasite enters the bloodstream, multiplies in the liver and returns to the bloodstream, attacking red blood cells. Early symptoms of malaria are fever, chills, headache and nausea. Left untreated, malaria causes convulsion, coma, organ failure and death.



Imagine No Malaria is an effort of the people of The United Methodist Church to raise \$75 million to eliminate death and suffering from malaria in Africa by 2015. This is a comprehensive approach to beating malaria through prevention, education, communication and treatment.

We will engage the passion of 11.5 million United Methodists worldwide to empower an entire continent to achieve a sustainable victory over malaria.

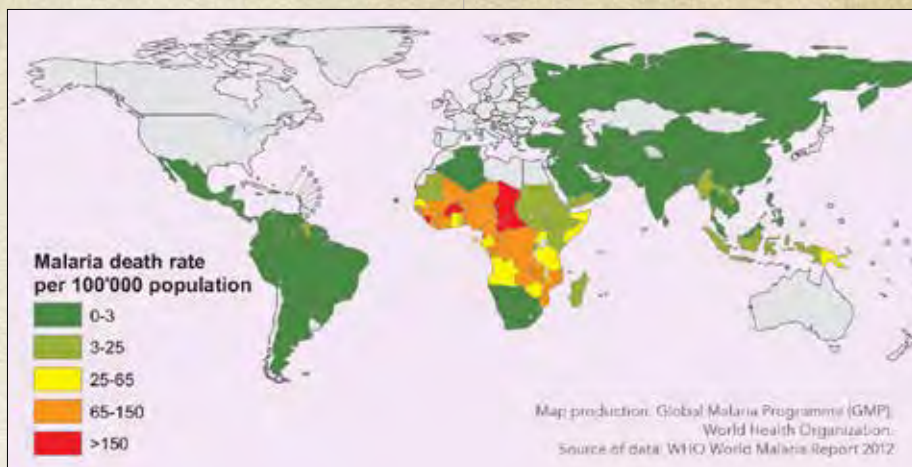
We are making a difference. Today a child dies every 60 seconds from malaria; just a short time ago, it was every 30 seconds. The clock is slowing down. The number of deaths per year has dropped from 1 million to less than 600,000.



Malaria is a disease of poverty. It severely affects those who cannot afford treatment or have limited access to health care, leading to a detrimental effect on attendance at workplaces and schools.



Social holiness has always been a hallmark of who we are as United Methodists. John Wesley encouraged his followers to live like Jesus - to reach out to those on the fringes of society, heal them and send them back into their community for a greater good.



While malaria has largely been eradicated in the U.S., between 350 million and 500 million people are still infected each year, mostly in Africa.



Malaria is both preventable and treatable. There is currently a plan to eliminate malaria in our lifetime.

Insecticide-treated mosquito nets are a simple, cost-effective way to prevent malaria, but nets are only part of the solution. To overcome malaria, we must continue to support the most effective prevention methods, while also improving education about the disease, establishing community-based malaria-control programs, conducting communications outreach through radio, and revitalizing hospitals and clinics to improve treatment across the African continent. Our efforts are more effective and sustainable when we work collaboratively with the international community. Imagine No Malaria is working closely with our partners to leverage and maximize available resources toward a sustainable solution.



The Virginia Conference wants to save 100,000+ lives in the next year. Everyone can help. Every Life Can Save a Life.

Global health is a major focus for The United Methodist Church, which has more than 11.5 million members internationally and is in mission in more than 125 countries. For more than 160 years the denomination has been a key player in the fight against malaria, operating hospitals, clinics and mission centers across Africa.

Social holiness has always been a hallmark of who we are as United Methodists. John Wesley encouraged his followers to live like Jesus – to reach out to those on the fringes of society, heal them and send them back into their community for a greater good. 🌟

Make checks payable to:

"Virginia Conference"

and put "Imagine No Malaria" in the memo line.

Because of a generous grant that covers all administrative costs, 100% of all donations go to the work of Imagine No Malaria.

Send to:

VAUMC

P.O. Box 5605

Glen Allen, VA 23058

Reference our website and Facebook page:

www.vaumc.org/imaginenomalaria

www.facebook.com/EveryLifeSaveALife

Contact:

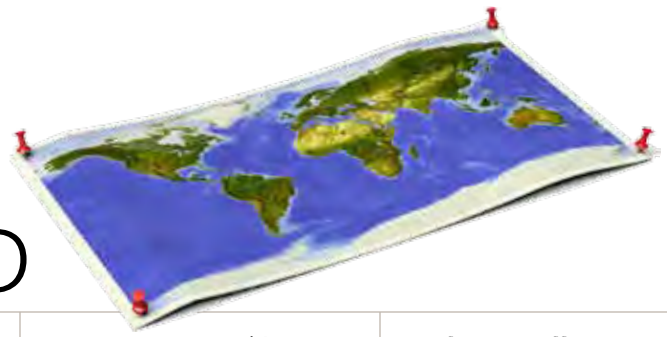
Maria Maxwell

Virginia Conference Field Coordinator

804-521-1160

MariaMaxwell@vaumc.org

Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD



Average age of United Methodist pastors climbs to 56



The Rev. Lovett Weems Jr.,
Lewis Center director.

By Sam Hodges

The graying of The United Methodist Church's clergy ranks continues, with the median age of active elders reaching an all-time high of 56, the Lewis Center for Church Leadership found in its annual study of clergy age trends.

The just-released report also shows that active elders between ages 55 and 72 constitute a record high 55 percent of the active elders pool, while the share of active middle-aged elders (ages 35 to 54) continues to drop.

The percentage of young clergy is up, albeit modestly. Certain conferences and jurisdictions have seen good gains in that area, said the Rev. Lovett Weems Jr., Lewis Center director.

The 2014 study confirms that The United Methodist Church is increasingly dependent on licensed local pastors.

"It's a changing land-

scape," Weems said.

The Lewis Center has long tracked United Methodist clergy age trends, using United Methodist Board of Pension and Health Benefits statistics, and including both ordained elders and deacons and those on the elder or deacon track.

A 2006 Lewis Center reported noted that from 1985 to 2005 the percentage of elders under age 35 dropped from about 15 to under 5 percent.

Weems said the factors for such a dramatic drop were several, including the length and cost of seminary education, the length of the ordination process, and the decline of church-going overall, which has caused fewer young people to grow up considering a Christian vocation.

But he said the denomination understands that its future is tied to its ability to cultivate young leaders and has been on the case, as evidenced by the Young Clergy Initiative and various


conference efforts.

"The United Methodist Church is more aware and is addressing (the young clergy shortage) in ways that I don't see happening in other mainline churches, although every mainline church has the same patterns," Weems said.

The new study notes that the number of young United Methodist elders reached a historic low in 2005 and has climbed by nearly 100, or about 12 percent, since then. The overall numbers dipped slightly this year, but the percentage actually increased, due to an overall smaller pool of elders. The pool of deacons is much smaller still, but the percentage of under-35 deacons remained at 9 percent.

Women make up 39 percent of young clergy, and over three-quarters of young deacons are female, the study found. 🍀

-Sam Hodges is a reporter for United Methodist News Service.

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Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD

UMCOR responds with thoughtful urgency to Ebola outbreak

The United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries is continuing to be present and respond to the needs in West Africa as health officials try to contain the Ebola outbreak that has infected more than 3,065 people.

The Rev. Denise Honeycutt, who leads the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), has been in regular contact with Bishop John Yambasu of Sierra Leone and Bishop John Innis of Liberia.

"We want them to know that UMCOR is with them and responding with urgency to whatever the needs are, to get them through this crisis," she said.

UMCOR has sent \$383,000 in grants to Sierra Leone and Liberia. Funds are supporting tents and construction of isolation units, personal protective equipment, training for health staff, public messaging about Ebola, and safe handling of deceased bodies.

Grants also are providing much-needed health-care supplies. Whenever possible, funds are being sent to United Methodist health boards to purchase supplies locally. UMCOR executive, Francesco Paganini, says this is the most efficient way to get the United Methodist health boards exactly what is needed as soon as possible.

When medical supplies are not readily available, UMCOR is working with trusted suppliers to provide an inventory list to the health boards. The health boards indicate what they need and how much they need. Because it can take months to ship by sea, UMCOR is shipping by air, though Paganini says the space is increasingly limited and expensive as the Ebola outbreak continues. "We want to make every shipment count and are very intentional about sending high-quality, needed supplies in the correct quantities," he said.

Bishops Innis and Yambasu are also trying to streamline the process of requesting supplies through UMCOR. In a letter signed by them and Honeycutt, they asked donors to please donate through the International Disaster Response Advance instead of shipping supplies directly. They wrote, "This approach helps ensure the appropriateness, timeliness and quality of materials and avoids inclusion in shipments of used, damaged, out-of-date or otherwise inappropriate items." This is consistent with UMCOR's standards and helps relieve pressure in seaports and airports.


Kip and Nancy Robinson, Virginia missionaries who serve in Sierra Leone, want people to know that, "Sierra Leone is

more than just Ebola." The Advance projects there and in Liberia need continued support so that when the crisis passes, the schools, ministries and other health programs will have the funding to resume.

The Ebola crisis is especially heart-wrenching for United Methodists because of the long-standing presence of The United Methodist Church in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Churches in the United States have strong partnerships with churches in West Africa. The missionaries are deeply thankful to their partners throughout the United Methodist connection who continue to offer prayers and support to UMCOR's response to the Ebola crisis. United Methodist churches that want to respond to the Ebola crisis in West Africa are encouraged to:

- ❖ Pray for the people who live under the fear of this disease, the families of those who have

died, and the health professionals who are caring for people who have Ebola.

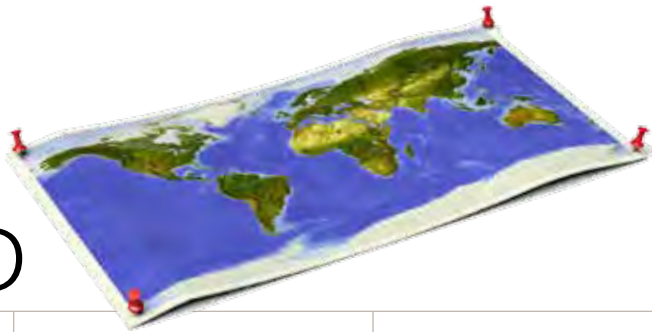
- ❖ Give to UMCOR International Disaster Response, Advance #982450, so that UMCOR can continue to partner with United Methodist health boards and other organizations working to respond to this and other disasters.
- ❖ Raise awareness about Ebola and about the importance, generally, of good healthcare systems and hygiene practices. 

-United Methodist Committee on Relief

Ebola-Liberian nurse is being sprayed with disinfectant after preparing several bodies of victims of Ebola for burial on August 1, 2014.
(Ahmed Jallanzo EPA)



Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD



Groups ask bishops to speak out

By Heather Hahn

Two United Methodist groups – coming from different theological perspectives – are urging the Council of Bishops to take the lead and speak out on issues facing the church and wider world.

Those issues include the police shooting in Ferguson, the root causes of immigration, violence in Gaza and church divisions on human sexuality.

The Western Methodist Justice Movement and Good News each released a statement in September encouraging bishops' action. Both are advocacy groups that are not official United Methodist bodies.

What the different statements show, say leaders of both groups, is the value United Methodists place in the guidance bishops can provide.

A Border Patrol agent stands on a ranch fence line with children taken into custody in South Texas brush country north of Laredo, Texas.
www.voanews.com



"In a very practical way, the bishops are the most visible manifestation of The United Methodist Church in the years between our quadrennial General Conferences," said the Rev. Frank Wulf, the convener of the progressive Western Methodist Justice Movement and its coordinating team.

"This is one reason why major social movements find it so important for bishops to be present when they are making statements of concern to the nation or the world," Wulf said.

The Rev. Rob Renfro, president of the conservative Good News group, echoed that statement.

"Regardless of one's theological perspective, most United Methodists want our bishops to lead through their actions and their teaching," he said. "Their voice should instruct and inspire us to be God's faithful instruments of grace and truth in the world."

In an open letter to the Council of Bishops released on Sept. 5, the Western Methodist Justice Movement asks the council to address three crises.

- ❖ The shooting of Michael Brown by police in Ferguson, Mo., and what the letter called the movement to say "No more!" to the criminalization of U.S. minority communities and to the militarization of U.S. police forces
- ❖ The recent surge of

children from Central America crossing into the United States, which the letter says "has started to open our eyes to the violence, poverty and injustice that lead to the creation of unhealthy and unsustainable patterns of global migration"

- ❖ The violence in Gaza and the deaths of thousands of Palestinian civilians

The Council of Bishops will next meet Nov. 1-7 in Oklahoma City, but the Western Methodist Justice Movement is asking the body to speak out before then.

"The people for whom you have been elected to provide temporal and spiritual oversight need to hear from you," the letter said. "They need to know that their bishops are engaged with the critical issues of justice and injustice, violence and peace, wealth and poverty that are roiling the U.S. and the world."

Good News describes itself as a conservative-evangelical movement that has been working for renewal and reform in The United Methodist Church for nearly 50 years.

In an e-mail titled "UMC Bishops Must Hear from Laity and Pastors," Good News on Sept. 3 urged people on its mailing list to advocate for the Methodist Crossroads statement. So far, at least 3,300 United Methodists have endorsed the statement, which says

Religious news from around the NATION & WORLD

bishops must enforce and publicly support church law restrictions against same-sex marriage if the denomination is to hold together.

"Regarding the issue of human sexuality, I would love to see our bishops explain, defend and promote our United Methodist position that sex is to be reserved for heterosexual marriage," Renfroe said.

The Book of Discipline tasks bishops to be leaders, teachers, exemplars and prophetic voices, among other roles. The United Methodist Church's constitution, part of the *Discipline*, requires that the Council of Bishops plans "for the general oversight and promotion of the temporal and spiritual interests of the entire Church."

Bishop Warner Brown Jr., of the California-Nevada Conference, is the current president of the Council of Bishops. He responded by saying that the council has never functioned in a manner that allows members to respond weekly to the many situations that arise around the globe.

"The council serves as a worldwide church representing 12 million United Methodists on four continents," Brown said. "We are committed to our role of being prophetic voices for justice in a suffering and conflicted world, proclaiming the gospel, and alleviating human suffering." ❧

-Heather Hahn is a reporter for United Methodist News Service.

Judicial Council plans hearing for Schaefer appeal

By Linda Bloom

The United Methodist Church's top court will hear an appeal this month of a decision to reinstate a pastor who had lost his ministerial credentials after performing a same-sex marriage ceremony for his son.

The appeal involving the Rev. Frank Schaefer, which provoked national media attention, is one of 21 docket items under consideration when the United Methodist Judicial Council meets Oct. 22-25 at the Marriott Courtyard Downtown in Memphis, Tenn.

After a hearing in June, the denomination's Northeastern Jurisdictional Committee on Appeals restored Schaefer's credentials and ordered the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference to compensate Schaefer for all lost salary and benefits dating from Dec. 19, 2013.

The Rev. Christopher Fisher, who served as counsel for the church, has appealed that decision to the Judicial Council. The appeal contends the decision was at odds with the 2012 *Book of Discipline* and previous Judicial Council rulings.

At Fisher's request, the Judicial Council has granted an oral hearing on the matter on Wednesday, Oct. 22.

Several changes have occurred recently in Judicial Council membership. Council vice president Angela Brown, who was elected and served as a layperson but was commissioned as clergy at the 2014 California-Nevada Annual Conference, has resigned. She is succeeded by Sandy Lutz of Canton, Ohio, the first lay alternate.

Kurt Glassco, another lay alternate, has been appointed as a local pastor in the Oklahoma Annual Conference, thus changing his category to clergy and removing him from Council. Randall Miller of Oakland, California, is the new first lay alternate.

Two clergy alternate positions also have changed. The Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe resigned after becoming the top executive of the United Methodist Board of Church and Society and the Rev. Jane Tews is now deceased. ❧

-Linda Bloom is a United Methodist News Service reporter.

The Rev. Frank Schaefer (right) discusses his beliefs about the need for inclusiveness in the United Methodist Church at his home in Lebanon, Pa. He is flanked by his wife Brigitte (left) and their daughter Debbie. A UMNS photo by Mike DuBose.



EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY



Reaching the Millennial Generation

By Asa J. Lee

Churches must become more innovative and diverse on a variety of fronts, but less doctrinaire and institutionally rigid, if they want to reach Millennials. This is one conclusion of recently released research from the Pew Research Center that surveyed the Millennial Generation in adulthood. Pew's new report, "Millennials in Adulthood: Detached from Institutions, Networked with Friends," reveals some significant changes in generational assumptions about culture, politics and religion among adults born after 1980. The study is one of the first to identify how this generational cohort will impact our society and our economy as they enter adulthood.

Millennials are, according to the research, "unattached to organized politics and religion, linked by social media, burdened by debt, distrustful of people, in no rush to marry,

and optimistic about the future." They are the most diverse and optimistic generation of any currently alive in the United States, but also the most distrustful of institutional structures in our society.

Politically and religiously disaffiliated

Millennials have the highest levels of political and religious disaffiliation of any generation Pew has studied. Half describe themselves as political independents, although they tend to have liberal views, and about three-in-ten say they are not affiliated with any religion. Not only are they less likely to be religiously affiliated; they are also less likely to say they believe in God. A solid majority still do – 86 percent. But only 58 percent say they are "absolutely certain" that God exists, a lower share than among older adults

Diverse

Millennials are the most racially diverse generation in American history. Unlike previous generations, they are not congregating in racially or politically segregated groups. They have moved away from the traditional ways of categorizing people, ideas and beliefs – categories such as race, ethnicity, political parties and religious affiliation.

Skeptical about institutions

This research suggests that traditional systems of power that are often

part of the institutional life of many churches are major turnoffs for this age group. Millennials are overwhelmingly resistant to institutional maintenance and seek active, relevant ministry in the world for Jesus Christ. They are looking for churches that offer dynamic ministries that are transparent in their sense of purpose.

Digitally connected

Millennials are "digital natives" at the leading edge of the digital revolution. The internet, mobile technology and social media define their social affinity groups and shape their self-identities. Arguably these digital connects have supplanted the institutional connections that defined earlier generations. This generation expects the church not only to have a robust digital presence, but also to embrace the relational potential of electronic communication.

Millennials are now at the forefront of the changes driving our society. To be relevant to this age group, churches must envision a new way of operating and engaging – drastically reordering some priorities and focusing intentionally on issues of diversity, institutionalism and innovation. Congregational leaders and practitioners should be ready to adapt to "serve this present age." 📶

-Asa J. Lee is assistant director for programs for the Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary.





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Your church can make a big difference in the life of a college student. Here are some fun and easy ways to welcome college students who visit your congregation. They'll appreciate your efforts and your church will be enriched by their participation.

Make a point to meet and speak to college students when they come to church. Feeling welcomed is the No. 1 concern of students who attend a new church.

Invite students to sit with you during worship so they don't sit alone.

Treat a student to lunch after worship. Whether it be at home or a local restaurant, students will appreciate an invitation to talk and eat a meal that was not prepared at the dining hall.

Bring extra food for after-church potlucks and invite the students to stay for lunch. Most students do not have kitchen facilities

to prepare a potluck dish, but they want to participate in church activities.

Make a personal phone call to a student who attends your church on Sunday morning, and answer any questions they may have about your congregation.

Take a student for coffee during the week following their visit at church.

Offer to drive students to worship.

Send birthday cards, a bookmark, or words of encouragement throughout the year. Students love mail.

Include college students on your Church Newsletter mailing list.

Offer Sunday school classes on topics of interest to young adults.

Organize a fellowship activity for college students.

Present a plant to every new student who attends worship.

Include students in worship, inviting them

to read scripture, usher, or serve as a communion steward.

Create "care packages" for students before finals week. Cookies, small toys, pens, sticky notes, stuffed animals, and even a Slinky would be great gifts for stressed out students. Enclose a note wishing them well on their exams.

Adopt a student for a year, inviting them to meals and calling to be sure they are all right.

Include students in your family's holiday activities. Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter are hard times to be far away from home.

Design a flier describing your local church and post it in the Student Union on campus. Be sure to include worship times and a map to your church.

*-Laurie Day, Willamette University,
and Janet Cromwell, Wesley Foundation
Director at the University of Oregon*

LIVING THE WORD



Dan Dietze serves as the Fredericksburg District Lay leader, conference prayer advocate for the United Methodist Men, has been newly appointed as one of the Board of Laity Chaplains, and will serve as the Southeastern Jurisdictional Prayer Advocate for the United Methodist Men beginning in 2015. He is a clergy spouse, married to Rev. Gail Dietze, a licensed local pastor currently serving at Andrew Chapel in Stafford County, where Dan attends. They have five children and 10 grandchildren. Dietz was born Catholic, raised Lutheran and married Methodist! He received his Bachelor's Degree at the University of Nebraska and is a veteran who served as a Navy officer for 22 years. He retired in 1995 and began and continues to work as a support contractor for Sabre Systems for the U.S. Navy in Washington, D.C. He received a Master's Degree in Business Administration from the Naval Postgraduate School in Business Administration and a Master's Degree in Finance from Aquinas College in Michigan.

Oct. 5, 2014

Rejoice always

Habakkuk 2:1-5; 3: 17-19

Many of us have experienced times in our lives where we found it extremely difficult to rejoice in the Lord. We are to be thankful people regardless of what is happening to us or what news we have just received. How was I to be a thankful person that horrible day of 9-11? As I watched with horror as the events unfolded, my co-workers and I tried to find a way home, since we were in California. We lost five co-workers on those flights. How can I rejoice in the Lord? I remember saying as a boy and heard this said by many people back home in Nebraska, "If it weren't for bad luck, I wouldn't have any at all!" What a pessimistic view! These are people that are starting to lose hope for the future or have lost hope. Those who are strong in the Lord endure!

Habakkuk wrestles with this question of why does the Lord permit the righteous to suffer while the wicked continue to prosper? Our good works don't usually have immediate results. Even though we continue to face difficulties for our beliefs, better times will come – even though many times this will not be in our lifetimes. I have learned that the results occur in God's time and we are only the planters of seeds. We continue to plant even though the harsh sun continues to kill out the crop.

I think of the many "Hang in There" posters of the 1970s. The two I remember most are the cat hanging on to a bar with its two paws, or another one which read "If life has you up a tree, how about a hug?" It had a picture of a dog laying its head on a cat. We will experience God's joy when we patiently await God's promises/hugs!

I also remember the words of the song written by Rueben Morgan, the chorus keeps going through my head "My redeemer lives, my redeemer lives, my redeemer lives, my redeemer lives!" Let's get through the tough times and join our redeemer and live forever. Amen!

Oct. 12, 2014

God answers when we call

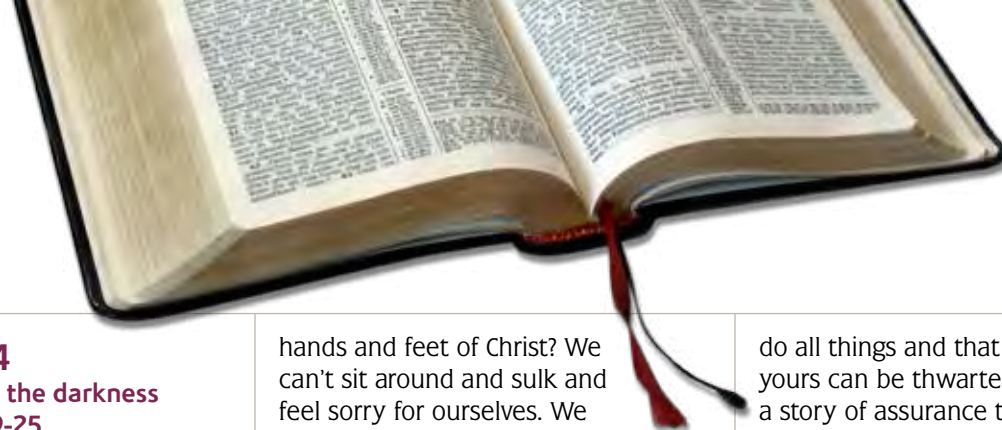
Job 19; Psalm 57

Job was humiliated and tormented 10 times, and he was insulted and disgraced. One of our sons committed a wrong to society a couple of years ago when he became hooked on drugs from the painkillers he was taking while serving in the Coast Guard. After he got out of the service it led to many bad things for him. He became terribly addicted and he did something which caused front page news in our local newspaper. One of my dearest friends decided not to call to check on me because he thought I would be too embarrassed.

Job was abandoned by everyone. When this happened, I hurt very much and I felt abandoned. Some people began to treat us differently. I can tell you from working in the court system many people treat you differently because of what one of your family has done. My wife and I did not hide it from our friends, or our church family; we told others and grew closer as a group and closer to God from doing that. These were the people who showed up in support of our son and for us as we attended all the court hearings, trials and sentencing. When things go terribly wrong you need those angels, close spiritual friends to be angels for you to keep you going through those tough times.

You also need to be strong spiritually and have a prayerful life. We had to keep some of our own family from turning against their brother. So it is with us and God. We prayed for the miracle and it didn't happen on this occasion. During these difficult times in life, we often blame God or we take it out on God, especially when the outcomes don't happen the way we expect or want.

When we call upon God through prayer, God will always listen and God will answer. You may not think God answers but that, in itself, may be the answer. But in all things, especially these bad times, keep your relationship and prayer life strong with the Lord!



Oct. 19, 2014

Hope overcomes the darkness

Job 24:1, 9-12, 19-25

I don't know about your house, but things are far from perfect in my house. Job lost everything and his friends blamed it on him. Job looks at all of these innocent victims who have been wounded, tortured or killed during his period of suffering and states in Chapter 24, verse 12: "yet God pays no attention to their prayer." Job actually complains to God in his prayer life! He accuses God of protecting the wicked. The important point to me is Job keeps his relationship (prayer life) with God going. He kept talking to God. We know God wants a relationship with us, even though our prayers are sometimes not answered quite like we want.

We can get discouraged and depressed from all the evil around us. When you are depressed during difficult times even reading the Bible is not the same. I know on a few difficult occasions for me in my life the Bible no longer jumped out in color but was dark and gloomy. You generally need the help of friends, family, Bible study and prayer to get you through dark times. Call out to God through prayer and God will rescue you. My prayer life and church life has grown stronger during these dark times. How is your prayer life (no matter what is happening in your life)? Share your story like Job with God and God's angels around you. It will strengthen you and give you hope.

When we call upon God through prayer, God will save us but maybe not in our planned way. But in all things, especially these bad times, keep your relationship and prayer life strong with the Lord.

Now do we just sit back and watch people be oppressed? Why not change the world! Let's get out there and help the oppressed and be the

hands and feet of Christ? We can't sit around and sulk and feel sorry for ourselves. We have to get involved beyond our prayer life and be the catalyst to make things happen.

Yes, our redeemer lives!

Oct. 26, 2014

Hope in God satisfies

Job 42:1-10

How is your prayer life? What kind of relationship do you have with God? Job said in verse 5: "Now my eyes see you." How do you see Christ? Do you see God through your spouse, friends, pets, pastor, birds of the air and fish of the sea, or through acts of nature?

Jobs friends proved to be no friends at all. I remember the quote from my younger days, "with friends like these, who needs enemies?" Job prayed for his friends and renewed them in God's eyes. Our friends may support us, or our friends may hurt us unknowingly or deliberately. There is no reason for us not to pray for them. Through Job's prayers and his relationship with God, Job grew closer to God and his friends were also growing in God's grace.

Job endured suffering but through prayer and grace, his life had a positive turnaround and became much better for him and his friends that he had prayed for. Now Job sees God and all the beauty around him. Do you see beauty and pray for the friends around you? The whispers of the wind upon one's face can be God speaking to us. We need to listen to the wind and the stillness of the air. Be quiet and listen. A relationship isn't about always talking. It's about giving the other person a chance to talk to you while you listen. It satisfies the soul when we have a growing relationship with God. We can never grow too close.

Job 42:2 says: "I know that you can

do all things and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted." This story is a story of assurance to me that God will act in my best interest when I serve and have a prayerful relationship with God. We need to help others find hope in God! We need to get out and tell our story to grow and make disciples!

Psalms 55:16, says "I call upon God and the Lord will save me." Let's call on God all the time, pray for others and get out and tell our story to others. Let's add to our prayer life and spend more time in prayer, so we can have that strong loving relationship with our Father. Our redeemer lives! Amen! ☞

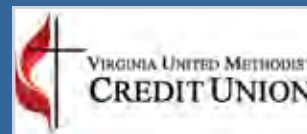
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DEATHS



John S. Davenport, retired provisional clergy member, died Aug. 22, 2014. He is survived by his wife, Martha; they were active at

Aldersgate UMC. Davenport began his ministerial career in 1988 at Floyd Parish. He went on to serve Havens Chapel, Kenbridge and East Nottoway. He retired in 1995. During his retirement, he served Boykins and Community in the former Portsmouth District.



Guy B. Hamilton Sr., retired local pastor, died Aug. 27, 2014. He was a former Marine who felt God's call to ministry. He served as

pastor of Asbury UMC in Nokesville (Prince William County) from 1992 to 2007. He retired and moved with his wife Cheryl to Tennessee. Following a funeral at Asbury UMC, he was buried at Arlington National Cemetery.



The Rev. Luther M. Marks, 88, died Sept. 6, 2014. Marks began his ministerial career in the West Virginia Conference in 1954. He transferred to the

Virginia Conference in 1963 and served Garrison-Ebenezer, Beech Grove-Oak Grove, Stokesland, Mount Olivet in Danville, Whaleyville-Somerton, Beulah-St. Paul, Courtland and Clarksville. He retired in 1991. He is survived by his wife, Jean, and was also the father of **the Rev. Milton Marks**, pastor of

Raleigh Court UMC, Roanoke District. His funeral was held at Jamieson Memorial UMC in Clarksville.



Robert Frank Newcomb, 76, a retired local pastor, died July 17, 2014, in Manassas. A native of Oklahoma, Newcomb worked for the

Boy Scouts of America for more than 30 years until retirement, then turned to his other love, The United Methodist Church, where he worked as a local pastor. Newcomb is survived by his wife, Sandra.

Clyde Cecil Lyle Jr., 85, of Roanoke, died Sept. 2, 2014. His son, **Rev. Michael Lyle**, is pastor of Washington Street UMC, Alexandria District.

Ruth Frances Searle Luther, 86, died Sept. 6, 2014, in Richmond. Ruth was preceded in death by her husband, **the Rev. Jay E. Luther**.

Betty Anne Leach Warrick, 56, of Danville, died Sept. 3, 2014. She was the wife of **the Rev. Donald M. Warrick Jr.**

BIRTHS

The Rev. Tim Beck and his wife, **Jennifer**, welcomed a new daughter, **Ava Lynn**, born Aug. 12, 2014. Beck serves Kenbridge UMC, Farmville District.

The Rev. Ryan and Lou Oswald welcomed a new daughter, **Daylie Ruth Oswald**, who joins siblings Aiden and Avery. Oswald is an associate at Fishersville UMC.

The Rev. Dave Rochford and his wife, **Lisa**, welcome a new son, **Alden Isaac**, born Aug. 22, 2014. Rochford is the Staunton District Superintendent.

ADOPTIONS

The Rev. Dr. Justin Allen, Dean of Spiritual Life at Shenandoah University, and his wife, **Alethea**, recently adopted **Carter Jack Allen** from China. Carter turned 2 on July 29.

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("Faith on the Roof" continued from page 21) that!" Steve added. "For example, my two churches have done a Stop Hunger Now meal packing event for two years in a row by inviting other churches to partner with us. So now it's become a thing we do. People ask me about when are we going to invite those other churches."

It really was a 'happening.' Some church and community members came with tents to also camp out on the parking lot.


Brosville UMC member Jackie Minter set Weedling's adventure to music, sung to the tune of "The Camptown Races":

*Pastor Faith is on the roof,
Praise God, praise God!
Need some nets, mosquito proof,
Praise the Lord all day.
Pastor's on the roof,
pastor's on the roof.
We give our money to buy some
nets,
God will do the rest!*

The cardboard cutout of Bishop Young Jin Cho first unveiled at Annual Conference was also on hand.

"We've had fun moving 'Bishop Cho' around the district," said Steve Weedling. "It's so lifelike, people forget he's there and they get surprised. One day (our DS) Janine (Howard) asked me where the 'Bishop' was and I said we were storing him in our den, and we had to keep the door closed because we were afraid our little dog would go in and pee on him. ... And that got some strange looks from the church members who overheard us."

Did Weedling learn any lessons from this experience?

"As tired as I am now, I'd say the lesson is not to come up with these kinds of ideas," said Weedling. "But it's been good. We've raised a lot of money and hopefully this will lead other pastors on the district to do crazy things to get involved." 

-Neill Caldwell is editor of the Advocate.

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FROM THE BISHOP



Imagine no malaria!

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

I am back! After 40 days of renewal leave, I came back to my office on Sept. 2. I am deeply grateful for this time of rest and reflection. During my leave, Kiok and I took three trips for my continuing education or for rest. I also reviewed the first half of my ministry and reflected upon the second half. I reaffirmed that I could not do my ministry without God's help and that I would more humbly seek and rely upon God's wisdom and guidance. I thank my office staff for covering everything during my absence.

Since I returned to my office, I have been hearing many wonderful stories about Imagine No Malaria. One pastor challenged her congregation by saying that she would stay on the roof of the church one hour for every \$100 raised. One hundred dollars translates into 10 lives saved from

malaria. Her congregation and the two congregations served by her husband, responded to this challenge by raising enough money to save more than 380 lives. One small congregation in the far western part of our conference raised an amount that will save more than 400 lives. So far, we have raised about \$120,000 which will touch 12,000 lives.

What a great beginning it is! When I proposed this initiative, I had some wishes and hopes. I wanted this initiative to be a part of our spiritual disciplines. In our tradition, spiritual discipline has two dimensions: acts of piety and acts of mercy. For the past two years, I emphasized acts of piety. Through this initiative, I wanted us to have a balanced spiritual discipline. Imagine No Malaria is more than a fundraising campaign. It is a part of our spiritual disciplines. I strongly encourage you to take part in this initiative in prayer.

Another of my hopes was that Imagine No Malaria would be a joyful movement rather than a burdensome plan. I am praying that participants will experience the joy of giving and learn what our Lord meant when he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." What a great joy it is for us to take part in saving human lives, especially children and expectant mothers! What a great privilege it is that our prayers and participation can make differences in the lives of people on the other side of the earth! I pray that all participants in this initiative will experience a joy surpassing human understanding.

When we launched this initiative, I invited every church and every church member to participate. I also encouraged our children, youths and young adults to lead these efforts. I believe that this initiative will provide a great opportunity for our next generation to learn and experience the importance of mission. And if our younger generations get excited, then the

church will be energized, and this initiative will have a great and positive impact on the life of the church.

These reasons have made me very happy to introduce Imagine No Malaria. These reasons moved me to do a "happy dance." Once again, I invite every church and every church member to join this initiative of saving lives from malaria.

The Virginia Conference has a very proud tradition of strong mission support. I hope this tradition will continue during this conference year. I will be deeply grateful if you will visit the conference website (www.vaumc.org) and share your stories with other brothers and sisters in Christ.

Later this month, I will take another group of clergy to Korea. This will be the third time for me to lead this pilgrimage. Participants are excited about this trip. During our stay in Korea (Oct. 15- 23), we will visit various churches and universities and learn the importance of mission. We will participate in early-morning prayer services that will begin at 5 a.m. every day, and we will experience the importance of prayer in our mission and ministries. We will also have a chance to learn about the history and culture of Korea. This will be a heavy schedule and a very long flight. Your prayer for safe travels will be deeply appreciated.

It is already October, and our churches are preparing for their charge conferences. I pray that these annual gatherings will be a blessing to all of you and to the churches.

May the Lord continue to guide us and give us peace.

In our Lord,

Young Jin Cho

United Methodist church worker named hometown hero

By Christina Dimeo Guseman



Rachel Jones and her therapy dog, Molly, visit Zion UMC.

Louisa County has its very own hero.

Zion Crossroads resident Rachel Jones was just named one of Allen & Allen's hometown heroes.

The law firm accepted nominations from across the state for its Hometown Heroes Award, which according to the firm's website seeks to honor "Virginians who are responsible [for] generating positive change in the community or in the lives of others." Jones, who was nominated by her coworker, Donna Bowman, was one of 50 chosen for the honor.

Keeping busy in the community is just part of life for Jones, who works for Zion United Methodist Church (ZUMC) and Zion Christian Children's Center, a 90-student preschool and kindergarten at the church in Zion Crossroads.

"I kind of wear two hats at ZUMC," Jones said. "As the community programs director I bring in lots of programs to the church – things like Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H, karate, art classes, women's self-defense and

Upward Sports. It's tiring but rewarding, and it's given me a platform to bring all these great programs into the community."

The other hat Jones wears is her role as facilities and compliance director for the school. Back in 2010, Jones was one of the folks helping to open the preschool and kindergarten. As extended care director she oversaw the afterschool and summer camp programs. And now, as facilities and compliance director, she makes sure that the school falls in line with state requirements and handles the facilities.

But Jones brings a little something special to the school – a therapy dog named Molly. Jones and her family rescued Molly, a black lab mix, from the humane society in Washington, D.C. After going through obedience training with Erika Proctor's *Green Dogs Unleashed* in Fluvanna, Jones followed Proctor's advice and took the necessary steps to certify Molly as a therapy dog. Now Molly and Jones work together as a therapy team.

"I take Molly to different nursing homes, 4-H groups and to the school," said Jones. "She and I teach a little program to children about safety around dogs. Things like not pulling their ears, not putting your face in front of their face, asking permission before you pet – all those safe handlings – in order to help children not to be bitten by strange dogs."

Jones lives near ZUMC with her children – 9-year-old Brayden and 7-year-old Emily – and her husband, Donny, who works with the Virginia state police in Albemarle, Nelson and Greene counties. 🐾

-This article first appeared in the Louisa Life newspaper. The photo is by Kelly Allison.



Tweets heard 'round the conference

Sonja Flye Oliver @SoFlye59

#IfTheShoeFits don't just wear it, give thanks for it! #Gratefulness #ItsEnough

Patti Money @pattimoney

Charging iPad mini. And kids' iPad. And my portable battery charger. #ihavetoomanydevices

slkcalv @slkcalv

Nothing like making the nurse say "Wow, would you look at that," and then having the student intern come running

Andrew Book @AndrewHBook

I made my moral stand about [Ray] Rice by refusing to bid on him in our fantasy auction...not that anyone would have noticed :)

Megan Harrison @MeganHarrison23

I wish there was a day of recovery between Sunday and Monday

Ebenezer UMC @EbenezerUMC

Calling all bakers!!! We need your help to make 3000 dozen cookies (do the math - that's 36,000 cookies!!) for Sussex State Prison

Pastor Jason Elmore @PastorJasonE

I hope Johnny Football can play defense because the Browns need help!

Patti Money @pattimoney

Hi from Duke Chapel! Feeling like a legit UMC pastor now!

"If you think you
are too small to
make a difference,
try spending the
night with
a mosquito."

-African Proverb

