

The Ashland District Connection

Connecting laity and clergy to make disciples of Jesus Christ

Ashland District
Virginia Conference

July/August 2009

on the Web at www.ashlandvaumc.org

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The 2009 Virginia Conference, Norfolk, VA, June 14-17

The last four years the theme of the Virginia Conference has been "Let's Get Growing: More People, More Young People, and More Diverse People." In 2006 the theme was "Let's Get Growing." In 2007 we concentrated on more people; in 2008, the emphasis was on more young people; and this year the theme was more diverse people. The first female bishop elected in Mozambique, Bishop Joaquina Nhanala, was a Conference guest.



Bishop Hee-Soo Jung from the Chicago area was our Conference preacher. "We've spent too much time arguing about who is in and who is out. ... It's not about retention, but recruitment." He not only preached to us but also sang to us in a beautiful baritone!

Throughout the four days of the Conference many prayers and songs were sung in other languages as well as in English. We were reminded that our God is a God of diversity—*all* are welcome at the table.

Virginia United Methodists raised over \$200,000 from our Conference offering for mission work in Brazil, Mozambique and right here in Petersburg, Virginia. Pathways Ministry, directed by Reverend Mike Watts, a former pastor in the Ashland District, received a third of the offering. Pathways Ministries works to rebuild and strengthen the city of Petersburg by rehabilitating older homes,

building new affordable single family homes, providing free medical and dental clinics, and providing at-risk youths with education and training for the work force by involving them in a productive role rebuilding their communities. The Conference communion table was built from recycled wood by young people in a Pathways woodworking class. The wood was salvaged and recycled from buildings in Petersburg destroyed during the 2008 tornadoes in central and southeast Virginia.

We were asked by our hosts to each bring 4 cans of food to the Conference. Through the generosity of those attending, **9800 pounds of food** were donated to the Southeastern Virginia Food Bank. They were extremely grateful. Their work to feed the hungry will be aided by how Virginia United Methodists responded to the call for food.

Members of the conference donated a total of 38,070 kits for UMCOR, and monetary donations for kits were \$76,805.

On Tuesday morning, Bishop Kammerer



(photo from Monday pm) recognized the conference churches who have volunteered to be the first to accept the challenge of the Five-Talent Academy. A total of 65 churches came forward, 15 of which are from the Ashland District.

As part of our work we had 32 constitutional amendments to the *2004 Book of Discipline* forwarded by the 2008 General Conference to vote either for or against. Once

all the votes from the U.S and international conferences are in, we will learn which amendments passed or failed. Most of the amendments (23 in all) related to the “World-wide Nature of The United Methodist Church.” The rationale for these proposed amendments “allows General Conference to create similar structures for all of our world-wide church. Each Annual Conference would belong to a Regional Conference which would be able to organize sub-units call Jurisdictional Conferences.” About two-thirds of the approximately 1500 ballots cast voted against these 23 amendments.

Another amendment on which our Virginia voting delegates differed in opinion was the first amendment, which according to the General Conference rationale, “emphasizes the wideness of God’s mercy and the availability of the ministry of the church to all.” The amendment would change the *2004 Book of Discipline*, Division One, paragraph 4, Article IV would read: “Inclusiveness of the Church—The United Methodist Church is a part of the church universal, which is one Body in Christ. The United Methodist Church acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth and that we are in ministry to all. All persons shall be eligible to attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments, and upon baptism be admitted as baptized members. All persons, upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith and relationship in Jesus Christ, shall be eligible to become professing members in any local church in the connection. In The United Methodist Church no conference or other organizational unit of the Church shall be structured so as to exclude any member or any constituent body.” Our Virginia delegates voted as follows: for the amendment, 715; against the amendment, 785.

Once again, we will find out the results of these constitutional amendments when the votes are tallied from **all** U.S. and international conferences.

The Conference plenary speaker was Dr. Gil Rendle, a United Methodist minister, former consultant with Alban Institute in Herndon, now working as a senior consultant with the Institute for Clergy and Congregational Excellence for the Texas Methodist Foundation

in Austin. Dr. Rendle spoke to us on Monday and Tuesday giving constructive advice on the courage and hard work it will take to develop 250 new faith communities over the next 30



years.

He gave this illustration from the midrash, Jewish interpreters of the ancient Jewish texts, who described the parting of the Red Sea this way: when the Jews fled Pharaoh’s army and got to the water’s edge, they sat around arguing who was going to go in the water first. After a long while as the Egyptian army was getting closer and closer, one brave Jewish man started walking into the water. Step by step he walked without the waters parting. Finally as he took the step that would have put his nose under water, the waters parted. It takes not only faith but courage for great things to happen.

Dr. Rendle referred to the Conference’s “All Things New” strategy as the “Virginia experiment.” He warned us that making deep cultural change as we seek the transformation of the world will not be without resistance along the way.

Continuing his analogy with the story of the Israelites wandering 40 years in the wilderness, he reminded us that the wilderness is not a place for answers but rather a place for questions. Moses was not called to lead the people out of the wilderness, but to keep them there until God could change them.

How are we going to make 250 new faith communities? How are we going to transform the world? No one knows how to do this. Dr. Rendle suggested we keep asking ourselves the questions: Who are we? Who are our neighbors? What is God calling us to do? Keep asking questions with intentional prayer and give God time to work within us.

We were also encouraged by Rev. Tom Berlin, pastor of Floris UMC, during the Monday morning laity session. According to Rev. Berlin, visionary people have a passion for people and pay attention to what offends Jesus. Christ is offended by poverty and injustice as he directed his disciples to feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, help the

homeless, cloth the naked, visit the imprisoned. In other words, minister to the least of these among us.

The Conference Bible Study teacher was



Dr. Ann Burkholder, associate dean of Methodist Studies at the Candler School of Theology in Atlanta. She previously served as District Superintendent of Melbourne, Florida, followed by service as the director of Connectional Ministries. Dr. Burkholder talked about the difficulties of achieving diversity, using the conflicts among the first Christians as an example, notably Paul's conversion and subsequent ministry to the gentiles.

For more information on Conference activities, talk to your church or charge delegate or pastor or visit the Virginia Conference Web site.

From Your DS

Dear Friends,

As we head into the summer months I have several thoughts that I want to share:

2009 Annual Conference

- was highlighted for me by the approval of the next step for "All Things New," our Virginia Conference Vision to start 250 Faith Communities in the next 30 years. On Tuesday night of Annual Conference we approved a feasibility study to raise \$15 million dollars for the first 15 years of the program. This will not be raised with apportionments or with any quota given to Districts or Local Churches. The method will be based on an individual approach to those lay and clergy who feel a passion to reach out to unchurched folks.

In addition we had over 15 of our churches from the Ashland District sign up for the Five-Talent Academy that will begin this October. My hunch is that we lead the Conference in that category and we also lead the conference for 2008 in the largest percent increase of

members. Over all, the Virginia Conference had a positive gain of about 800 members for 2008--THANKS BE TO GOD!!!

July Volunteers in Mission Trip to Mississippi—July 4-11

- I will be taking part in a Volunteers in Mission trip with the Voices of Youth Choir and Bishop Kammerer to Biloxi, Mississippi (same site as our February 2007 Ashland Clergy Trip). Eight District Superintendents along with Bishop Kammerer will be involved in this work.

August School of Congregational Development in Chicago

- for the fourth year in a row I am taking part in this national church growth conference that focuses on starting new faith communities. District Lay Leader Larry Tubbs and John Nelson will also be attending.

I pray that you have some time to rest and recreate this summer. Please keep our pastors and churches (especially those moving) in your prayers around moving day July 1.

Grace and peace,
Mark

Upcoming events

Moving Day—July 1

District Stewards Meeting at Wright's Chapel—July 26

District Conference at St. Matthias—November 15

2010 District Training Day at Ebenezer—January 9, 2010

United Methodist Family Services

This diverse agency serves the needs of children in your community. Are you a newly developed empty nester looking for a way to serve the needs of young people? Are you a retired grandparent who has seen it all? Or are you a newlywed couple looking for ways to give back for all you have received? If you feel a call to serve your community, consider UMFS. They are in need of people to act as foster parents in this area. With thorough training and the help of social workers, you will be supported throughout this process. Please check their Web site at www.umfs.org to learn more.

From Your District Lay Leader

Julie and I are now home from Annual Conference and look forward to a very exciting and challenging year with the "All Things New" strategy for the Virginia Conference and the Ashland District.

We had very engaging speakers during the three days of Conference. Dr. Sherry Daniels



of Norfolk UMC preached at the service of remembrance Sunday night and said that "When we have relationships with God's people, it makes all the difference in the world. A word from you can change their life forever." Rev. Daniels said the challenge of finding more diversity was not easy, but to "hang in there and see God work."

On Monday morning at the Laity session, the Rev. Tom Berlin said that many of our churches "need a new vision of this world. We need to see things that have grown dull to our eyes. Reaching people for the church depends on the laity and not on the clergy, and it's been that way since Acts on."

Our plenary speaker for 2009 Annual Conference was Dr. Gil Rendle, former consultant with the Alban Institute in Herndon. Dr. Rendle told conference members that to make significant change would require the courage to make difficult choices. Churches should stop worrying about the "nouns" (money, building, process, etc.) and get more concerned for the activities of the church. He referred to the Conference's All Things New strategy as the "Virginia experiment." To make it work, he asked, "Do we have the will to be made into new people?" With the primary objective to change the church culture to fruitfulness, he reminded members that they would need to be willing to change norms and standards.

He concluded by telling of the courage that it would take to make the changes in culture. Only from the "troubled waters" could that

courage be identified. Leaders must be willing to lead without knowing the way. "No organization asks its leaders to make them uncomfortable," he said. "One must learn how to practice courage."

As a reminder for modeling ourselves after Christ, read once again Philippians 2:1-11.

Go Fish,
Larry Tubbs



Westview on the James

Kid's Work Camp: September 25-27, \$62 per person

Bring your 3rd-6th graders to Westview for a weekend of team-building, worship, and missions! Groups will travel into the community for outreach projects; introducing (or reinforcing) missions to children. We'll welcome Christian educators for leading worship and Westview's counselors will be here to lead games and activities. Always a blast—and a learning experience! Mark your calendars now!

Family Fun Camp: October 24, \$25 per person (Children 5 & under free)

Fun for the whole family! Bring your children and let them show you what camp is all about. Try your hand at archery, attempt the climbing wall, make some fun crafts, hike the beautiful trails, worship around a campfire, and share in



delicious s'mores.

Call or email the camp office at 804-457-4210 or wvretreats@hughes.net or check the Web site at www.westviewonthejames.org for more information. Your children will thank you!

UMVIM

Mission Trip to Statesville, NC, Completed

Gary Gross, our Ashland District Mission Chair reports that nine Ashland District United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) team members traveled to Statesville, NC, last month, May 3-8. Their mission was to help the Wesley Community Development Corporation (WCDC) build affordable housing. The team members represented five local Virginia churches.



Ashland District Team Members, L – R: Mary Jewell, Gary Gross, Sarah Monahan, George Hunter, Scott Graham, Bill Hession, Phil Haynes, Mark Dezar, and Ed Donalson

The house's foundation was in place when the team arrived. By the end of the week the team



Reviewing the Blueprints, L – R: Wayne Ward (WCDC), Bill Hession, and Phil Haynes

completed installation of the sill plate, floor joists, joist blocks, sub floor, all of the outside walls, and the framework for one inside wall from the front to the back of the house.

When the team left at the end of the week the house was ready for installation of the roof trusses and the remaining inside walls. This house is located on the lot next to the house another Ashland District Team worked on in 2008 – the 2008 house is finished and occupied. Thanks goes out to all of the team members who participated in this Ashland District UMVIM trip. More information on WCDC can be found at www.wesleycdc.com.

Another trip from the District later this year will be going to the MERCI Center where supplies for all the kits are stored for emergency relief. The team will be helping the volunteers stock and check kits.

If your church is sponsoring a mission trip this year within the U.S. or internationally, please send your information to me so we can include you on our prayer lists. We would particularly like to hear from those of you who are recruiting team members. Email your information to katecook@bealenet.com.

Are You Listening? Hearing God's Call

A 3-day event for rising high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors will be held at Randolph-Macon College August 2-4. Registration is limited to 20 people. There is no cost to participate. To register, call Margie Turbyfill at 804-368-7276 or visit the Web site:

www.rmc.edu/vocationevent.asp.

Who
We Are


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

--Virginia Conference Vision Statement

Ashland District Calendar for July and August 2009

Date	Time	Event	Location
7/1		Pastor's Moving Day for Clergy	
7/2	12:00 p.m.	Closing Early for 4 th of July Holiday	District Office
7/3		Closed for 4 th of July Holiday	District Office
7/5-11		FredCamp	Fredericksburg
7/6	7:30 p.m.	District UMM	Wright's Chapel UMC
7/12	5:00 p.m.	District Clergy Welcome Picnic	Wright's Chapel UMC
7/12-17		Camp Rainbow Connection	VUMAC
7/12-18		Harvest of Hope	Ashland
7/12-18		Richmond Metro Workcamp	Richmond
7/13-18		Yes We Care About Neighbors Mission Team 2009	Caroline, Hanover, King Wm.
7/13	6:00 p.m.	District Council/Board of Laity Combined Meeting	Aunt Sarah's, Carmel Church
7/14	7:00 p.m.	District Board of Missions	Tabernacle UMC
7/21-22		Provisional Residency Event	VUMAC
7/21	7:00 p.m.	District Finance Committee Meeting	District Office
7/24-26		School of Christian Mission, Weekend Session	VUMAC
7/26-8/1		LebCamp	Hanover
7/26	3:00 p.m.	District Stewards' Meeting	Wright's Chapel UMC
7/27-30		School of Christian Mission, Week Session	VUMAC
8/2-4		<i>Are You Listening? Hearing God's Call</i>	Randolph-Macon College
8/3	7:30 p.m.	District UMM	Wright's Chapel UMC
8/6	7:00 p.m.	District Board of Church Location & Building	TBA
8/7-8		Lay Supply Pastor Orientation	VUMAC
8/9-14		All God's Children Camp	Westview on the James
8/9-14		Camp Rainbow Connection	VUMAC
8/16	2:00 p.m.	District Youth Council	Wright's Chapel UMC
8/18	10:00 a.m.	District Committee on Ordained Ministry	District Office
8/21-22		Conf. Disaster Response & Recovery Training Academy	VUMAC
8/21-22		Conference Middle School Mission I Weekend	Westview on the James

VUMAC - Virginia United Methodist Assembly Center

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