Armstrong Priorities Freshman Academy

The people of faith of Asbury UMC, 324 North 29th Street, Richmond, are blessed to be given opportunities to live into our tagline: It’s time to go deeper into our relationship building with God in Christ Jesus and all God’s people. In 2013, both religious and political leaders, Rev. Dr. Ben Campbell (Richmond Hill), City Councilwoman Cynthia Newbille, other distinguished pastors, and I met to form “Church Hill Priorities,” a group of fierce people of faith, who believe in investing in the lives of the promise children. Armstrong Priorities Freshman Academy is not just the establishment of another academy which exists inside of Armstrong High School in the East End of Richmond. On Easter, we believe that God raised Jesus as the Victor of Life and is empowering us to live in the wholeness of resurrection reality. Many of our African American urban children have challenges beyond education and economics such as spiritual, emotional, and behavioral issues. In light of this, Armstrong Priorities Freshman Academy will become a foundation of an urban ministry model for seminary interns CPE placement, outreach opportunities for God's people of faith to volunteer for in/afterschool tutoring, mentoring, and to go deeper in our relationship building with teenagers and family members.

In light of this, we have had two overnight retreats in partnership with Westview on the James Camp and Retreat Center. Asbury’s Hospitality Team, APFA educators, APFA Board director, members, and mentors poured love into the APFA students. Additionally, both a boys only and a girls only overnight retreats were held at Asbury UMC in 2016. Our girls retreat theme, The Power Within: conflict resolution, dealing with peer pressure, knowing your value and respect for self. The girls retreat was in partnership with Dick’s Sporting Goods, KAKY (Kollege and Kareer for Youth), Mary Kay, Target, Kohl’s, and J.C. Penny stores.

For more information, please contact Rev. Marilyn Heckstall at <marilynheckstall@vaumc.org>.

On April 2-8, the Virginia Conference will participate in a week of intentional prayer for the mission of The United Methodist Church and for the work of the Commission on a Way Forward which began meeting in January. This week of Praying Our Way Forward is an initiative of the Council of Bishops as a part of their larger commitment to lead the church in every part of the world in times of worship, study, discernment, confession, and prayer for God’s guidance.

Each annual conference in The United Methodist Church will participate in this prayer ministry and will conclude in June 2018. Churches in each of the 16 districts of the Virginia Conference will be invited to participate. In addition to participating in each conference’s designated week of prayer, individuals are invited to join the initiative beyond the week of April 2-8, by praying daily and fasting weekly for the church, mission, and future. Resources for both congregation and individual participation in Praying Our Way Forward may be found at <http://umcprayer.org/> and <http://www.vaumc.org/PrayForward>.

Bishop Sharma D. Lewis

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Friends,

I always find Lent to be the opportune time to read. It is a season where we can turn off the TV and catch up on a more engaged practice. The Bishop has been helpful with her call to join her in reading through the Bible.

If you are like me, the other issues of this month are also on your mind. Our Judicial Council will be meeting at the end of the month to offer a pivotal decision. The Commission on The Way Forward continues to meet. Next week is our Conference time to pray for that commission.

In all the events and the kairos nature of this month, I find myself drifting to our roots. I am working through some of Wesley’s sermons and reading a relatively recent biography of Asbury: “American Saint” by John Wigger. When so many foundational things seem to be wobbling, it is helpful to return to our roots and remember who we are. When you read the issues Wesley and Asbury faced, there is a renewed perspective on our contemporary challenges.

Specifically, I was surprised to read this week that Wesley, at the end of his life, looked clearly into a situation that is not so distant from ours. Wesley wasn’t dealing so much with issues of human sexuality but he was dealing with decline. In 1789, when he was eighty-six years old, he preached one of his last published sermons entitled, “Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity.” He had seen his movement grow in his younger years, but now was seeing the spiritual tide receding (at least in England, not in America). He asks the question why.

Today we are more nuanced and will often carefully point to problems outside of us. Not Wesley. He said the problem is us, not the culture, nor the controversies. He told his Methodists that the reason they were losing their momentum was that they had failed to embrace the fundamental spirit of self-denial. As if that wasn’t enough, he went on to say, with even greater volume, that the reason for the decline of Methodism was because Methodists failed to give financially. In that famous line, he said that we were earning all we can, and we were saving all we can, but we were failing in that critical third instruction, to “give all you can.”

Of course Wesley never hesitated to “go from preachin’ to meddlin.” But it is still a timely reminder. We can spend so much time worrying about the challenging forces to our faith within issues and controversy that we fail to see the log in our own eye. Historically, one of the premier causes of spiritual decline in our lives and our denomination is simply our failure to give generously.

If you can say Amen to this, let me offer you an opportunity to do something about it. On Saturday May 6, the District will be sponsoring a day long workshop with Paul Nickerson entitled “Tippers to Tithers.” It will be an opportunity for clergy and church leadership to attend and be encouraged in challenging our people to enter into joyful and sacrificial stewardship. I will be there and I hope many of you will join me. Richmond clergy recently received an email on the event.

Things are challenging but there is something we can do about it! I look forward to praying with you this week and joining you on May 6!

In Christ,

Pete

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**Richmond District**

The Virginia Conference • United Methodist Church

P.O. Box 5606 • Glen Allen, Virginia 23058

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April 2017

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**The History of Old Richmond Churches**

Tuesday, April 18 at 11 a.m. at Reveille UMC, 4200 Cary Street Road, Richmond, Dr. Walter Griggs will share the fascinating history of Richmond’s oldest churches. Dr. Griggs recently retired from VCU after teaching for 45 years in the School of Business. In addition, he has authored a number of books on a variety of subjects, including “The Collapse of Richmond’s Church Hill Tunnel” and “World War II Richmond, Virginia.” Walter is an informative and interesting speaker whose wit brings enjoyment to his listeners. An avid researcher, he is a lifelong learner and teacher. The program begins at 11 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Bring your favorite side dish or dessert to share at the luncheon following the program. The main dish and beverages are provided.

For more information visit <www.reveilleumc.org/leisure-club>.

**Prayers for...**

◆ Rev. Michael Southall-Vess, medical leave, continues his recovery from liver and kidney transplant surgery in February.

◆ Rev. Lee Sheaffer, retired, who continues rehab for a stroke suffered in January.

◆ Rev. Lisa McGehee, deacon, Good Shepherd UMC, on the death of her father on March 11.

◆ Rev. John Peters, retired, on the death of his sister on March 1.

◆ The family of Hazel McClung, widow of Rev. Ardell “Mac” McClung, who died on March 22.
UMFS invites You to Tea

The Richmond District United Methodist Women are having their 2017 Prayer Breakfast on Saturday, April 15 at Providence UMC, 901 South Providence Road, Richmond. Mary Jane Rawley, Conference UMW president will join us as our guest speaker. Activities begin at 8:30 a.m. Register through your local UMW unit.

Join us for the “On the Road in Mission” Bus Trip to Wesley Community Service Center, Portsmouth, Saturday, April 22. The bus will pick up and return passengers beginning at Bon Air UMC at 8 a.m., Skipwith UMC at 8:30 a.m. and Shady Grove UMC, Hanover at 9 a.m. Return trip will drop off at Shady Grove at 6:30 p.m., Skipwith 7 p.m. and Bon Air 7:30 p.m. Our day will include:

◆ Working in the food storage areas to pack emergency food boxes, rotating stock, etc.,

◆ Polishing and refinishing two conference room tables,

◆ Refreshing flower gardens and outside shrubbery to provide ‘curb appeal’,

◆ Window and woodwork cleaning in educational wing.

Cost is $64 which includes transportation, insurance, lunch, dinner, gratuity and our UMW spirit. Make checks payable to Richmond District UMW and send to Ruth Wilkinson, 4209 West End Drive, Richmond, VA 23294. Full payment due by April 8.

Visit Westview on the James

Mark your calendar for Sunday, April 23. Westview on the James will be holding its annual Open House from 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. This is a great opportunity to get a “taste” of what summer camp is like by touring the camp, trying some activities, and meeting the camp’s awesome staff. Check out Westview’s improved facilities: updated Hogans with A/C; renovated bathhouse; new bouldering wall, high ropes challenge course, and Zip ‘n Dip. Lunch and refreshments will be provided. Open House is a free event open to all, so bring a friend! For more information visit <www.westviewonthejames.org>.

Westview MIRs

Westview on the James is seeking Ministers-in-Residence (MIR) for its summer camp program. Westview was founded in order to offer a “place apart” where children can experience and grow deeper with God.

The MIR shares a message during morning Sonrise worship each day; is a resource to campers and staff; and is available to answer questions about scripture, faith and discipleship, or exploring a call to ministry. One MIR is needed for each week of camp, beginning June 18 and ending the week of August 6. Camp begins Sunday evenings at 5 p.m. and concludes at 7 p.m. on Friday night. The MIR resides at Westview in the Kim Cabin. As a thank you for serving, the MIR is allowed to bring one child or grandchild to Westview for free. To learn more, contact <wsvsummercamp@gmail.com>.

Westview seeks CITs

Westview on the James is looking for 15 or 16 year olds who are interested in building their leadership skills while working with younger kids for its Counselor in Training Camp (CIT). During the week of July 9-14, CIT campers will spend half of their day learning how to be a counselor and the other half participating in camp activities. All CIT campers will go through Red Cross First Aid/CPR/AED training and receive a certificate of completion for the program. This week will be a fun way to see if you are interested in applying for a Camp Counselor position in the future. The cost is $485. For more information, visit <www.westviewonthejames.org>.

Ministers’ Convocation

This year’s Ministers’ Convocation: Making Space for Yourself and Others, to be held May 8-10, will offer a time for renewal/relaxation and learning. As pastors prepare to enter this new year in ministry, consider registering now! Come be engaged in theological and academic conversation while experiencing rejuvenation for ministry.

Speakers include Dr. Amy Oden, Professor at Candler; and Rev. Dr. Joel LeMon, Associate Professor at Candler.

The convocation will be held at Wyndham Virginia Crossings Conference Center in Glen Allen. Continuing Education Funds are available at <vaumc.org/clergycontinuingeducation>. For event details and registration see <www.vaumc.org/MinistersConvocation>.
Early in the spring, the Methodist Church in Cambodia is moving toward self-sufficiency. Bishop Lewis also announced the annual conference mission offering goal of $200,000 to focus on the following missional priority projects:

- **$50,000 Cambodia** - For continued support for our partnership with the Methodist Mission in Cambodia as they move toward being an autonomous Methodist Church.
- **$25,000 Brazil** – For our long term support of the Shade and Fresh Water ministry with at risk children across several conferences in the Methodist Church of Brazil.
- **$25,000 Mozambique** – Our partnership with the United Methodist Church of Mozambique focuses on education by providing lay training resources that strengthens their discipleship and witness across both conferences in Mozambique.
- **$50,000 Virginia Long Term Disaster Recovery** – We are committed to a long term response to those whose lives were changed by tornadoes and hurricane Matthew in 2016. The funding of the recovery will allow further teams to answer the call to make a compassionate response.
- **$25,000 Ethnic Minority Missional Ministries** – Funds for grants to go toward developing ministry outreach in the conference to immigrants and other marginalized groups.
- **$25,000 Virginia Volunteers in Mission** – To provide funds available to small membership faith communities who wish to engage in mission that may lack resources.

See <www.vaumc.org/AC2017> for important information regarding housing, kits for conference, and other Annual Conference details.

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**R-MA 125th Anniversary**

Randolph-Macon Academy invites all of the churches in the Virginia Conference to celebrate our 125th Anniversary as we remember our heritage of being founded by the Methodist Church and Randolph-Macon College in 1892. On April 29, from 11 a.m.–4 p.m. we will have a community celebration on our campus. On April 30, at 9:30 a.m. we will have a chapel service in Boggs Chapel to celebrate God’s faithfulness these past 125 years. We will also recognize our Confirmation Class of 2017. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Chaplain Josh Orndorff
jorndorff@rma.edu

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**District Opportunities**

- April 2–8—Praying for a Way Forward, 521-11102.
- April 15—UMW Prayer Breakfast, Providence UMC, 640-5355.
- April 18—The History of Old Richmond Churches, Revealie UMC, 359-6041.
- April 22—District UMW On the Road in Mission Day Trip to Wesley Community Service Center, Portsmouth, 218-0627.
- April 23—Open House, Westview on the James, 457-4210.
- April 23–125th Anniversary Celebration, Randolph-Macon Academy, 540/671-3689.
- May 1—Youth Theology Institutie, Shenandoah University, 540/535-3546.
- May 8–10—Ministers’ Convocation, Wyndham Hotel and Conference Center, Glen Allen, 521-1126.
- May 24—VA PAUMCS Spring Event, Fredericksburg UMC, 521-1124.
- June 2–3—UMW Day at Ferrum College, 218-0627.
- June 16–18—Annual Conference, Hampton, 521-1124.
- July 9–14—Counselor in Training Camp, Westview on the James, 457-4210.

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**UM Center Closings**

The District Office and the VAUMC Conference Center will close at 1 p.m. April 13 and remain closed April 14 for Good Friday.

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**Lay Servant Schedule**

Donna Seward, director, Lay Servant Ministries: <donna_t_seward@yahoo.com>, 897-3309. Richmond District Certified Lay Servants lead worship regularly at the following care centers:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4/2</td>
<td>Beth Sholom</td>
<td>A Henderson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/9</td>
<td>Elmcroft</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/16</td>
<td>University Park</td>
<td>G Stephens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/23</td>
<td>Elmcroft</td>
<td>B Henderson</td>
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**RICHMOND DISTRICT DISPATCH**

April 2017

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**District Dispatch**

Richmond District
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Peter M. Moon District Superintendent
Susan Petrey Administrative Assistant
Cindy Payne-Ingraff District Treasurer
Ron White District Lay Leader
Scotty Boyle District President, UMM
Claude Stocky District President, UMM
Bill Chaffin District Ministry of Scouting Coord.
Donna Seward Director, Lay Servant Ministries

We’re on the web at:
www.richmonddistrictumc.org

The DEADLINE for the NEXT ISSUE is the 15th of the month.