Church's Ministry Makes a Space for Young People

A conversation with the Rev. Timothy Kirven begins with his enthusiasm level on high as he talks passionately about the Safe Zone ministry at Worship and Praise UMC.

But, then suddenly, the enthusiasm is gone, “I’ve probably done over 100 funerals for young people over the last four to five years,” Kirven said. Amid the cries of those mourning such unthinkable loss, he heard a call, from parents and youth, for a safe haven.

Worship and Praise Church is a United Methodist church. So, in the fall of 2017, Kirven took Bishop Sharma D. Lewis through the basement of the church’s building on East Laburnum Avenue, sharing a vision for a gathering place for young people ages 10-18.

When it was still a mess, Bishop Sharma D. Lewis said, “I can see this being a safe zone for kids.” On Easter Sunday the Safe Zone opened.

Since then, on any given Friday, you’ll find the basement abuzz with young people shooting pool and playing ping pong while others play Xbox or PlayStation on one of seven TVs, as the sound of Christian music pulses through the basement. You’ll hear lots of chatter and lots of laughter, the sounds of young people happy, the sounds of young people safe.

And there’s only one way to get inside. “Nobody can get into the Safe Zone without a Bible in their hand,” Kirven said. “That’s your ticket.”

Safe Zone begins with 30 minutes of praise and worship led by the youth of Worship and Praise Church starting at 7 p.m., followed by a message rooted in Scripture. The fellowship time begins around 8 p.m. and goes until almost 11 p.m.

In its first two months, an average of about 40 young people showed up each week for the Safe Zone. Chaperones include students from Virginia Union University’s campus ministry. With a capacity of around 60 students Kirven anticipates needing a larger facility soon. Such a thought brings him great joy.

But he knows that, although it happens inside the church, Safe Zone is about preparing young people for what they’ll face outside those basement walls. “When I see these kids smiling and parents being drawn in to the Safe Zone, that’s the community being empowered,” Kirven said.

“The Safe Zone is my way of saying that I’ve seen all this bad happen and if we can save one child, so that a young boy or girl can grow up and have a desire to be something better, I think we’ve done our job,” Kirven said.

If you would like to learn more, see the complete article at <www.vaumc.org/pages/news/2018vanews/2018vanews_safezone>.

--Article by Forrest White, reprinted by permission from the August 2018 Virginia Advocate>.
Prayers for...

 Rev. Yunho Eo, Laurel Hill UMC, who was hospitalized in July and is back in the pulpit.

 Rev. Tim Gerde, retired, who had a July hospital stay and is home and recovering.

Friends,

“...and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given us.” (Romans 5:5)

Don’t run through that verse too quickly. Paul says that God’s hope “does not disappoint us.” Every single one of us have experienced or endured that pain of hope that does disappoint. Maybe it was a time where you took a risk on a new opportunity, a new relationship, a new career or other possibility to seek a brighter tomorrow. Maybe it didn’t work out and you were sitting there, likely alone, holding the bag of your disappointed hope. Maybe you felt foolish, maybe you simply resolved to not let yourself be fooled by hope again, determined to live harder and more “realistically.”

But Paul makes this shocking claim. In the midst of so many things in our world and lives that do disappoint, in a culture where many of us cannot even fathom that things could be better, the Scriptures yet claim that God’s hope “does not disappoint.”

Somehow, as citizens of this nation, members of this denomination, and most importantly, people of the kingdom, we have to hold on to hope. In the person of Jesus Christ, there is no place where there is no hope. This hope which does not disappoint is centered in him. That does not mean that circumstances will always work out the way I want, but it does mean that there is something more powerful and loving underneath those circumstances no matter what.

In the months to come, I am pretty sure that many things will come our way and with them, will come that contemporary temptation of jaded cynicism. When it knocks on your door, I hope that you will join me in turning to these words from Paul. He reminds us that uniquely, God’s hope does not disappoint. As for me and my house, I am going with that.

I pray your summer is going well and I look forward to joining you with a continuing sense of hope!

In Christ,

Pete

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 church. There will also be opportunities to worship and develop relationships with the church members. The team is asking for 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 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. For more information call MaryKaye at 521-1155.

God Unbound

You are invited to a special discussion of God Unbound: Wisdom From Galatians for the Anxious Church with Elaine Heath, Dean of Duke Divinity School, on Sunday, September 23, at 2:00 p.m., in the Reveille UMC sanctuary, 4200 Cary Street Road, Richmond. Her book leads readers through a study of the Letter to the Galatians to encourage them to expand their views of God, themselves, and the church’s mission. This event is free and open to the public. Call 359-6041 for more information.

Prayers for...

◆ Rev. Yunho Eo, Laurel Hill UMC, who was hospitalized in July and is back in the pulpit.
◆ Rev. Tim Gerde, retired, who had a July hospital stay and is home and recovering.
The District UMW would like to invite you to attend their upcoming events in August. As the summer progresses, get together with friends and new folks to educate yourself, to lend a helping hand in the gardens and to relax and enjoy the fellowship of others in Christ.

On August 11, the combined Richmond and Rappahannock River UMW invite you to join us for an Opportunity for Conversation on “The Way Forward.” We are gathering at Wright’s Chapel UMC, 8063 Ladysmith Road, Ruther Glen.

Registration begins at 9:30 a.m., program and conversation from 10–2 p.m., lunch will take place 11:45–12:30. Bring your own Brown Bag Lunch (beverages and dessert provided).

Leaders are Karen McElfish, Virginia Conference UMW vice president; J.M. Gallier, Rappahannock River District UMW president, and Scotty Doyle Richmond District UMW president.

There is no charge for this event, however, in order to facilitate planning and preparation, if you have not already registered to attend, please call Scotty Doyle at 640-5355 and leave your name and number of attendees.

And then, Saturday, August 18, District UMW will visit Shalom Farms, 9 a.m.–12 noon. Join your UMW friends there to work together for the harvest.

**Bishop’s Prayer Convocation**

Lively and clergy are invited to attend the Bishop’s Convocation on Prayer, Saturday, September 15, at Reveille UMC, 4200 Cary Street Road, Richmond. Rev. Dr. Terry Tekyl will be the plenary speaker. There will also be small group learning opportunities in the areas of prayer and Wesleyan spiritual disciplines. The cost of registration is $10 which includes lunch. Find a brochure and registration information at <www.vaumc.org/Events>. Convocation participants may attend two workshops. Please indicate workshop preferences with registration. Deadline to register is September 9. Contact MarcBrown@ vaumc.org for more information.

**Embrace 2018**

Embrace 2018: Virginia Clergywomen’s Transformational Event will take place September 25–26 at the Virginia Crossings Conference Center, 1000 Virginia Center Parkway, Glen Allen.

This is the first gathering of the Virginia clergywomen in 30 years! Join us for two days of worship, study, and community. Engage in hands on missions, show off your skills in a Talent/No Talent Show, and participate in panel discussions on change and growth within your own ministry context. But most importantly, connect with other clergywomen and claim a renewed sense of call. Be inspired. Be nourished. Be embraced.

The deadline for in-residence registration is Wednesday, August 15. Find registration, CEU’s and grants information at <www.vaumc.org/Events>. For questions contact RobinBeMiller@vaumc.org or call (703) 303-9017.

**UMFS Welcomes You**

Come visit the UMFS Richmond Campus and learn more about United Methodist Family Services. Our next tour is on Tuesday August 21, 5:30–7 p.m. The tour helps bring the UMFS ministries to life while you walk around the campus. You also get to learn a bit of fun history, since we continue to operate today on the land where we were founded in 1900 as the Virginia Conference Orphanage of the Methodist Church.

UMFS is located at 3039 W. Broad Street in Richmond. All are welcome. Please RSVP by August 20 to Jill Gaynor, <jgaynor@umfs.org> or 804.254.9463.

**CROP Walk**

The 48th Annual Richmond CROP Hunger Walk will take place on Sunday, September 16, beginning and ending at Ginter Park UMC, 1010 W. Laburnum Avenue, Richmond. Registration begins at 1 p.m., and the walk begins at 2:00. Find more information and register online as a team or individual at <crophungerwalk.org/richmondva>. There will be a Recruiter’s Rally at Ginter Park UMC on Saturday, August 18, 10–11:30 a.m., where team captains can pick up promotional materials for their walkers, followed by a pot-luck picnic lunch at the Shalom Farms Westwood location. Shalom Farms is a local recipient of our funds. For more information call 271-2289.

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**Richmond District**

**Mini-Mission Encounter**

 Sacred Spaces: Encounters with God and Neighbor through Mission Saturday, September 8 8:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. Beulah UMC 6930 Hopkins Road Richmond 23234

◆ What is it? A mini-version of the Virginia Conference Mission Encounter. Participants will gain an overview of the Mission Studies. The Mini-Mission Encounter provides an opportunity for men, women, and youth to learn about partnering in God’s global mission and to grow spiritually.

◆ Who Should Attend? Any United Methodist with a passion for Missions.

◆ Mission Studies:

- **Spiritual Growth: Embracing Wholeness**
  - Study Leader: Rev. Nancy Robinson

- **Geographic Study: The Missionary Conferences of the UMC in the US (Red Bird, Oklahoma, Alaska)**
  - Study Leader: TBA

- **Issue Study: What About Our Money?**
  - Study leader: Rev. Dr. Stan Hargraves

◆ Schedule

- 8:30–9:00 Registration, Continental Breakfast, Displays

- 9:00–9:30 Program

- 9:30–12:30 Study Groups

- 12:30 Depart for Home

◆ Mission Emphasis: Sherbourne Food Pantry (non-perishable goods or monetary donation)

Jointly sponsored by the Richmond District United Methodist Women and Board of Missions

Registration Deadline September 1 Registration information available at: <www.richmonddistrictumc.org/>
Financial Peace University

Financial Peace University (FPU) is a nine-week, life-changing program that empowers and teaches you how to make the right money decisions to achieve your financial goals and God’s plan for your life. The course includes practical lessons on eliminating debt, building wealth, giving like never before, and much, much more! Through video teaching, class discussions, and interactive small groups, FPU presents biblical, practical steps to get from where you are to where you’ve dreamed you could be. The class will meet Thursdays, September 20-November 15 from 6:30-8 p.m. at Good Shepherd UMC, 9155 Hungary Road, Henrico, and is designed for individuals, couples and/or families. The cost is $99 per household. Must register for free childcare weekly. This life-changing class is being facilitated John Fuller, executive director of the Virginia United Methodist Conference Pensions and Benefits office. Register at <www.daveramsey.com/fpu/classes/>. For more information, contact Rev. Lisa McGehee at <lisamcgehee@vaumc.org> or 270.7613.◆

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>

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