

Advocate



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Virginia Advocate

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

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Subscriptions

Print subscriptions are \$20/one year; \$30/two years; \$40/three years. Special bulk rate for five or more copies going to a single address is \$12 each for one year. For both printed copy and online access, subscriptions are \$25/year; \$35/two years; \$45/three years. For online only, cost is \$10/year; \$15/two years; \$20/three years. Subscribe online at www.vaumc.org, under "Resources>Publications."

Deadlines

The Advocate is published once a month. The deadline to submit news and ad copy for the November 2016 issue is October 1. For more information on future deadlines, contact the Advocate office or visit the website.

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Rates for advertising and tributes are available upon request.

Local Church News

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

Letters

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

©2016 Virginia Advocate

USPS 660-740 ISSN 0891-5598

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

POSTMASTER: Send changes of address to Virginia United Methodist Advocate, P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058. Editorial and business offices are located at 10330 Staples Mill Rd., Glen Allen, Va. Office hours are 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

PILLOW TALK



Madeline Pillow
Editor

Over our heads

I was recently doing research and I came across a great thought: If someone from the 1950s suddenly appeared today, what would be the most difficult thing to explain about life now?

One possible answer: I possess a device, in my pocket, that is capable of accessing the entirety of information known to humans, and I use it to look at pictures of cats and argue with strangers.

Imagine the dreams of people centuries ago who looked to the stars and wondered, who stared out at the oceans and wanted to know what was beyond. It's a sobering thought that we might not be using the gifts, graces and knowledge available to us to surge us ahead, to open up the world for the next generation of dreamers.

That's what happens with burnout as well. It's too easy to get bogged down in stress and to take our attention away from the significant in our lives like investing in ourselves, our families and our ministries.

I often try to remind myself of enjoying the small moments, the important moments. In years to come, I won't remember the board meeting that I was stressed about. I will remember the special dinner where I celebrated my mother's birthday with family.

As Maya Angelou said, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

When we invest into ourselves, families and our ministries, we affect people. We have impact.

By maintaining the important things and my stress, I make a better impact. And I would rather be known for having a positive impact than being a ball full of stress that brings down someone in their ministry or negatively affects change they are attempting in their lives.


Don't let the significant go over your head. Don't miss the chance to have impact. 



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Scan this code to go to the
conference website:
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CORRECTION: There was a color misprint in the July Advocate under the Roanoke District apportionments. All the churches reported in red should be reported in blue. Blue represents those churches that paid more than 100 percent of their apportionments.

The *Virginia Advocate* Staff

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LETTERS

Retired elder highlights differences of all humans in human sexuality debate

As a member of the Virginia Conference since 1958 and retired for 17 years, I am moved to respond to the Evangelical Fellowship commentary in the August *Advocate* issue. The Virginia Conference has been wasting time, money and energy for decades over a trivial pursuit.

The Evangelical Fellowship seems to belie the meaning of fellowship heavily on the irreconcilable differences. Humans have always had differ-

ences. God's grace is totally reconciling. The *Book of Discipline* appears to take precedent over Scripture, especially over the Gospels and Jesus' words.

According to the Gospels, Jesus says not one word regarding sexual orientation. Paul speaks heavily of our being one in the body of Christ.

How do we interpret Scripture? Obviously Jesus was not a literalist or else he would have cheered the stoning of the woman taken in adultery, holding his own stone. He would have chastised his disciples for working on the Sabbath and not healed on the Sabbath himself. He would not have said, "You have heard

of old, I say to you."

Human differences have been with us from the beginning of our history. Color, size, culture, language and preferences seem to indicate that the creativeness of the Spirit loves diversity and likes to test humans' abilities to be generous and gracious.

Our culture likes to beat up on persons different than "us." Now the church continues to walk by on the other side while some politicians are offering aid. I would rather be a Samaritan than a priest on this issue.

— Richard Worden, retired elder,
Harrisonburg District

READ MORE about
avoiding burnout in the
ministry starting on
pg. 16.

Tips for recruiting and nurturing volunteers in ministry

The vocabulary church leaders use when asking people to serve makes a significant difference, writes Jake McGlothlin, director of missions and outreach at Floris United Methodist Church in Herndon, Va. In a commentary for the Lewis Center for Church Leadership, he offers tips for recruiting volunteers:

"Some people avoid committing to leadership positions because they fear it is a commitment with no end. We all know people who have been in the same leadership role for years, even decades. Some may still have passion for what they do, but still end up resenting the church because they



can't seem to let it go. For other long-time leaders, their grip over the ministry becomes tighter and tighter until it is no longer the church's ministry, but rather, a personal ministry.

Because burnout in ministry is real and devastating, I make sure our volunteers understand that I only want them to stay on if they still love it and not feel obligated to remain. I try to meet annually with my ministry leaders to see how they are doing and to talk about their ministry. I also ask them if they'd like to continue. When I first started doing this, people would get offended because they thought I was trying to kick them out. But they soon realized I had a genuine interest in knowing if they are still in.

Ministry leadership should be challenging, but it also must be rewarding. I want my ministry leaders to love what they do."



Letters to the Editor are printed on a space-available basis. Letters may be e-mailed to MadelinePillow@vaumc.org by the first of the month.

A bucket full of thanks

I would like to personally thank all those across the Virginia Conference who helped replenish our cleaning bucket supply at UMCOR warehouses in Charlotte, N.C. at the end of August. Instrumental in this effort were Pastor Bob Pihlcrantz, our disaster pastor; Scott Dillard, our Conference UMM Coordinator; District Disaster Coordinators; District UMM and Pastor Glenn Rowley on the Bishop's staff.

For everyone both praying for and helping the victims of flooding in Texas, Louisiana, Maryland and West Virginia — God bless you! We shipped over 850 buckets! That includes those who donated, supplied and cleaned used buckets, provided the cleaning materials, staged, packaged, loaded and transported them and handled the logistics to make it all come together. Great work, good timing and desperately needed! Praise God!

Thanks for your big hearts and strong hands!

— Andrew Kissell, president of the
Virginia Conference
United Methodist Men



United Methodist Men readied the buckets for transport to Charlotte, N.C., at two different locations on Aug. 31.

If your local church UMMen would like to take part in future events such as this effort, contact Dann Ladd, conference UMMen vice president for Membership and Development at ladddann@gmail.com.

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Heart Havens shares future plans after Morrison Home closure



by Madeline Pillow

Hearth Havens has announced that the Morrison Home in Newport News is set to close on Sept. 15. The reasons for the closure are due to the safety and health of the home's two residents and the difficulty in keeping the home appropriately staffed.

The Morrison closure will not affect the Macleigh-

Holland home in Virginia Beach or the other eight Heart Havens' homes in Virginia.

Heart Havens staff will be working with the case managers for the residents of the Morrison home to smoothly transition them into suitable housing.

Sarah Wilkinson, communications and volunteer manager, shared that the Heart Havens board of directors and the leadership team are thankful for the support the home has received over the years and said that the decision was not an easy one.

"Ultimately, it came down to the health and safety of the residents in the house. There comes a time for most people when they need more medical support," Wilkinson said.

Heart Havens provides services and support in a

group home setting, but the organization is not licensed to provide nursing care.

Looking to the future

As the organization looks to the future, both Sarah Wilkinson and Brenda Sasser, chief operations officer, recognize that the originators could not have foreseen the current landscape when the first Heart Havens home opened in 1999.

While both still see a place for group homes, they noted that support for people with intellectual disabilities is changing to more individualized options.

Today, many people receiving service and their families want a different and more individualized form of service provision for people with intellectual disabilities. Federal and state mandates have also shared this direction in the last several years.

"People want their children to be as independent as possible. They don't want them to be segregated away from other people," Sasser said.

Opportunities now through the Medicaid Waiver program are focused on providing support based on the need and choice of the individual. So while there are different ways to provide the support needed, the trend is moving toward total community

Residents at the "2 Days 2 Serve" event at the Tate house in July.



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immersion.

These new opportunities are leaving a lot of room for excitement at Heart Havens.

“Our whole mission is empowerment for people with intellectual disabilities,” Wilkinson said. “We already, in our group homes, look for ways to get people in the community, to do things they want to do, whether it’s big or small. So being able to provide some other opportunities for that is in line with our mission.”

Providing more individualized support

Heart Havens is currently in the process of looking into more individualized support including in-home services, apartments and sponsored placement.

In-home support refers to support provided by staff members to a person with intellectual disabilities wherever they are with activities, such as going to the grocery store or visiting a doctor. In the past, Heart Havens was able to provide this service to those who were 18 or older, but now through a new provision, they would be able to support children as well.

Sponsored placement is another service that Sasser believes will increase in the near future in the Richmond area. This involves a host family supporting an individual through a family



The “2 Days2 Serve” event helped high school-aged youths explore their callings. At the Tate house, they shared a time of music with the residents, painted pictures and did some chalk art outside the house.

environment. The individual would live with the host family and have more opportunity for community integration.

Apartment living is a support that will be completely new to Heart Havens. In this setting, adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities receive support as needed, while residing in an apartment. This setting naturally lends itself to people developing relationships that extend beyond their families and paid staff. Although this is a new avenue, Sasser hopes to see this support eventually provided in Charlottesville, Richmond and Virginia Beach.

This venture will require a great amount of monetary funding to get it started.

Sasser said in the next year that Heart Havens will look in the Richmond area for a good environment to

start a trial run.

The Charlottesville District Vision Team is already actively raising funds for this venture.

“The Question” remains

Wilkinson emphasized that the question that started this whole movement – “Where will my child live when I’m gone?” – is still at the heart of their future plans.

Wilkinson said that there are now additional questions being asked as people are seeking more individualized lives for their children with intellectual disabilities.

“People with disabilities should have the same choices that those without disabilities have,” Wilkinson said. And this should be true for where they live and what they want to do with their lives.

This year, the theme

for Heart Havens has been “A Place at the Table.” This theme reflects a passionate endeavor on the part of Heart Havens as they try to gain full inclusion within the church for people with disabilities and provide the resources to make it happen.

As Heart Havens looks to grow into the future with new opportunities, the Heart Havens board of directors and leadership team ask for prayers as they navigate the shifting regulatory environment that they work under.

Sasser also reflected on the changes coming for Heart Havens.

“Nothing can grow and stay static. Everything has to change. I think all of these changes are for the good,” Sasser said.

To learn more about Heart Havens and their work, visit

www.hearthavens.org 

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Voices of Youth tour changes location, maintains focus

By Becca Minor

Voices of Youth (VOY) “Be Still and Know” 2016 tour lived up to its name. When the planning for this summer’s trip began, the itinerary included travel to Paris and Taize, France, with a week stay at Taize. When the ISIS attack in Paris took place in November, we began a time of prayer and discernment. It became evident that our plan was not God’s plan.

We had to be still and know that God had greater plans. Hawaii soon became our new trip destination for Voices of Youth, the Virginia Annual Conference

mission choir that began in 1985.

Hawaii has the highest homeless population per capita of all 50 states. How can paradise, a place of such beauty, be a place of such destitution for so many? The juxtaposition of this situation is what we wanted the youths to understand and be in mission to. How can we be in solidarity with those who have nothing? How can we better understand what we take for granted every day, so that we can then give of ourselves and our resources to the least of these?

This was a big part of why we were going to Hawaii. The second half of our trip would be focused on Camp Mekokiko, the only United Methodist camp in the state of Hawaii. It was here that we would be able to get dirty and

sweaty doing manual labor on the lush mountain side of the Big Island.

Orientation began July 9-12 at Heathsville United Methodist Church in Heathsville, Va. During this time the youths and staff had opportunity for group building, devotion, mission conversation and instruction, and to learn the music that would be shared later in the trip. On July 13, we flew to Honolulu and reached the Wesley Foundation of the University of Hawaii, our host home for two nights.

The director, Joseph Yun, said he was overwhelmed that a group from Virginia was coming to Hawaii to help work with the homeless population. I must share that prior to our departing from the Wesley Foundation, Joseph pleaded for us to share with others the great need that they have in Hawaii for mission teams to come and work. Joe spoke of the desperation that is so present there in Honolulu and was so grateful for our presence.

While in Honolulu we were able to work with the Institute of Human Services (IHS) at their women and family shelter. Joshua Jenson was our guide at the shelter and had an overwhelming love for the community he served. This shelter was one of seven locations for

All photos courtesy of Becca Minor.
One of the focuses of the 2016 Voices of Youth tour was to be in mission with the homeless population in Hawaii.



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Voices of Youth is a three-week mission opportunity for high school youths.



IHS. Joshua shared that the three most important things the shelter provided for the homeless community were a place to eat, a place to sleep and a place to receive kindness. We worked in the rooftop garden, where 45-55 pounds of food is harvested each week and used in their meal prep. Some from the group also worked in the distribution area going through donations, keeping what was useable and discarding trash.

Our work at Camp Mekokiko consisted of

trimming the plant life in the orchard, building a barbeque pit, collecting macadamia nuts that are sold to raise money for the camp, and creating fencing around tent sites (painting posts, placing posts in the ground, wrapping with wire fencing, and connecting a gate door) all to keep the wild pigs out.

When we arrived back in Virginia, we traveled around the conference offering worship services to share our testimony through word and song. It was truly a gift to hear

the youth speak about deepened faith and being called to be a difference back home in their local communities because of this trip.

Voices of Youth has been in mission for 31 years, and we pray that it will be around for another 31 years. This three-week mission experience takes place every summer. It is an opportunity for high school youths (rising freshmen to graduating seniors) to grow in their faith and deepen their call to do God's work. Yes, we are a mission choir, however we would love to offer any youths that has a talent with music — whether it be vocal, instrumental, interpretive dance or sign language — the opportunity to participate.

The Voices of Youth 2017 "Testify to Love" trip is already being planned with a destination of Texas. If you have a youth or know

of a youth that would love to experience God through this mission experience please invite them to reach out to us.

You can contact the 2017 coordinator Ryan Brown via email at voicesofyouth@vaumc.org, and more information and applications are available at vavoicesofyouth.org.

—The Rev. Rebecca Minor is the Virginia Conference VOY Coordinator.

At Camp Mekokiko, youths help with manual labor.



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A pastor's quest for early Israel

By Ralph K. Hawkins

I never thought I would be an archaeologist. When I answered the call to ministry in January of 1991, I found that I enjoyed parish ministry immensely and thought that I would spend my career doing just that. When I began my masters', however, one of the first courses I had was a seminar on the Book of Joshua, in which I was introduced to the many questions surrounding the origins of early Israel in ancient

Canaan.

After I finished seminary and went into full-time ministry, these questions continued to percolate in the back of my mind. Several years later, while serving a church in east Tennessee, I ran across an ad by an archaeologist who was digging in the highlands of Israel in an effort to answer some of those questions. That summer, I spent my vacation working for him. I loved it so much that I went back every summer for the next four years, and finally went back to graduate school and did an advanced degree in archaeology. I've been digging in the dirt ever since.

But the questions about early Israel remain unanswered. Who were the early Israelites and where did they come from? The Book of Joshua claims that the early Israelites came from the east, outside the ancient land of Canaan, and that they entered it by crossing the Jordan River "opposite Jericho" (Joshua 3:16). Many modern scholars, however, argue that the earliest Israelites were actually disaffected Canaanites who fled their oppressive overlords in the urban centers in the west. The argument that the Israelites originated inside the land of Canaan is based, in part, on a lack of evidence for early Israel in the east.

In recent years, however, explorers have found 54 sites dating to the beginning of the period of the early Israelite settlement (about 1200 B.C.E.) in the Jordan Valley, a region almost completely unknown archaeologically up until now. These sites clearly represent the presence of a new population group in the east. Most of these sites are simply large rings of stones, probably for corraling animals, and are not very promising archaeologically. A handful of them, however, include clusters of buildings and courtyards, and were clearly meant to be permanent villages.

The largest of these, Khirbet el-Mastarah, is

Ralph Hawkins in el-Mastarah oval enclosure: This large oval enclosure of stones was likely used to house sheep or goats at night. Since it's the largest enclosure on the site, it may have belonged to the chief. All photos courtesy of Ralph Hawkins.



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– The Rev. Dr. Ralph Hawkins is an associate professor and chair of the Department of Religion at Averett University and also serves as pastor of the Calvary-Kerns Memorial Cooperative Parish.

(Left): Dig directors Ben-Shlomo (right) and Hawkins (left).

(Below): Detail map of the vicinity around Khirbet el-Mastarah: This map shows the location of the site in relation to Jericho and some other well-known sites.

particularly fascinating. This large site includes several houses, animal pens, hints of walls and a series of unusual stone piles. Dating back to the time of the first settlement of the Tribes of Israel, as described in the Book of Joshua, this site is likely to be one of the earliest Israelite villages in the land.

Its name, “Mastarah,” means “hidden,” and the site is literally hidden. It is located in the desert, about six miles north of Jericho, off the main roads and away from reliable water sources. It is positioned in the fork of a dried out river bed and surrounded by hills on three sides, completely masked from its surroundings.

My colleague, Dr. David Ben-Shlomo, and I are launching the “Jordan Valley Excavation Project” (JVEP), which will spearhead

the excavation of this hidden site, beginning in 2017, in an effort to solve some of its many mysteries.

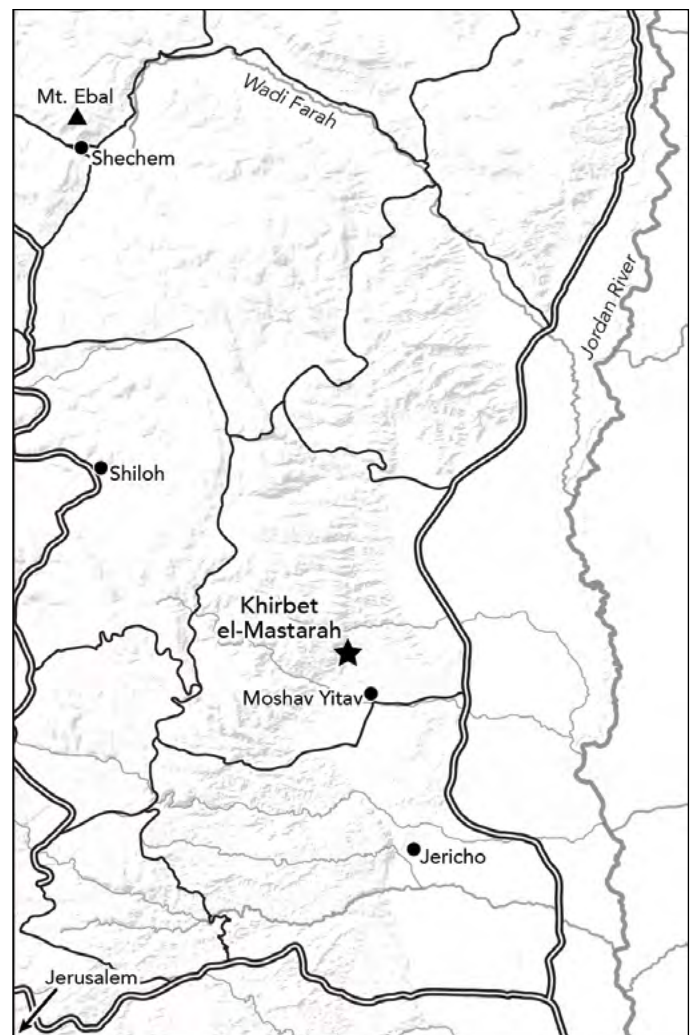
Is this one of the earliest Israelites villages in the land, as its location just west of the Jordan River might suggest?

And, if so, why did they settle in this hidden location?

The excavation at el-Mastarah is a pioneering project in an area that is almost unknown archaeologically, but that likely represents the earliest region of Israelite settlement in the land. Join JVEP as a volunteer, help us find answers to the mysteries of el-Mastarah and experience Israel like never before!

For more information, visit www.jvep.org or contact Dr. Hawkins directly at rhawkins@averett.edu.

Financial sponsorship is welcomed, and checks can



DISCIPLES HELPING TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD



▲ The hot, languid days of August generally find reduced worship numbers, last minute vacations and back-to-school shopping.

However, August at **Great Bridge UMC in Chesapeake, Va.**, found 3,000 pounds of rocks, paint pens in the colors of the rainbow and INTENTIONAL PRAYER.

The sermon series in August focused on prayer and the importance of prayer. As the sermon series moves through August, the congregation was invited to write on or decorate a rock with a prayer or praise. Some rocks included prayers for the country and leaders, prayers for victims of crime, poverty, flooding, drought and war. There were rocks with prayers for specific people, and some that just held a word such as healing or peace, still others had a picture drawn with a favored Bible verse. As the month progressed, the understanding and the need for prayer increased, and more and more prayer rocks were created.

The prayer rocks have become not just an art project based on a series of sermons. They seem to have become the symbols of laying prayers, concern and burdens at the feet of God.

The completed prayer rocks can be found outside the various entrances to the church building and in the sanctuary. As members and non-members of GBUMC enter the building

during the week and on Sunday, they slow down to read the prayer rocks, reflecting and praying over the various pleas.

In the end, the prayer rocks are not only a physical reminder to walk with God in prayer, but also a reminder of the burdens and joys we share as sons and daughters of God.

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

Pictured below is the Rev. Leah DeLong with Soles4Souls donations all around her. **Marshall UMC, Winchester District**, collected 106 pairs of shoes for the ministry Soles4Souls in honor of Leah DeLong's service at Marshall UMC. ▼



DISCIPLES HELPING TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD



▲ Over the summer, **Gum Spring UMC, Richmond District**, folded more than 3,000 origami paper doves to observe the 15th anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Each of the doves represented a person killed on 9/11. The doves were suspended in the sanctuary for worship. It made for a powerful visual remembrance as all gathered gave thanks for the promise of resurrection.

▶ **Olive Branch UMC, Farmville District**, holds an annual giveaway project in memory of Lisa DiStefano. Lisa started this project several years ago as a community event, in which the OBUMC parishioners and friends gather gently used or new clothing and small household items, toys and a variety of other small items. Unfortunately, Lisa died three years ago, but the church continues the project annually in her memory and for the good of our



community.

The event is like a large yard sale, but everything is free. This year, in August, approximately 100 people were

served in the Gasburg community with literally over a thousand items given away to local folk in need. 🍷

EVENTS



October

5 Talent Academy

Oct. 4, Ebenezer UMC, Stafford

The 5 Talent Academy is a group of like-minded pastors and laity across the Virginia Conference who are committed to learning the tools and techniques to have healthy, fruitful congregations. As a member of this community, you will learn new ways to increase worship attendance, professions of faith, faith development, ministry to the poor and stewardship. This event is designed to help participants equip the people of their congregations to be the church in the world. Join the 5 Talent Academy on Tuesday, Oct. 4, for "Equipping People for Ministry Outside the Walls of the Church" featuring Andy Crouch. The event will be live streamed to 10 satellite locations throughout the conference from Ebenezer UMC in Stafford. Go online to see all locations at www.vaumc.org/5TalentAcademy.

Church Leadership Institute (CLI)

Oct. 10-12, Virginia United Methodist Center, Glen Allen

The Church Leadership Institute (CLI) will help you discern your ministry style by offering greater clarity in the following areas: ministry competencies, core behaviors, spiritual gifts, affinity groups and place on the apostolic/pastoral continuum. Graduates will learn the basics on how to lead renewal in their congregations. Those feeling called to be a new church planter will have the opportunity to more fully discern that call. Register by visiting www.vaumc.org/cli.

Preaching the Advent Season: Sermon Preparation for the Busy Preacher

Oct. 11, Shady Grove UMC, Mechanicsville

"Preaching the Advent Season: Sermon Preparation for the Busy Preacher," sponsored by the Goodson Academy for Preaching will be Tuesday, Oct. 11 at Shady Grove UMC, Mechanicsville from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The course is worth 0.5 CEU. For more information or questions, email Goodson@vaumc.org.

ARMS Retreat

Oct. 12-13, Eagle Eyrie Retreat Center, Lynchburg

The 2016 Association of Retired Ministers and Spouses (ARMS) Retreat will be held this year at the Eagle Eyrie Conference Center, near Lynchburg. All retired clergy and spouses and widows and widowers of clergy are invited. Cost: \$60 per person; \$30 for first-time attendees. Speakers include Bishop Timothy Whitaker and John Fuller, executive director of Virginia United Methodist Pensions, Inc.

Small Church Summit

Oct. 22, Providence UMC, Richmond

Join fellow small church clergy and laity for the Small Church Summit Saturday, Oct. 22, at Providence UMC in Richmond and broadcast via livestream to five additional locations. Keynote speaker will be the Rev. Lynne Caldwell who will build upon the foundation she set at Small Congregation Pastor Training in July. Focus will be on asset-based ministry as participants are taught to build on the strengths of their particular congregations. This event is open to all VAUMC clergy and laity who serve a small congregation (average worship attendance between 1 and 149 persons). Cost is \$25 per person. Lunch is included. Those attending can earn

0.5 CEU for participation. Registration open until Oct. 10. Visit www.vaumc.org/small-church-summit for more information.

Conference UMW Annual Meeting

Oct. 28-29, Good Shepherd UMC, Richmond

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

Kindred Project Retreat

Oct. 10-12, Bellfry Retreat Home, Lexington

Kindred Project will offer a two-day Silent Retreat in the Celtic Tradition at the Bellfry Retreat Home (www.bellfry.org), 4 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 2, to 10 a.m. Friday, Nov. 4. The retreat will be facilitated by Kim Barker-Brugman, Janie Mitchell and Dawn Peck. Estimated cost is \$175 per person. To reserve a space, contact Dawn Peck at dhpeck@hotmail.com.

"The Small Church Can! Older Adult Ministry on a Shoestring Budget"

Oct. 14, The Hermitage, Roanoke

The Hermitage in Roanoke, one of the communities of Virginia United Methodist Homes, Inc. (VUMH) will be offering a learning opportunity for clergy and laity on Oct. 14. It will be held at the Hermitage in Roanoke (1009 Old Country Club Road, Roanoke) from 9:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Registration will begin at 9:00 AM.



EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY

Older Adult Ministry is often developed either by resource rich, large membership churches or with them in mind. This leaves small church leaders with a dilemma: whether to adapt these resources to their setting or adapt their setting to these resources. This learning session and conversation offers a different approach of designing Older Adult and Boomer Ministry with the small church context and gifts in mind to build an exclusively small church ministry model from the ground up. Presenter is the Rev. Dr. William B. Randolph, Director of Aging and Older Adult Ministries with United Methodist Discipleship Ministries.

There is no cost for the learning event. Attendees have the option of staying for lunch to continue conversation with Will or to join residents of the Hermitage who are members of your church. The cost for lunch is \$8. You **MUST** reserve your space for lunch in advance and pay for your own meal on-site by cash or check (credit and debit cards cannot be accepted). Because space is limited for the learning session, you **MUST** register your plans to attend by October 7th by calling or e-mailing Melissa Lowery at **(540) 767-6801** or **MLowery@vumh.org**. Please inform Melissa when you call if you plan to stay for lunch. Feel free to direct any questions to Martha Stokes at **MStokes@vumh.org**. 📧

Five tips for welcoming new church visitors



1. Location, location, location

How to welcome visitors into your church can vary based on how you live. To figure out the best ways to welcome visitors, ask your new members what made them feel welcome at your church.

2. Know thy neighbor

Figure out your visitor's comfort level of interaction (email or a follow-up visit) by finding out the reason for their visit. Are they looking for a new church? Did they grow up in church? Are they new to church? Get to know your visitors as individuals and not just potential members.

3. Seize the day

It's best to contact a new visitor within 24 hours of their visit to show an immediate level of care and concern. Welcoming doesn't end when the

church doors close—it is an ongoing process of building relationships.

4. No surprises

Before you collect contact information from your visitors, let them know what you plan to do with the information. You can do this in person or have it written on a new visitor card. Don't be discouraged if visitors do not choose to give out their contact information. They may just need more time to get to know your church.

5. Follow through

Touch base with your new members within three months and again at the six month mark. Ensure that your congregation has connected with them and are still enjoying their experience. 📧

— Tips courtesy of United Methodist Communications

CHURCH LEADER

IF YOU ARE

WIN



BURNOUT

ON FIRE FOR GOD,
NEVER MIND THE
FLOODS OF ADVERSITY.



Self care and wellness are subjects that are gaining greater exposure in the wake of hectic work schedules that threaten a work-life balance. But we have to ask: what is it about our culture that makes us overwork ourselves past creativity, healthful lifestyles and energy?

Are we afraid we won't be seen as productive? Successful enough? Hard working enough? Are we afraid we will be judged by others? Are we afraid that others won't find us inspiring and that our lives aren't "Instagram-worthy?"

But we need to be counter-cultural. By doing so, we place importance on taking care of ourselves, managing our energy and well-being without personal judgment. We need to expect the same from others and be allies to each other on this path.

Church leaders, among other professions, need to be on the lookout for feelings of stress, overwork and work-life balance whether you're the youth leader or a senior pastor. By showing up healthy, energized and balanced at our cores, the roots for strong and meaningful ministry can begin for ourselves and those with whom we interact.

In the book *The Vulnerable Pastor*, author Mandy Smith queries the reader to move from the phrase "work-life balance" to talk about abundant life. As she says, "Something is wrong when we become machines, when our time use is determined by how much there is to do."

Continue reading to learn how some of our church leaders in the Virginia Conference manage stress and a work-life balance.



CULTIVATING COURAGE FOR AUTHENTIC MINISTRY

By F. Elizabeth Givens

One morning in late July, I found myself dangling from a couple of carabiners and a harness on a strong metal wire in a foreign country, traveling about 20 miles per hour, 1.4 miles in the air, over a waterfall and canyon. I'm not quite sure how I gathered up the courage to do 13 different zip lines (starting with that as the highest). I do know that when I awoke the next morning, every muscle in my upper body was screaming at me. Apparently I was holding on for dear life tighter than I thought.

Ministry is like that — it requires enormous amounts of courage if we are going to show up authentically as clergy or laity in leadership within the congregation, denomination or extension ministries. Sometimes we don't know how tightly we are holding on, or how much strength it is going to require of us.

I place a high value on fruitful, effective ministry for myself. In order to be fruitful and effective, I also have to be authentic. I can't build walls between myself and the community in which I serve. I can draw healthy boundaries, but not walls. They need to know my shortcomings and failures — we need to be mutually vulnerable with one another.


Living and working that way requires enormous courage and energy. I learned almost 20 years ago that there were some practices which would be critical if I wanted to maintain that courage and energy. The first practice I began was spiritual direction. Since 1998 I have met most months with a spiritual director to talk about my soul and my relationship with God and to be prayed over by my director. This work holds me accountable for my own spiritual journey. One hour a month, I weave together the threads of all that happens in my ministry, my personal life and my life with God. It is a

practice of intentional attention to my soul and means I can't avoid the tough stuff that stirs in me.

The second practice that became critical to my ability to live authentically was a covenant group. I am so very fortunate to have a couple of different groups of people who I trust highly, and who share the joys and challenges of ministry. We are courageous enough to be vulnerable with one another about this difficult work. That very vulnerability strengthens our relationships, and, in turn, our spirits.

Most recently, in the last four years I have begun the practice of regular work with the Center for Courage and Renewal, which was founded in 1997 by Quaker educator and author Parker Palmer.¹ The center offers retreats based on Palmer's Circles of Trust™ approach. The retreats allow both individual and collaborative work so that participants (clergy, health professionals, educators and others) can discover a safe space to nurture our own souls, which in turn cultivates integrity and courage in our professional work. This work has been rich and rewarding for me personally, and I am now working to bring it into the rhythms of our congregational life.

There are, of course, many methods and programs for doing this sort of work. The Shalem Institute, Richmond Hill, the Center for Action and Contemplation (Richard Rohr), and CourageWorks (Brene Brown), are just a few others. What I have found over two decades of ministry is that doing my own soul work is the single most important thing that I can do to be effective in congregational ministry. It's also the most important thing that I can do to be a healthy parent, a good friend and all the other roles I fulfill in life.

This kind of inner work has its own challenges — it often feels like jumping on that zip line and hanging on for dear life. It's easy to run from this task, because every time we get to know our soul a little better, it is both a blessing and a challenge. It can feel counterintuitive to do such hard work, just to help us with hard professional work. But I believe this important work of wrestling with who we are as a child of God is precisely what Jesus calls us to. It is the deep work of abiding in Christ, which we are called to do because Jesus has chosen us, and appointed us “to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last” (John 15:16a, NRSV). 

— The Rev. Beth Givens is pastor at Welbourne UMC, Richmond District.



¹ www.couragerenewal.org. Many programs of the center are available for Virginia Conference Clergy Development Fund financial assistance.



CAN I REALLY PRACTICE SELF-CARE?

By Brad Dulaney

Recently my 7-year-old has been bounding around the house singing, “Wish we could turn back time, to the good old days / When our momma sang us to sleep but now we’re stressed out.”¹ Hearing these lyrics from the lips of my son worried me at first. “Good Lord!” I thought, “I’m failing as a parent!” Of course, he’s as happy as a lark — oblivious to the adolescent angst behind the lyrics. But, as *The Atlantic* points out, this song is “an anthem of Millennial anxiety.”²

Could it also be an anthem for today’s church? We wish we could turn back time to the good old days when our pastor’s only job was to be our chaplain who preached and showed God’s love...when our laity showed up in droves each Sunday and had loads of free time for serving.

But everything has changed. Christianity has been sidelined. Many members have relegated church to the shrinking margins of free time, competing with weekends at the lake and travel soccer. We’ve watched the good old days slip away. Clergy and staff can no longer captain *The Love Boat*! They’re scrambling with the laity to transform the cruise ship into a missional fishing vessel before it sinks. With all this change and challenge, can somebody say, “stressed-out!”?

How are today’s lay and clergy leaders to cope with such stress? What can we do to survive (and even thrive!) over the long haul?

Our discussions on stress management usually start by talking about “clergy self-care” — doing things like taking a day off each week, striving for work-life balance, getting physically fit, developing support networks, practicing spiritual disciplines, etc. Over my first decade of ministry, “self-care” was an ongoing struggle. I often fell short. I felt stressed by my failures to “care for myself.”

Then I read an article that clarified my wrestling with “self-care.” Lillian Daniel’s words struck a chord: “Ultimately, the notion of self-care does not work because we don’t have in us what is required. Self-care is the Band-Aid we put on spiritual exhaustion, dark nights of the soul and the disappointment of consecutive losing seasons in a long ministry.”³ A light bulb went off for me! The problem with “self-care” is that it’s about me doing the caring for me — and I can’t do that of my own power! I needed a new theological and spiritual framework — that I am powerless to “take care of myself.” I need a power-greater-than-myself to help me deal with the stressors — which are also beyond my control. Yes, I must exercise self-leadership. But, in the end, I need grace from beyond myself.

A weight was lifted from my soul! After years of struggling to bear the cross of “clergy self-care,” I discovered a deeper truth of discipleship: when I am yoked with Jesus, I find rest, and the burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30). I cannot care for myself. I need a Savior. I need to keep company with my Lord. And I need a community of fellow disciples who cheer me on, call me out, hold me accountable, and (above all) love me like Jesus — and for whom I strive to do the same.

In truth, this doesn’t look a whole lot different from the tasks of “clergy self-care.” I’m spending time with my family, investing in supportive relationships, doing spiritual disciplines, taking care of my body, keeping Sabbath and going on dates with my wife. But I’m not so quick to separate this from what I’m doing with the staff and laity in ministry, where we’re investing in relationships, building bridges in the community, developing leaders, taking risks, working hard, having fun, doing what we love and celebrating God’s fruits. Somehow in walking with Jesus, and with one another, the stressors are a shared burden. A more integrated, wholistic life becomes possible by the grace of the One to whom we are yoked. Self-care is no longer another box on the to-do list (which is stressful in itself!). Instead, it becomes a natural fruit of Christian discipleship—a lifestyle that comes with a whole host of stressors, in itself, but that also comes with the spiritual resources which empower and liberate us to know peace and joy as we walk alongside the stressed-out of this world. ☞

— The Rev. Brad Dulaney is the pastor of Redwood United Methodist Church in Rocky Mount, Va.

¹ “Stressed Out” by twenty one pilots.

² <http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2016/03/one-thing-considered-stressed-out-an-anthem-of-millennial-anxiety/470034/>

³ “What Clergy Do Not Need” by Lillian Daniel in *CT Pastors*, Nov. 2009 (<http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2009/november-online-only/what-clergy-do-not-need.html>)

FOUR DAILY PRACTICES FOR LIFE-WORK BALANCE



By Jason Duley

I've been busy lately. You might identify with this condition. Busy, however, is not a state of spiritual fitness. So I reflect on my life-work balance often so that I may intentionally ensure that busy does not become a chronic affliction. Today's world pushes us to perform, to work 24/7 without disconnecting — ever. As a result life may become frayed, frustrated and fragmented. Where's the balance?


Life-work balance begins with God. I am mindful that keeping the Sabbath is not a suggestion but a command. Working most Sundays I find other ways to honor this command and create a rhythm of ceasing from work. Each day begins with a Sabbath rest (a good sleep) then a morning devotion time. Throughout a typical workday I aim to practice these steps: flow, friendship, family and communion-focus.

Flow is a fluent, energized focus. I enter it first through physical fitness in the mornings. Jesus said, "Consider the lilies..." so I literally go outdoors to experience God's presence in creation. My daily ethos revolves around an anchor habit, running. Three runs a week, of varying speed and distance, provide a solid foundation for health and wholeness. Often I supplement that with cycling once or twice. More deeply, it is simply the time outdoors. I pay no gym membership fees because I prefer (as John Muir did) to read the scripture of nature. It's invigorating no matter the weather. That means either in sleet and snow or the still heat of summer, I'm finding recreation (literally, recreation). For me this is a moving meditation, not merely a physical experience. It helps me mentally to remain present, not worrying about the future. To experience God's presence, one must be present. This first practice helps me

to be calm in conflict, focused on Christ in relationships and less busy or hurried in my daily work. Faithful self-care means I can be the rested and healthy leader a congregation needs.

Another practice is the virtue of friendship. Among pastors, collegial friendships happen only with intentionality. I make a consistent effort to schedule lunches or hikes in order to build solid friendships in ministry. Looking back, it has been during these times that my strength is renewed, my attitude improved. Accountability and encouragement reenergize me through the presence of faithful friends. Clergy peer learning groups provide regular opportunities to find and forge these relationships. Friendships inside and outside of the congregation are also a source of support and a ceasing from "busy-ness".

Even more important is the role that family plays in my balanced life. I grew up in a house that anger and anxiety built, where workaholism was the respectable addiction. In my early adulthood I resolved to live differently, to lead my family on a healthier path. When my kids were born I carved out a two-hour dinner time daily so that I could be present when they got off the school bus. We would have family dinners at the table almost every evening before I returned to church for meetings. Having a supportive spouse, who is my best friend, makes all the difference in the world. While my work and family spheres intersect, my family life goes beyond church activities and often takes precedence over work. I leverage the ever-helpful appointment calendar. My family is scheduled first, so I can say, "My regrets; I have a prior commitment at that time."

Finally, I cultivate a communion-focus. I imagine the Table experience while at meetings or having crucial conversations with challenging personalities. How do I feel at the Table? How do I extend grace and greet all participants? And most significantly, how do I hold the elements? Laity who serve communion by intinction have had this experience as well. I hold the bread or the cup with arms extended, in hospitality to others. I hold them with open hands. In any situation when I feel I'm cramped or clenching my fists — becoming stressed, over-worked, over-functioning — I remember my communion-focus, which is the culmination of all the above, the transformation of the renewing of the mind (Ephesians 4:23). To embody a certain balance, a creative tension between life and work is an ongoing effort, a spiritual exercise, a life-work in itself. 

— The Rev. Jason Duley is senior pastor at Galilee UMC, Arlington District.



SELF-CARE: CONTROLLING OUR LIVES IN PROPER RELATIONSHIP TO GOD

By Kyungsuk Cho

Presidents don't get vacations — they just get a change of scenery," said Mrs. Nancy Reagan. So do, I believe, pastors. Well, with a family of five including three active children, that is certainly my reality.

Our time is limited to 24 hours a day. The more we work, the less time we have for self-care. That is just simple math. And vice versa — the more we do self-care, the less time we would have for work. It hardly looks possible to find the time for self-care in the chaotic busyness of ministry.

In that sense, I have learned that reducing stress in ministry, which is what we generally call "self-care," actually means "self-control." Like Paul said in his letter to Galatians, self-control is one of the Fruit of the Spirit. From this perspective, self-care is not simply about resting or enjoying hobbies. It is more about how to control our lives in the proper relationship to God.

In other words, coping with stress is not necessarily about "doing" something. We are often prone to think that we must do things for self-care. Of course, there are good relaxation techniques and exercise programs to relieve stress and stay healthy. I urge my colleagues to find one that works for them. However, I believe self-care is more often about discerning where to "stop" with courage and confidence, and letting the Spirit work on our behalf.

In an effort to maintain healthy control in my life, I use a planner. I know many ministers use their calendars for time management. Surprisingly, however, sometimes a

calendar only tells us what is ahead. Using a planner, on the other hand, has helped me to prioritize tasks in their proper order of their importance. Very often, we end up sweating over things that seem to be urgent but are not really important. I often see examples of this with my family care. Using my planner ensures that I don't miss my sons' school events or family outings. When we prioritize our duties not only by their perceived urgency but also by their importance, we enjoy better control of our time and can nurture what is important but easily missed. By doing this, I have never missed, at least so far, important family events, except for one time, when I was unexpectedly called to lead a funeral and missed my son's birthday party. Thankfully to God, he was forgiving.

In addition, thinking of the importance of items to be done, in my daily prayer, I normally ask "why" questions like, "Why did we begin this?" "Why do we have to keep doing this?" "Why is it so important?" and so forth. This particular conversation with God helps me be continually motivated, since it keeps me focused on the goal that my ministry ultimately has.

Also, to avoid clergy burnout, as Kim Johnson emphasizes, I have learned that it is very important to distinguish between "accessibility" and "availability." As a minister, I am always accessible to my people. They can freely contact me anytime, but that does not necessarily mean that I am available at every moment. Establishing healthy boundaries is crucial when it comes to coping with stress, as it holds me accountable for the ultimate purpose of ministry, without causing any unnecessary exhaustion.

With regard to the life and ministry of lay leaders, I have discovered one of the biggest fears, which causes fatigue to lay leaders, is that they do not really understand the exact boundaries of what they are supposed to do. Therefore, at the beginning of every year, I try to make sure my staff and lay leaders clearly understand what their commitments are. Normally, in cooperation with the Nomination Committee, I work on the job descriptions of the lay leaders. And for the staff, I work with the Staff-Parish Relations Committee in the same way. And I revise them every year. It is not to be dogmatic. It is not only to put "things to do" on the list. It is rather to help people understand their responsibilities and priorities, so that they may realize where to stop as well as what to do. 🍷

— The Rev. Kyungsuk Cho is pastor at Wesley UMC, Arlington District.



LETTING GO OF "BALANCE IN MINISTRY"

By Chenda Innis Lee

The pursuit of "balance" in one's life is all a buzz nowadays. This lofty goal assumes that distributing equal attention to every facet of one's life will yield tranquility. However, the concept of balance, as Karoline Lewis describes in her book, *She: Five Keys to Unlock the Power of Women in Ministry*, is more of a myth because "it is simply not possible to keep even the important things in your life in perfect balance every day, all the time."

I have found this to be true in my life as I live out my call to ministry through being a wife, mother and pastor. Even with the best time management tools at my disposal, it is impossible to give equal attention to these demanding roles. Each role presents, daily, varying circumstances that require me to choose which ultimately receives more or less of my attention.

While an admirable goal, I find the quest of maintaining perfect equilibrium in my life daunting and unrealistic. For me, it does not yield serenity; which is why, in the words of Princess Elsa, I have decided to "let it go." Instead, I focus more on making wise choices that will bear fruit and help me find joy and peace amidst my multiple identities. I offer the following as examples of how I am choosing to live into my myriad roles:


Listening to my body. In 2012, I went through an experience that nearly claimed my life. In my effort of trying to fulfill ministry requirements, I ignored visible signs from my body that something was awry. With the notion of needing to fulfill the clerical role, I put my then 18-month-old daughter's life and mine at risk. That experience taught me that I have only one life and when I am gone, ministry will continue, while my loved ones will be left with the void of my absence. I have since learned that my body is always right. I should never disregard or take lightly when physical signals in my body tell me that I

need care and attention.

Appreciating the flexibility my vocation provides.

One of the most challenging aspects of parenting is the cost of childcare. As a pastor, I am privileged to enjoy flexibility that helps me offset the rising cost of childcare and spend more time with my children. I am able to change and shift my schedule when unforeseen circumstances arise and can also bring my children to work when childcare arrangements fall through. I am deeply grateful for congregations that have created the space for me to function in this way.

Using my allotted vacation time. In our profession, time away is essential for self-renewal and fruitfulness in ministry. While we do not have accounts of Jesus' vacation destinations, the gospels writers show that taking time for renewal was an essential component of his ministry. I was fortunate to have worked alongside colleagues who modeled the importance of taking vacation when I served as an associate pastor. I am also grateful for our conference's generous vacation policy for full-time clergy. I take full advantage of this by scheduling two consecutive weeks off in the summer in order to enjoy uninterrupted time with my family. The other two weeks of vacation are scheduled for the week after Christmas and the week after Easter, since these are the most demanding times in the life of the church.

Since letting go of pursuing balance as an attainable goal, I find myself less stressed and better able to function in the roles to which I have been called. 

— The Rev. Chenda Innis Lee is the pastor of Calloway United Methodist Church on the Arlington District.



CARING FOR CHURCH LEADER BURNOUT

Faith communities recognize that many pastors suffer from burnout and if left unaddressed, burnout can have painful consequences. According to the Ministering to Ministers Foundation, more than 1,600 U.S. pastors are forced out of their positions each year; nearly one in four ministers faces a forced termination at least once during his or her ministry; and only 54 percent of pastors go back into full-time church-related positions after a forced termination. A top cause of termination is burnout related to work demands and family, financial, physical or other stressors.

Knowing how to help church leaders avoid burnout is important, but what if you suspect your leader is already burned out? Being proactive could help prevent a crisis.

First, recognize burnout is a common mental health condition best treated by mental health professionals, just as physical ailments are best treated by medical professionals. If you suspect burnout, your role is to encourage the person to seek counseling, and provide support as he or she undergoes counseling.

Identify the signs.

According to the Mayo Clinic, these are the signs of burnout:

- ❖ Being overly cynical or critical
- ❖ Having a hard time getting started on an assignment
- ❖ Behaving irritably with co-workers
- ❖ Lacking enough energy to be productive consistently
- ❖ Lacking satisfaction from achievements

- ❖ Appearing disillusioned or expressing disillusionment
- ❖ Using food, drugs or alcohol to feel better or simply to not feel
- ❖ Changed sleeping or eating habits
- ❖ Suffering from unexplained headaches, backaches or other physical complaints

Be direct and discreet.

If you see the signs, you can first try the direct approach. Privately, tell them that they seem to be under a great deal of stress and you are concerned and want to help. If they are receptive, provide a list of resources (some ideas are below) or a list of local mental health professionals. If they aren't, try talking with the spouse or another family member. Perhaps that person can try the same tactic but with better results.

Seek professional assistance.

If the leader is in denial and will not seek a professional evaluation, contact one of these sources. Sometimes, they will intervene and contact the person directly.

These sources have connections to The United Methodist Church or support denominational values:

- ❖ Methodist Counseling and Consultation Services offers individualized assessment and counseling for clergy. According to MCCS, medical insurance often covers the cost of therapy with nominal co-pay, but fees can be negotiated with the individual therapist.
- ❖ PastorCare, an ecumenical organization based in Raleigh, N.C., provides

referrals and other resources to support pastors. The group says it will initiate contact with a pastor who is reluctant to seek help.


- ❖ Quiet Waters Ministry is a comprehensive ministry focused on the spiritual, emotional and physical health of Christian leaders.

Provide encouragement and support.

If the leader recognizes the problem and seeks help, your role becomes one of support. Counseling takes time and energy, so offer to take on extra duties to free the leader to have time for healing. Offer to help at home with child care, cooking and cleaning, especially if retreat-style treatment is being done.

From a professional perspective, ask the leader how he or she would like to address the issue with the congregation if it is necessary. If the counseling requires the leader to be away a great deal, a statement to the church members might be in order.

Finally, understand family, addiction or other issues outside of the church may be contributing to the problem. Respect personal boundaries and don't pry too much about the recovery process. That's the counselor's job.

If you suspect your church leader is experiencing burnout, step in to offer help. It might take courage, but think about how he or she helps church members. Your church leader deserves the same. 

—Article from United Methodist Communications

TECHNOLOGY TIPS



Technology and creativity — a recipe for Thanksgiving

By Tricia Brown

Turkey and dressing. Football and parades. Americans have a variety of Thanksgiving traditions. If you are trying to figure out how your church can participate in the celebration, the internet offers a variety of ideas and tips to help make the preparations easier than ever.

Post expressions of Thanksgiving

Social media and smartphones make it easier than ever to help get your congregation in the Thanksgiving spirit. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and even texts can be great ways to share the Thanksgiving spirit.

- ❖ Join the fun of Facebook. Post a Thanksgiving-related question on your church's Facebook page and ask for comments. For example, "What is your most memorable Thanksgiving and why?" Check out these Top 10 UMC Facebook Posts to get those creative juices flowing. Post a new question each day.
- ❖ Post Scripture verses, quotes from a Thanksgiving sermon or liturgy, prayers or even memes.
- ❖ Rejuvenate your blog by writing special Thanksgiving messages. Involve your readers in the discussion by encouraging them to comment with their own expressions of thanksgiving.
- ❖ Participate in a month-long celebration of Thanksgiving by posting something for which you are thankful each day. Think about specific things related to your church and congregation as well as your personal life.
- ❖ Ask volunteers to shoot videos with an "I am thankful for ..." theme. Post these on your church website or Facebook page throughout the month of November. Or recruit volunteers to produce a special marketing video to show the Sunday before Thanksgiving.
- ❖ Encourage your children's classes to write Thanksgiving poems or stories. Teachers can find great Thanksgiving writing prompts and printouts online. Ask children to read a few selections during November worship services, display copies on bulletin boards in the hall, and post a few on your church website. For safety, include only the author's first name.



Reach out to your community

Perhaps the best way for your church to express thankfulness any time of the year is to share your blessings with others.

- ❖ Ask Sunday school classes or small groups to look for volunteer opportunities or choose a special community outreach project to complete during November. There also are lots of outreach ideas for families. Serve at a shelter, feed the homeless, visit a nursing home or check out the Red Cross, United Way or Salvation Army for other ways you can get involved.
- ❖ Organize a church food bank or stock the shelves of a local community food bank. Check with the food bank to see what items are most needed. Then, designate one Sunday for the congregation to bring those items into the church. Ask volunteers to deliver the food to the food bank after the service.
- ❖ Ask church members to submit names or contact your local school counselors for the names of needy families. Then, recruit volunteers to collect donations of food and assemble food boxes to be delivered to the families the week of Thanksgiving.
- ❖ Remember that your blessings go beyond food. Contact local charities, including those who serve veterans, foster children and prisoners. Ask how your congregation can help. Often they are in need of gently used clothing, hygiene items and cleaning supplies, as well as food and other small gifts.
- ❖ Conduct a Black Friday outreach. Black Friday has encroached upon the Thanksgiving holiday causing

many employees and consumers to spend the holiday working and shopping. Take goodies to the customer service desk of local stores. Ask the manager to put the goodies in the break room as a way of thanking the employees for their hard work during the holiday season. Or pass out cups of coffee and cocoa and doughnuts to people standing in line. Use the opportunity to start conversations with the waiting customers about your church and your relationship with Christ.

However your church chooses to celebrate Thanksgiving, make it easier on all those involved with simple event registration. Take advantage of all the benefits that technology offers in your efforts this November. 🍁

— Tricia Brown is a freelance writer with United Methodist Communications.

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Devotions from General Conference 2016-based scripture

LIVING THE WORD



The Rev. Teresa Keezel is pastor at Trinity UMC, Ches-terfield. She has two children of whom she is very proud.

October 2, 2016

The Imprint of God

Hebrews 1: 1-9

How many times have you read in the Old Testament “and the word of the LORD..?” In the New Testament, the LORD decides to try a new tactic. Instead of “telling” the Everlasting One is going to try “showing.” Educators remind us that different people learn in different ways. Some are auditory learners and learn by hearing, others learn by reading and still others learn by seeing and engaging in an activity. And so “the word became flesh and dwelt among us. We have seen his glory like that of the Father’s only son, full of grace and truth.”

The author of Hebrews is writing to the Jewish people and he uses language that they all know well. The world — that which we have always been able to see — has been created through “the Word.” God spoke and the world became.

Now this same Word has become flesh. Where we heard the Word before, now we get to see it. We get to see the words lived out in front of us and as he loves other — the Word asks us to join in.

In Genesis, we hear God pronounce that creation is good and God is pleased. In the Gospels, we hear God declare that He loves us; God loves us so much that He has come down to earth both to show us the way to live and He comes to cover our sins. Because our sins are covered, we can keep trying and learning and growing into its likeness.

Try. Fall down. Have our bottoms brushed off, our tears dried, a good hug and then we try again.

So Jesus accomplishes dual goals. “The word made flesh comes.” It lives out its ministry interacting with us. And this interaction is patient and loving and restoring. In living, the Word continually calls to us and invites us to share in loving each other. The other main goal is trying to assure us that the Father continues declaring us worthy of love. The Father continues wanting to walk in relationships with us, and to achieve this, the Father is willing to carry the burden and initiative for the relationship. (He is willing to forgive our sins.)

It is all about loving relationships.

October 14, 2016

Builder of the House

Hebrews 3: 1-6; Matthew 7: 24-29

Once again we hear the echo that the world became flesh and dwelt among us. The Word as part of the Godhead was from the beginning. Creation was made through him. But the author of Hebrews isn’t just constructing a Christology of the Son of God, he is also building an addition to the house.

Because the Word has been from the beginning and He is part of the design/building team, when we see the Son, we see the Father. As we have watched Jesus live out the Law, we have seen how the Father intended His design to be constructed. Moses was a spokesman for God: God spoke to Moses, Moses then spoke and interpreted to people. But with Jesus, there is no middleman. Jesus is part of the original design team. He is the son.

In ancient times, society believed that a son, especially the firstborn son, was a direct copy of the father. The author is giving his audience language and assurance that they know. “The Son” Jesus, can be trusted. Also as the Son, we hear that Jesus continues to build onto the house.

With a clear line of Jesus’ authority laid out, the author moves on in building the addition. With audacious language, we hear declared: “Therefore brothers and sisters, holy partners in this high calling.”

We aren’t just servants like Moses, we are partners — partners in the building of the house.

Coupled with the passage from Hebrews, we are directed to Matthew. Here in Jesus’ own words, the building program is laid out. A wise-man builds his house on a rock. If we are wise, we will build on Jesus. We will build a house following the same design and with the same building methods as Jesus. The design is good; the methods create a strong, durable house that no forces can shake.

We are invited to be partners in the building process. “Brothers and sister, holy partners in a heavenly calling...”



We hear the call. In Jesus, we see the design and the building methods. Will we join in? Will we learn these building methods and discipline ourselves in the techniques?

October 16, 2016

The Great High Priest
Hebrews 4 14- 5:1-10

We don't think a lot about having a priest. Priests are the swinging door between God and people. People come to them, and they turn around and offer to God. Likewise, God gives to the priest who in turn, presents it to the people. Jesus, we are told, serves as our high priest. As one who is both God and human, he stands in for both sides of the relationship. He can both speak and act as God, and he feels the tensions of a limited, vulnerable partner.

Sometimes, we over emphasize the divine nature that lived in and through Jesus of Nazareth. Sometimes, we get so focused on the Godness of Jesus (that he can be and is a full likeness of God) that we discount the human Jesus (one that has a beginning and is full of limitations and weaknesses). The author wants to make sure that we don't do this. While continuing to build his case for the divine nature that resided in Jesus, he turns his attention to the man.

Jesus can sympathize with us because he is like us. There is a tendency to want to make Jesus so solidly divine, that he cannot be truly vulnerable. There is a temptation to make Jesus so consumed by the indwelling of God's spirit that the human struggle of choosing God disappears.

We are back to the central place of free will. We believe that free will is a key component of our journey with God. We get to choose moment by

moment, decision by decision, whether we partner with God or not. To make Jesus so divine that there is not the ambivalence of a real choice, detracts from his greatness. Jesus is so special and such an impressive example because he did have a choice. Like us, he was genuinely tested. But he allowed God to both live and reign in him.

Jesus struggled. Jesus suffered over his decisions. He experienced doubts and anguish, and heartache. And as he struggled and chose, he was "made perfect." Jesus grew into the image of God.

Oh, United Methodists! A key part of our faith system finds its origin here. Through his struggles, testing, tempting and weakness, he was made perfect. The same is true for you and me. Are you going on to perfection? Do you expect to reach it in this lifetime? These are on our path, and in the difficult ones we are made new.

October 23, 2016

The High Priest Forever
Hebrews 7: 1-3; 19b-28

Every now and then, the New Testament gives us glimpses of old Jewish tradition. We hear the buzz around Melchizedek — the King and high priest of Salem, the City of Peace. Our author compares Jesus to this figure. Like Melchizedek, Jesus comes out to meet the faithful. Melchizedek came to Abraham, Jesus came to us. Melchizedek comes out to accept Abraham's offering and to bless him, Jesus comes out to meet the faithful and to bless us.

Having established Jesus' credentials for being both God's presence and fully like us, the author makes it clear who his audience is: a Jewish people that require an unblemished blood

sacrifice. Sometimes it escapes us that our roots rest in blood sacrifice. The author calls us back. Someone has to pay. The payments must be made in blood and with a perfect offering. At each choice, Jesus allowed God to reign. He even allows God to reign all the way to surrendering His life as a substitute to ours.

God loves us so much that the goal of creation is for us to walk with Him. God realized all the way back in Genesis 9 that we would never be able to fully do this. We keep wandering away or out-and-out rebelling. The only way God can fulfill his goal of walking with us is for Him to make it possible. And so He does. He himself provided the blood sacrifice. In the Old Testament, God provided the ram for Abraham and Isaac. In the New Testament, God offers a divine/human substitute.

We owe an awful lot to the man Jesus. He surrendered and allowed God full sway. He comes out to us. If we will accept Jesus, our king and high priest will grant us and grant us peace. Will we meet him? Will we offer our lives?

October 30, 2016

Pioneer and Perfected of our Faith
Hebrews 12: 1-13

Sometimes I grow so discouraged. Do you? Sometimes I want to just give up. I want to plop on the floor like a child. Other times, I want to run away as far as I can get. Sometimes I get angry at the world. Sometimes my disgust is at myself.

Jesus was "made perfect" in his suffering. But I don't want to suffer! Tough! The author of Hebrews knows where we live. He is very realistic about this journey that we are on. He knows that it can be discouraging and

(Continued on pg. 29: "LIVING WORD.")

CLERGY & DIACONAL



DEATHS



The Rev. Frederick J. Pawell, Jr. died Aug. 19, 2016. He was married to Geraldine for "20 years of wedded bliss." They were blessed with

their daughter, Judith of Des Moines, IA. Fred was fortunate to meet and be married to Grace for 40 years. She preceded him in death in 1999.

Fred joined the US Marine Corps during World War II and transferred to the Air Force in 1950, retiring in 1966 as Chief Master Sergeant. He was an ordained United Methodist minister and served for 10 years as the first executive director of Big Brothers, Hampton. He served as chaplain with the Hampton Police Dept. for three years and with the Williamsburg Police Department for 22 years.

He began his service with the Virginia Conference in 1968 at St. James UMC in the former Peninsula District. He also served Mt. Pleasant UMC in the former Norfolk District and Tyler Memorial. He retired from the ministry in 1983.

The Rev. Edward J. Taylor Jr., a retired elder in the Virginia Conference, died Aug. 20, 2016. He was a resident at the Hermitage, Alexandria, for many years.



He began serving churches in the Virginia Conference in 1956. He went on to serve Francis Asbury UMC, Oceana; Grace

UMC, Roanoke; Market Street UMC, Winchester; 71 Highland UMC, Colonial Heights; Wesley Memorial UMC, Charlottesville; Asbury UMC, Harrisonburg; and Grace UMC, Manassas. He retired in 1993.

William "Bill" James Burleigh, 75, Lynchburg, died Sept. 3, 2016. Born May 31, 1941, in Richmond, Va., he was the son of the late Rev. James Sidney Burleigh, a United Methodist minister and the late Amalia Moore Burleigh.

The Rev. Bill Burleigh was an undergraduate at Ferrum and Lynchburg colleges and a graduate student of Duke University Divinity School in North Carolina. He served as a United Methodist minister in the Virginia Annual Conference for 32 years until his retirement in 1995.

He was a member of Centenary United Methodist Church and continued to serve their congregation as a Sunday school teacher, circle leader, choir member and member of the music committee prior to his illness. Previously, he started the Asbury Parkside Community Center for youths and the first day care center in Portsmouth, Va., in his early ministry. After his retirement from the conference, he sang with the Jefferson Choral Society in Lynchburg for several years.

Most recently he was appointed as a member of the Patient Advisory Board for the University of Virginia Dialysis Center located in Amherst.

Bill is survived by his wife, Susan Karnes Burleigh and his beloved daughters, Karyl Burleigh Bloyer (Christopher) of Saint Leonard, Md. and Catherine Burleigh Smith (Brian) of New Stanton, Pa. He is also survived by his two grandsons Zachary and Sean Smith of New Stanton, Pa.

Deaconess Dorothy Peers, 90, died July 29, 2016. She was a long-time member of Trinity UMC, Richmond District. Her funeral was held at Trinity UMC on Aug. 29.

Jeannette Edwards Kube, 87, died Aug. 22, 2016. Retired from Lone Star Industries, Jeannette volunteered at Portsmouth General Hospital and was actively involved with many United Methodist churches.

She is survived by her daughter, Karen K. Tew of Suffolk; son, Paul H. Kube Jr. of Portsmouth; seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

June Menzies Guldenschuh, 90, of Prince George, died Aug. 19, 2016. She was preceded in death by her husband of 62 years **the Rev. Edward Guldenschuh**. She served alongside her husband faithfully for 38 years in the Virginia Conference.

She is survived by her sister, Vivian Menzies; daughter, Lynette Doyle; two sons, Blaine Guldenschuh (Shirley) of Prospect Hill, N.C. and Jon Guldenschuh (Karen) of Beaverdam; eight grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

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Thelma Olivia White, 99, died Aug. 18, 2016. Thelma is the mother of **Brenda NeSmith**, wife of **retired elder Samuel E. NeSmith**.

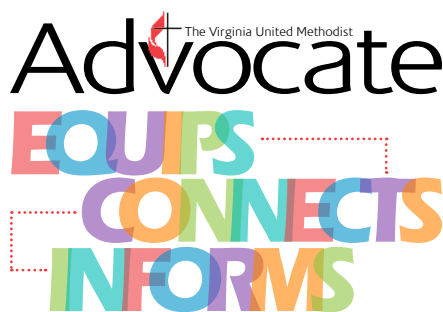
Thelma's entire professional career took place in the administrative arena of the Methodist Church. Thelma was uniquely privileged to witness the historic developments within the Methodist denomination, especially related to African-Americans. Thelma was secretary to two African-American bishops for 24 years, during the denomination's segregated Central Jurisdiction: Bishop Alexander P. Shaw (1940-52) and Bishop Edgar A. Love (1952-64). After the denomination's merger in 1964, Thelma moved to the Baltimore Conference United Methodist Center where she provided secretarial services in the offices of the district superintendents, the Board of Missions and the Conference Treasurer. For two years, Thelma was employed as secretary at the N.M. Carroll Home. In 1982, Thelma retired, having rendered 42 years of professional service to the United Methodist Church.

A member of Union Memorial United Methodist Church in Baltimore, Thelma was active in the Flower Circle, the Mission Team and the United Methodist Women where she served as treasurer for many years. Beyond the local church, Thelma served on the Conference Historical Society and the Board of Managers of the N.M. Carroll Home.

BIRTHS

The Rev. Pam Culler, Sherbourne UMC, Richmond District, welcomed a new grandson on Aug. 23, 2016.

Gunner Isaac Culler is the child of Justin Culler and his wife Christine. 🍀



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(LIVING WORD, continued from page 27.)

long. He acknowledges that the world we live in, including churches, are far from perfect living communities. And so he writes to encourage: lay aside the weight and run with perseverance looking to Jesus.

As a young girl, I remember being told that if I chose to follow Jesus, my life would be easier and smoother. I have found the trust to be quite something else. Loving my neighbor as myself and loving my enemies is quite challenging. To let go of fear requires continuous effort. To allow God to sweep me into all kinds of places pushes me to many situations that I quite frankly don't want to be in. I find that life is not easier. Sometimes it is more painful...though more meaningful as well.

So the author reminds us not to look to ourselves but to look to Jesus. He too suffered. People gave him a hard time. But his connection with the Father, saved him and raised him for the dead. As we too stay connected with the Father, he too will save us.

Sometimes our trials are the world

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trying to push us around. Sometimes our enemies are trying to hurt us; sometimes it is God trying to reshape our attitudes, trying to trim our sprouts so that more energy is moved to where it needs to go.

Anyway it goes, look to Jesus! Look to Jesus and let him help you. He can help you lift your drooping limbs. Try to set aside what struggles you can. And run, walk, plod — just get there. And if necessary, know that Jesus will carry you when you need him to as well. Just keep focused on him and go. 🍀

FROM THE BISHOP

Bishop Sharma Lewis' official start to her episcopacy began on Sept. 1, but our bishop was called to Houston, TX, where she met for the Global Clergywomen Gathering and the World Methodist Conference.

Check out these pictures from her travels and visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y0kFbo-qlv2o> for her "official" greeting to the Virginia Conference. 🇺🇸

(Below) The newly-elected women bishops were recognized at the Global Clergywomen Gathering.

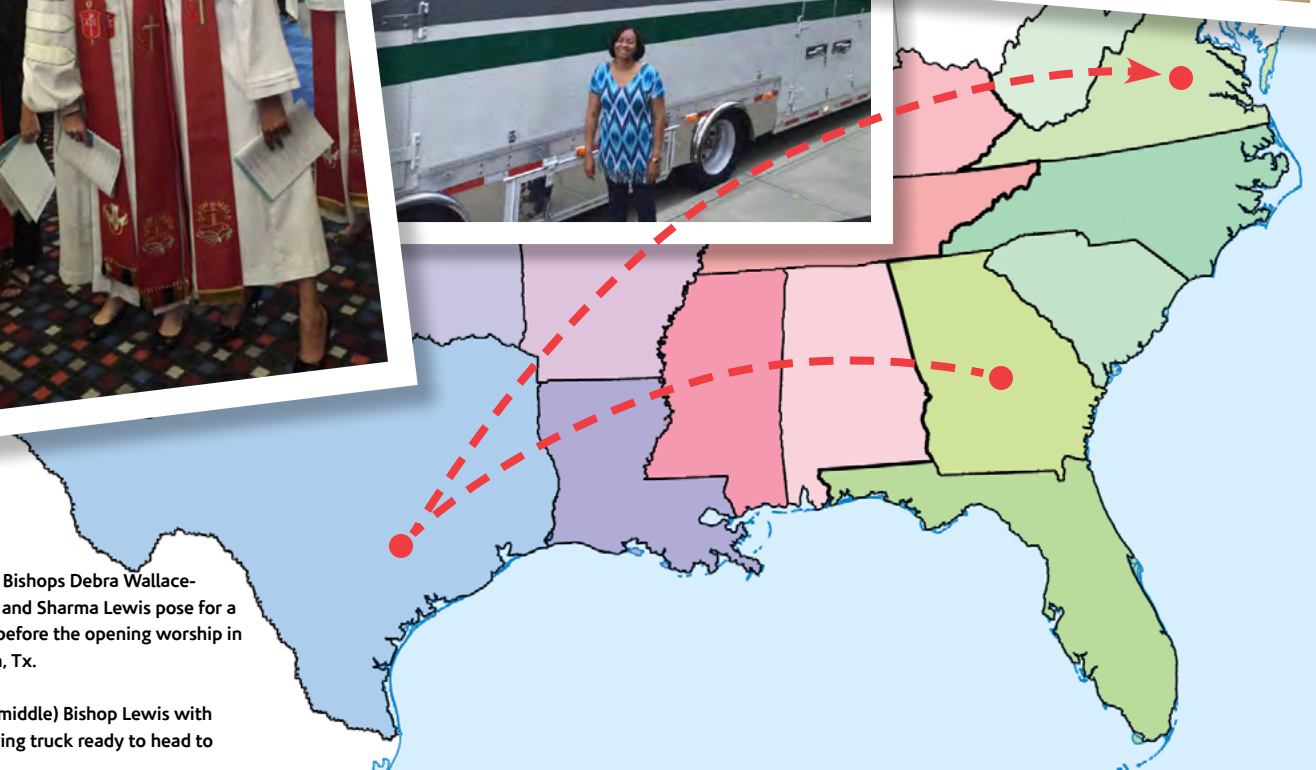


(Below) Bishop Lewis takes a moment to celebrate her new state..

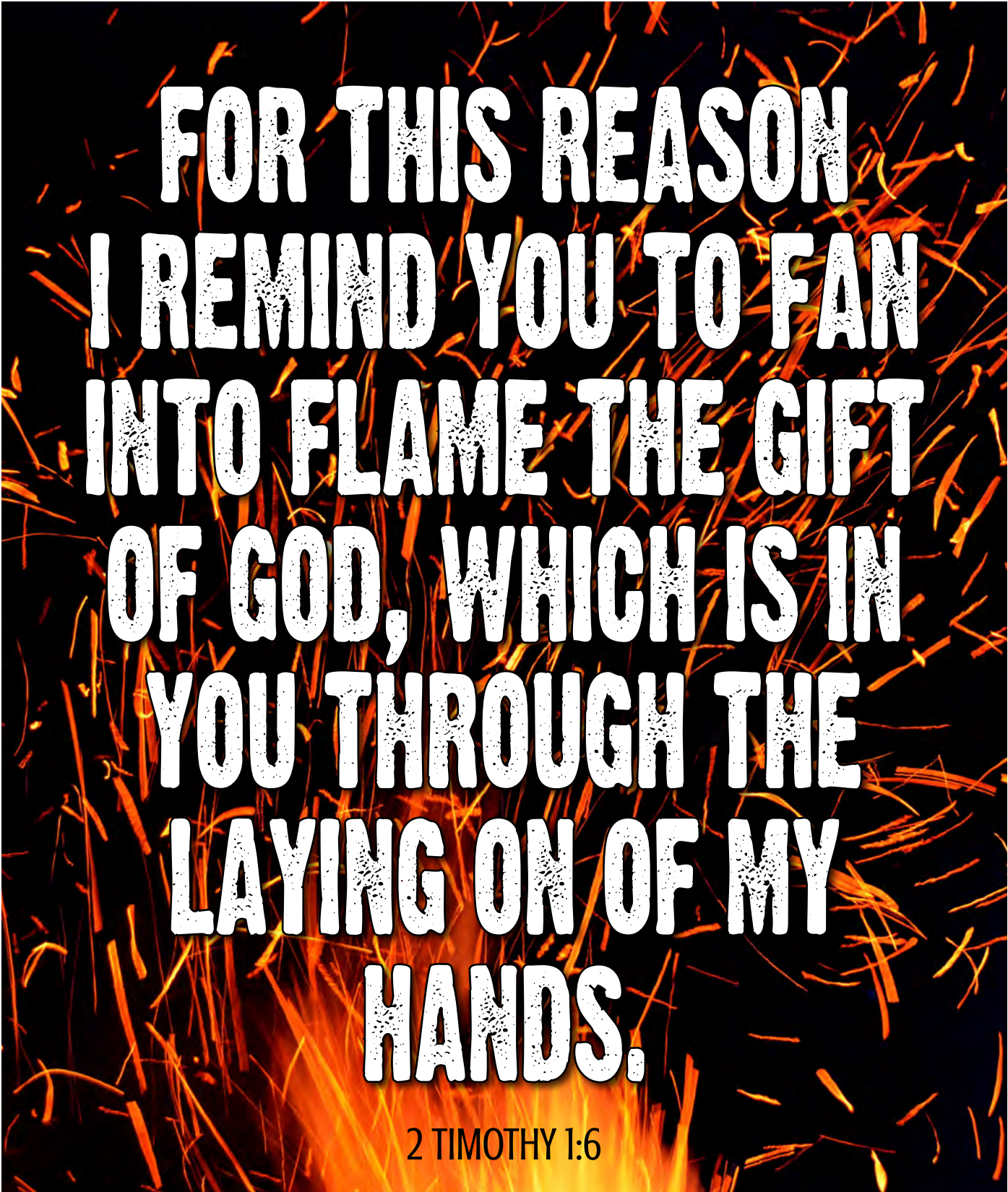


(Above) Bishops Debra Wallace-Padgett and Sharma Lewis pose for a picture before the opening worship in Houston, Tx.

(Above middle) Bishop Lewis with her moving truck ready to head to Virginia.



ONE LAST WORD



**FOR THIS REASON
I REMIND YOU TO FAN
INTO FLAME THE GIFT
OF GOD, WHICH IS IN
YOU THROUGH THE
LAYING ON OF MY
HANDS.**

2 TIMOTHY 1:6

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