

The United Methodist connection in VIRGINIA



The Future of Conference Archives

By Stephanie Davis and Jack Martin

The Virginia Conference Archives, located in the United Methodist Center in Glen Allen, is an important repository for conference records, church histories, local church closing records, books, historical documents and paraphernalia germane to the Virginia United Methodist heritage and predecessor denominations. Part-time archivist Stephanie Davis meticulously maintains the permanent collection and

receives new materials for cataloguing or disposal.

A large part of Davis' job is encouraging and assisting churches to preserve their records, compiling local church histories and celebrating their heritage. When churches close, she accepts their valuable records and stores them for future use. Davis also accepts, when possible, gifts of books, records, papers, pictures and objects that help to tell the story of Methodism in Virginia.

Davis searches for baptismal records and researches many other topics. For example, when churches celebrate anniversaries or homecomings, she helps provide lists of ministers, with their dates of service and pictures.

Any person is invited to visit the archives to use its resources.

A growing demand

The recent closure of the Blackstone Assembly Center brought a significant amount of material into the archives, significantly straining the capacity of the facility. Digitization is one way of preserving this growing amount of material with efforts under way to procure state-of-the-art equipment to do so, but it is costly and resources are limited.

While the archives has computerized information programs and a move-

DID YOU KNOW?

Each local church can write its own history and place a copy in the Archives. The conference archivist can also assist local churches in setting up a history committee, a history room or in writing their church's history.

Contact the conference archivist at 804-521-1132 or stephaniedavis@vaumc.org for office hours and assistance with research questions.

able shelving system that provides easy access to storage, Davis reports that more space is needed to adequately carry forward the work, and that new equipment is needed, including a new computer. One of the important aspects of her position is assisting those who do historical research. Up-to-date equipment is essential for this work. Through the generous contribution of a Conference Historical Society trustee, a new scanner was purchased last year.

One of the more significant efforts of the Virginia Conference Historical Soci-



VIRGINIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HERITAGE publication in 45th year

ety (VCHS) is the preservation and promotion of the Patti Russell Endowment, which helps to support the salary of archivist. Russell served the conference for many years as volunteer archivist.

Looking to the future, the VCHS hopes contributors will be generous in helping to grow the endowment in this age of expanding technology where faster retrieval and much greater capacity are needed, even as the historical society is working with Davis to find new ways to care for materials within the confines of the present archives, while looking for additional space. 🍷

—Stephanie Davis in the conference archivist at the conference center located in Glen Allen. The Rev. Dr. John (Jack) T. Martin Jr. is president of the Virginia Conference Historical Society.

The *HERITAGE* is a bi-annual scholarly bulletin published by the Virginia Conference Historical Society. Each issue presents: two or more well-researched and documented articles about the people, places and events of Virginia United Methodist history; recent history-making events and efforts to preserve United Methodist history; updates from conference archivist Stephanie Davis; and the Rev. Raymond Wrenn's Notes from the Ethelbert Drake Society.

To produce *HERITAGE*, a dedicated, all-volunteer publications committee meets twice yearly to discuss the upcoming issue and to plan for future ones. All articles are composed by writers who are passionate about Virginia United Methodist history and who are knowledgeable in their subjects. Authors are compensated with free issues of the publication in which their article appears.

The *HERITAGE* team is always searching for good stories and welcomes all queries and manuscripts concerning Virginia United Methodist history. You can reach editor Myra Lindsey at heritage@vaumc.org.

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