

Advocate



Allowing the Spirit to move:

Music in worship services

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PILLOW TALK



Madeline Pillow
Editor

Try a little empathy

I was driving to work one morning and I saw two birds in the road. One had been hit by a car and the other was standing over it. I drove past feeling bad and wondering about the emotions of that witness—that bird who was still alive trying to assess what had happened to the other.

I've seen similar behavior with turkeys. It's also something that crows are known to do. Researchers have studied this behavior, and while it could be somewhat of a funeral service for a dead bird, research also suggests it could be an investigation. These birds could be figuring out how the bird died to avoid a similar fate.

Either way, I wish humans displayed more birdlike behavior. How often do we feel bad for someone and their situation and do nothing? How often do we see something terrible in the news and think "how awful?" But we don't do any investigation into the incident, why it happened or how it could be avoided.

Recently on our Facebook page, we shared the journey of the Rev. James Brigman from the North Carolina Conference who walked all the way from North Carolina to Washington D.C. to bring awareness to the effects of Medicaid cuts to adults and children like his daughter Faith who is considered medically fragile and depends on 24-hour care.

As expected some negative comments showed up on our page. One commenter asked Brigman to have some respect for himself and go home and take care of his daughter. While I wasn't surprised, I did wonder, are we no longer capable of being an empathetic people?


Empathy according to Merriam-Webster is "the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner."

Personally I know very little about people who need Medicaid; Brigman's journey and his daughter's story helped explain how dependent the family is upon it. Without it, Brigman said he and his wife would not be able to keep their store running let alone keep his job as a pastor. Ultimately Brigman is acting as a witness for his daughter.

When we forget to practice empathy, we act as if we know it all—everyone's personal story and struggles. In practicing empathy; however, we recognize we have not been in everyone else's shoes. We don't know what certain things feel like. We don't know it all.

That doesn't mean we can't question the veracity of stories or experiences. But today it seems more popular to immediately state that someone is wrong before hearing the whole story or after only hearing one side.

Empathy means listening to the whole story and more than one side. It also doesn't mean being in agreement. But you can show love and compassion even to those with whom you disagree.

What a novel idea. Loving our neighbor. Wonder who said that? 

Madeline C. Pillow



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Above: Grace UMC's 2017 Wesley Singers youth choir before their tour. Photo courtesy of Lynn Jost. See feature article beginning on page 12.



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The *Virginia Advocate* Staff

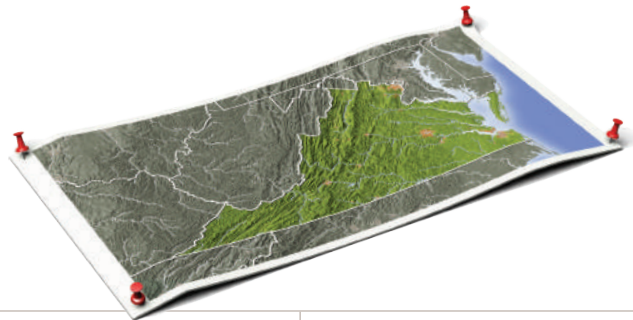
Madeline Pillow | Editor, Director of Communications

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The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



Pastor leads summer devotions on the water



By Madeline Pillow

There's a lot of grace out here," the Rev. Gary Heaton says as he paddles his canoe on the Roanoke River to what's known as "Downriver Devotion." Heaton, over the last four years, has paddled this same course and knows where the rocks are as well as the sandbars. Having seen the river at high and low water, he is in active relationship as he paddles.

Every Wednesday during the summer, Heaton has paddled to the sycamore tree at the Greenway mile post 22.7 at noon.

Under this sycamore, "Downriver Devotion" is an opportunity for any and all off the Greenway, the jogging path in Roanoke. While Heaton's church, Greene Memorial UMC, Roanoke District, has a mid-week service each week, the summer devotions are an active attempt to get the church outside of its traditional walls. The service is usually around 10 minutes complete with music, Scripture and a message. On this particular Wednesday that we traveled with Heaton, he

led music with his harmonica.

"It is an opportunity to be in creation, to develop a relationship with creation," said Heaton. "I have to tell you over the four years that I've been doing this, I've become very intimate with this river and you really get a sense of creation as a being with which you can have a relationship. There's something very life-giving about that."

While on the river, Heaton shares his love of nature and how it influences his ministry. He uses words like rhythm, applying it as easily to his ministry as to the river we are floating upon.

"Paddling is part of the rhythm of my spirituality and the rhythm of my worship week," Heaton shared.

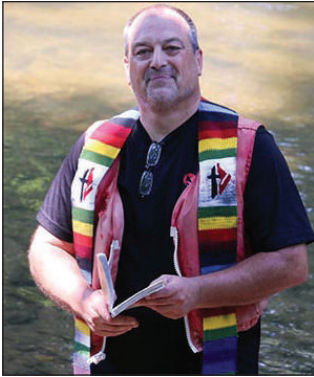
It's important to Heaton, he says, that both he and his church don't highly publicize the weekly devotions; rather, he enjoys that people in the community stumble upon it.

"We don't advertise this, we don't put a big spread in the paper, we let people discover it kind of like that flea market feeling that when people find something they think is really neat they have that thrill of finding it," said Heaton. "I think that's part of why we let this be a hidden gem in this beautiful spot and the people who discover it find it brings them life and energy."



The Rev. Gary Heaton combines his passion for paddling and preaching.

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



How it started

Heaton shared that one of the neatest things about the devotion is that the idea came from a community member. Heaton was paddling with a Recreation Department staff person when he shared with Heaton that a weekly service should be done on the water.

While Heaton acknowledges that people might say an outdoor ministry is simply recreation for him, he takes it a step further.

"It's also evangelistic. It's taking the Gospel into a setting where people can happen by it. My congregations have over time willingly and enthusiastically become a part of that and wanted to be associated with that," Heaton said.

He shared that he has conducted two river baptisms for young adults and that it had been embraced by his church because they have now become familiar being in an outdoor setting and making it a part of their worship.

Getting outside the church walls

Heaton notes that getting out into nature not only satisfies an environmental justice standpoint but also a biblical one.

"We live in an urban setting. People spend a lot of time under fluorescent lights, inside buildings and under roofs. And yet we are a biblical people and our Scriptures were written by people who spent most of their time in the out of doors," said Heaton. "I think a good way to be a biblical Christian is to be at least familiar with the context of the setting of where our Scriptures were written. To be comfortable in the out of doors, I'm going to say is an essential part of being a good biblical scholar."

From an environmental standpoint, Heaton said, knowing a simple thing as if the city of Roanoke's water is clean or dirty is an important part of being a citizen. As the church, Heaton said, its prompting to get outside their walls can help arouse interest in the community's world around them and start an engagement with the environment.

For Heaton, the devotions are not about the numbers, he said. Rain or shine, he makes the paddle down to mile post 22.7. He shared that even in the heat or rain, there have always been individuals there. In

his quest to be a non-anxious leader, Heaton said he sees how the church places a lot of anxiety on leaders if performance does not produce a large number of people.

"A big part of spirituality is not driven by the number of people who show up its more about that mystical connection between you and your Creator that other people are drawn to. The success of the 'Downriver Devotion, I would say, has been the people who have discovered in their own spirituality a desire to be in touch with creation," said Heaton. 🍷

-Madeline Pillow is the editor of the Virginia Advocate.



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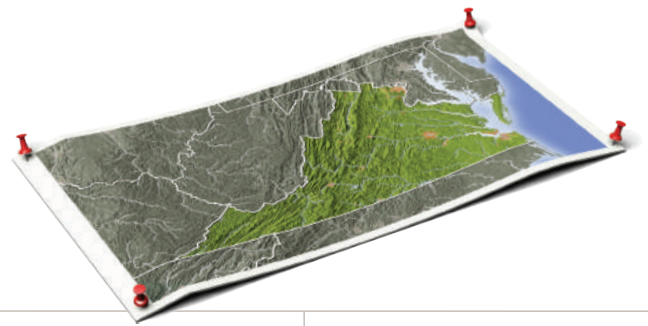
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The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



N.C. pastor walks to D.C. for Medicaid awareness

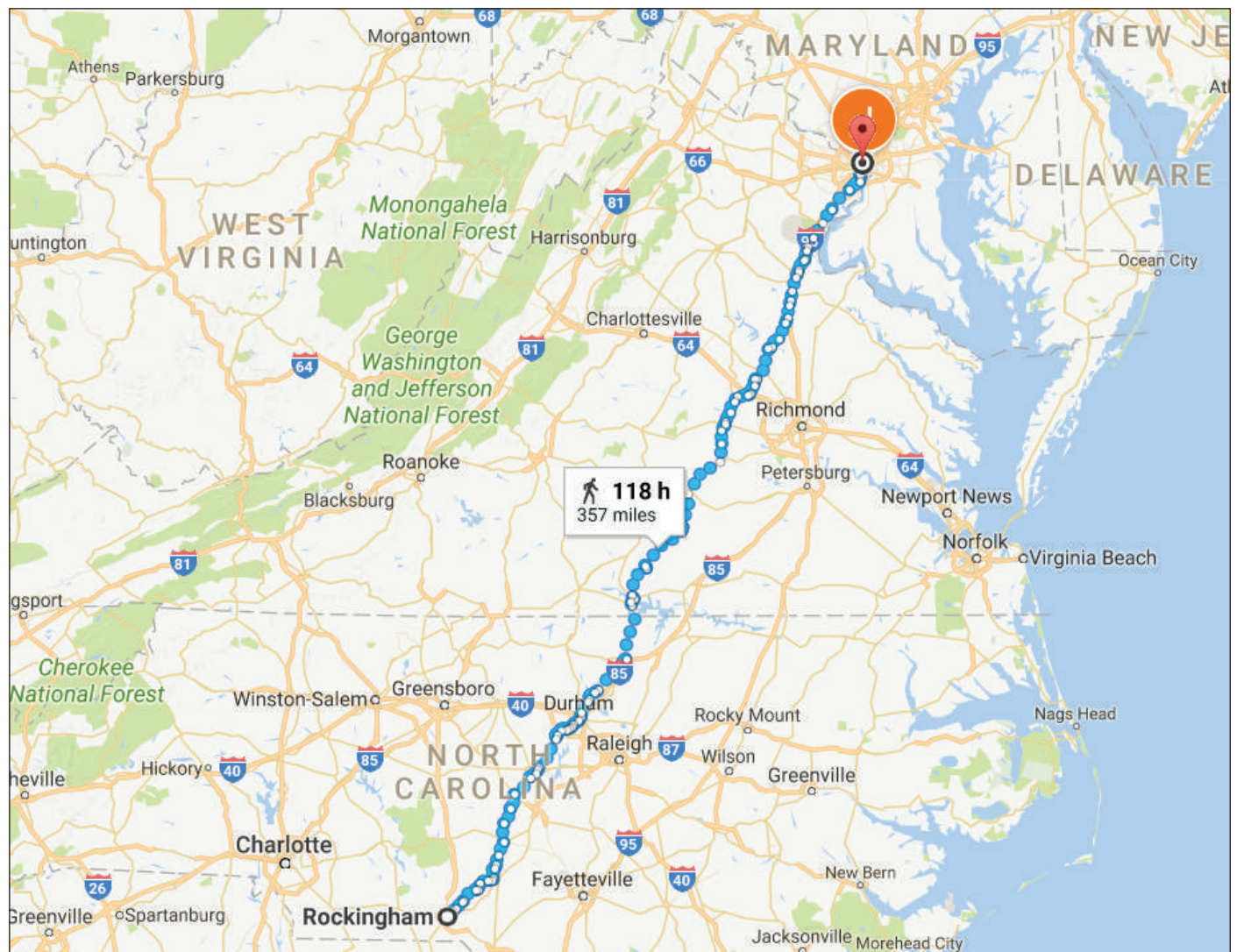
The Rev. James Brigman traveled from Rockingham, N.C. to Washington, D.C. beginning on July 7, 2017, to bring awareness to possible Medicaid cuts this past

month. Brigman's daughter Lauren Faith, 9, is considered medically fragile and requires 24-hour care. The family receives help from the Community Alternatives Program (CAP) which is one service that could be cut with possible federal spending cuts to Medicaid.

Brigman, who is from the North Carolina Conference, said he gathered strength and fellowship from the United Method-

ist connection along his journey.

From visiting with the Rev. Brian Seigle in South Hill to meeting with a group of community members and clergy including the Rev. Kendra Grimes, Randolph-Macon College chaplain, to support from the Rev. Keary Kincannon at Rising Hope Mission Church, Brigman shared his journey for Faith all along the way.



The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA

Traveling in Virginia, Brigman walked along Route 1 averaging about 20-25 miles a day in the humid Virginia weather. When the Senate vote was delayed a week, Brigman was able to slow his pace and walked into D.C. on Monday, July 24 after walking over 350 miles to get there.

Meeting up with Brigman in Richmond on July 17, he shared that it was the stories of families who are in similar situations that kept him going. He received these stories and shared his updates on a Facebook group entitled "A Voice for Lauren Faith Brigman and All Medically Fragile Children/Adults."

By the time Brigman had reached Richmond, his spirits were high and he had only worn through one pair of four athletic shoes that he had brought along. He shared that he was not just walking for Lauren but was walking for the other children and adults who are also on similar journeys.

Once reaching Washington, D.C. Brigman, his wife and daughter as well as other supporters talked with his senators and were able to sit in on the vote. They also visited some local UMC churches as well as the White House.

For now, Brigman is back at home and is still urging all to continue the



Brigman and his family taking part in communion at Rising Hope Mission Church.



The Rev. Brian Seigle was the first in our conference to welcome Brigman to Virginia.

fight to bring awareness to children and adults who rely on facets of Medicaid for care.

Brigman and his journey was recently covered by *TIME Magazine* and can be viewed at: <http://time.com/4856231/the-united->

[patients-of-america/](https://nccumc.org/news/2017/07/pastor-walking-daughters-healthcare/). You can also learn more about him and his walk from the North Carolina conference at: <https://nccumc.org/news/2017/07/pastor-walking-daughters-healthcare/>. 📌

EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY



Four ways to use Facebook Live at church beyond the worship service

By Laura Buchanan

Livestreaming worship services using Facebook Live is becoming more common among United Methodist churches – but Facebook Live doesn't just belong in the sanctuary.

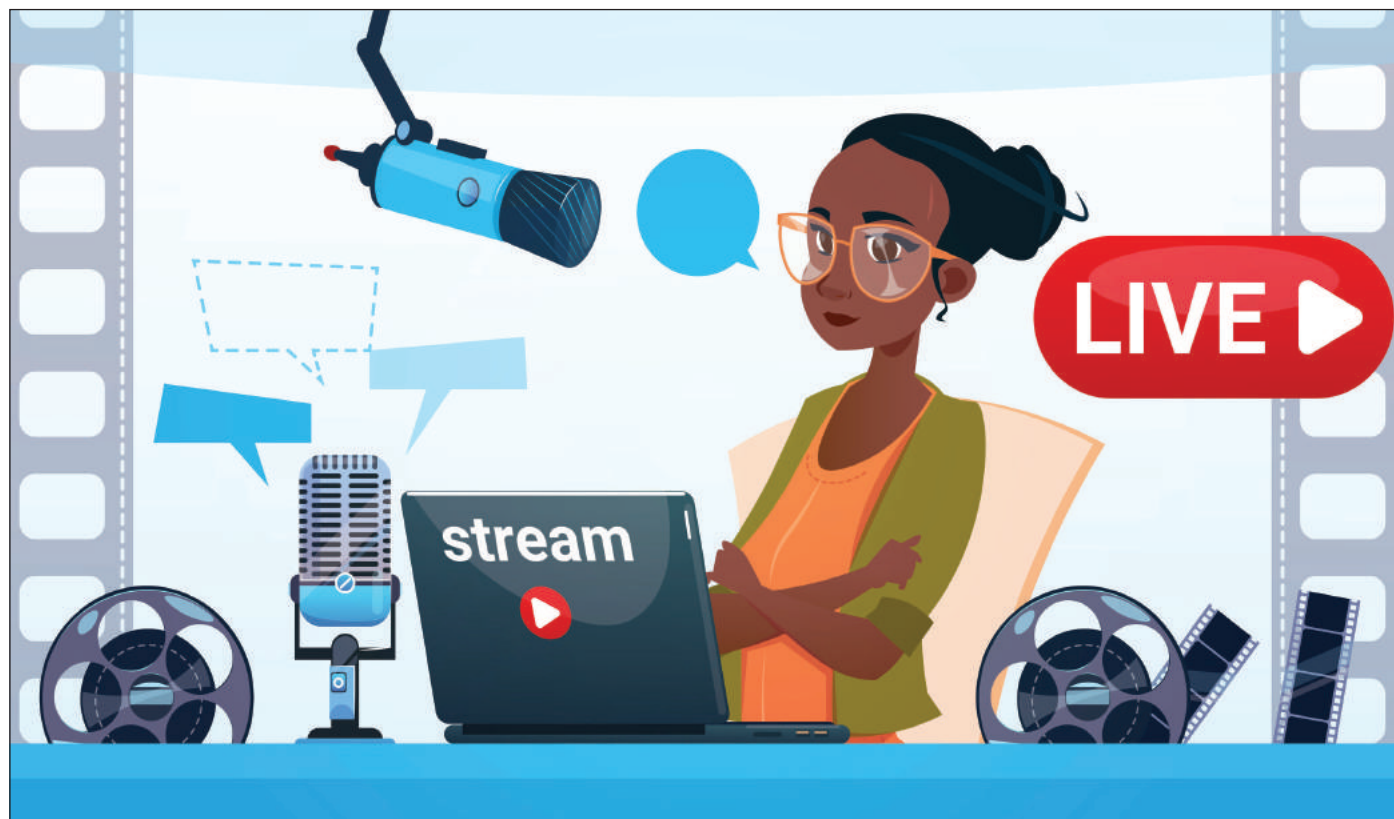
"Facebook presents an amazing opportunity for churches to reach out to the mission field. What is

possible is only limited by a church's imagination," said Will Rice, director of communications and media support at the Rio Texas Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. "What if churches were to share more of what the church is all about? We have an opportunity to not only stay more connected with our members but also to connect to new people in different ways."

There are many ways to utilize Facebook Live beyond the worship service, all of which can help people learn about your church and its ministries. What stories do you need to share? What information

would be helpful to your online congregation?

"When Facebook launched its live feed option, we immediately began to take advantage of it," said Josh Bush, director of communications at Covenant United Methodist Church in Dothan, Ala. "Instead of [Facebook] being an announcement forum where we post dates and times of upcoming events, we are now able to bring church to you – wherever you are! Our world is relying on technology more with each generation, and we will continue to use and improve our [social media] strategy to reach people for the Kingdom."



EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY

Here are four ideas to consider as you expand your livestream ministry:

1. Reach out to virtual visitors

Tech savvy seekers go online to learn about a church before they visit. Facebook Live can help people get to know your church and learn what to expect if they attend a service. Think about introducing your church staff, giving a quick tour of the church building or showcasing the children's ministry and nursery spaces so that people will feel comfortable dropping off their kids before the worship service.

When planning a mission event, think about livestreaming as an opportunity to share the story of what your church is doing in the community. Is the congregation holding a clothing drive, packing meals for hungry families or completing home repairs for people in need? Using Facebook Live to talk about these efforts helps people see and understand the missions that your church cares about so they can get to know you better. An invitation to participate in mission work is a great way to welcome a new person into your church.

2. Inspire your congregation

Busy schedules are a

challenging part of mid-week ministry, but Facebook Live offers a chance to reach out to your congregation with faith-building messages and words of encouragement. Ask your pastor to offer a short message of the week relating to a sermon series, a particular Bible passage or a current event.

Messages such as these can also be helpful during times of inclement weather that may keep people at home on a Sunday morning. A staff person or pastor can offer a time of worship and prayer to reach people wherever they may be.

If a weekly message isn't the right fit for your congregation, consider hosting a time of Bible study or peaceful Scripture reading and prayer, asking viewers to share their thoughts on the passage as well as prayer requests. Congregants can interact with each other by commenting on the video, building an online community of prayer and support.

The Rev. Laura Fine Ledford, pastor of All Saints' United Methodist Church near Raleigh, N.C., hosts weekly morning prayers on the church's Facebook page. She said, "One translation of John 1 says, 'the Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood.' We believe that Jesus took up residence where the peo-

ple are and the people are on social media. While this platform doesn't replace gathering in person, it is a means of grace, allowing us to extend the liturgy into the week."

3. Promote events and fundraisers

Build some interest before your upcoming sermon series, vacation Bible school, trunk or treat, festival or Easter egg hunt through live promotions. Recruit an event organizer to talk about the event, show off giveaway items that participants will receive, discuss any information that will be helpful or offer some behind the scenes details – "Did you know it takes three hours to stuff 1,000 Easter eggs? Come and find them!"

The same concept applies to fundraisers. As you prepare for the event, whether it be a luncheon, auction, yard sale or chili cook-off, allow people to see the volunteers and the work they are doing to make the event a success. Also, spend some time discussing the specific ministry or fund that will benefit from the fundraiser.

Keep these promotions light-hearted and meaningful. You want people to have a desire to attend and support the event to not only enjoy themselves but

(Con't. on next page: "FACEBOOK.")

"Facebook presents an amazing opportunity for churches to reach out to the mission field. What is possible is only limited by a church's imagination."



EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY



("FACEBOOK," cont. from page 9.)

to also see how their participation can make a difference in your church's mission work. On the day of the event, ask an event organizer to join you for a livestream to discuss an overview of the effort and share key moments.

4. Encourage questions

Often, people in your pews have questions about your church but they are not sure whom they should ask. Schedule a time for your pastor or other church leader to offer a question and answer session on Facebook Live. You can encourage people to ask general questions about the church or spend the time focusing on a specific topic, such as membership, a certain ministry area or an upcoming mission event. Be sure to promote the opportunity so that you have plenty of viewers ready to ask their questions.

No matter what your subject matter, promote your livestream via social media posts, email news and in the bulletin so that your congregation will know to watch – and don't forget to ask them to share the live video with their friends to help build a wider audience. Your viewership may start small, but persistence, regular reminders and relevant video content will help your audience remember to tune in, and grow with you, online.

"I believe smaller congregations might have the most to gain from Facebook Live. Video is an incredibly powerful medium, and it has been out of reach for smaller churches. Even small rural churches can find someone with a smartphone to help them get their message out," said Rice. 📱

— Laura Buchanan is a PR Specialist at United Methodist Communications.

FACEBOOK ALLOWS YOU TO POST AN ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT YOUR UPCOMING LIVESTREAM TO HELP BUILD YOUR AUDIENCE.

1. Go to your church's Facebook page
2. Click Publishing Tools
3. In the sidebar, click Videos
4. Click +Live, then next
5. Type the post as you want it displayed when you go live
6. On bottom right-hand corner, click the arrow down and click Schedule Live
7. Select your scheduled start time and date and read the other directions and helpful information on this screen
8. Upload a custom image if you'd like - the default is your church's profile photo
9. Click schedule



EVENTS



SEPTEMBER

Rappahannock River Lay Servant Training

Sept. 15-16, Regester Chapel UMC in Stafford

The Rappahannock River District will offer Lay Servant training with classes including Basic, Polity in the UMC, Interpretive Bible Reading and United Methodist Heritage. The schedule will be Friday 6:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. and Saturday 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Contact the district Director of Lay Servant Ministries, Greg Sokolowski, with any questions at 121falcon@msn.com or (540) 525-0891. Training will be at Regester Chapel UMC in Stafford. There is a \$15 charge for meals that should be paid prior to Sept. 11. Check out flyer for specific informa-

tion on the conference calendar at www.vaumc.org.

Connecting...to God and Each Other and the Community

- ❖ **September 26, Mint Spring UMC in Staunton**
- ❖ **October 14, Wesley Grace UMC in Norfolk**
- ❖ **November 4, Chestnut Hill UMC in Lynchburg**

The Small Congregation Leadership Team invites small church clergy and laity to a day of learning, conversation and discussion with the Rev. David Canada. This event will take place in three locations across the conference. Each of these three dates will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. with lunch provided and the course worth 0.5 CEU. Register at [https://www.](https://www.eiseverywhere.com/ereg/index.php?eventid=254985&)

eiseverywhere.com/ereg/index.php?eventid=254985&.

Please be sure to specify your location and date when you register. Contact the Center for Congregational Excellence for more information at (804) 521-1100 or email ellenheatwole@vaumc.org or pathickman@vaumc.org.

OCTOBER

5 Talent Academy

Oct. 19, 10 locations around Virginia

Registration is now open for the 5 Talent Oct. 19 event, "How to Structure your Church for Evangelism" with Jacob Armstrong. Armstrong will lead the event in exploring key principles

(Con't. on page 21: "EVENTS.")

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Exploring Social Prophetic Witness for the 21st Century

Saturday, September 16, 2017
8am-4pm

Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church
Fort Washington, Maryland



featuring **Dr. Leah Gunning Francis**, Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Indiana
Rev. Dr. F. Willis Johnson, Wellspring UMC, Ferguson, Missouri
Rev. Dr. Lester McCorn, Pennsylvania Ave AME Zion, Baltimore, Maryland



Allowing the Spirit to move:



O, Praise Him

music in worship services



*Praise God in his
sanctuary, praise him
in his mighty heavens.
Praise him for his acts
of power, praise him for
his surpassing greatness.
Praise him with the
sounding of the trumpet,
praise him with the harp
and lyre, praise him with
timbrel and dancing,
praise him with the
strings and pipe, praise
him with the clash of
cymbals, praise him with
resounding cymbals.*

PSALM 150:1-5

From the contemporary music of Journey UMC, Farmville District, to a mixture of traditional and contemporary music at South Hill UMC, music is as tied to a worship service as the preaching and style of a church.

The Rev. Mike Davis at Journey UMC sums up their music experience as one that allows for dancing, standing and allowing the Spirit to move.

“Music can bring you to tears, it can make you shout. It can bring you to prayer and sometimes even make you dance, all in celebration, communication and relationship with God,” said Davis.

For Jimmie Crowder Jr., organist at South Hill UMC, the church, through the pastors and congregation, have always provided tremendous support for music.

“Many people have said, and I agree, that music can enable worship experiences that the spoken word can’t,” Crowder said.

To learn more about how music is chosen for worship services, read the rest of the feature to learn from music directors from around the conference.



Connecting the heart and soul: Music ministries at Grace UMC

By Madeline Pillow

Grace UMC in Manassas features 16 musical ensembles that take part in four different worship services, reflecting that music is an integral part of worship life at the church.

For the Rev. Milton Rodgers, minister of music and organist, and Lynn Jost, music associate, who direct some of the various groups, part of their work is being open to the Spirit's call to worship in a creative way. The pair also make a concerted effort for all the ensembles to interact with each other often through this creative process.

By its very nature, Grace UMC is meant to be a musical church; the sanctuary was designed to be concert-friendly and a local performing arts center found its start at the church. But for the church, personally, music also has another hold.

"Music is very important to the community of Grace as

it unifies the community during worship," said Jost.

The various groups are active participants in their community as Rodgers in his call as ordained deacon feels the call to take music in the world and he encourages the ensembles to do so as well. The Chimers groups visits older adult facilities in the surrounding areas and the Children's choir takes its Old Testament musical to the local synagogue. As well, the Wesley Singers Youth Choir always makes it a point to add mission to their yearly music tour.



Music is about participation

Both Rodgers and Jost agree that music should always be participatory.

"The hymns and praise songs are our chief means of participating in the music of worship. The other choir anthems are sung on behalf of the congregation and because the congregation is listening to the anthems and offertories, they are passively participating in this worship. The listening is always active, participatory listening. There should be no 'just listening'," said Rodgers.

Jost also shared that the church is active in teaching newcomers how to sing and read music by singing from the hymnals.



Photos of the many music ministries at Grace UMC, courtesy of Lynn Jost.



"I believe the congregation should feel comfortable and enjoy singing hymns or choral responses in a worship service. I also appreciate the congregation's quiet meditation as they listen to a choral or instrumental anthem. Music offers an inspirational dimension to the worship service," said Jost.

Both said they believe it is important for the music ministry to provide and expose the congregation to different music styles during worship services. Through a varied choral repertoire that features traditional, contemporary, ethnic, gospel and classical styles, the music at Grace UMC is varied to both illuminate the creativity in music and reach their varied congregation and their differing tastes.



Music knows no age

Music is an arena open to all at Grace UMC with many intergenerational opportunities. For example, a singing choir is the starting point for 4-year-olds and elementary-aged children learn singing and hand chimes.

With the number of styles and opportunities for music at the church, Rodgers and Jost shared that there a broader spectrum of involvement and it allows for creativity in individual's worship styles.

Planning the details

Music is planned as far ahead as three to six months alongside Scripture and the various sermon series.

Rodgers shared that both he and Jost works very hard to make the music fit to the Scripture and in meetings with the pastors, hymns are chosen to fit the worship themes.

"It is very important to us that the music and the worship fit together organically. That is why the two elders, the music associate and I sit down to plan organic worship. It is so fulfilling to hear people say that they noticed how the worship and music all fit in together," said Rodgers.

For Jost, the planning is also with the worshipper in mind.

"It is all about connecting the heart and soul! From the moment, the worshipper steps into the sanctuary we hope to prepare and open their hearts each Sunday to recognize God and give thanks and praise to God through music," said Jost. "Passionate worship also includes visual stimulation. I work together with the associate pastor to create visual images for the altar. We implement drama presentations or video clips that can bring a Scripture lesson to life." 📺





Music Spotlight: Josh Wortham

Josh Wortham is the Director of Music at Chester UMC, James River District. He shares in this Q&A his love of music, the process of choosing worship music and more. Check out our video with Josh on Facebook and YouTube to hear him play a beautiful rendition of "Holy, Holy Holy."

How has music influenced your life?

Church music has been a part of my life since day one essentially. My grandfather was the volunteer choir director at my home church for almost 40 years. And so I grew up sitting on the front pew because my grandfather was directing, my grandmother was singing soprano and my mom was singing alto; it was just a family affair. We were sort-of the goofballs who would sit around the piano around the holidays and have an impromptu hymn sing for the fun of it. So church music is the soundtrack of my life.

How have you carried music into your adult life?

Obviously this is my calling. It has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. I first started serving a church when I was in high school, continued through college and then I came here to Chester right out of college and have been here for 13 years now. I'm trying to honor



a bit of my grandfather's legacy; he was an inspiration to me in what he achieved with a volunteer church choir on a weekly basis. Just listening to God's spirit in the midst of it all to find the music that speaks to me, that speaks to others, and that captures the power of Scripture and the beauty of testimonies and God's work in our lives is what I work toward. To me there is nothing more powerful than a glorious choir anthem to capture the word of God and to carry that message through.

What is your personal worship style?

I grew up in a very traditional worship setting. I spent a couple of summers at Lake Junaluska working with the praise and worship choir there and I spent my college years in a sort of blended church. When I came here to Chester they had one traditional service and they were starting a new contemporary service. Since then we have added another blended service which has a southern Gospel flavor. I would say my go-to is more of the traditional flavor but I love all of it and different mediums speak to me in different ways at different moments. It just depends on the situation and what different things tug at my heart.

What do you look for in music when planning a service?

For me personally I try to get the self out of the way first. That's always my first goal. Now certainly there are leanings. "Holy, Holy, Holy" I could sing that every Sunday and be perfectly content. I want to do music with integrity, music that is Scripturally-grounded. I often heard the jokes of contemporary music being 7-Eleven music: seven words, 11 times. So I try to not avoid that but use it when it's appropriate. I'm looking for hymns and choruses that are true to Scripture and are true to my own faith journey and the stories I've heard from other people. There's a place for repetition, a place for uniqueness. I'm looking for "singability," music that's going to capture people and music that draws me in. I want to walk away from the service singing a line or repeating a phrase that becomes my sort of mantra and prayer for the week.

How do you approach blending music styles for a service?

For the sake of planning, I wish there was an easy equation. You know you plug in your instrumental, your solo, your three worship songs and you're good to go.



Each week I think is a new experience. Being in tune with what's happening in the world, what's happening in our church, is important and then trying to capture that energy and how the Spirit is working through us that week. Some songs just lend themselves to congregational singing and folks crave that opportunity to share in that song. Other songs are so intimate that they need to be delivered by an individual or perhaps by a quartet. Or sometimes there's beauty in a choir singing something that a congregation couldn't pull off with no rehearsal. It's beautiful to hear the beauty and power of those voices uniting together. Then there's that place for instrumental for people to reflect and maybe they are listening to an instrumental piece and they know the words and they are processing in their minds. There's certainly no set formula but seeking the Spirit and seeking that balance for what's going to work on Sunday and praying that God blesses those efforts and choices.

How do you work with your pastors to plan worship services?

We often sit down on Monday or Tuesday morning depending on what is going on in the week. Whichever pastor is preaching that Sunday will read the Scripture whether from the lectionary or something that has been inspired from during the week and we start to tear that Scripture apart and see what God is speaking through that. Then songs will come to mind. Some of my favorite moments are when I get up on Monday morning and I'm singing a song in the shower, no idea why, and I get to worship planning and Sylvia (Meadows, senior pastor) will read this Scripture passage and I'm like this song was in my mind this morning. It could be a direct quote or something else and we get those goosebumps.

How do you balance when to choose familiar versus unfamiliar songs?

I'm probably guilty of using too much repetition. I crave the familiar because it takes down sort of the barriers that come with learning something new. I keep a regular chart of the songs we use in the service so I can look at how often we play something. We don't want to play something so often that it becomes stale or we do something from rote memory and there is no passion there. But I want it to be often enough and familiar enough that people can engage and maybe its they take their eyes off the page of the hymnal or they're able to look away from the screen and engage in their own spirit and in a new way.

When introducing something new, I'm always careful about its value. I never introduce something just because it's new. I ask, Is this popular just because it's the new #1 on the chart? Or is this going to fade away because it's not really richly grounded? I go back to the criteria: is it Spirit-filled? Is it something that the congregation can pick up? Is it something that they can find familiar phrases in and engage in?

Maybe we'll introduce new music through a solo one week or have the congregation engage in a chorus during a choir piece to get them familiar.

How do you balance planning three different services?

It's a blast. Admittedly it's hair pulling but it's a blast. We have the contemporary service that is your rock band motif in the fellowship hall. The middle service is a little more southern Gospel- oriented although we've been pulling in from the African-American hymnal more recently. And then we have the traditional service at 11.

I love the diversity and I would miss it if we didn't have it. Some weeks it is challenging for instance if at the traditional service the choir is singing a song and it's perfect to support the message and it really brings it home but I don't have anything equivalent for the first two services. Then the challenge is finding that sort of song of response that can speak in the same way but to the uniqueness of the other services.

How important is music to the life of Chester?

I've seen the music program here at Chester grow here not just in size but in spirit. Our choir when I first came here averaged about 15 on a Sunday morning and they were a faithful 15. They were that core group who had been doing it for years. They made beautiful music and then that group began to grow in number and spirit and electricity. I now take that choir on tour every other summer because they sing with a spirit and energy that speaks to people. That's why I want to take them on the road, I want to share them and show that choral music is still a vital part of worship.

Our folks don't worship the music but they certainly engage through the music. I'm always cautious to make sure we're not just performing and regularly we look at where the songs are coming from and we look at how they are impacting us. 📖

LIVING THE WORD*



Alex Carney recently graduated from Shenandoah University in May with a degree in religion and is pursuing a Master's of Divinity at Drew University. This past summer, Alex worked as an intern with the VAUMC Office of Communications and Office of Justice and Missional Excellence. Alex enjoys makeup, knitting, Marvel films, and Washington Nationals baseball. She also loves her dog, Sasha, and cats, Lokitty and Luna. Alex wrote the devotions for Sept. 3 and 10.

Casey Akers is a senior at Shenandoah University. She is a religion major with a double minor in environmental science and gender and women's studies. She is also a part of the Faith Seeking Justice Christian Leadership Program.

Casey worked as an intern with the VAUMC Office of Inclusivity and Lay Leadership Excellence and the Office of Congregational Excellence for the summer.

In her spare time, Casey enjoys playing video games, outdoor adventures, reading and playing with her dog, Daisy. Casey wrote the devotions for Sept. 17 and 24.

Sept. 3, 2017 **Matthew 16:21-28** **Spirit with us**

Just as in our own everyday life, there are so many things going on at once in this passage, both spoken and unspoken. Jesus, who knows his fate is coming, is telling his disciples that fate and for what? He knows that they aren't going to listen. They may value his words and believe in his miracles, but, as it's identified on the third day they do not believe that the dead can rise itself.

Peter, just like all the disciples, was in shock over the horrible things that were coming out of Jesus's mouth. Torture? Death? That couldn't happen. It wouldn't. Jesus was chosen by God. Jesus was the son of God; the Creator wouldn't let this happen. In his panicked mind, Peter couldn't help pulling Jesus to the side, not because in that moment he was blinded, but because he loved Jesus so much he could not bear the thought that Jesus could be right in this.

However, Jesus saw the big picture. He saw the reason that this was to be done. That didn't mean he wanted it, or even that he was willing to contemplate the facts. Perhaps, just as Jesus was telling his disciples what would happen he was working his courage up to face the realities before him. But Peter was shattering his resolve, the courage that Jesus had built up at this point was being stripped away by his friend simply implying that God would save him from his fate. Jesus knew God wouldn't. It was up to him. This was Satan's block.

In our lives we often find ourselves in mind-sets similar to Peters. We are desperate for a bad situation to work out. We want there to be a solution that is beneficial to us. So we try our best to convince ourselves, and others, that everything will be okay even when the chance looks grim. In those moments we are so desperate that sometimes we will do more harm than good, even when we only want what's best. However, just as Peter, sometimes we only see one piece of the puzzle. One point of view seems horrible, but clouds the true grace of what is about to happen.

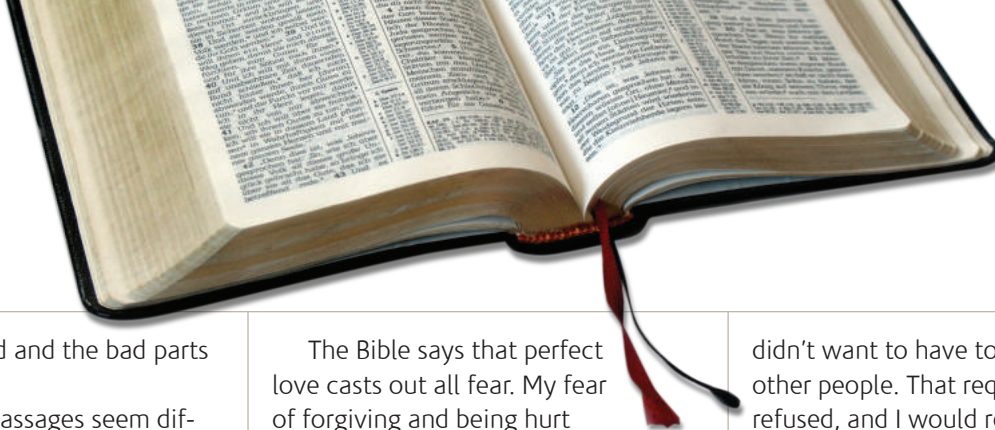
Peter's nightmare came true: Jesus, who he loved most, suffered and died on the cross.

What Peter didn't see through his desperation is that Jesus rose again. On the third day light appeared at the end of Peter's dark reality. Just as in Peter's case there is hope, maybe not in the way we expect or not in the way we want, but every situation has an end, and regardless of that end, the Spirit is with us through it all. Even when we create roadblocks, as Peter did with Jesus by telling him that what he was saying was untrue, the Trinity is still there to encourage us on the right path. Though we don't see the full picture Jesus does, and he is there for us through it all, that doesn't mean that our problems will be solved, but that does mean Jesus is there for us through our problems, and that is a great comfort.

Sept. 10, 2017 **Exodus 2:1-14; Romans 13:8-14** **Selfless in love**

Though these passages are side by side they give two completely different points on the subject of life. The first passage says, as Jesus always states, to love one another unconditionally and completely, because that is what the law of God demands, and this is true. What is our purpose but not to love those who are around us? How little is our reality worth if we don't exchange the love that is given to us with other people? It's in our nature to want to love and connect with those who are around us, therefore God's law is to follow our nature of love without fear or suppression.

In the next passage there is a warning, or a promise, depending on interpretation. Get ready, for God is coming; the rules seem a little stricter. Don't stray, don't overindulge and keep God close to your heart. The reality is, salvation will come eventually; however, are we ready to face that reality? The truth is we can never be truly confident on whether we are following the laws of God or social construct. We all stray, we all have something that pulls us back into the struggles of day to day life. We are all fairly sure the world won't end tomorrow, so we continue



with both the good and the bad parts of who we are.

Though these passages seem different they are actually very similar. Its focus is on the question: how do we live properly? By following God's law. God's law is to love without ceasing. Why shouldn't we overindulge? Because it can cloud our judgment of love. Let's be honest, the world is a harsh place where fear is often the drive for success. In order to reject this judgment, we must live with God's love which is patient and kind. Don't be selfish of your love but be selfless. We, as the Christians, are called to love, so go forth and love without ceasing.

Sept. 17, 2017

Matthew 18:21-35

Practicing forgiveness

To me, forgiveness is something I've struggled with more as I've gotten older. When you're a kid, you might get pushed on the playground, which in the moment feels awful, but is generally pretty easy to brush off. As you get older, though, and enter the so-called "real world," things become more intense. I don't know that people become meaner necessarily, but you become more exposed to the extreme spectrum of both human kindness and negativity.

However, I also know that I mess up on a daily basis. I hurt people and don't even realize it. Why? Because I'm human. Yet God forgives me every single time.

I think we're often scared to forgive others as God has forgiven us. There's a worry I've experienced when it comes to forgiveness: does this mean that I'm open to being hurt again?

The Bible says that perfect love casts out all fear. My fear of forgiving and being hurt again is small in comparison to the love that God shows me and expects me to show to others. By letting my fear get in the way of my Christian duty, I squander the forgiveness I've received because I don't want to extend it to the person I don't want to forgive.

I've learned that forgiveness is also a process. It's not easy to do it the first, second, or even hundredth time. Also, it's important to remember that just because you still experience anger or resentment doesn't mean that you're a bad person. Bad emotions happen to anybody; what's important is what you do with those emotions. You can choose to act in anger and hurt, but you can also choose to act in compassion and forgiveness. When we choose the latter, we choose to treat others as God has treated us.

What challenges do you face when you practice forgiveness? How will you give yourself room to heal and practice compassion?

Sept. 24, 2017

Philippians 1:21-30

It's a group effort

Do you remember having to do group projects in school? I do. It never felt equal; either I was the one pulling all the weight or nobody valued my opinion enough to listen. Even when we got to choose our own groups, things still managed to go wrong.

I thoroughly enjoyed solo projects. I was free to be creative without having to worry about anyone's judgment besides that of my teacher. I would even ask sometimes to see if I could do a group project on my own because I

didn't want to have to coordinate with other people. That request was usually refused, and I would resent my teacher in the moment, but now I know that there's a greater lesson to be taught.

My teachers never had me do group projects because they wanted to suppress my creative spirit (or whatever other excuse I made for it at the time). They wanted to teach me that we don't exist in this world alone, and that bigger projects called for us to get help from others, even if they don't do it in the way we originally wanted.

We're called to "live together in a manner worthy of Christ's gospel." This means that even in those times when our family of God reminds us more of a dysfunctional group project, we're still supposed to work together.

There have been so many times where I've felt like my opinions weren't important to the church or that nobody else cared about our goals besides me. I'd asked God if I could go it alone, but like a good teacher, God would tell me to go back and work it out with my group. I realized that spreading God's love is a group effort; if you do it by yourself, you won't be able to get it all done. You'll spread yourself too thin. You'll feel exhausted.

We're not meant to go this alone. When we truly work together, we don't have to be afraid of what life throws at us.

Who's in your church or community that you want to work better with? How can we work better together as a church? 🍷

*Abingdon Press announced that they are discontinuing the publication of the New International Lesson Series Annual. This month, the Bible verses are based off the lectionary. Moving forward, passages will be in accordance with Bishop Lewis' Bible Reading Challenge calendar.

CLERGY & DIACONAL



DEATHS



The Rev. David Benjamin Lewis, 79, died July 7, 2017, in Richmond, Va. Born September 5, 1937 in Richmond, he was

the son of Olive Poole Lewis and Percy (Della) Lewis.

Lewis was a graduate of John Marshall High School, the University of Virginia and the Divinity School at Duke University. He met his wife Lieu while assisting her father as an associate pastor, and they celebrated their 57th wedding anniversary shortly before his death. David was an ordained elder in The United Methodist Church, serving congregations in North Carolina, Scotland and Virginia. A gifted artist, Lewis' watercolors of homes, churches, and public buildings are beloved keepsakes for his many clients and especially his family and friends. His lasting dignity and good humor are deeply impressed on the hearts of those who love him.

David is survived by his wife Lieu; his daughter Elizabeth (Stephen Michael) McCoy; his daughter Barbara Lewis; son Robert Lewis; granddaughter Ariel (Rick) Rishworth; great-granddaughter Mary Rishworth; brother Ellis Lewis, and brother Richard (Pat) Lewis.



The Rev. Charlene R. Beethoven, 63, of Ashland, died June 29, 2017. She was preceded in death by her first husband,

Elmer S. Wilson Jr. She is survived by her husband, Mark Baird; sons, Ryan Beethoven-Wilson (Meredith) and Philip

Beethoven-Wilson (Erica); granddaughter, Harlow Wilson; grandson, Adrian Reyes; and sister, Wiletta Miller. Charlene was a retired elder in the United Methodist Church, serving churches in Chicago, Illinois, Dale City, Newport News, Southampton County, Mechanicsville and Richmond. She was a beloved hockey mom, proud UVA graduate who raised a family of Hokies and a mentor to many young people, friends, church and family members. She had a heart as big as the world and was deeply loved by those whose lives she touched, and will be dearly missed.



The Rev. Ted E. David, 69, died June 23, 2017 at the Medical College of Virginia following a long illness. As an ordained elder

of The United Methodist Church, Ted served as pastor of United Methodist churches across the Virginia Conference prior to his retirement three years ago as senior pastor of Virginia Beach UMC.

David received a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Richmond in 1970. He was later awarded a Master of Arts in 1972 from the Presbyterian School of Christian Education followed by a Master of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary in 1973.

Throughout his long and distinguished career as a United Methodist pastor, David was loved by congregations especially for his warmth, humility and special interest in children's ministry. His colleagues and friends knew him as a person always ready to lend a supportive and encouraging hand. He also touched the lives of many who were unconnected to the church but in need of spiritual support and guidance. After retirement, he was regularly asked

to minister to individuals needing a pastor to officiate at the funeral of a loved one. Those families were touched by the depth of his caring words and often later referred to him as their pastor.

Ted is survived by his wife, Paula; his son, Scott; his daughter, Karey; and granddaughter, Margot Brundage David.

Lois Tucker, wife of the **Rev. Ray Tucker**, died July 6, 2017, at her home in Selma, Va. The Rev. Tucker served as pastor to Mountain Valley UMC, Rich Patch.

Margaret (Louise) Smith Riggins, 92, a retired registered nurse, died July 3, 2017, in Forest, Va.

Born on August 14, 1924 in Norfolk County, Va. to Littleton and Sarah Smith, Margaret married George S. Riggins, Jr. on November 26, 1949. Together they resided in the village of Churchland, Va., until his death on Dec. 20, 1993. She continued to live in the same home until moving to Lynchburg in September 2014.

Margaret is survived by her daughter, Margaret Barb; son, **the Rev. George Riggins** (Rebecca); three granddaughters, Dr. Emily Knowles (Jonathan), Rachel Baumgartner (Niels), and Hannah Riggins; grandson, Christopher Riggins; great-granddaughter, Nora Knowles; and great-grandson, Benaiah Knowles.

Margaret was a faithful and active member of Centenary UMC in Portsmouth for more than 60 years where she sang in the choir, assisted as a Sunday School teacher and served in the United Methodist Women.

The family received friends July 8 at Monroe UMC and held a service of death and resurrection in celebration of her life with the Rev. George "Jack" J. Davis, Jr. presiding.

Ret. Cdr. William Charles (Chuck) Kincannon of Alexandria, Va., died July 1, 2017.

Chuck was born in Stephen's County, Okla. on Jan. 27, 1923. He was commissioned as a naval officer at Notre Dame in 1943. He worked as a Navy meteorologist for his entire career. After retirement from active duty in 1964, he worked for the Department of Defense until 1988.

Married in 1946 to his one true love, Murice Jean Miniard, they had a 70-year love affair. Chuck's legacy is reflected in the lives of his son, **the Rev. Dr. Keary Kincannon**, pastor of Rising Hope UMC and wife, Judy Borsher; daughter, **the Rev. Dr. Karla Kincannon**, pastor of Aldersgate UMC, and husband, the Rev. Dr. Jim Noseworthy; and son, Kirk Kincannon and wife, Denise Kincannon. He is survived by his wife, children, 10 grandchildren, six great-grandchildren, a sister and several nieces and nephews.

Benjamin Sean Daniely, age 48, died June 26, 2017, after a battle with cancer. He was the son of **the Rev. J.D. Daniely**. Daniely served as an elder in the Church of God in Christ in southern California. He was the husband of Paula Jones Daniely, and they had one daughter and two small grandchildren. ☞

("EVENTS," cont. from page 11.)

for evangelism in local church including crafting a vision that fits your mission field, rethinking worship and leadership development and structure. The event will be streamed to nine locations across the conference from the live site at Woodlake UMC in Chesterfield. Gather a team from your church to take part. Early bird pricing as well as team discounts are available. Visit <https://vaumc.org/5talent> for more information and to register. ☞

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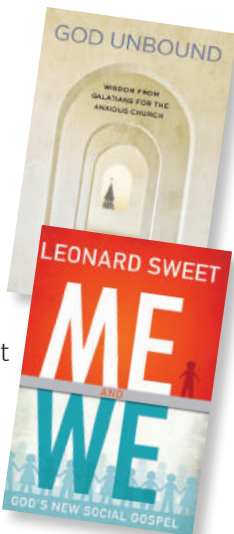


Happy reading!

While Bishop Lewis is out for the month of August on renewal leave, start on her reading list! Bishop Lewis provided her reading recommendations at Annual Conference in June.

God Unbound
by Elaine Heath

Me and We
by Leonard Sweet



New Wine, New Wineskins
by F. Douglas Powe Jr.

Transforming Evangelism
by F. Douglas Powe Jr. and Henry Knight III

Not Safe for Church: Ten Commandments of Reaching New Generations
by F. Douglas Powe Jr. and Jasmine Rose Smothers

Holding Up Your Corner
by Frank Willis Johnson

The New Jim Crow
by Michelle Alexander

Walking with Nehemiah
by Joseph W. Daniels Jr.

How to Pray
by E. Stanley Jones



Bishop's Bible Challenge readings for September

September 1	Ezekiel 9-12
September 2	Ezekiel 13-15
September 3	Ezekiel 16-17
September 4	Ezekiel 18-20
September 5	Ezekiel 21-22
September 6	Ezekiel 23-24
September 7	Ezekiel 25-27
September 8	Ezekiel 28-30
September 9	Ezekiel 31-33
September 10	Ezekiel 34-36
September 11	Ezekiel 37-39
September 12	Ezekiel 40-42
September 13	Ezekiel 43-45
September 14	Ezekiel 46-48
September 15	Daniel 1-3
September 16	Daniel 4-6
September 17	Daniel 7-9
September 18	Daniel 10-12
September 19	Hosea 1-7
September 20	Hosea 8-14
September 21	Joel 1-3
September 22	Amos 1-5
September 23	Amos 6-9
September 24	Obadiah-Jonah 4
September 25	Micah 1-7
September 26	Nahum 1-3
September 27	Habakkuk-Zeph. 3
September 28	Haggai 1-2
September 29	Zechariah 1-7
September 30	Zechariah 8-14

– See more at: <http://backtothebible.org/reading-guide/15/7#sthash.Cl2yx6KJ.dpuf>

ONE LAST WORD

John Wesley's Directions for Singing

1. Learn these tunes before you learn any others; afterwards learn as many as you please.
2. Sing them exactly as they are printed here, without altering or mending them at all; and if you have learned to sing them otherwise, unlearn it as soon as you can.
3. Sing all. See that you join with the congregation as frequently as you can. Let not a slight degree of weakness or weariness hinder you. If it is a cross to you, take it up, and you will find it a blessing.
4. Sing lustily and with a good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead, or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of its being heard, than when you sung the songs of Satan.
5. Sing modestly. Do not bawl, so as to be heard above or distinct from the rest of the congregation, that you may not destroy the harmony; but strive to unite your voices together, so as to make one clear melodious sound.
6. Sing in time. Whatever time is sung be sure to keep with it. Do not run before nor stay behind it; but attend close to the leading voices, and move therewith as exactly as you can; and take care not to sing too slow. This drawling way naturally steals on all who are lazy; and it is high time to drive it out from us, and sing all our tunes just as quick as we did at first.
7. Above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing him more than yourself, or any other creature. In order to do this attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, and see that your heart is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve here, and reward you when he cometh in the clouds of heaven.





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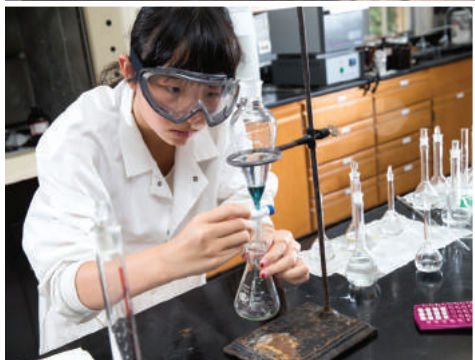
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(Cappex, 2014)



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