Welcome, Farewell and Congratulations!

W e welcome the following clergy who received new appointments to the Richmond District at Annual Conference in Hampton on June 17:

◆ Yunho Eo to Laurel Hill UMC
◆ Yun Chol Kim to St. Peter’s UMC
◆ Kurt Knobel to Calvary UMC
◆ Jim Lavender to Corinth UMC (Gd)
◆ Jonathan Poarch to Beulah UMC as associate
◆ Julio Serrano-Perez to Belmont UMC and Beulah UMC as associate
◆ T. Bryson Smith to Good Shepherd UMC
◆ Claudia Stallings to Ramsey Memorial UMC
◆ Owen Taylor to West Hanover charge

And wish God’s richest blessings to these pastors who are leaving the District to begin a new adventure in ministry:

◆ Norman Ramsey to the Staunton District
◆ Debra Lucas to the Winchester District
◆ Bob Berghuis to District to the

Elizabeth River District
◆ Marti Ringenbach to the Arlington District
◆ Deborah Koontz to the Charlottesville District
◆ Mark Roscoe to the Rappahannock River District

And prayers for a blessed retirement for:

◆ Bob Jennings
◆ Valerie L. White

Congratulations to the following Richmond District candidates for ministry who were ordained, commissioned or licensed at Annual Conference:

Licensed as a Local Pastor:
◆ Jonathan Poarch
◆ Owen Taylor

Commissioned as a Provisional Member:
◆ Mi Sook Ahn

Ordained as an Elder:
◆ Caitlyn Fox Bailey
◆ Chinhyo Dan Kim

AC Offering Update

A s of July 3, $134,487.82 has been received for this year’s Annual Conference special offering, nearly $66,000 shy of the goal of $200,000. The offering was designated as follows:

◆ Cambodia: $50,000
◆ Brazil: $25,000
◆ Mozambique: $25,000
◆ Native Americans: $10,000
◆ Cuba Recovery: $25,000
◆ Haiti: $25,000
◆ Puerto Rico Recovery: $25,000
◆ Moscow Seminary: $15,000

For details see < www.vaumc.org/AC2018 >.

Contributions may still be sent to the Conference Treasurer’s office, P.O. Box 5605, Glen Allen, VA 23058. Designate “Annual Conference Offering” on your check or at the bottom of your apportionment statement. If the check is from a church, indicate the church GCFA number on the check.

For more information call 521-1108.

UM Center Closings

E ffective July 1 the District Office and the Conference Center will close at 1 p.m. on Fridays through Labor Day. Please call before you come to assure that someone is here to greet you.

The District Office and the VAUMC Conference Center will close July 3 at 1 p.m. and be closed on Wednesday, July 4 in observance of Independence Day holiday.

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Friends,

“You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather serve one another humbly in love.” (Galatians 5:13)

This week, we will be celebrating the Fourth of July. It is that annual hot holiday with fireworks and picnics as our nation remembers and celebrates the gift of freedom.

Recently, on vacation, I was able to finish a great summer read: Jon Meacham’s “The Soul of America.” As a historian, he wrote the book to remind our nation that we have seen difficult times before and have risen, to use Lincoln’s phrase, with “the better angels of our nature.” In multiple chapters, he chronicles how we have seen harsh times but movements arose that made us better. He speaks to the major efforts to give women and African Americans the right to vote and how those efforts were enabled by the very hard and long work of multiple seen and unseen heroes and heroines.

We don’t always appreciate that freedom. We often take it for granted as so many are simply unwilling to vote or participate in the process which so many worked, bled, and died. It is too inconvenient. But Meacham’s book and other contemporary efforts remind us in this day and age that freedom is a two edged sword. It is a wonderful gift, received because of the sacrifice of many, but it is a gift that must be stewarded well. When it is not appreciated or when it is presumed, it is easily lost.

This is the case for national freedom, but it also applies in the spiritual realm. Paul speaks of the wondrous gift of freedom in Christ. We are not in bondage to the power of sin and darkness but are given the freedom to live lives of eternal significance and contemporary power. In the familiar words of Proverbs 3:1, we are free to “laugh at the days to come.”

But the gift of spiritual freedom is also a two edged sword. As Paul affirms, it also comes with responsibility. Our Wesleyan heritage teaches us that all people are free to choose for Christ or not. All of us are free to choose for God’s kingdom or not. Our understanding is one of inclusivity. All are welcome and God’s prevenient Holy Spirit speaks to and calls all to join the banquet. But with that free choice comes responsibility. As all are called, all are also accountable. All are accountable when we say no, when we are too busy, or when we are otherwise preoccupied. Prevenient grace and its inclusivity is a beautiful thing but there is a challenging side to it. We are also accountable when we fail to be good stewards of the freedom we are given.

We are living in trying times. Part of the reason they are trying is that many of us have presumed upon the freedom we have in this nation. We can easily do the same with our faith. A free nation and freedom in Christ are a powerful combination that can, if we can steward these gifts well, be vessels of changing the world. But perhaps to get back there, we have to remember that there are consequences to being poor stewards of the gift, whether be as a nation or as a church. As we celebrate the fourth this year, my prayer is that, underneath the fireworks, we will all find an element of humility that offers fertile ground to appreciate the freedom that is ours and let that celebration be a catalyst for renewed kingdom engagement in our world and in our faith.

In Christ,

Pete
Helping Hands 2018

Helping Hands is an exciting two-day mission experience for children, rising 4th through 6th Graders, offered to all member churches of the Virginia Conference UMC.

The Richmond area event will be held July 26-27 at Woodlake UMC, 15640 Hampton Park Dr. Chesterfield. Contact Diana Foster at <DFoster@woodlakeumc.org>.

Come and learn about mission opportunities and the importance of being a caring Christian. The cost is only $36 per person. This includes a T-shirt, meals, snacks, and an overnight stay. We will be sleeping on the floor and do not have shower facilities.

Possible Hands-On and Workshop Experiences Include painting, planting, window washing, visiting a Veterans Hospital, loving animals, feeding people, yard work, playing games with elderly, washing wheelchairs, delivering needed supplies, making meals for First Responders, singing, sorting at Thrift Store, playing with kids, worship and making new friends.

Registration for church groups and information about other dates/locations is at <http://www.vaumc.org/events>.

Get your team together and learn what it is to be a United Methodist Kid in Mission!◆

Help Needed for Cuba

Rev. Larry and MaryKaye Cochran will be leading a United Methodist Volunteers in Mission team to Cuba August 10-19. The team will be doing construction work on a Methodist church in the town of San Juan de Los Yeras. Reconstruction work will be done on the 110 year old sanctuary and church school building. There will also be many opportunities to worship with the church members and develop relationships as the team works side by side with their brothers and sisters in Christ. The team is asking for the following donations to assist the church in Cuba:

◆ flat double bed sheets and towels.
◆ Over the counter medications such as: aspirin, ibuprofen, Tylenol, multivitamins, both adult and pediatric.
◆ Small bars of soap, tooth paste, tooth brushes, razors, shampoo.
◆ Light summer weight clothing lightly used or new.
◆ Pens, pencils, markers, scissors, small pads of paper, small boxes of crayons.
◆ New sewing machine, yard goods (summer weight), scissors, notions, buttons, needles, zippers, patterns, straight pins, hooks and eyes.

Any donated items may be brought to Belmont UMC, 3510 Broad Rock Boulevard, Richmond, VA 23224 or the Office of Congregational Excellence, VAUMC Conference Center, Glen Allen, by August 8. In addition, they have a goal of raising $1,000 to take to Cuba to help with the cost of construction materials for the work to be done. Checks can be made payable to Belmont UMC with “Cuba Mission” in the memo. Thanks; every little bit helps!

For more information contact MaryKaye at 521-1105.◆

Resources about AC 2018

Members making reports to their local churches about Annual Conference 2018 can find a summary of the events at <www.vaumc.org/AC2018>. The link to the conference Vimeo page provides access to the “Glory Sightings” videos shown throughout the weekend. The Rev. Tom Berlin’s presentation from Friday morning about the Commission on a Way Forward is available on Vimeo as well. Visit the conference Flickr link to view photos from the weekend. You are free to use these pictures, but remember to give photo credit. You can also go back and look at all sessions from Annual Conference 2018 on the livestream site.◆

Olde Time Revival

An Olde Time Revival, hosted by the Virginia Conference Older Adult Council, will feature dynamic preaching from Bishop Peter Weaver and worship led by Michael Berkley, associate director of music at Woodlake UMC. The event will be held Sunday, July 15 from 2:30 to 5 p.m. at Williamsburg UMC in Williamsburg. For more information email Carol Bookwalter at <clbook743@gmail.com>.◆

All Good Gifts

Rev. Lee UMC, 4200 Cary Street Road, Richmond, invites you to the All Good Gifts youth talent program on Wednesday, July 11, at 7 p.m. in the sanctuary. Plan to attend this summer evening of music, theatre, art, dance, and visual arts. Join us for dinner before the program at 5:30 p.m. in the fellowship hall. Singers will present selections from the musical Children of Eden and from the contemporary Christian music repertoire. Actors are preparing two dynamic dramas, Noah Speaks and Modern Samaritan. Dancers are practicing a modern interpretation of the creation account from Genesis 1. Instrumentalists are preparing for various opportunities, both as an ensemble and as accompanists. Behind the scenes, visual artists are working to bring each of the scriptural themes that are contained in the program to life in creative ways. For dinner reservations, visit <www.revelleumc.org/all-good-gifts-dinner>.◆
Welcome to Bessie Owens as director of Lay Servant Ministries: <obessie10@yahoo.com>, 745-5372. Richmond District Certified Lay Servants lead worship regularly at the following care centers:

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>Speaker</th>
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<tr>
<td>7/1</td>
<td>Beth Sholom</td>
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<td>7/8</td>
<td>University Park</td>
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<td>7/15</td>
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<td>Elmcroft</td>
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Influence 2018: Worship
Tuesday, October 30
Woodlake UMC, 15640 Hampton Park Drive, Chesterfield VA 23832

Early Bird Registration: $30 per person
Must Be Registered by September 26
Event Registration: $40 per person, Registration Deadline October 22
Team discounts available
(Every 5th person free when registered together)
For more information and to register go to <www.vaumc.org/5talent>

District Opportunities

- September 23—God Unbound, Reveille UMC, 359-6041.
- September 25–26—Embrace: Clergywomen's 2018 Retreat, Virginia Crossings Conference Center, Glen Allen, 571/236-9753.
- October 14–19—Virginia Five-Day Academy for Spiritual Formation, Roslyn Retreat Center, Richmond, 703/281-5506.
- October 30–5 Talent Academy, Woodlake UMC, 521-1155.
- November 12–16—Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders, First Mennonite Church, Richmond, 630/627-0507.

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

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