

Best Ministry Ideas 2009

Best Ministry Ideas were presented by each church in the Alexandria District during their 2009 Charge Conferences. Questions about the specific ideas should be addressed to the church submitting the idea.

Alexandria District

The Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church

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Age Level Ministries

Cokesbury UMC

Older Adults Ministry

Cokesbury's older adult ministry began in February 1995. What began as a few older members of Cokesbury's congregation has continued to grow over the last nearly 15 years to approximately 50 members in attendance at our monthly meetings. Our group age requirement is 50 or retired.

The group named itself Helping Hands and has strived to make the name meaningful. In addition to being a social outlet for seniors in our congregation, we assist in the ministry and outreach missions of Cokesbury, maintain a medical inventory to assist anyone within the church, including family members or friends, who have a need for medical equipment, and maintain a prayer/phone tree to advise members of urgent matters or needs for prayer.

Beginning soon after its first meeting, a steering committee was organized to meet 2-3 times each year to set up a series of programs or activities. Once a schedule has been prepared, it is then brought to the membership for approval. Helping Hands has had a very busy and ambitious schedule throughout the years.

Each month, the group publishes a newsletter called "Hand Notes" to keep members apprised of church activities, prayer concerns, and health and community related items of interest.

One of the first things that the group did was take bowling lessons and set up a non-sanctioned bowling league. That league continues to this day, including many bowlers from outside the church, and has been a very popular way to spend Monday mornings.

During the group's lifetime, we have contributed 100 chairs to the fellowship hall, paid for educational materials, donated \$1,000 to the elevator fund, paid for computers in the church office, contributed \$500 for a golf cart as an intermediate means of providing transportation to elders and handicapped to the upstairs part of the church, provided the resources for our pastor and his wife to attend a retreat, made donations to the mission team, and have hosted funeral receptions as a loving tribute to members of our congregation. Helping Hands has provided the entire worship service on several occasions, including the sermon, liturgist, ushers, and choir.

Our outreach programs include contributions to Salvation Army, Northern Virginia College Ministries, and All God's Children Camp, including camping supplies and scholarship. We sponsor the Operation Christmas Child program in our church, wrapping shoe boxes for the congregation to fill with small gifts for children in war and weather-ravaged places all around the world. Helping Hands contributes postage to mail the boxes (last year 150). Twice each year, we take responsibility for the flea market that provides the community a place to earn money or purchase low-cost items.

As a social outlet for older adults, we attempt to hold some activity each month. Some examples: potluck luncheon with our meeting each month, game nights, field trips to theaters and

museums, miniature golf, river cruises, occasional speakers on subjects of interest, cookout, ice cream social, landmark tours, and have made several overnight trips to Lancaster, PA, where we saw Christian theatre productions and attending other Methodist Churches where we were always greatly welcomed. We hold a very fun Christmas party on our meeting date in December and an anniversary party each February.

As a self-supporting organization, Helping Hands has several fundraising events each year. For manning and taking responsibility of the flea market, we receive a commission on the total profit. At the same time, we always hold a bake sale, which is successful because the group has a number of very good bakers. The most anticipated fundraiser that we have is the Soup & Salad luncheon that we hold every February and November. This all-you-can-eat affair includes a large variety of homemade soups (including clam chowder, bean, vegetable beef, broccoli-cheese, French onion, chicken noodle, chili, potato, and split pea), along with salad, crackers, beverages and desserts for just \$4.00. We also have a small petty cash fund to pay for postage on our newsletters and other incidentals for our potluck luncheons, greeting cards and stamps. We are proud of the fact that we do not have a line item on the budget!

Being chairpersons of the Helping Hands group at Cokesbury is very rewarding and fulfilling. We would like to share our experiences with members of other District Churches who are always welcome to attend any of our meetings or functions.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Mahar Bunny Mahar

Co-Chairpersons

Old Bridge UMC

Seniors Ministry

Aware, energetic, thriving! That describes the seniors at Old Bridge UMC – a willing group in the service and the activities of our church. We're few but we don't let that stop us from searching out areas where our talents can be useful. In general, seniors have three big pluses to share here – time, experience, and love.

Several years ago we began with our monthly Silver Pilgrims luncheons and realized a good thing was happening to us as a group. We could be useful by reaching outside our usual interest areas into other church activities with our support and our varied experiences. The attentive leadership of our Senior Adult Team keeps us involved with current church life. Several recent opportunities have been serving as acolytes and a beginning senior choir.

Quite naturally you will find seniors in bible studies, helping in the nursery and various children's classes. Also we have answered needs by Mops at their luncheon for mothers, at special occasion programs for the children's department, Jeans for Jesus (Pastor Burton's pet project) and for Vacation Bible School where some of us even got caught in a water balloon fight last summer! Donations to Acts, the Hilda Barg Homeless Shelter, Samaritans Shoe boxes, the Angel Christmas Tree and our church's preschool are at the top of our To Do List.

We had dirty hands and clothes but happy hearts as we worked with the sweet potatoes that were gleaned from fields a few months ago for those in need. Let me tell you about 40,000 pounds of sweet potatoes dumped in the church's parking lot by an 18-wheeler! That was truly an intergenerational crew with the kids at the top of the huge mound shoving the potatoes down with their feet for the rest of us to heave into red mesh bags for local food banks. Messy, messy but all used even down to the last chunk!

In 2008 with prayers and anticipation, we burst upon the scene at Old Bridge UMC through the efforts of some creative thinkers and the blessings of Pastor Burton and Andy Harris from Adult Ministry. It may be a stretch to use the phrase "for such a time as this" here but the timing was certainly right for a senior group. In February we will be celebrating the beginning of our third year of activities with our annual Silver Pilgrims Indoor Picnic Luncheon. These gatherings are monthly highlights for 25-30 of us where we are centered by a small wooden cross and our Life on the Plus Side devotionals. Seniors come happily with all kinds of good food to enjoy. Sharing a favorite dish with the group is a special treat and it's not unusual to set out extra chairs. There are attractive room decorations and monthly birthdays are acknowledged with a cake. Anyone can make contributions to our little Celebration Box used us to recognize other special occasions and people in our lives.

Our more recent programs have included Nutrition, Exercise and Injury Prevention from Potomac Hospital, Living in England During WWII by an English War Bride, Our Hobbies and Collectibles, God and the Vietnam War a talk by a veteran, a speaker from ACTS regarding their mission and service, PWC Crime Prevention department on Awareness at Home and Away, a Civil War buff speaking on

Gettysburg, Squiggles a group creative art project and this month Thankfulness for God's Blessings with sharing from our own group. The December treat will be the Christmas program given by the children in our Old Bridge UMC Preschool. They are a true delight to behold.

Yes, we're already three months ahead into planning for 2010 because we're not getting any younger you know! Now thank you all for this grand opportunity to get acquainted.

St. Matthew's UMC

Faith Enrichment Program for Children

Our church has a vibrant and very active music program for children on Monday afternoons. This program draws many families into our church, including those who are not active participants in our Sunday morning Christian Education program. There are 5 different vocal and bell choirs that practice between 2:30 pm and 5:30 pm. Many families have children that participate in more than one group over the course of the afternoon. In the past, children who were waiting on siblings or who were in between their choir practices would go to a childcare room where they could work on homework or play. This program was working well, but we wanted to use this time to offer a Christian Education opportunity for children. Particularly for children of those families who were not able to attend Sunday school.

By working with our Director of Music, we created a schedule where each age group would have a 45-minute to an hour time slot where children could participate in a Faith Enrichment class. The program was offered as an option for all children, even those who did not participate in choir. We designed the structure of the Faith Enrichment to be less formal than a traditional Sunday school class. Typical classes consist of games, bible lessons, bible skills building and crafts projects. This model was chosen to provide a variety of activities for children who participate in both Sunday school and Faith Enrichment, and to accommodate children who had spent their days in school and choir and just needed some down time. Faith Enrichment classes are led by our Associate Pastor for Children and Youth and the Director of Children's Ministry with the help of a team of 6-8 volunteers.

The Faith Enrichment program has been a great success and we now have many more children than were originally anticipated to participate. It has provided families with children in different choirs with an opportunity to have their children engaged in a meaningful, spirit-filled activity while their siblings are at choir practice. There are between 50 and 60 children who participate in the Faith Enrichment program each week, broken down into the following age groups:

- K-2: 20-25
- 3-4 grade: 20-25, and
- 5-6 grade: 5-10

We are having particular success with our K-2 and our 3-4 grade class. The K-2 class meets directly after its choir rehearsal 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm. The 3-4 grade class meets at the very end of the program from 4:45 pm – 5:30 pm. Our 5-6 grade class is a great group, but significantly smaller than the other two. One reason for smaller numbers in the 5-6 grade group is that its class meets before choir rehearsal.

We continue to evaluate the program. An important part of the evaluation process is gathering feedback from families and children. All of the evaluation data helps us to refine the program. The children really enjoy this opportunity and very few are choosing to opt out. Parents really appreciate this

program, especially because it enables them to drop all of their children off at one time and pick them up at the same time. The childcare room is still available and some families continue to use it, but for many of our families who participate in our music program, the Faith Enrichment program is a well-received option for Christian Education.

Springfield UMC

Family Events

SUMC sits on the corner of a very busy intersection in the heart of Springfield, VA. We're across the street from Giant Food, where the cashiers frequently yell to customers, "no WIC at this register!" We're a tenth of a mile from Echo, Inc., and are adjacent to our neighborhood elementary school, Garfield, where fifty percent of the children participate in the free or reduced lunch program. Our church does not need to look far to see the mission field. Our mission is to know Jesus, share His love, and grow His church. But how do we move a congregation to witness the love of Jesus to a very diverse community in need?

Witnessing is not easy. We've all heard the angry retort, "Don't force your beliefs on me!" While we as Christians don't wish to force our religion on anyone, we do desire to share how the gospel of Christ changed our lives. But how do we as Christians reach out to non-Christians and the un-churched and share His love?

Thankfully, God is not asking us to "corner and convert 'em." Peter tells us in I Peter 3:15, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." At SUMC, we reach out to our community through free family events where we have opportunities to witness in an environment that is fun and comfortable for everyone.

In the spring, we have a Spring Festival, where we invite the community to join us for an afternoon of family fun activities. Children enjoy hinting for plastic filled Easter eggs, participating in bunny hop races, wooden egg-spoon races, playing various carnival games, making crafts, decorating cookies, and eating popcorn and cotton candy. Children receive colorful prizes that say "Jesus Loves You" or "God Is Good." Publicity includes advertisements printed in local free newspapers, to posters displayed in nearby businesses. Bilingual flyers are sent home with elementary students in their "Friday Folders" and are handed out to middle school students interested in earning community service hours. Funds for the event are raised through an Easter Tree in the church narthex. The congregation selects paper ornaments from the tree denoting an item or amount that is needed for the festival. These donations have allowed the event to be free for our community. We do a similar event in the fall, our Harvest Festival, and we also do free Movie Nights and Game Nights throughout the year on Fridays.

At our events, information tables and tents are prevalent with brochures, newsletters, flyers, and DVDs about our church family, worship times, and ministry opportunities. But this is not a popular festival attraction. Families who attend our events do not come to peruse our information table. They come to enjoy themselves, but through their interactions with our volunteers, they may learn about the wonderful opportunities at our church to further their family's spiritual journey. It is then that our volunteers have a point of reference to provide visitors with more information.

Woodlawn UMC

Youth Ministry Focus

Youth are a vital part of the Body of Christ, Woodlawn's Youth Council and Voices of praise Music Ministry is committed to:

- Focus on Joyful Christian Discipleship
- Attends, participates and develops programs and events that promote Christian fellowship, growth, missions, outreach, and unity
- Encourage and empower youth leaders
- Be a forum and an advocate for all youth

Youth council invites all sister churches and other United Methodist Churches in the area to participate in the programs, workshops and events sponsored by the Youth Council and the Voices of Praise (VOP) Ministry opportunities. Youth Council encourages Woodlawn adults to create one on one relationship with the youth of Woodlawn to teach them God's way. We encourage adults and other youth to be an encouragement to youth when they are going through difficult and/or challenging times in their lives and to be an example in whatever the circumstances.

It is our prayer that God will use the Woodlawn Youth Council to help focus our youth ministries on the transforming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that we will be emboldened by the Holy Spirit to be agents for renewal in our church, and that we may grow together in Christian servanthood.

Highlights:

ANNUAL VOPs CHRISTMAS BALL – Our annual Christmas ball was a success. This event promotes youth fellowship and outreach. All youth 13 and up are invited. The VOPs encourages the attendance of every youth in the church. The VOP choir along with youth council sponsors this event. A Christian DJ provides the music. Attendees play games and take part in a banquet style meal. Fun, Door prizes, etc. This event promotes outreach and fellowship.

YOUTH OF WOODLAWN ADOPTED NEEDY FAMILY IN THE CHURCH – God laid it on the hearts of the young people of Woodlawn to adopt a family during the Christmas season. The youth voted on a family they felt was in need in our church. It was a unanimous decision. They were on one accord on which family to bless. The youth donated over \$500 dollars. Gifts and gift cards were donated to the family to bless them in the name of the Lord! This act demonstrates missions and loving your neighbor.

ENCOURAGING YOUTH OF WOODLAWN – Dr. Ronald Teel is mentoring Vaughn Dashiell in playing the piano. Alec Thomas mentors some of the youth in cooking and kitchen etiquette. The young people serve during women's and men's day. Mr. Kelvin has taught a young person to install brakes on his car. We are sure there are many examples in the life and the works of Woodlawn's Adults teaching and mentoring young people.

VOICES OF PRAISE 7th ANNIVERSARY PROGRAM – Over the past seven years this event’s attendance has grown. This year we had two events associated with the 7th anniversary of the VOP. Anniversary Program was held at Woodlawn United Methodist Church with over 200 people in attendance. Standing room only! We also had an anniversary concert at our Prince William Campus. Close to 250 people in attendance. Over 100 youth attended and participated. This event promotes youth fellowship, outreach and salvation experience.

SOUTH COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER OPEN HOUSE – The Voices of Praise participated in the South County Government Center open house on Saturday, May 31. Other youth and adult members of Woodlawn attended. The Fairfax County Government Employee Newsletter, Volume 40, No. 13, page 5 published a picture of the Voices of Praise. This event promotes community outreach and youth fellowship.

GUM SPRINGS COMMUNITY CENTER DAY – The Voices of Praise participated in the Gum Springs Community Center Day. Other youth and adult members of Woodlawn attended. The Mount Vernon Gazette reported on the event and posted pictures of the Voices of Praise choir & musicians. This event promotes community outreach and youth fellowship.

GUM SPRINGS COMMUNITY CENTER DAY HERITAGE DAY – The Voices of Praise participated in the Gum Springs Community Center Day in June 2008. Other youth and adult members of Woodlawn attended. This event promotes community outreach and youth fellowship.

GALLOWAY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH YOUTH DAY – The Voices of Praise participated in Galloway UMC’s Youth Day by ministering in songs. Other youth and adult members of Woodlawn attended. This event promotes support and outreach.

DISTRICT TRAINING DAY – The Youth of Woodlawn and the Voices of Praise participated in District Training Day by ministering in songs and helping attendees with directions and helping the teachers transport class materials to their respective classrooms and providing general help as needed. This service promotes missions.

YOUTH WORKSHOP – Approximately twenty youth participated in a youth workshop. The workshop facilitator was Shawn McBride – Delivering Truth to Youth Ministries Pastor Shawn McBride has the skill, integrity and passion to effectively communicate truth to today’s generation in youth ministry. He has an uncanny ability to inspire, challenge, motivate, relate to and encourage youth. His unique style, humor and energy has made him one of the most requested speakers for youth retreats, conference, revivals, public school assemblies, and seminars locally and abroad. The youth from Woodlawn were blessed and continue to share the word they learned during the workshop with Pastor McBride. Even Pastor Brown used one of the illustrations in his Sunday morning sermon. The youth recommending he come back for revival. Special thanks to Woodlawn Workshop committee for all the hard work.

WAGING WAR/STAND YOUTH REVIVAL – The youth revival this year was truly a blessing. Last years attendance was around 70 people each night. This years average attendance was estimated about 95 for all three nights. Numerous youth/ parents expressed their feelings on how revival truly blessed them

and their families. They even wanted us to add an additional night! The youth held a 30 min gospel praise session in the parking lot on Monday and Tuesday night. Monday night was multiplicity night, Tuesday was jersey night and Wednesday was throw back night. Many youth invited their friends to attend revival. This event promotes community outreach, an experience with God, and a salvation call. (A time to get right with the Lord!)

ANNUAL HARAMBEE YOUTH RETREAT (SEJBMCR) – Over 20 Youth/Adults from Woodlawn participated in the Harambee Youth Retreat. The word harambee is South African in origin and means “Let’s come together.” This event’s purpose is to be a celebration of gifts, talents, and willing hearts of ethnic United Methodist youth. These events also focus on helping youth and young adults understand BMCR’s history, purpose, and focus on equipping and supporting Christian youth. This years harambee was held on June 25-29, 2008 at Rust College in Holly Springs, Mississippi. This event promoted Fellowship! Dance! Song! Fun! Food! Spirit-Filled Worship!

WARRIORS – Many young people in Woodlawn desire to preach and teach God’s word. As an answer to this call, Pastor Brown births a WARRIORS group. Pastor Brown mentored the young people by instructing them in preaching and teaching God’s word. Approximately five/six youth attending faithfully for six months!

CALLING 21 INTERN – The youth council members (along with other congregation members) faithfully supported the Calling 21 Intern **Jeremy Koontz**. The youth council help provide encouragement, love, support, shelter and meals during his tenor at Woodlawn. We all have built a relationship with him. We miss him. We are continuing to stay in touch with Jeremy. His closing sermon continues to bless many that heard it. He preaches with such passion for his fellow Christian, brother, and sister. An exceptional young man of God!

ENCOURAGE AND EMPOWER YOUTH LEADERS – Youth council members provided a forum for four young people to preach and teach God words by creating a FAITHFUL EXPRESSION night. Approximately eighty people were in attendance. Most of the guest came from family, friends, and outside church members. All expression speakers did a wonderful job in expressing what God gave them to share. The expression speakers were Courtney Miller, Vandie Bernard, John Highsmith, and Justin Williwams. Justin Williwams has preached on Sunday morning service at Woodlawn and just recently at Pastor Vernell Carter’s Church in Springfield, VA for their youth Sunday morning service. He also spoke during Harambee 2008 Youth Retreat in Mississippi!

BIBLE STUDY – The youth are encouraged to attend bible study. They are encouraged to start bible studies. Youth faithfully attend Wednesday night bible study. The Youth were given a directive during a workshop to study the book of proverbs. Due to the young people studying God’s word, a bible study was birthed. Twelve young people faithfully attend a Monday night bible study in Dale City. Six youth meet for bible study in their home on the highway. Some youth had been attending bible study over the internet for three months. There is a definite hunger for the word of God from the youth of God!

ANNUAL CONFERENCE FEATURED VIDEO OF VOICES OF PRAISE MINISTRY – During Annual Conference, the Woodlawn Voices of Praise and Youth Ministry were featured during annual conference. The Video

can be seen on God Tube. The video highlights how Woodlawn uses a non-traditional method to outreach to young people through music to create a connection to God.

YOUNG PEOPLE TEACHING – Some of the young people of Woodlawn teach during Vacation Bible School. They hold positions as assistant teachers.

YOUTH MINISTERING IN SONGS – The Voices of Praise and the 68+ members of the Points of Lights Children choir minister in songs during 2nd Sunday services. The Voices of Praise also minister in songs on once a month during prayer/praise bible study service. On numerous occasions the VOPs minister in songs during service at our Prince William Campus.

YOUNG MEN ATTENDING MEN'S PRAYER BREAKFAST – Eight young men of Woodlawn attended a District Men's Prayer Breakfast at Burke United Methodist Church.

YOUTH ATTENDED DISTRICT CHARGE CONFERENCE – A Woodlawn youth attending district charge conference and voted on delegates.

PROJECT EXCEL – Twelve graduating seniors were recognized for their achievements with a bible with their names engraved.

ROBERTS MEMORIAL YOUTH GOSPEL HIP HOP PROGRAM – The Voices of Praise and youth from Woodlawn attended/ministered in songs during a Gospel Hip Hop program at Roberts Memorial UMC.

YOUTH JAM IN WASHINGTON DC – Voices of Praise minister in songs at radio personality Preacher Boys church for the second year. Five youth were led to rededicate their lives to Christ.

HALLELUYAH NIGHT – A fun filled evening with snacks and candy that provides an alternative to Halloween. Youth participate each year in providing security and help with the activities for the children.

COMMENDATIONS

The Woodlawn Youth Council and Voices of Praise Ministry urge all to:

1. Seek creative ways to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the youth of your neighborhood.
2. Work with Woodlawn youth to more fully integrate them into the full life of the church.
3. Support the youth council budget to allow continued growth of creative ministries that are building up the Kingdom of God through God's children.
4. Continue to support the work of Woodlawn Youth Council.
5. Encourage adults to create a one on one relationship with the youth of Woodlawn to teach them in love.
6. We encourage adults and other youth to be an encouragement to youth when they are going through a difficult/challenging time in their life. Also to be an example in Whatever the circumstances.

Kelvin Teel, Youth Council Coordinator

Youth Council Members

Robert Miller

Reba Miller

Maria Teel

Buildings

Faith UMC

Handicap Access Ramp

Faith United Methodist had dreamed of having handicap access from the parking lot to the sanctuary. Built in the 1960s, at the front door a churchgoer had a choice, stairs to the sanctuary and stairs to the Social Hall and classrooms. Finally, plans were drawn and approved by Fairfax County, even the architectural review board because Faith is located in a historic district. The next obstacle: the church could afford the materials but could not afford a commercial build.

The pastor takes our connectional system to heart, so he reached out to people and churches across the connection. The first attempt was met with some promises, but after a year of waiting the proposed builders were unable to take on the project. The Lord said to keep looking.

The renewed effort found a contractor willing to lead a volunteer crew and who also was able to bring volunteers from the United Methodist church he attends. Faith is a predominately older congregation, but we scared up a few people, and Calvary Chapel, Alexandria, who rents use of the Faith facility, brought a number of dedicated workers. Faith's pastor called everyone he knew, recruiting some volunteers from his home church on the Arlington District and some volunteers from the Emmaus team on which he was teaming.

A 76 foot ramps is no one-day barn-raising, and volunteers can only work on Saturdays. We started on a hot Saturday early in September. Here's the plan: unless it's raining, every Saturday morning we start at 8 am and work until we can't go any further. Coffee and donuts greet the workers. On many Saturdays the ladies at Faith would make lunch for the workers. On several Saturdays someone prayed in the sanctuary for the workers outside. The project and the workers were regularly lifted up in prayer in at least four congregations.

34 post holes had to be 30" deep. The bulldozer only dug down 20". The last 10" on all 34 holes almost did us in. Some came with skills. Others came armed with enthusiasm. Men and women shared in the work. Our project leader was filled with the spirit and with a spirit of patience. The county inspected our progress at several steps along the way. We worked into the fall. Those 8 am mornings got colder. Christmas came and went. We took New Years off.

And then, once we got the platform down, it started to look like a ramp. Up went the rails, the slats, and the top of the side rails. By the end of March, the ramp was completed.

Without the selfless gift of leadership and the dedication of workers from many faith communities, the ramp could not have been built. Our grateful thanks to Sleepy Hollow UMC, Clarendon UMC, Calvary Chapel, Alexandria, and to folks from other churches along the way.

Roberts Memorial UMC

Parish House

The mission of Roberts Memorial United Methodist Church Parish House is to provide an environment for its members to learn and grow in Christ in classroom settings, support worthy community services and activities, and for the church administrative office.

Over a number of years, the parish house had deteriorated to such a state that it became unsafe, unusable and a blight in the community. However, in 2002 the congregation, being very much aware of this condition began the process of raising funds to renovate the facility. On October 25, 2006, a contract was signed and construction began. The renovation was completed on April 13, 2008, at a cost well over a million dollars. This facility is fully handicap accessible including an elevator, wheelchair ramp and restrooms. A dedication service was held on May 1, 2008.

The parish house is used most days and evenings for Sunday school classes, Small Group Discipleship meetings, Wednesday Night Bible study, Prayer and Healing Service, various committee meetings, office space and the Pastor's Study. Other events and activities are also held at the Parish House such as Vacation Bible School and the Church Picnic which is held on the grounds of the parish house.

The congregation is proud of this accomplishment yet humble, for we know and proclaim to all that is was and is by the grace of god that this has come to fruition.

Robert D. Hicks, Trustee Chair

Community Events

Accotink UMC

Church Celebrations

One of the great highlights for our church this year was when the church announced that it was going to host a baby shower for one of the members of the church. The mother was only twenty years old, already had a two year-old child, no husband, and worked at McDonald's. The day of the baby shower, thirty-five folks worshipped, five were baptized, four joined the church, and over forty came to the baby shower following the worship service.

It seems to me that the message I hear God giving to the church would be to look for celebrations that the church can play host to, however they must be of a certain nature. Consider an elderly couple with no family: they live alone and their fiftieth wedding anniversary approaches. This would be a great opportunity for the church to host an anniversary party for them. Another instance would be a birthday party for someone who has been out of work for months: it would be made known to all of the members that they are to bring only monetary gifts to the celebration.

When the church gets involved in these kinds of celebrations, you can count on the Holy Spirit to be stirred up in people, which presents the perfect opportunity to invite folks to join the church and be baptized. I strongly suggest that the church host these celebrations following the Sunday morning worship service.

Asbury UMC

Chicken Equals Community

Is it just a coincidence that Jesus often shared a meal those whom the Pharisees called “sinners” (those who were not overtly religious or regular church-goers)? Is it a coincidence that Jesus openly invited himself over for dinner at the home of a tax collector in front of a crowd that wanted the tax collector to be condemned for his actions (see Zachaeus)? Is it a coincidence that Jesus could have done anything he wanted to do on his last night on Earth and he chose to have a meal with his closest friends and followers? At Asbury, we do not think that all these meal ministry moments are a coincidence. Something happens over a meal: people talk, they communicate, and they are welcomed into the lives of each other.

At Asbury, we love our food! We have dessert and discussion groups at our minister's home. The second Sunday of each month, we have fellowship meals after church. We have sausage making days. However, in the early fall we concentrate on chicken – barbecue chicken, that is! The day starts off at 5 AM and continues to 8 PM! We cook it and the community comes out in multitudes. We average around fifty people in attendance on Sunday mornings, but we cook 500 chicken halves on one Saturday in September. People come out from the community to sit and eat or to help us cook. Some in the community do not come out for festivities, but they call for the chicken and we provide delivery. This year, others are coming out to provide some fun with train and horse rides for children for free. We conclude the day's festivities with some good ol' bluegrass music on the grounds.

The chicken barbecue serves as a fundraiser for our church. The funds go to local missions, helping out those in need in our local community, and other worthwhile causes. However, we find that a lot of people come out to our church on these days because they value the church. It seems that we have a lot of people in the Nokesville and Aden areas that want to be a part of something good for the community, and they want to help. Many churches, including our own, are inwardly focused for most of the year, but it's these days when we come out of our church and into the community that seem to be powerful. Perhaps that is why Christ spent most of his time in the community instead of in the synagogue. Fellowship over a meal is one of the most powerful ways to be a Christ follower.

Remington UMC**Bonfire for Community**

The Bonfire was the mission event that almost was not. Intent of the bonfire was going to be a community event. Scheduled for 19 December 2008, the participants would arrive at the church at 6 PM, get on a wagon with hay in it, and go through town – wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and singing 2 or 3 Christmas Carols at various spots. Then the wagon powered by a pick up truck would come back to the Church parking lot where the bonfire would be burning. Desserts including the making of s'mores would be done, would be served and people would mingle around visiting and getting to know each other better. The weather on 19 December did not cooperate at all with a monsoon type rain all day and evening. The bonfire was rescheduled for January 2009. It took place without the caroling and was well attended by approximately 40 people some of whom were not attending RUMC at the time. A great community outreach program which is anticipated to be held weather permitting in December 2009. All in all a good ending to a mission event that almost was not.

Diversity

St. Andrew's UMC

Loving Diversity

One of the best and most unique characteristics of St. Andrew's UMC is the loving, accepting and diverse congregation. We are small, but powerfully. And our best ministry is taking care of one another and being an invitingly warm church. We are a wonderful display of God's Children: old, young, disabled, able, dark skinned, light skinned, poor, affluent, mentally challenged and intelligent. And we reach out to all of those who want/need a church family. Evangelism has been one of our best ministries and/or missions. Many of our church members have recently conducted a huge outdoor hanger campaign, going out into the surrounding community and placing the "RETHINK CHURCH" door hangers on hundreds upon hundreds of homes. One of our church members who is retired and computer savvy, sends the bulletin out each week to those who could not make it to church, are ill or shut in, or inactive members either by email or by regular mail. He is also starting a birthday and holiday card mailing campaign in order to keep in touch with everyone. Guests of St. Andrews will receive a gift bag, call or card thanking them for attending St. Andrews and considering it as a possible church home. Both the Pastor and the UMW visit our church members who are shut-ins or have health issues. We shepherd those church members who need the extra support of rides, financial aid or food. And even those who we don't know who are in need, especially during these tough economic times. We even have a "Pastor's Discretionary Fund Table" where we bring in items to sell for a dollar (or more if you feel that it is worth it), and the proceeds go to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund and at the same time helps those who can utilize the items for only a dollar. It is an ongoing table and it is a win win for our congregation and for those that come to St. Andrews for help. Also, we have recently started a Sacred Dance Group to praise God in a different format, and so far our congregation has received it with very positive feedback.

Truly taking care of one another in our church family is our best ministry and how we carry out God's Living Word. We try hard to practice what is preached. St. Andrews members are truly blessed and we hope to continue to grow to share the word and all the gifts of God. God's light shines bright within the walls of St. Andrews.

Education

Del Ray UMC

Connectional VBS

“What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. For we are God's servants, working together” (1 Corinthians 3:5-9).

The ministry that has made a big impact, and holds the potential for limitless impact in the life of our church, arose out of an awareness that while we are not the smallest church in the world, we are nowhere near the biggest. We understand that initiating and sustaining certain ministries presents us with significant challenges, simply because of our size.

One such ministry is Vacation Bible School. VBS always seemed beyond our reach. Not quite enough children, not quite enough volunteers. Then, in the summer of 2008, we received an invitation to join Trinity and Beverley Hills for their joint VBS that summer. We attended and realized the power of this model. In planning, then, for 2009, we expanded the conversation to include Trinity, Beverley Hills, and Washington Street. We decided to host the event at Del Ray. The results exceeded our expectations. Volunteers were plentiful and energized. Over eighty children were in attendance for the week. Many families expressed how meaningful the week was for their children. Many expressed how great it was to connect with families from other churches. As Paul said, “For we are God's servants, working together.”

This is not about Vacation Bible School. This is about the strength that the body of Christ can generate when working together. Our conference and our district do a great job of providing connectional opportunities for ministry on a larger scale, and we should take advantage of these opportunities. However, as individual local churches, we can go beyond those offerings to create ministry partnerships that strengthen our witness and outreach in countless areas. For example, we have held joint United Methodist Men gatherings with Trinity and Beverley Hills. We are also exploring a joint youth ministry partnership with Washington Street. Our prayer is that by “planting and watering” together, God will indeed give growth.

Grace UMC

Parent Confirmation Class

Confirmation is a special time in the life of a young person. The staff and laity of Grace church love to plan and participate in confirmation classes. Over the years we have noticed that something was missing. We felt like we prepared well, taught interesting classes, participated in hands-on missions, and arranged for exciting field trips. The students were interested and eager to join the church. We received many new members. But were we changing young people into Disciples of Christ? How could we be more effective?

We noticed the parents were always asking, “What can we do to help during confirmation?” “How will I know if my child is ready?” “What if...?” We began to explore holding a parent confirmation class to help inform parents of what was being taught in their student’s class. Our first year, we held a three-week parent class. We soon realized this was a key piece in helping to grow roots in our students. We now plan for a parent’s class that coincides with the student class, held on the same day and time and covering the same material for the full length of confirmation.

We identified many reasons as to why this class was needed. We have families coming from different Christian faith backgrounds: mom may be Methodist but dad was Presbyterian, etc. Parents may not have attended new member classes, or attended some time ago, and don’t remember what they may have learned about United Methodism; some parents had never been confirmed as a youth. Parents were asking significant questions regarding their faith and United Methodism. We felt that the confirmation experience could be enriched for the youth if we included the parents. Having a parent class in conjunction with mentor involvement creates an environment in which the students feel that faith is important to others. Our church family grew as we introduced parents, students, and mentors. Having a confirmation parent class creates an environment in which the family is practicing faith rather than *observing* traditions because we had the parents involved in everything the students did – missions, field trips, etc.

The parent confirmation class works best when following the same outline as the confirmation students. This creates conversation in the car on the way home, at the dinner table, and throughout the week. We cover the basics and include all the same things we would have the students doing – like looking up scripture, going on field trips, do hands-on mission work, participating in the same discussion starters, etc.

Confirmation became a “choice” for the youth rather than an expectation or church rite of passage when parents saw firsthand the commitment their students were making. Parents stepped back a little and allowed the Holy Spirit to work. The family was strengthened because we helped to inform and clarify some of the misinformation. We saw that parents and students became a lot more comfortable talking about their faith to others – they were informed and even had faith/belief conversations! The sacraments took on deeper meaning as students and parents respected the mystery behind baptism and communion.

Attendance remained steady for both classes and we have even started new Sunday School classes from the parent's classes. It helped open the door between "what we have always done" to "what is open" to us now. As a church, you can tie in the importance of family devotions, family rituals, respect for our faith tradition and a sense of pride in United Methodism. Parents are interested in becoming future mentors and youth group leaders because they appreciate what they got out of the class *and* they are more informed about their own faith and can answer questions other students may have. The possibilities for your church are endless!

Immanuel UMC

Bible Stories for Children

Immanuel has developed a children's outreach program of telling bible stories. The curriculum we used was "Godly Play", a resource written by Jerome Berryman, an Episcopal priest. Once a week as part of the after school program we invite the children from the day care center operating in the church, to come and hear Bible stories. The children also do mission projects and crafts, and have a snack. But here's the rest of the story.

The Treasure Chest (A play in one act)

Setting: A church office, somewhere in Northern Virginia

Characters: Kimberly Coffey, a reporter from *Christian Youth News* (Lay Leader) and Pastor Deborah Austin (Immanuel United Methodist Church pastor)

Act One, Scene One

Kimberly enters from the back of the church. Pastor Austin is seated in her office.

Kimberly: How do you do, Pastor Austin. I'm here from *Christian Youth News*. May I come in?

Pastor Austin: I'm fine, thank you. Yes, please, come on in.

Kimberly: I've been sent here on a very interesting assignment, but I'm not sure I'm in the right place. I was told to investigate a story about a treasure.

Pastor Austin: You are in the right place. We have discovered treasure here at Immanuel. Let me show you.

Pastor Austin reached into a box behind her and pulls out a golden box.

Kimberly: *(exclaiming with an intact of breath)* Ohhh. What is that??

Pastor Austin: This is the Ark of the Covenant.

Kimberly: That does look like treasure. But what has this got to do with your new program for children??

Pastor Austin: This is one of the props we use to tell God's story to the children. The children like to be able to visualize the story. It really comes to life for them. Each story has its own set of people, or animals, or artifacts – like this Ark of the Covenant – to help tell the story.

Kimberly: So what stories do you tell??

PA: We have so many! Where do I begin? So far, we have at least 35 stories.

Kimberly: Wow! Which ones?

PA: Well, let's see. The Holy Family. The Creation. The Ten Commandments. Noah. Moses. Aaron and the Golden Calf. Elijah. Isaiah. Ezekiel. Abraham and Sarah. Jeremiah. Daniel. And then there are lots of the parables that Jesus told.

Kimberly: Tell me more. How did you get started??

PA: Well, it all started when we realized because we had a passion for children in our church. And we wanted to think of new ways to reach out to the children in our community, regardless of parental involvement, so we immediately thought of day care. And that the very BEST way to reach them was through story telling.

Kimberly: So how did you arrange that?

PA: It was really simple. We got written permission from the parents.

Kimberly: And how have the children reacted to this program??

PA: Well, it surprised us how the children have become so hungry for these Bible stories.

Kimberly: What is the setting for your story telling??

PA: We call it God's Secret Garden. It is in our nursery which has beautiful murals painted on the walls. My favorite is the one that shows Jesus bending down to hold a child's hands while he learns to walk.

Kimberly: What else do you have in the nursery for the children?

PA: We literally have a big cabinet – the Treasure Chest – stuffed full of boxes and baskets of these Bible stories. The children crowd around the table, their hands waving in the air, full of questions. They are so excited! They can barely sit still.

Kimberly: So what's the treasure??

PA: The treasure is that the children are receiving these wonderful stories their souls need. The treasure is also for Immanuel church. It is like yeast for our ministry.

Kimberly: How do you mean that??

PA: I mean it gives us delight and joy and hope. I had a big dream about this. But I had no idea how satisfying it would be. You know the Bible says our hearts yearn for the stories. And it's true. It gives us great satisfaction to tell the stories of the Bible. It's an incredibly powerful thing, Kimberly, what we are doing with these stories.

Kimberly: How so??

PA: Well it's partly the matter that these children all knew each other, but now they've become a family, caring for each other. But it is also seeing their delight, and their excitement. The children come flying up the stairs and ask, "Are we having a Bible story today?"

Kimberly: What stories do they like the best?

PA: They were especially hungry to learn about the Ten Commandments. Who would think? They wanted to understand the ones called “Don’t Break Your Marriage” and “Taking Seriously the Name of God.” These different names for “Do not commit adultery” and “Do not take the name of the Lord they God in vain.” They wouldn’t understand those names, so the new names help them to understand.

It is a powerful thing to tell the story and to see the children learning week by week, and to know they are growing in their understanding of the teaching of the Bible, and of the wisdom of Jesus.

Kimberly: Do you have participation from the congregation??

PA: Yes, so many have helped with it. Giving of themselves. Bringing in the little props, or making them, even hand painting some of them. Bringing in the snacks. Making and doing crafts with the children. And of course, learning to tell the stories.

Kimberly: There’s so much to this story. I hope they have room to print all this in *Christian Youth News*. What else?

PA: One time I was sitting there and one of our members was telling the story of Jesus the Good Shepherd. And I just sat there and listened. It blessed me. The stories are good for everybody.

Kimberly: That’s not surprising. I still learn something new each time I hear the stories of the Bible.

PA: I have to tell you about the mission program we have for the children to do. One time they made 115 sandwiches – in about 20 minutes – it was amazing, and they took such pride in it. It just thrilled them to do that.

Kimberly: And did they know where the sandwiches were going to go??

PA: Yes, they knew they were going to feed the people in the shelter.

Kimberly: How old are the children?

PA: Kindergarten through 4th grade.

Kimberly: What a great thing to learn at that age. That they can serve and love their neighbors.

PA: They’re never too young to learn that.

Kimberly: How do you wrap up each session?

PA: When the children leave, I lay my hands on each child’s head, in turn, and bless them. They love it so much, and they make sure I don’t forget to do that.

Kimberly: Wow! This is amazing. Now I know what the “treasure” is right here at Immanuel.

PA: Yes! Such an amazing gift to give to all our children. God has given us this great gift. And we are just sharing it and the wisdom of Jesus' teachings. And God is blessing us in it. It is full of rich blessings.

Kimberly: Well thank you Pastor Austin, for clearing up the mystery of "The Treasure Chest" right here at Immanuel.

PA: Thank you for coming. God bless you.

(Kimberly exits. The pastor goes back to her work.)

Trinity UMC (Catlett)

Taking VBS to Homeless Families

Problem and opportunity: The current economic situation, especially the increasing number of foreclosures in the sub-prime housing market, is forcing more and more families into homelessness. Children living through the experience of homelessness need to know the love of community, indeed, the love of Christ. The Church has the opportunity during this most stressful and frightening time to be for these children the face and love of Christ.

In addition to a short-term emergency shelter, Fauquier is also home to Vint Hill Transitional Housing, an intensive two-year program assisting families in the transition from being homeless to acquiring the skills necessary to maintain stable and independent living. The Vint Hill Transitional Housing community is based on providing a structured, safe environment for the nurturing of families, the growth and well-being of children, and fostering community amongst all neighborhood families. To be eligible for the program, a family must be in one of the following situations: in the process of eviction, currently living in a shelter, or living with family or friends in crowded conditions. Adults must have custody of children under the age of 18, full-time employment for 30 days, and a working vehicle.

What we did and how we did it: Put most simply, we took our Vacation Bible School on the road; instead of holding VBS at the church, we arranged to offer VBS at the Vint Hill Transitional Housing community. This required an amazing amount of work, but it made incarnate the ideas that the church is not a building but instead that the Church is the people who become the hands and feet of God. One episode in particular illustrates how the Holy Spirit was at work amongst us that week: on our opening night, while we unpacked the crafts and tacked-up the murals in the outdoor pavilion that would be our school site, a moving van was being unpacked a few yards away and a young girl watched us with interest; we introduced ourselves to her parents and invited her to join us; through the VBS she was able to quickly make friends with her new neighbors. And from the preparation of obtaining permission to have VBS at Vint Hill, through the daily transport, set-up and teardown that was required, the final tearful goodbyes at the end of the week, the adults and youth of Trinity that worked to provide VBS were likewise blessed by the experience.

What we learned this year to improve our Vacation Bible School ministry next year:

1. **Host an outdoor hamburger and hot dog cookout on opening night.** We learned this year that some families were hesitant to allow their children to attend a Vacation Bible School hosted by a church with which they were not familiar; on opening night we met several new families with children outside their apartments who were uncommitted to attending. We realized that had we started grilling hamburgers and hot dogs an hour or two earlier (or perhaps the night before) we could have created a friendly, hospitable atmosphere of a summer, kid-friendly block party; the smell of food on the grill and balloons in the air on a summer evening would have provided a warm opportunity to meet with new families.
2. **Start VBS at a time that is more convenient for working parents.** This past summer we scheduled VBS to begin each evening at 6:30 p.m. and we witnessed several families just

returning home from work around that time. Since we were not offering dinner each night (though we did, of course, offer snacks), it would have been beneficial to push back out start time till 7:00 p.m. This little bit of extra time would have been more convenient for working families while still allowing us to finish at a reasonable time.

Evangelism

Cana UMC

Calendars for Evangelism

Every year in September, the Cana Methodist Church announces looking for volunteers who would like to order calendars for following years. Most of the times, one or two families are chosen to donate approximately \$1,500.00 - \$2,000.00 anonymously. These volunteered families have a strong belief that their participations will outreach Korean communities for spreading of the gospel. They have utmost convictions for God and Jesus and compassions toward settled and unsettled Korean immigrants, students, and business owners. Additionally, even they have hardships created by current economic conditions; volunteers are more determined and committed to donate for a worthwhile cost.

When the orders are placed, church chooses two categories which one for wall calendar and the other desk calendar. When church review calendar catalogs, it's important the committee analyzes pictures and contents of the calendar. The calendars should reflect the image of living God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. For instance, this year, the wall calendar had portraits of Jesus with rams, landscapes, and nature. It also had poems of the Korean handicapped Poet, Myong Hee Song, as well as the verses of Holy Scriptures. For the desk calendar, it was nature seas with Jesus in boats with nets and his disciples. And the verses from Holy Scriptures were included each month for non-believers who had never encountered with the Holy Word.

Once calendars arrive in December, the church distributes the wall calendar to grocery stores, restaurants, post offices, and other business offices. Since the Cana UMC practiced it for past five years, some of regular attendees were benefit from these calendar circulations. In fact, some members confessed without the calendar reached out to them, they would never know the Cana church. Another instance, few members confessed that since the calendars were reached to them annually for few years, they were anticipating for new calendars. The business owners, office workers and other Korean people communicate the information to newly arrivals from Korea or elsewhere in USA so they also could benefit from new calendars.

The calendar utilization created such an influence for Koreans in Lorton and Northern Virginia area. When church started the program five years ago, it ordered 50 wall calendars and 100 desk calendars. After five years of its successful mission, church ordered 100 wall calendars and 350 desk calendars in this October. The church's enthusiasm to circulate calendars coupled with pastor's cherishing volunteer program, the Lorton and the Northern Virginia become a solid community. The church congregation experiencing one family in Christ wherever visibly identifies the church calendars on desks of business offices, grocery stores, restaurants and other houses when they visit.

Franconia UMC**Scrip Program and New Neighbor Bags**

This past year, members of the Evangelism Committee conducted brainstorming sessions to come up with new ideas for community outreach programs. We came up with many exciting ideas and ways to accomplish our goal of bringing more people to Jesus Christ. However, as we all know, ideas cost money to bring to fruition, and our church is not immune to the weak economy. Fortunately, our Evangelism Co-chair, Lesley McPhaden, recalled how her brother's United Methodist Church in Ohio had begun funding outreach programs and more by selling gift cards (scrip) to its members.

We started our own scrip program about a year ago. We purchase the scrip from an organization that acts on behalf of churches, schools and other non-profit organizations to purchase large amounts of scrip from national and local retailers. Because the scrip is purchased with cash up front, the participating retailers offer a substantial discount. The discount, from two to fifteen percent or more, is our revenue.

The revenue from our scrip program has funded one community pizza/pasta dinner, two ice cream socials, New Neighbor Bags for members of our congregation to give to their neighbors, and has allowed us to reduce our budget request by approximately 40%. This is definitely a win-win program – the church benefits, retailers benefit, and members of our congregation benefit by knowing they're helping fund outreach programs when they go about their daily business of buying groceries, gasoline, eating out, etc.

Good Shepherd UMC

Taking It to the Streets

Forty-two years ago this past June, Good Shepherd Methodist Church was chartered into existence. Rev. Ben Pratt went from door to door in the diverse community of Dale City, inviting people to help start a new church. They responded, and the rest is history... our history.

Nearly 20 centuries ago, the Church of Jesus Christ began such an initiative – largely due to local persecution – to move beyond their center of worship and Christian conversation, and to go out into the highways and byways, guided by God’s Holy Spirit to take the message of the love of Christ to other people along the way – intentionally – everywhere they went. The effect was a life-changing offering of hope, peace, and eternal life to people of all kinds of backgrounds. It was risky, exciting, and miraculous. The Church of Jesus Christ was well underway in what would become the greatest rescue mission of all time: Save Planet Earth. The rest is history. And... believe it or not... OUR history – something we often forget.

It is this passion for our neighbors that we are seeking to revive at Good Shepherd – even beyond the many offerings of relief and mission that our people share generously and lovingly. We continue to focus on why we exist as a Christian community at all: to obey the commands of our Lord when he admonished his disciples to love – God, one another, our neighbor..., and to make disciples of all people – baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (in other words, bringing them into the Kingdom of God). With The Great Commandment and The Great Commission as our purposes for existence, we now hope to move our people out from our center of worship and Christian Conversation, and out into the streets and among the people of our community, in a time of prayer, contemplation, and getting to see where our neighbors live. We invite our people – all our people – to become prayer walkers.

All four Sundays in October, after treatment from the pulpit, at the close of each worship service, our people will be invited and challenged to step out through the many doors of our sanctuary and to walk through the communities that surround our church, in quiet and observant prayer for the families and households that are closes to us in our geographical parish. From worship, to the streets, like expanding rings in water that has been “disturbed,” willing hearts will flow outward from God’s altar, watching, listening, praying, smiling, greeting, and remembering. Those who do not feel they can participate will be invited to do what they can... when they can. With encouragement and not pressure, we will flow outward in order to know our neighbor. After October, we hope to do this regularly, to remind our own people that the men, women, and children who live around us are among those that Christ called to save.

It is our prayer that this new... or rather very old discipline will help us better become the hands and feet of Christ among the people who go by our church every day, many unaffected by our presence. With open hearts, open minds, and open doors, we will pray for our neighbors – and hopefully, history will be made.

St. James UMC

Social Networking via Internet

Social Networking. It is “all the buzz” in our world today with millions of users on Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and assorted other social connectors. Like almost anything else in life, the value of a network is in its use, good or bad. At St. James, we use social networks online to help keep ourselves connected and aware.

We have become particularly active on Facebook, using the Facebook “group” function to create a page for our members and friends. Through this page we can promote upcoming events, including invitations to all members with RSVP, post audio/video sermon links for people to listen to and watch, open discussions about varying topics, and just generally keep in touch with one another. And the cost is another bonus: nothing but time!

On the upside, we can invite and remind everyone of church-wide events and they in turn can use the invitations to invite others to join us. If the sermon recording is particularly meaningful that week, they can link it to their own Facebook page and therefore to all their friends pages. Prayer concerns can be shared and ideas exchanged. It is much less costly to communicate than snail mail and quicker too. It is also intergenerational: even Pastor James’s parents (80 and 74 years of age) are avid Facebook users!

On the downside, not everyone in our congregation is on Facebook so we are not yet communicating with everyone using this tool. It is not quite as personal as a note through the USPS. Some people are not fond of the advertising; no one has indicated that at SJ.

The F.O.G. Youth Group has a page and uses it to keep up with one another and share pictures of their mutual adventures. They also make all their meetings “events” that they can use to invite participation and keep track of who is coming to events they sponsor.

We have even recently begun a “closed” group through Facebook for the administrative council to communicate with one another between meetings as well as remind one another of the meetings and agenda and post documents to one another.

Events

Burke UMC

Meals for Learning and Intergenerational Fellowship

In the January-February issue of *The Interpreter* an article appeared about preparing dehydrated meals for hungry children in Kenya. It attracted our Mission Committee's attention because of our Senior Pastor's recent VIM trip in August of 2008 to Kenya. In our 2008 Visioning process, a vision that was lifted up was a desire for more hands on intergenerational and mission events. This seemed a perfect fit. Rev. Judy Fender contacted project organizer Joe Lorber in High Point, NC. and discussion, prayer, and discernment began. Once approved by our Ministries Council and Administrative Board our Mission Chair Wendy Breseman swung into planning and action. We worked with the Children & Family Ministries Committee and Youth to plan an event for all age groups that would provide fellowship, hands on mission experience, mission education and worship and funding. Funding is an integral part of this project; it costs \$3000 dollars to host an event. An e-mail invitation was sent to all groups within our church such as choirs, UMM, Bible Study groups, Kids Can Do Missions, etc. as well as outside groups meeting in our church including Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and our Hispanic Congregation. A notebook was prepared with background information, pictures, directions, an envelope for pledges, and a volunteer sign up sheet.

We planned the event as a type of "homecoming" to coincide with the fall kickoff date and time for our youth and children's mission ministries program. A fellowship meal was planned, along with alternative activities such as making cards for the children and decoration the shipping boxes. The Lorbers traveled to Burke UMC on August 11, 2009 to meet with us, view our facility and walk through the process of packaging 12,000 meals. As they shared a video presentation of their work in Kenya we felt reassured and excited that our plans were blessed by God.

"Meals for Learning" originated from mission work done in Kenya by the Global Mission Team from Wesley Memorial UMC in High Point, NC. Meals for Learning was established to work with churches and civic organizations to provide high protein, nutritious meals for children in third world countries through school lunch programs.

The original concept of providing the meals was developed by a businessman in Minnesota along with a number of food scientists. The group reviewed nutritional data of people living in areas where malnourishment is severe and established a list of vitamins, minerals and other constituents that were lacking in their diets. From that list, the meal package was "engineered" to include ingredients that would correct the deficit. The result was a recipe that could be put together, sealed and boxed by groups of volunteers. Once packaged, the dehydrated product has a shelf life of 3-5 years and is reconstituted at the destination in boiling water with each packet feeding 6 persons.

"Packaging Events" are brought on site to supporting churches and organizations and, with volunteer help, over 12,000 meals can be packaged in about 2 hours. The work is easy and allows for fellowship and getting to know the other volunteers in an enjoyable, lighthearted setting. This was

certainly the result at Burke United Methodist Church as people worked, broke bread, visited with each other. It was wonderful to visit with the member of the Hispanic Congregation that meet at BUMC on Sunday afternoons.

Once packaged, our 12,000 meals were loaded onto the Lorber's rental van and traveled for storage to a warehouse in High Point, NC. Once a container is filled with approx. 285,000 meals it is sent to the receiving country where one of our partners will accept the shipment, provide for its security and assure its use in an appropriate manner.

On September 23 approximately 250 adults, youth, and children from Burke UMC, our Hispanic congregation, scouts, and District Young Adults gathered in our sanctuary for prayer, explanation, and directions.

We filled our fellowship hall with tables and about 100-120 people. We stationed 6 persons (children, youth, and adults) at each one. Each table measured and poured ingredients into a baggie; runners would take the baggies to another table where sealing machines sealed the openings tightly; other runners would pick up the baggies, run them to the packing station, and load and seal the boxes. Every time a box was filled and sealed, a bell would ring, and cheers erupted around the hall.

Once the process begins, it quickly resembled what someone called "well-organized chaos." Children decorated boxes; elementary children made great runners as youth and adults, old-timers and newcomers, worked side-by-side in pouring and sealing. The casual conversation with the person next to you could have made the time worthwhile by itself; knowing that you had a direct role in supplying food for drought-stricken Kenyans provided an immeasurable sense of satisfaction.

Joe and Diane Lorber also sponsor a "Buy a Worm, save a Child" program. Since many Kenyans suffer from intestinal parasites, worms can rob their host of up to 30% of their nutritional intake. Children can package seven Gummi Worms per bag and sell them for \$1.00. It raises awareness of the problem, and every 200 bags provides medicine for 1,400 children. Burke UMC will continue to support this fund raiser through our Kids Can Do Missions fellowship groups.

It was a wonderful day. We raised \$3400 to cover our expenses. Our objectives were met and hungry children in Kenya will be fed, thanks be to God. Information is available at www.mealsforlearning.org. You may contact the Lorbers through jlorber@triad.rr.com or through Wesley memorial UMC, High Point NC (336) – 884-2204.

Respectfully submitted by Wendy Breseman, Co Chair of the Mission Committee.

New Light UMC

KORUS Festival

New Light UMC is a small church that the congregation does barely support the church from its members' contribution. The church wants to grow by increasing its membership and also to outreach by supporting UMC mission activities. With its size, these two objectives are not always easily achievable. We first have to improve our financial status. Due to its size and current financial crisis, our status does not seem to get any better.

We focused on other activities that can be agreeable among all church members and the members all can contribute in various ways. Most importantly, it should not conflict with our faith in God. We picked two activities; these are yard sale and KORUS festival. Until now, we have organized two yard sales and participated in the KORUS festival. Through these activities, we have raised a total fund of \$8,900. This amount may not be a lot, but it is meaningful to the church members.

When we initially planned for KORUS, planning team had a concern about overall logistics. Surprisingly, all members expressed their support in various ways. We formed several teams such as procurement, food preparation, transportation, cooking and actual sales in the booth. All these took about a month and a half and were not easy. It was a great opportunity in building fellowship among members. Every member contributed to these efforts with time and skills and we all prayed together for the success. We all believed that it was a test of our capacity and capability.

With these experiences, we can outreach further with God's guidance.

With the outcomes, we were able to contribute toward our apportionment, summer church retreat and winter retreat for youth. We also have been assisting:

- Mexico Mission
- Vietnamese Mission in Malaysia
- Good Spoon Latino Mission

We believe that we put ourselves to the test in God's Faith and we passed. It helped us building a core competency in our Faith that can be a corner stone for our growth. We all are looking forward to coming years and hope we can report more and better next year.

St. Mark's UMC

Harvest Festival

There has long been a feeling that many people in the community view the church as always wanting something from them. It seems that the only time the church really reaches out to contact them; it is to sell something to them or ask something of them. The sad part is, often they are right... as you think about the various yard sales or fund-raising dinners, or gift wrap sales, etc. That was one of the biggest goals of this event – this event was purely to GIVE to the community. Christ told us, “freely you have received, freely give.” And this can be applied in so many ways... this ministry report will highlight one such way that we as a body of believers are striving to reach out to our neighbors in a sincere and purposeful way... our Harvest Festival.

Purpose: There were two primary purposes for this event. First is outreach into our local community and let them know we genuinely care about them and want to know them better. Secondly, we wanted to let the light of Christ shine through us through this event to counter the trends of Halloween.

Concept: First and foremost this will only be accomplished through prayer and obediently responding to God's will. While we are still seeking what doors God wants to open through this event, we envision accomplishing this purpose by holding an event that is open and free to the community that will have food, music, games, crafts, activities, ministry information, a “Trunk-or-Treat” and a movie. We also envision this happening by the involvement of the three churches of whom Christ is the Head and Shepherd.

The Event itself: Last year's event was a blast. We were blessed to have very talented musicians, both from within the churches as well as friends of the church, to provide enjoyable music for the afternoon. We had food provided by two of the participating churches so we were able to provide both the traditional American picnic-fare as well as the added bonus of the Hispanic culture and its delicious cuisine. We had several different craft areas for the children, face painting, petting zoo, and a moon bounce. Additionally we had several ministry tents set up to provide information and literature to anyone interested in learning more about the ministries and events we have to offer them. And finally we had the trunk or treat, where the church members decorated their trunks with fall themes and pass out candy in the safe confines of our church parking lot. Each child/family was also offered a free portrait from the event.

Lessons Learned: We will have to admit, there were some bumps and bruises from this first time event. We learned how to jump through hoops to get the needed permits in order to be compliant with regulations in Prince William County – we learned a lot in this process.

- Start early – especially if you will be providing food to the public or if you will be using a moonbounce. There are several steps/signatures needed to get the temporary activity permit required for any public event held outdoors. If you have a moonbounce or other amusement device you will need to check whether the vendor has had an inspection that year or not... this can cause huge delays and extra costs.

- We had grandiose plans for the event... but learned it makes for a very long day. This year we still want to do a lot, but are cutting back on the length of time of the event – we are learning that it will be better for the helpers as well as the fact that visitors will be able to stay only so long, so you don't want to have them hanging around and doing nothing waiting for the next 'time slot'.
- COSTS – there can be a lot of unknowns in an event like this – for one, how much food to get. We definitely had plenty, but need to find out how to keep a good balance. Additionally, figuring out what are the best combinations – do you buy soft drinks or make tea... Things like that.
- COMMUNICATION – I have to admit this is where I was guilty of not distributing information better. It is better to have everyone on the same page, and then to divide and conquer the tasks. This also helps people from getting overwhelmed or burned out. Intermediate goals and check points are a must to ensure there aren't the last minute rushes.

Results: While there were definitely bumps and bruises from the first year of this event, I think most will agree this was worth the effort and definitely worth building upon and continuing. While I can only speak for myself, I think there are others who will agree, that the scripture was proved to be so very true that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" – because this event truly was a blessing – seeing all the people from two different churches (and cultures) working together to let Christ's light shine in our community – offering the love that we have first received; hearing the wonderfully talented voices of those whom God has gifted; tasting the marvelous food; watching our talented crafters and artists working with the children; seeing the smiles and hearing the laughter of the children as they played with the animals or bounced in the moon bounce; and meeting new friends and neighbors...

-oh, so even when we GIVE we RECEIVE...

One of the great things I see happening in our church family is the refocusing of our efforts in other areas of reaching out and GIVING to the community – with the Clothing Drives that are taking root where instead of doing a yard sale fund-raiser, we are following Christ's teaching to help those in need, by giving out what we have to those who don't... and by doing so, letting them know Christ loves and cares for and provides for them too.

And most importantly – we have people from our local community who attended this event last year, who have become regular attendees of worship and youth groups... which is what this is all about!

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 St. Mark's UMC
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 Manassas, VA 20111
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Sydenstricker UMC

One Hundred... an Amazing Number

One hundred... an amazing number... worthy of celebration!

And how we did celebrate at Sydenstricker United Methodist Church as we commemorated the church's 100 years of existence from the small group worshipping in a dance hall on Hooes Road in 1909 to the four services of worship we enjoy in the original, white clapboard chapel and the modern brick sanctuary today.

Our celebrations this 100th year included:

An Outdoor Centennial Hymn Sing with songs suggested by parishioners and then chosen to represent each decade of the past century;

A Civil War Re-enactment color guard attending a Service of Reconciliation with the presentation of two Southern Crosses for the graves of both a Union and Confederate soldier resting in the chapel graveyard ...made even more meaningful with relatives of one of those soldiers in attendance;

An elegant silk wall hanging... the design depicting a border of Chrismons surrounding images of the original chapel and the present sanctuary, cross stitched and assembled by women of the church and dedicated on Palm Sunday;

A dedication of a white cross provided by the men of the church and hoisted on the steeple of the sanctuary;

The acceptance of an invitation to once again preach from the pulpit by half dozen of our former pastors followed by a reunion potluck for each one;

The commitment of our church in providing scholarships for students in El Salvador well into the future.

One hundred ...an amazing number... worthy of celebration!

With 100 bibles donated to Epiphany Ministries;

With 100 new books for the church library selected from recent UMW Reading Program lists;

And with 100,000 meals prepared for Stop Hunger Now!

This was our most ambitious undertaking of the year. On March 28 and 29 over 620 people ranging in age from 4 to 87 years old turned out to assist in this meal packaging event. With Christmas and Lenten offerings and donations from other groups totaling over \$25,000 we were able to purchase

the necessary supplies. In three sessions over two days sixteen churches from various denominations all around Northern Virginia (nine United Methodist churches) provided the man power as well as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and young adult groups from local high schools. Outside groups represented about half of the volunteers. Some of our meals were shipped to Zambia, Africa, and some went to Haiti. This was a journey in our faith for our church and the presence of the Holy Spirit was evident throughout. We were blessed with the special joy that comes from working together in a cause greater than ourselves and we had fun doing it! It was a great birthday party!

One hundred... an amazing number... worthy of celebration!

And in the afterglow of this year we face 2010.

Now it's time we step up our efforts in faith sharing which is our focus for the coming year. We will be involved in a study during Lent called "Just Walk Across the Room" with concurrent small group studies. Later in the year a 6-week course on Faith Sharing will be offered. We will learn and practice the art of speaking comfortably with others in a non-confrontational manner about our own personal faith experience and journey.

God has blessed us as a church for 100 years. May we show our gratitude to Him by sharing His love with others.

Wesley UMC

Fifth Sunday Weekends

Late in 2008 as we were planning for 2009 one member, Diane Nees suggested we do something with Fifth Sundays. The idea was to have a Saturday Evening Fellowship meal and activity followed by a special service on Sunday morning where we would do something different. The idea was that these would be kind of events that an invitation to a friend, neighbor, or even an acquaintance would be easier to give than a normal Sunday.

So far this year we have had three of our Sundays (There are usually 4 a year). Here is a list of the days and what we did.

	Saturday	Sunday
March 28 and 29	Nothing	<p>A Hymn Sing based on Grace: Prevenient Grace Justifying Grace Sanctifying Grace</p> <p>5 choices were listed and the most popular was sung.</p> <p>Suggestions were not to sing the entire hymn but maybe a verse of the top 2 or 3.</p>
May 30 and 31	Fellowship meal and a different kind of worship service trying videos and prayer stations. It was hard for some to shift from the social to the worshipful.	The Mount Vernon High School Madrigals joined us for worship much to everyone's delight.
August 29 and 30	<p>Fellowship meal and a showing of "The Robe", the first movie <u>released</u> in wide screen format. (Not the first one made).</p> <p>While it is a good film, poor seating and the lack of an option for younger children made it hard to sit all the way through.</p>	The "Harmonica Club" which meets on Thursday Nights at Wesley shared their gifts and talents. This was a lot of fun.
November 28 and 29	Planned: Fellowship meal and an Advent Workshop: We will make a Jesse Tree for Advent devotions at home.	Planned: Nick Restifo, violinist and member of Wesley will offer a program of violin pieces

We will be doing this again in 2010: Are weeks are January 30 and 31, May 29 and 30, August 28 and 29, and October 30 and 31. The Madrigals will return, but on May 23rd, so we aren't quite sure on how that month will work.



Above: The Mount Vernon High School Madrigals performing at the 2009 Peach Festival
Below: The Harmonica Club performing at the 2009 Peach Festival



Grief

Prince of Peace UMC

Grief Services

One of the things we began doing a year ago that seems to meet a real need is Grief Services. Last year we spoke about “needs based evangelism” and several programs at our church that stemmed from that concept. One of those programs was Grief Share. Two Grief Services have been born out of Grief Share.

We do a Service of Remembrance twice a year, prior to or at the beginning of Advent and the Sunday prior to Mother's Day.

The service prior to Christmas acknowledges the loss that family members feel, especially as they move through the holiday season. We try to recognize particular moments from family gatherings to decorating to family traditions that seem incomplete without their loved one. In this service we offer a time of prayer, scriptures that offer hope, and we light a candle for each person being grieved. After lighting a candle for the person the family member can share anything about them that they wish to help tell their story. We also offer a list of helpful suggestions to get through the holidays and process the grief. Some of the participants have experienced a death in this year but some are still grieving deaths from previous years.

The second service we do is before Mother's Day. This service is particularly geared toward those that have lost children or lost a baby in childbirth, or have miscarried. In this service all the candles are in individual baby jars. There is a time for people to name the baby (especially if the child was not named.) We offer a time of sharing as in the other service, but also offer a time for people to write a note to their baby expressing their hopes, losses, and dreams. We offer for the people to take their notes to the altar and place them around a rose bush that will be planted near the church's memory garden. The notes are planted along with the rose as a sign that God still brings life even in our loss.

Missions

Buckhall UMC

Youth Collect Food for SERVE

SERVE is the local community (Western Prince William County, Manassas, Manassas Park) homeless shelter and food bank. Fifteen? Sixteen? (memory fails!) years ago SERVE received permission from the managers of two local Giant Food Stores to solicit donations of food from customers shopping at those locations.

SERVE provided logistical support for the endeavor: SERVE printed a single-page handout with suggested items that customers could donate, and volunteers at SERVE were periodically picked up the donations. SERVE requested church youth (and other) groups to provide volunteers to collect the food. SERVE suggested two-hour shifts. In early December, for two week-ends (Saturdays and Sundays) members of Buckhall's youth group, and their pastor, took part in this food collection.

Impressed by the amount of food collected we were surprised that the program did not repeat the following year. A few years later when the program had still not resumed we asked SERVE for permission for Buckhall's youth group to collect food for the food bank. Permission was gratefully given.

For the last dozen years (two to four weekends a year) the youth group – with even younger children – has solicited donations of food for SERVE.

Each time we prepare and print the hand-outs and adult volunteers deliver the food to SERVE. Twice – in two days – we have collected nearly 4,000 pounds of food. Two weekends ago, collecting only on Sunday (from 12:00 noon to 6:00 pm) we solicited and delivered over 1,700 pounds of food.

For churches like Buckhall that do not have their own food bank, this is a way to support a community ministry.

Some logistics:

- Ask for permission from a local food bank
- Ask permission from the grocery store manager
- Provide hand-out
- Receive food (and sometimes cash or check donations) for the food bank

For further ideas or suggestions about this ministry, call John Hull 703 369-4715.

Dumfries UMC

Mission Partnership With Dumfries Elementary School

We are very excited about our new mission program with Dumfries Elementary School. The school is located just one block from the church. We are in the poorest part of Prince William County. We have a great food and clothing program, called Bread and Fishes, at our church. We wanted to go out farther into our community and make a difference. Therefore we have entered into a mission partnership with Dumfries Elementary School.

We have held a teacher and staff appreciation dinner, along with our annual gifts of shoes and socks for the children. This year we have adopted the 5th grade of the school. We will continue to support the teachers with gifts and notes of encouragements. We want to have positive interaction with the children. We are taking part in reading programs, special luncheons, birthday celebrations, providing supplies, helping in whichever grade needs some assistance, hosting the 5th grade graduation, doing landscaping, providing office help, helping with special monthly school events, taking part in their Spring Earth Day and Spring Carnival, their May Field Day and Multicultural Festival, Book Fair and other programs where our assistance is needed. We look forward to mentoring the children and being a positive role model in their lives, giving them hope and helping them to set goals. We have invited them to participate in our Trunk or Treat activity on Halloween.

We are also offering a series of life skills classes, such as parenting, finances, resume writing, and nutrition. We are working with both our Bread and Fishes program and with the Elementary School to expand our ministry.

Our purpose is to be in mission with the school, of being assistance to them. We will follow their rules, showing our love and care, as we interact with them. We are not attempting to make Christians or United Methodists or find new members for Dumfries Church. Our desire is simply to offer our help in love to the children and teachers of Dumfries Elementary School.

Fairlington UMC

Stop Hunger Now Project

Stewardship season – offering churchgoers the opportunity to joyfully share their income with the church – is tough in any year, but even worse in these difficult economic times when so many people are facing personal financial hardships. Yet we all recognize that stewardship involves so much more than financial contributions. Every year we seek to motivate people to support the church through “their prayers, their presence, their gifts, and their service.” So three years ago Fairlington started a major service project, Stop Hunger Now, to coincide with stewardship season. And this year, in the grips of this recession, we had our most wildly successful event yet.

On October 17, 2009, in Fairlington’s fellowship hall, thanks to the work of approximately 150 volunteers and their donations of \$10,000, the church packaged 40,000 meals to be shipped to hungry school children worldwide. Stop Hunger Now is an international hunger relief organization. Through Stop Hunger Now’s meal packaging program, volunteers package dehydrated, high protein, and highly nutritious meals that are used in crisis situations and in school feeding programs for schools and orphanages in developing countries around the world. Stop Hunger Now packages meals at a cost of 25 cents per meal and asks the organization hosting the packaging event to cover the costs.

I believe this event proved so successful for three reasons: (1) all ages were able to participate, from small children to our seniors; (2) it taps into people’s desire to help those in need; and (3) it yields a tangible result, namely thousands of packages of dehydrated meals, packed and ready to ship.

How do we know this event was a success?

- 23 people showed up Friday night to set up – after I told another dozen they could take the night off because we had so many volunteers
- 120 people showed up on Saturday to help pack meals – the youngest was 8.5 months the oldest did not like to be asked her age
- Our goal was \$7,500 to allow us to package 30,000 meals and we raised \$10,000 which allowed us to package 40,000
- 32 children ran back and forth carrying bagged meals from the packagers to the sealers
- One member brought her troop of girl scouts
- The Companions in Christ class came together
- Church families brought friends with no connection to the church
- One family that felt bad it couldn’t contribute more financially because the husband had been laid off provided doughnuts and fruit to feed everyone
- One young couple who had attended Fairlington for the first time the previous Sunday was inspired by the event’s announcement and joined the volunteers
- Everyone actually had fun while following the example of Christ!

Lincolnia UMC

Emergency Hypothermia Shelter

How can a congregation consisting of members who are scattered all over the Washington metropolitan area engage in meaningful ministry with the poor? What do we have to offer? After taking time to reflect on our situation, an obvious answer surfaced. We have space! The fellowship hall is unoccupied most evenings. How can we put that space to use?

During the winter of 2008-2009, Lincolnia Church first became involved with the Hypothermia Prevention Program which is conducted in conjunction with the Fairfax Community Shelter. We offered to house up to twenty-five men per night for two nights each week from mid-December through the end of March. The men would have mats and sleeping bags provided for them to sleep on the floor. They arrived at Lincolnia Church in the evenings after having a hot supper at the Bailey's Crossroads Shelter. Staff from Volunteers of America, including social workers and nurses, would spend the night with our guests. Everyone would depart the next morning by 7:00 a.m., after our guests ate breakfast, usually prepared by another congregation in the ACCA service area and were given a bag lunch to take with them.

Occasionally during the winter, members of Lincolnia Church would purchase gloves and/or heavy socks for our guests. They would also participate in preparing breakfasts and/or bag lunches.

As the winter wore on and other sites were unable to provide shelter on other nights, we increased our commitment to three nights per week. By the end of March, we were housing our guests almost every night of the week.

The congregation enthusiastically embraced this ministry to the extent that the Church Council approved the concept of housing homeless guests seven nights per week during the winter of 2009-2010 (with some exceptions for nights when United Methodist Family Services will need the fellowship hall and allowing us to hold our Christmas Workshop during the second week of December), from December 1 through March 31. In addition to housing the men, we plan to include them in our Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year's Eve services. We hope to work with Bailey's Crossroad Shelter in order to provide a hot Christmas dinner for our guests. There have been some discussions in the congregation focused on occasionally preparing hot breakfasts for them as well. We will also continue to provide socks, gloves and other items from time to time.

Although staff members are provided to supervise and assist our guests we hope to have more congregational involvement and personal interaction this winter. Members will make themselves available to listen to our guests' stories, share their faith, and just "hang out" from time to time.

Lincolnia Church does not have a lot of money or members who can engage in "hands on" ministry for extended periods of time. We do have space – something which was badly needed by the people directing this program. We were reminded that we need not focus on what we don't have. God can use what we do have.

Manassas/St. Thomas UMC

Career Connect Ministry

Looking for Employment?

CAREER CONNECT MINISTRY

Resume Writing

Interviewing

Building Social Networks

1st and 3rd Saturdays

9:30 – 11:30 am

Lower Level

Email: Andrea.m.hall@gmail.com

Midland UMC

Lenten Program

Idea: Society of St. Andrews (SSA) Lenten Program

Description: Every Lent (and Advent), SSA offers a free program. This past Lent, our congregation really dove into this resource. At no cost, SSA provided us with books of daily devotions from Ash Wednesday to Easter, shorter devotional booklets to accompany a Good Friday Fast, coin boxes for donations, and worship resources such as bulletin inserts & sermon topics. As SSA obtains all of its food through gleaning by volunteers, it is able to provide nourishing food to the hungry for only 2 cents per serving, mostly for transportation (only 7% of donations go to administrative costs).

Timing:

- Materials were distributed to congregants the Sunday before Ash Wednesday
- Coin boxes were collected the Sunday after Easter
- SSA celebrates its 30th anniversary this year... sign up now for Advent!

Benefits:

- Acts of mercy provided food for the hungry in America
- Awareness of hunger was increased among the congregation
- Acts of Piety offered spiritual formation for participants

Unique Characteristics:

- The themes of hunger and gleaning resonated with our farming community
- A short focusing paragraph was read each Sunday at the beginning of worship
- Coin boxes not taken home were distributed around our fellowship hall, receiving contributions during our weekly fellowship time, various church meetings, and Boy Scout troop meetings
- Most of the devotional booklets were observed at several congregants homes during pastoral visitation
- Good Friday Fast booklets were observed at several congregants homes during pastoral visitation
- We added our entire Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday offerings to the SSA collection
- One congregant anonymously offered a matching fund, which encouraged greater giving, in addition to doubling the congregation's overall collection
- In addition, a nationwide matching fund multiplied our donations to well over 110,000 servings!
- We did hand-washing (vs. feet) on Maundy Thursday, which nicely complemented the SSA Lenten theme ("*Christ's Marvelous Hands*")
- Likewise on "One Great Hour of Sharing" Sunday, when we sang "*Jesus' Hands were Kind Hands*"

- The results were so good, we've added this (Lent & Advent) to next years congregational goals

Contact Information:

- Church: Midland United Methodist Church
 - Address: 5435 Midland Road Midland, VA 22728
 - Phone: (540) 439-8813
 - Website: www.midlandvaumc.org
- Lay Leader: Jim Settle, (540) 788-1161
- Lay Speaker: Faith Scott, (540) 788-3036
- Pastor: Rev. Charlie Sribula, (703) 989-8745

Mount Horeb UMC

Angel Food Ministry

It is now 8:00 AM on an 18 degree Saturday morning in January. The parking lot is full of cars, a few small trucks, and several utility trailers. People are milling inside and outside of a non-descript building. Entering the building and walking into the open area behind the reception desk, hand carts are leaning against one wall, paper bags that have been opened are against another wall, organization names are posted on a third wall, and paper product labels are on the fourth. There is a sense of anticipation and the conversation generally drifts to asking the question, "Where is the truck?"

Finally, someone calls out, "The truck is here." At that time all rush from the comforts of the inside to load the truck. Within thirty minutes a tractor-trailer is unloaded, one product at a time. Some of the product is transferred to the waiting small trucks and trailers and the rest is carted into the building and stacked against the product labeled wall. Once the truck is gone, products are sorted and placed by the various organization names and what is left is sorted and placed into individual bags. As what was set aside is removed, the crowd that has been gathering outside is allowed in and each person receives their bag or bags.

If this sounds like a chapter out of a novel, it is not; it is a monthly activity called simply, Angel Food Ministries. Angel Food Ministries began in 1994, in Monroe, Georgia as a mechanism to provide food relief for families. Angel Food is a non-denominational and non-profit Christian based food distribution ministry. Two major differences between Angel Food and other food distribution organizations in the Northern Virginia area, such as the Share Food Network, are that it is nationally based and administered only through churches.

In *Matthew 25:36-36 (NIV)* Jesus said, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

Fauquier County is not dissimilar to Prince William or Fairfax Counties in past times. It is predominantly rural with pockets of suburban development. A need existed to provide food relief for many families, with little or no available resources within the county. Some of our congregation investigated Angel Food on that January day and found a welcoming community of Christians who are devoted to provide family food relief. What was inspirational that day was the willingness of everyone to pull together to accomplish the task of getting food to those in need.

Mt. Horeb initially began with Angel Food Ministries using The Bridge Worship Center in Fredericksburg as a connection point and has since grown to become a host site. Our start into this food relief program coincided with a blossoming outreach ministry involving Community Touch Inc., a local non-profit organization which provides a food bank, thrift shop, clothing and household goods re-distribution program, and temporary homeless relief in southern Fauquier County. Our partnering with Angel Food Ministries not only provides Community Touch participants with Food relief, but also the local

community with an opportunity to extend their money. Through this outreach ministry we are trying to live how Christ has taught us and bring his message to others.

Angel Food is open to **all** to purchase a week's worth of food (enough for a family of four) for thirty dollars (\$30.00). Each month's orders are accepted in person, through phone contact, and through the internet up to a week prior to the delivery date. On the day of delivery, members of our congregation travel to Fredericksburg to repeat the opening scene. Our goods are brought back, sorted, and boxed for pick-up that day. This gives an opportunity for our congregation to reach out to the community and bring people to Christ.

At the time we entered this ministry, only two host sites were north of Fredericksburg. Since our initial start in 2008, eight additional area churches became host sites and word is slowly reaching the Northern Virginia area. We continue to spread the message of this ministry and of the opportunity to help those in need to all who will listen.

As the nation's economy faltered, the use of food relief has become an important part of everyone's lives. More and more people and families are now approaching times where their money does not meet their obligations and many do go hungry. Participation in any food distribution service helps people live with dignity. Angel Food not only provides nourishment for the body, but also for the soul by building or nurturing an individual's relationship with God. Angel Food Ministries meets these needs in all areas, whether rural, suburban, or urban.

Mt. Horeb defines its mission to **connect** people to Christ, **create** an environment to grow and nurture people in their faith, and **communicate** the good news of Jesus Christ to our neighbors and the world. Our participation in Angel Food is giving our congregation an opportunity to fulfill a part of our mission in ministry.

Look into your congregations and outside your walls; there are many who need bodily nourishment and far too many who are famished for God's word. We hope all congregations will become part of the Angel Food network, whether becoming a host site or working through another site to help feed the people and bring the message of Christ to others.

Mount Vernon UMC

Stars of Wonder

The Young Adults of MVUMC are starting a new project and mission called Stars of Wonder. This project will address several issues.

- 1) Mount Vernon UMC is located on a hill and during the Advent and Christmas season, there has been nothing to draw the public's attention to the church. Stars of Wonder will be placed on a grassy area next to the public road. The stars will be placed on the area which goes up the hill toward the church.
- 2) The Young Adults needed a mission project that they could work on together to help build relationships among new people who do not know each other very well. Working on this project together will build relationships and help this new group get to know one another and share time and energy on a mission project that helps others.
- 3) The money raised from sponsors of the Stars will go to United Methodist Family Services

Twenty-five to thirty wooden stars are being created to place on the property. They are approximately 15" high and will be placed on stakes of varying heights. They are painted a combination of gold and silver stars and lights will be placed on the yard to illuminate them at night. The stars will be "sold" for \$10.00 and may be given in honor or memory of loved ones. Names of those being remembered and the giver of the stars will be placed in an insert in the bulletin. The Stars will remain on the lawn approximately a month.

St. George's UMC

The Simple Grace of Yes

For many years St. George's has supported a vibrant site-based ministry by providing a home for a variety of groups seeking to meet the needs of our community. These groups include the New Light congregation, an opportunity for local college students to engage in fellowship (called "Table Talk"), the Girl Scouts, the Boy Scouts, the Potomac Academy (a community musical education program sponsored by George Mason University) and groups addressing addiction to alcohol. Over the years we also have focused ministry efforts on the needs of children, most notably by operating a preschool in our church facility, but also by providing a vibrant Sunday School program, youth programs for children from the 4th grade through the 12th grade, and choirs for children preschool age and up.

This year those ministries combined in a special way, and it all started by simply saying "yes."

Speaking for myself, I never really thought that simply saying yes could be such a powerful thing, but apparently it was the only thing God really needed to use St. George's as a home for a group that really needed one.

In April, our Pastor Denise Childers received an email from Dr. Ted Hoch, a United Methodist and faculty member at GMU who is an expert in behavior modification strategies. Dr. Hoch asked if St. George's would consider making its facility available for a week-long socialization day camp for autistic children. The camp would be run by "POAC" – which stands for Parents of Autistic Children, and would be directed by Dr. Hoch and Shannon McGrail. Shannon serves as current president of the Parents of Autistic Children group and has an incredible commitment and drive to work for the learning of all autistic kids in the area. Dr. Hoch said that because the behavior of these children can at times be disruptive and unpredictable, many potential hosts had turned them away. Dr. Hoch went on to relate the great need for autistic children to develop socialization skills because their condition tends to isolate them in a number of ways, including inhibiting the ability to communicate verbally, or to make eye contact, or fostering a tendency to engage in repetitive behaviors. Indeed, the need for this camp was such that parents were expected to bring children from places all over Northern Virginia and as far away as Maryland to attend.

And Pastor Denise said "yes", she would bring this request to our church council and support it.

And the church council said "yes", we should host this camp.

And Pastor Childers, who would be out of town the week of the camp, asked Karen Emmons, our Director of Discipleship Ministries, to organize St. George's effort as host. And she said "yes." Our then Preschool Director, Nicole Hanton, and some of the preschool staff also supported the effort. And a number of St. George's members and friends offered to help.

About 137 children came through this camp – 89 of the children were autistic, with roughly 25% of them being non-verbal. The rest of the children were what they referred to as "typical" children, meaning they are not autistic. It was important to have the typical children there to model many of the play behaviors.

Some members of St. George's had children participate in this capacity, and others helped out the teachers (there was one teacher for every two children). The parents of autistic children also got a chance to meet each other and share tips for improving the lives of their children and to offer each other mutual support, which is important because having an autistic child can isolate the parents, too. These parents related to St. George's members that they are isolated from most institutions in our society, including churches.

So we were blessed with an opportunity to offer welcome to a group that so often is not welcome, and we responded. The resulting outpouring of gratitude from our guests was overwhelming, and frankly far exceeded our commitment of resources to the project. Thanks for the hard work of our Communications Chair, John Nash, a local weekly newspaper ran a story on the camp, as did the *Virginia Advocate*.

And it happened because we were willing to go just a little outside of our comfort zone, and to extend hospitality to a group in our society that is relatively outcast. Which, on reflection, reminded us that this is like what Jesus did. Jesus sought out the least, the last and the lost.

We said "yes" when the isolated asked for a home for a week, and it made a great difference for the guests and the hosts.

We have already said "yes" to a return of the summer camp next summer.

Michael Jones, Chairperson, St. George's UMC Administrative Council.

St. Paul UMC

The Lord's Pantry

Good morning,

For today's victory moment, I'd like to share some numbers with you. I'd like to share the number 175... 77... 1063... 4075... 20 and 3500. I'll tell you about these numbers later.

Unless you're a visitor today, I believe it's safe to assume that everyone knows that St. Paul UMC has a food pantry and also a USDA food distribution program. But what you might not be aware of who the people are who volunteer at the pantry and how many it takes to allow the Pantry to serve the families in our community.

We've had over 50 people between the ages of 11 and 80 volunteer at the Pantry. What a diverse and fun loving group we are.

- We have middle school and high school students who volunteer.
 - We've had 5 young people from Holy Family Catholic Church earn hours for their Confirmation requirement.
 - We've had high school students who need community service hours for government and English classes and for scouting. Three of these students finished their service requirements many months and even years ago and are still coming regularly to volunteer.
- We have folks volunteer who are completing various appointed community service requirements.
- We have folks who call us out of the blue because they're looking for a place to volunteer and they heard about us.
 - One day I received a call from a young lady who was an intern for Lockheed working for the summer. She and several fellow interns were looking for an organization where they could do volunteer work. We invited them in and they had a wonderful experience helping clients shop for their groceries.
 - Another woman who works for a local real estate company was looking for a place to volunteer. She called the Capital Area Food Bank in Lorton and they suggested she call our church pantry which she did and she's become a regular... even bringing her elementary aged son with her this summer. She's also done several clothing and food drives through her office.
- We have friends of friends who come on an occasional basis when their schedule allows.
- The households who come for food many times end up volunteering for us. They arrive early because they walked here or someone gave them a ride and they had to come early. They want to help out. They sweep the porch and side walk, help with unloading the trucks in the morning, they break down boxes and remove the garbage; our homeless community arrives early for the Lord's Table meal and they help to carry groceries to client's cars.

- The core of our volunteer base comes from right here at St. Paul. We have a number of retired people who volunteer weekly and others who come when their busy retirement schedules allow. We have employed people who come for a few hours before he/she has to report to work or they come on their day off. We have school teachers who come after school is finished for the day and others who have volunteered for us weekly this summer because they're not available during the school year.
- There is also a group who work on days other than Thursday to make sure the pantry and clothing closet is clean and well stocked. They sort and size clothing, shop for food, stock the shelves, sweep, mop, and vacuum the floors, defrost the freezers, and more.

How blessed we are to have these volunteers and what a family and community we have become on Thursdays. I am honored to be able to work side by side with such loyal, compassionate, considerate, generous, funny, and loving, loving people. And before I tell you and answers to the numbers, I'd really appreciate it if all those who currently or in the past, have volunteered at the Pantry, to please stand up.

Now the answers to the numbers:

- The number 175 represents the number of weeks volunteers from this church have been serving the least fortunate in our community at the Lord's Pantry.
- The number 77 is the number of tons of food that have been distributed. The totters have carried 23,856 bags of groceries to people's cars.
- The number 1063 is the number of individual households our church has served.
- 4075 is the number of individuals those households represent.
- 20 is the number of volunteers it takes every Thursday to make the Pantry run
- And 3500 is the estimated number of man hours volunteered since January 2009

St. Stephen's UMC

Grace Ministries

Started in 1999 at Culmore UMC and Arlington UMC by Rev. Ileana Rosario, who is now with Wesley Chapel UMC in Suffolk, VA. There are now 7 participating churches:

- Culmore United Methodist
- Floris United Methodist
- Crossroads United Methodist
- Centreville United Methodist
- Mt. Olivet United Methodist
- Arlington United Methodist
- St. Stephen's United Methodist

Grace Ministries is a once-per-month distribution of free food, clothing, and diapers to families in need. There are also two job training programs (through Floris and Culmore). St. Stephen's Grace Ministries distribution is the 4th Saturday each month (except November and December are on the 3rd weekend).

Why did St. Stephen's become involved? To:

- Respond to the economic crisis
- Build on our long-standing tradition of Feeding Ministries
- Build relationships with our neighbors
- Serve as Christ would bid us

We started in May 2009 and had 52 families as guests; in October 2009 we had 149 families.

Grace Ministries at St. Stephen's distributes:

- Food from USDA, Food Bank, Food for Others, and congregation donations
- Clothing and children's items (toys, highchairs, strollers, etc.) from congregation, preschool, and neighbors
- Diapers bought through church donations
- Health and safety tips

Typical schedule on the fourth weekend of each month:

- Thursday – food delivery from USDA and Food Bank
- Friday – bag the food and organize the clothing rooms
- Saturday – Grace Ministries distribution (7:30 to 11 am)
 - 7:15 Prayer circle with volunteers
 - 7:30 Doors open doors for pre-registration, continental breakfast, and children's crafts
 - Welcome, opening prayer, health information presentation, full registration, and health screening (blood pressure, etc.)

- Guests go first to the clothing rooms (men's, women's, children's) and then pick up food
 - Volunteers with wagons help take food to their cars
- Expected blessings
 - We are helping our neighbors in need
- Unexpected blessings
 - Evangelism
 - Inactive church members returning to work on Grace Ministries
 - Expanding our ESL classes
 - Starting a Spanish Bible study group
 - Guests starting to volunteer and help each other
 - Neighbors involved as volunteers
 - Strengthening St. Stephen's internal relationships
 - Building new/stronger relationships among our members, e.g. integrating:
 - Members from all 3 services
 - All generations from 8 to 88 and
 - New members with long-time members
 - Involving young families and new members in a ministry of the church
 - Developing our next generation of lay leadership

Washington Street UMC

Caring and Service Ministry

The most significant change within our church this year is a re-orientation of our congregation and staff toward Christian caring and service. In order to accomplish this, we altered our administrative structure in a way that creates a dual lay leadership structure.

During early 2009, our Church Council believed that pronounced changes needed to take place within the congregation and decision-making structure of the church. Council was spending a tremendous amount of time on financial and administrative issues and less time on spiritual matters, congregational care and program issues. The Council charged a small group of laity and our two ministers (Visioning Task Force) with developing and delivering a set of recommendations on re-vitalizing our congregation.

During March and April, this small group identified five separate areas of ministry—

Care—caring for those from within our congregation

Reach—connecting to new people

Educate and Equip—increasing our knowledge of our faith and equipping us to minister

Worship—congregational worship of God

Send—service to those in our community, nation and world

This group tried to keep a faithfulness to mission, consider the wise use of resources (material and human), establish goal-focused and outcome oriented ministries, and have shared lay and staff leadership, discipline, priority setting and accountability. Two keys guided our work. First, that laity claim its responsibility for the welfare, congregational life, and vitality of our church. Secondly, that limited resources are managed effectively for maximum outcome.

In addition to the program areas listed above, the small group recognized that administrative matters such as budgets, personnel and facilities were a vital part of a strong church. A final recommendation, adopted by the Church Council, created a dual decision-making structure: an Administrative Board (Finance, SPRC, Trustees, etc) and a Council on Ministries that would highlight program and mission activities (CREWS).

WSUMC undertook (and is still doing) an extensive CREWS education effort directed toward the congregation including our website, weekly bulletins, lay remarks from the pulpit and one-on-one conversations.

While the Administrative Board/COM structure is by no means unique within our denomination, we are prayerful that this change will be more than moving committees around on an organizational chart. We are trusting in the hope that this change will lead our congregation to better care for ourselves, serve God and make disciples for Christ

A copy of the “Visioning Task Force” is attached.

Washington Street United Methodist Church
Visioning Task Force
Report to Church Council
May 5, 2009

The Task Force: Walter Hill, Chair, Pat Giraldi, John Thompson, Deanne Florindi, Pat Tipton, Anne Perry, Catherine Fratrick, Ed Stewart, Michael Lyle, Sara Keeling.

I. Our Mandate

The Visioning Task Force received its commission from the Church Council at Council’s February 24, 2009 meeting. Council tasked us with developing a recommendation that identifies the ministries Washington Street Church should carry out over the near future. Our commission was to assist Council in determining the ministries we must fulfill now to be faithful to our calling and mission as a servant congregation of Jesus Christ, to determine what ministries we might undertake should resources be available, and lastly what ministries, no matter how worthy, must wait.

Throughout March and April the task force met five times for some 12 contact hours plus individual time and work in preparation for each meeting for a total of approximately 30 hours dedicated by task force members.

II. Our Goals

Early on we developed the theme for our work. Faithfulness to mission, wise use of resources (material and human) goal-focused and outcome oriented ministries, lay and staff shared leadership, discipline, priority setting and accountability. Two keys guided our work. First, that laity claim its responsibility for the welfare, congregational life, and vitality of our church. Secondly, that limited resources are managed effectively for maximum outcome. To sharpen this focus, we offer the following plan to be executed over the 18-month period beginning July 12, 2009 and ending December 31, 2010. The plan calls for clear, measurable outcomes, benchmarks along the way and, most significantly, accountability by both lay and staff leadership.

III. Recommendations – Organization

Our deliberations lead us to believe that our current governance model of Church Council has become too cumbersome to enable us to be as effective, focused and vital as we can be. We conclude that a fundamental reorientation of church governance from bureaucracy to mission must occur. Further, we conclude that restructuring of our church committees will allow more flexibility in setting priorities and will create more accountability for staff and laity in meeting

our goals. Therefore, we recommend a new two-part governance system for our church. Actually, a return to a very workable system used in past. Church governance will be organized into:

- A. The Administrative Board
- B. The Council on Ministries

These two bodies are equal in authority but that authority manifests itself in different spheres. The Administrative Board, led by its Chairperson comprises:

- Lay Leader
- Finance
- Staff Parish Relations
- Trustees
- Annual Conference Delegates
- Council on Ministries Chair
- Pastors

The Administrative Board shall oversee all temporal matters that affect the church. No meeting (save SPRC) shall be closed to church members and all will be invited to share needs, concerns and ideas that affect the physical needs of our congregation, use of property and resources, our connectional relationships within United Methodism and financial health. It will be the Administrative Board that will hold the power of the purse, weighing prayerfully all proposals for financial commitments involving use of property, physical upgrades, remuneration, and exercising all other Disciplinary privileges and responsibilities, understanding that mission and ministry are primary in all decision making.

The Council on Ministries shall oversee, coordinate and set priorities for the mission and ministry of the church. The Council will establish discipline (a good Methodist word!) and accountability for the work it authorizes. The Council, guided by its chairperson, shall be organized under the rubric **CREWS**.

- Care
- Reach
- Educate and Equip
- Worship
- Send

Each work area of CREWS will have both lay (chair and vice chair) and staff leadership. Each area will include any number of persons who wish to join together in that area's ministries. Each work area will develop a mandate – an overarching ministry that the committee deems vital to the life and witness of our church. By no means is it our recommendation that all else stop save the mandated ministry. We do recommend, however, that the primary focus and energy of the

work area be put into identifying the overarching goal, setting measurable outcomes, determining a timeline, and setting and meeting benchmarks along the way. The expectation is that each work area will have a demonstrated, measurable success to be reported out by the end of December 2010.

Further, each work area will be accountable to and keep both the Council on Ministries and the congregation informed of goals and process through regular updates and celebrations of success along the way. As a congregation we will concentrate church resources – money, staff, volunteers – on a limited number of key goals. We will do a few things very well; the rest will have to wait. To do otherwise will lead only to lackluster, halfhearted and diffused performance, where no one is accountable and no one cares. This cannot be.

IV. A Laity/Staff Partnership

The Visioning Task Force recommends that staff receive a charge to develop resources to empower lay leadership for its tasks. Further, staff will develop and carry out a plan to train laity to organize and fulfill laity's responsibilities. Staff will be intimately involved in each work area and will contribute, oversee, guide and support laity in every way possible to ensure success.

While staff leadership is vital, the Visioning Task Force is firmly convinced that a fundamental reorientation of lay leadership is the *sine quo non* of this endeavor. For too long, laity have sat contentedly while staff and pastors have done the work. Too often, the only input lay members make is criticism of staff ideas, performance and action without giving guidance, leadership, sharing ideas or accepting responsibility to act as and simply be the Body of Christ gathered at Washington Street Church. This must end. While certainly each staff member has specialized gifts and skills, and can expect to be called upon for leadership, all of us are ministers and all of us must claim that ministry. The Task Force is unanimous and adamant in our belief that this new organizational structure and work area commitment of laity/staff partnership is the best way in which to reclaim our focus and vitality as a congregation, and reclaim our witness as disciples of Jesus Christ.

V. Some Practical Thoughts

What kinds of ministries come under each work area of our CREWS? The Task Force agreed that in simplicity lies beauty. We developed our thoughts on what we might do based on the understanding that each of us is searching. Searching to understand our place in God's universe, searching to find spiritual guidance, life and health, searching to find healing of wounds and doubt, searching to find fulfillment in life and searching merely to connect one with another as we travel our common road.

To that end we need not be grandiose; merely faithful, loving and caring. We suggest the following as examples of what might come from each work area.

CARE

- Ministries to our elderly – home visits, cards, phone calls, small but regular remembrances
- Shepherd/Stephen ministries – individual lay members are identified and trained to contact and be available to congregants who may be in need of special support
- Increased fellowship opportunities – weekly coffees after worship service, monthly luncheons, fellowship meals (We are already doing this to some extent.)
- Small support groups – may be social in nature or more directed toward the traditional Methodist model of small cells gathered for mutual support and spiritual growth.
- Reissuing a church directory, not only an alphabetical list of members, but including members of work areas, ministries and participation information on all facets of church life and congregational involvement.

REACH

- Institute a Welcome Ministry that includes trained greeters (including our “regulars” and others), lay-member follow-up with visitors and maintenance of a well-stocked welcome and information center.

EDUCATE AND EQUIP

- Develop adult small groups focused on Christian education and spiritual growth. Groups might meet at the church or elsewhere (home or downtown for lunch, as examples)
- Traditional Sunday School for children, youth and adults
- Bible study groups (Sunday mornings or other times)

WORSHIP

- Traditional worship service
- Nontraditional worship service
- Music ministry
- Special Sundays (children, annual picnic, for example)

SEND

- Mission opportunities and participation
- Local (Meals on Wheels, Rising Hope, Carpenter’s Shelter, for example)
- National (Carolina Cross Connection)
- International (mission trips abroad by members supported by the congregation)

In all our discussions, the Task Force returned repeatedly to the importance of instituting, encouraging and supporting small groups. It became apparent to us that these groups should permeate the life of the church, providing as many places as possible for our members to “plug

in.” Therefore, small groups appear in several of the examples cited above. Indeed, well-functioning work areas will, themselves, become small groups.

VI. Getting Started

The Task Force recommends a launch date of July 12, 2009 for this new venture. Each Sunday beginning May 31 until launch, time will be allotted during worship to discuss a facet of CREWS with the congregation. Not information only, congregants will be asked to choose a work area on which to serve for the next 18 months. The Church Council will reorganize itself into the Administrative Board and Council on Ministries with the first meeting of each body to be held in July. Between now and July 12, the current council and church staff will identify, orient and otherwise prepare chairs and vice chairs for each work area who may then begin to recruit work area members. Chairs and vice chairs will be dedicated on July 12 as part of the launch service at which time we envision all work area participants gathering at the chancel for a special moment of dedication and commitment. Visioning Task Force members agree that none of us should serve as dedicated leaders of the work areas as we wish to expand the reach of each area as far as possible among the congregation. We are committed to serving in advisory and supporting roles as requested by any and all work area leaders or other members of our congregation.

In summary, we on the Visioning Task Force were guided by six principles in completing our work.

- Laity is responsible for the welfare, congregational life, and vitality of our church therefore, laity MUST become active volunteers in the mission of our church
- Congregational care is a priority concern but not our sole focus
- We must shift the focus of laity and staff energy away from running the organization and toward the mission and ministry of the church
- We must become disciplined in our focus and the scope of our ministries
- Both lay and staff leadership must be accountable for the success or failure of this enterprise
- Benchmarks for mission success must be set and church resources concentrated on the key objectives

The Visioning Task Force has worked to focus our congregation on our biblical mission and to reshape our church’s organizational structure to fulfill that mission. We have not attempted to answer the important questions related to personnel and budget – the issues that led to the formation of this task force in the first place. Rather we have tried to answer a more critical and evasive question: What are the mission priorities of our congregation? As we sought answers to that question, we determined that a new decision-making structure should be formed. We believe that the structure and vision here will guide our congregation in both determining what our mission priorities are and provide a vehicle in which we can attain those priorities. We have been humbled by the task before us, yet exhilarated by the evidence of the Holy Spirit at work

among us and the power of the possible. Thank you for allowing us to serve in this capacity. In all deliberations and actions let us be guided by that Spirit.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Visioning Task Force,

Walter S. Hill

Wesleyan UMC

Food for Needy

1. The Play – “The Last Supper” by Dr. Emurian
2. “A Tiny Food Pantry” for those in need
 - a. Enough for a meal
 - i. Keep 2 loaves of bread in the freezer
 - ii. Peanut Butter and Jelly
 - iii. Tuna – easy open cans
 - iv. Soup – easy open cans
 - v. Plastic Ware (fork, spoon, knife, plates and napkins)
 - b. Log – Check ID if possible
 - i. Names, addresses, phone numbers
 - c. No Money – we don’t know what they will purchase
 - d. No less than 2 members assisting those in need
 - e. Send a report to the District Office
 - f. Invite to worship

Prayer and Retreat Missions

Morrisville UMC

Emerging Mission Area

Morrisville United Methodist Church will be reviewing a proposal to focus efforts on serving a very specific yet large section of our community. We will be creating ministry that teaches and unites The Holy Spirit with those afflicted with and impacted by cancer.

It is our intent to highlight the power of the Holy Spirit in the healing process of cancer. Our ministry will merge traditional medical resources with spiritual support and growth. We will begin to partner with local cancer support groups, medical centers and web sites dedicated to education and physical treatment of cancer patients. Morrisville United Methodist Church also recognizes that the family of friends of cancer patients have their special needs. We will offer support groups for care givers as well as cancer patients.

Our starting point will be the powerful ministry of prayer. Advertising of healing services and prayer watch is expected to attract community attention. As the ministry grows we will partner with professional medical, psychological and support groups to ensure we have people with qualified credentials guiding our ministry as well as our community.

Our goal is to bring support information closer to our local community and in the process introduce the power prayer and The Holy Spirit. We expect challenging questions: "Can God really exist?" "Why did God do this to me or my loved one?" "How can I go on and why should I go on?" Addressing these questions will not only help those facing the trauma of cancer but will also challenge those fortunate enough to enjoy a health and happy physical and spiritual life to share their strength and relationship with God.

Our vision is to unite with a larger medical community such as the University of Virginia at Charlottesville medical center. We will create a network of spiritual centers uniting all churches in Virginia into one fellowship focused on providing spiritual guidance and teaching how to use the power of The Holy Spirit in defeating this disease.

We believe that this ministry will have many benefits. It will start a flame that will grow into a conflagration regarding those who are seeking a deeper understanding of Gods plan for each of us. Truly it has the opportunity to reach into the heart and minds of those struggling with life and death. It will grow our local community and be a uniting force within the conference.

Rising Hope UMC

Weekday Noon Prayer Service

One practice that has strengthened the ministry of Rising Hope is the commitment to a short half-hour prayer service every day at noon, Tuesday through Friday. This practice has increased the depth of our spiritual outreach by strengthening our standing in the community as a spiritual refuge and haven. It has strengthened the spiritual depth of our staff and volunteers who have been called upon to lead the noon prayer from time to time. It has actually added to the number of volunteers who serve in our ministries because they are coming for prayer as much as they are coming to volunteer. For many, this prayer service is the first introduction to the worship life of our faith community. On occasion this introduction has led to a visit to our Sunday Celebration worship and that led the visitor to become a member.

The format of our daily noon prayer changes with the facilitator. Different formats are used by different volunteers. Pastor Keary often preaches an impromptu sermon and engages the participants in a dialogue. Others play recordings of an inspirational song, read a short devotion from *'Our Daily Bread'* or *'The Upper Room'*, or ask those gathered to share their joys and concerns. Prayers are then offered.

Rising Hope started the prayer service in 2001 when we faced a number of uncertainties. A full-time, year-long intern had just left to return home and start seminary. We were at a loss for knowing how to continue the wonderful outreach to the community she had started. We did not have enough income to hire a replacement. We had also just used the gift that Edwin and Helen Lynch gave us to make a down payment on the property we currently inhabit. We had no idea how we could raise the funds to renovate the building to move in.

At times Pastor Keary and Church Administrator Laura Derby were the only prayer participants because, other than a part-time secretary, they were the only employees. From time to time two or three other people joined in. Now this ministry has grown to where we regularly have 25-30 participants in our daily noon prayer time. On some days we have as many as 50 faithful joining us in prayer.

The fact that we have a daily noon prayer service has solidified the spiritual component of all the outreach ministries in which we engage. We annually serve nearly 6000 different people every year in our community with nearly 100,000 direct service assists. However, we are not a social service agency. We are a church. Our noon prayer service makes it clear that our motivation for all the good works that come from Rising Hope originate from a higher source, Jesus our Lord and Savior.

Silverbrook UMC

Retreat Center

Brothers and sisters in Christ,
Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

*For thus said the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel:
In returning the rest you shall be saved;
in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.*

Isaiah 30:15

I would like to take a moment and proclaim the goodness of the Lord and how his spirit has been working through Silverbrook United Methodist Church.

For 101 years Silverbrook has been ministering to the Lorton community in many awesome ways and in its 102nd year of service has become the Silverbrook UMC and Retreat Center. With the leadership of Pastor Kim Barker-Brugman the inclusion of the Retreat Center has grown and filled a much needed niche; a beautiful and quiet place for our members and the community to draw closer to GOD. Nestled under the large oaks and hidden by many beautiful mountain laurels our 102 year old sanctuary and prayer path provide peaceful place to “Be still and know that he is GOD”.

Our Mission Statement:

The retreat Center at Silverbrook United Methodist Church offers quiet days for adults to reflect, be still, and find rest away from the stressful world as they seek to deepen their relationship with God.

We are limited in our growth by only having 1 ½ acres and a sanctuary that is designated as historic trust. Our mission is not a food or clothing pantry. We believe that God is calling us to remain an active but small congregation with a part time retreat center.

We believe a retreat will help us draw closer to God.

We believe this retreat center will lead to an engagement with others who are un-churched. Spiritual seekers find a regular worship service on Sunday too frightening but we hope they will feel welcome to come to a retreat to further their exploration of the Holy. This fits in with conference vision to bring in more young people and *All Things New* – this is definitely new.

We believe our retreat center will help our fellow Christians – whether at Fairfax UMC or at the Presbyterian Church down the street – to get closer to God. We believe this is the best use of our space and will bring further exposure to our Lorton community. As we mentor and train our own people to lead retreats, we believe this retreat center will benefit us. This can only help our own people deepen their faith and to help our greater church with trained retreat leaders.

We believe many busy and harried people in the Northern Virginia area don't think they have time to go on retreat. They are pulled in so many directions that time with God often gets dropped from the 'schedule'. We are hoping and praying this retreat “just down the street” will help these stressed folks take time with God.

Twice a month Pastor Kim leads half and full day retreats. The half-day retreats are focused on contemplative prayer time around a predetermined theme. The full-day retreat is a combination of workshop and worship. Though Pastor Kim does the lion's share of the preparation and spiritual guidance, our congregation assists her in setting up and some of the behind the scene needs of the retreats. Donations from participants help to offset the expenses of the retreat.

God has truly blessed this ministry at Silverbrook United Methodist Church and Retreat Center. God's little 102 year old outpost continues to grow, and thrive as it continues to find more ways to be the hands and feet of our Lord and Savior to the surrounding community and to his faithful family who enjoy his little outpost here on Silverbrook Road.

For further information see our website www.silverbrook-umc.org

Washington Farm UMC

Open Door for Prayer

9-11, 2001, a scary unsettling day for Americans. Terrorist attacks, all planes grounded, parents worried about the safety of their children. What will happen next?

A member of Washington Farm United Methodist Church felt that the church needed to be open daily for anyone who might need to drop in. Washington Farm is strategically located on the George Washington Parkway which is the route of many commuters. The church allows commuter parking on the church lot and has a bus stop right in front of it. Additionally, it is a main road to Mt. Vernon estate. The member opened the church every morning at 7:00 and closed it every night at 11:00. During evening hours it was important to the member that the steeple and cross be lit as a symbol that peace, comfort and hope are found within. While navigating home from work after dark, travelers could see the steeple and hopefully feel comfort.

At the end of a year, the church member discontinued opening the church. The Lenten Study Group, as is tradition, reached a consensus on something the 'church' should do or something we, as a group of individuals, should focus on for the year. The group decided they wanted the church open for prayer. Since 2001, the church has had an Open Door policy.

Over time, we have acquired signs that are put up daily reading, 'Church is Open for Prayer.' We have a church member who organized a monthly calendar of openers and closers each day. Once a person enters the narthex there is a small podium with church literature. Entering the sanctuary, music plays softly and the lights are on. This has become a dawn to dusk ministry with many church members taking turns opening and closing the church.

People seeking quiet time are joggers, commuters, a school bus driver who also would play the piano, a Muslim, other visitors, and church members. These are known, many others avail themselves of the opportunity that we do not know. If a person has a need, the church is there for them. Additionally, if it is spur of the moment decision to drop in the church is always open. The important aspect to us is that 'the population' knows that the church is available daily. We practice open for prayer as the ministry of outreach, hospitality. Some people leave notes of appreciation for us because our doors are open for them to come and pray.

Now for reality. Concerns of theft, vagrants, graffiti and other bad things happening. At Washington Farm there was overwhelming support for the Open Door policy and few (2) members mentioned the concerns. Washington Farm has had two incidents. In the evening, a church member was startled when she entered the kitchen beneath the sanctuary and found a man there. He was asked to leave and he did. The second time, a woman had used the kitchen downstairs to cook. She was found sitting on the stairs, and nothing was said to her.

Washington Farm has had no thefts, no graffiti, no vagrants, no damage, no misuse. The member who began opening the church as a result of 9-11, has traveled all over the United States and

the world. Many times she has sought out the local Methodist Church only to find the doors locked. We, at Washington Farm, are proud of this ministry and believe it gives a literal meaning to the United Methodist Churches slogan of 'Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors.'

Dianne Tippins, Evangelism Chair
Washington Farm UMC
3921 Old Mill Rd.
Alexandria, VA 22309

Stewardship

Beverley Hills UMC

Pennies for Peace Noisy Offering

This summer, for 10 weeks, the 3rd-5th grade children in our church collected pennies during worship for a program called “Pennies for Peace.” In the spring, the children in Sunday School had learned about the work of Greg Mortenson, the author of the New York Times Bestseller *Three Cups of Tea: One Man’s Mission to Promote Peace, One School At A Time*. This book recounts the journey that led Greg Mortenson from his failed attempt to climb a mountain in Pakistan called K2 to successfully establish dozens of schools and promote girls’ education in rural Afghanistan and Pakistan. Greg Mortenson is the co-founder of the Central Asia Institute which, along with the National Education Association and the Pearson Foundation developed the idea of the Pennies for Peace program.

Pennies for Peace is an international service-learning program with tens of thousands of participants around the globe. Children in various nations (whether in schools or churches or wherever) learn about the lives of the children who live in remote areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. They learn about the great desire of these children for teachers, schools, books, and simple materials such as paper and pencils. Having learned of this great need, children devise ways to collect pennies for a specific period of time and then send the money collected to the Central Asia Institute. As of 2009, Central Asia Institute has successfully established 130 schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan, which provide (or have provided education) to over 51,000 students with an emphasis on girls’ education. (Money for these schools has been donated by other sources other than the Pennies for Peace program).

How did the children at Beverley Hills Church collect the pennies? Every Sunday for 10 weeks, after the time in worship we call “Message with Children,” we had what we called the “Pennies for Peace Noisy Offering.” The children passed metal bowls throughout the congregation in the same way that the regular offering is collected. We encourage people to throw their pennies into the bowls and make lots of noise. The children loved doing this week after week. It was fun! The children loved the sound of the clinking and clanking pennies! And – because they did this for 10 weeks in a row, and heard repeated each Sunday that “This is an offering for school supplies and schools to be built in Pakistan and Afghanistan,” we believe the idea of mission giving was strongly reinforced in our children.

The children also decorated their own individual penny collection containers which they took home after one Sunday in Sunday School. They were encouraged to collect pennies from family, friends, and neighbors, spreading the word about the Pennies for Peace program and what the pennies would support.

After ten weeks of collecting pennies, we found about 20 metal bowls, baskets, and other containers and divided up the pennies that had been collected. We laid these bowls on a table at the back of the sanctuary. For the “Children’s Message” on a designated Sunday, all the children in worship that day went to the table at the back, picked up a bowl of pennies, and processed down the aisle while our music director played a lively march on the piano. At the front of the church we had placed a Five

Gallon Bucket decorated by the children on a low table and each child one by one poured their pennies into the huge bucket. It was very festive and noisy! Then two children dedicated the pennies to their mission cause by giving short extemporaneous prayers as the pastor held the microphone for them.

The next day, two people put the huge bucket full of pennies onto a dolly and rolled it outside to a car. I don't know how they got it into the car – but somehow they managed. The pennies were taken to a bank where there was a coin counting machine. In all, 19,267 pennies were collected - \$192.67. The children were very proud of what they accomplished with the "Pennies for Peace Noisy Offering."

Cameron UMC

Children's Consignment Sale

One of the best ministries undertaken by Cameron is our semi-annual Children's Consignment Sale.

Initially begun in the early 1990's as a replacement for the UMW's annual bazaar, this ministry has grown to be a major event at Cameron and has exceeded our mission expectations.

Each September and March, the church is transformed for three days to allow sellers to drop off items for sale. We accept children's clothing, toys, books, furniture, strollers, car seats and items for children size 14 and under, as well as maternity clothes. We reserve the right to refuse items which are damaged, stained or otherwise inappropriate for resale. The sellers set the price for each item being sold. Our church workers do not negotiate with buyers. At the end of the sale, all items are separated by seller and available for pick-up. The income from the sale is split with the seller – 40% going to Cameron to be sent to the District UMW for missions.

Items left by sellers who do not wish to reclaim unsold items are given to a variety of other mission projects supported by Cameron, such as Rising Hope and Koinonia.

Over the years, this ministry, though still sponsored by the UMW, has become a church wide event. From the men and youth who help with set-up and clean-up, to those who assist shoppers and run the cash registers at check-out, the entire church community works together.

While the initial goal was to raise money for missions, we have found this activity does so much more. We know of families who are able to provide clothing and other items for their family because of this sale. They buy at one sale and become a seller at the next, trading up in sizes as their children grow. We know of families who have purchased all their children's Christmas gifts at the sale and count on being able to do so each fall. This past September, we were able to provide a maternity wardrobe, free of charge, for a 14 year old pregnant teenager through our interaction with Birthright. And the money we raise for missions far exceeds anything we raised through the traditional bazaar.

Finally, we use the sale as an opportunity to distribute information on the church, get to know our neighbors and offer to be a presence in their life as the hands and feet of God in the community. We are able to fulfill our mission statement: To make more and better disciples of Jesus Christ; To share the love of Jesus and the church with others. To bring care and comfort to the hurting.

Christ UMC

Consignment Sales

Every year, Christ Church manages and hosts two Consignment sales in the spring and the fall. The consignment sale literally transforms our worship center. Families in our community bring their used children's items (clothing, toys, books, etc.) and sell them to others at discounted prices. The sale has generated a lot of interest within the community as people have discovered the quality of the items sold. People begin lining up hours before the doors open with lines winding around our parking lot. This year almost 1000 people attended the event with 350 volunteers lending a hand to help manage cash registers, provide customer service, and simply to meet and greet.

The results for our October sale were amazing. Total sales were \$77,680.13 with Christ Church grossing almost \$30,000 to be used for additional outreach and further ministry. 24,209 items were sold out of 32,088 total items.

This sale was a huge step for Christ Church as we added electronic cash registers and a bar coding system. This allowed our consignors to enter their items on our server from home and print out their own bar code labels. All items were then scanned at check out and a sale credit was given to the consignor.

The October sale this year was especially inspiring. In addition to the outreach associated with the sale, several ministries were able to use it as an outreach opportunity. The Kenya Mission Team sold doughnuts, coffee, used books and White House Ornaments to support Hope Africa Ministries. Student Ministries grilled hot dogs and sold refreshments to support their upcoming mission trip. The worship team opened the doors to their rehearsal for their Originals CD release project (original music produced by Christ Church where CD sales supported Hope Africa) and Jesus was being praised throughout the entire parking lot. Our Journey campaign set out a coin funnel for kids to support to move to the Ox Rd. property and showed a model of the new building.

In addition to all of this, I have my own personal testimony. A young family purchased a crib and needed help loading it into the car. I thought it would only take a few minutes but it turned into an hour long project. We could not fit the crib into the car so I worked with the husband and wife to take the crib completely apart and load it into the car. As we were working together, I discovered this was their first child and we talked about raising families and joys of parenthood. It wasn't until the end that they discovered that I was on staff with the church.

For future sales, we look forward to finding better ways to integrate our core values (connect, share, grow, worship, serve) into the consignment sale so that we can better reach others for the Kingdom of Christ.

Cranford UMC

Tithing and Financial Leadership

The writers of the Talmud talk about the rebuilding of the Temple. They say that when it was rebuilt, the priests, the wealthy merchants, the rulers, and the poor were each given a wall to build. The priests, merchants, and rulers outsourced the work because it was beneath their dignity to be lifting stones, timbers, and rocks. The poor did not have the resources to pay to have their work done for them. As a result, their wall was the last one completed since it was constructed between doing their labors for others and doing their labor for God. The writers of the Midrash say that when the Temple was destroyed in 69 A.D., the only wall that remained intact was the Western Wall, the wall which the poor had built, for God shows mercy on the poor and He respected the magnitude of their labors.

We have several excellent ministries in our church. However I am going to talk about a ministry that makes people uncomfortable. It is perhaps the least sexy ministry that the church does, yet it is also the most necessary. I am talking about tithing.

To begin with, I sincerely doubt if many – if any – of our congregation truly tithes the first 10% of their revenue. I don't know because I have no need to know who gives what, who doesn't give, and who restricts his gifts. Second, like many congregations we have members who have been laid off, suffered reduced hours, have faced pay cuts, or who are not anticipating an increase in their Social Security benefits next year. Finally if we relied on making good on our bills by relying exclusively on undesignated money, something would not be paid. However we assume that the designated funds we borrow from will be repaid by the time they are called upon and that these funds will not be all called upon at once. Like many churches, we pray for large contributions throughout the Christmas season to make up any budget shortfall.

I suspect that this is the situation at most United Methodist Congregations in Northern Virginia. I am certain that there are congregations who are second mile givers and who have endowments and more money than they can possibly spend. That is not us though. It has never been us.

However what I am proud of is that we are current on our apportionments. Our pastor and our staff are being paid. Our men support Rising Hope and Lorton Community Action Center each month with a donation that matches what our congregation through the Administrative Council has pledged to donate. Our men have covenanted to send one more child each year to All God's Children Camp than the UMW sends. VBS and Sunday school are, for all intents and purposes, self-sufficient because of congregational donations of time, money, and talents. Our church is known in Mozambique as a key supporter of Mozambique missionaries being trained in Zimbabwe from our financial support.

Here is what we have found does not work in financial ministry for our church. This may not be the case for your church, because every congregation is different and each has its own flavor.

1. Pledging does not work. If we had to construct a budget based on our pledges alone, we wouldn't be able to cover our pastor's salary. We cannot plan a budget based on what people say they will commit because most people don't commit a yearly amount.
2. Budgeting is of limited utility. We know we have to do it for the Charge Conference, but typically the budget is a best case analysis of what we think (and what we know) the bills will be. Our two largest chunks of money are our apportionments and salaries and benefits to the staff. The remainder – office supplies, utilities, postage, routine care and maintenance of the church and the parsonage – forms a small portion of the budget.
3. We don't know if a stewardship campaign would work because we have not had a stewardship campaign in at least 10 years. While several members have expressed interest in having a stewardship campaign, no one has stepped up to take the lead. Good ideas without follow through remain good ideas.

Here though are things that we have found that do work:

1. Putting a face to the mission or telling a story about the mission. Ilda and her family have been a face and a voice to Cranford. Many of the church members have met her when she was here for a visit with the UMW. The donations – which are over and above our required giving – have a name and a face to them. By the same token, on education Sunday when there is a special offering for Methodist based colleges and universities, one of the graduates from a Methodist school's telling about what a Wesleyan college had meant to her and her husband resulted in many donations to the school program. When we have a story that we can respond to, we do. Unfortunately light bills and oil prices don't have much the same story that people do. However without the building, we won't be able to minister.
2. Keeping the congregation informed. Each newsletter that we send out, the treasurer discusses financial issues with the church. He does not preach about tithing or stewardship, since that is now what he is able. Rather he points out the cost of fuel – estimated versus actual cost – and how that affects the overall budget. He posts monthly income and outgo on the bulletin board so that anyone who wants to know where we are financially can have a snapshot. Our bulletin used to compare our expenditures to our budget. He found it was more helpful to give the monthly income, monthly expenses, yearly income to date, and yearly expenses to date – as well as any “profits” or (sigh) deficits.
3. Constant training of financial leadership. Several years ago the District did an outstanding job of providing quarterly training sessions for treasurers, stewards, finance chairs, and others. In our congregation, most of the members on the Finance Committee are not by training or profession accountants, auditors, tax experts, financial managers, or others who are specially trained in financial and economic arenas. Even if they were, church finances are different even from other not-for-profit organizations. In these sessions, which now occur annually, the various church financial leaders from across the District discuss what problems that they have had, software issues, their own best practices, and even the state of their own church finances with respect to other congregations. Those members of our Finance Committee who have attended the sessions have found them to be extremely useful. The availability of District Treasurer Leon

Newbanks (and prior to that Sandy Theiss) to answer questions as they come up has also been invaluable.

4. Real world budget and planning for the “what ifs.” One year we got a new pastor. We had not adequately planned for moving expenses, so there was a lot of last minute, end of the year running around trying to get money put back in to cover the cost of the pastor’s move. That served as a lessons learned – like the year the price of fuel oil doubled. Now Finance sets aside money each month to pay for fuel oil and for the pastor’s move. Mind you, we are not looking forward to paying for that in the near future. However money will be available. Finance also tries to set aside money for routine care and maintenance of the church and parsonage. These are “undesigned” designated funds.

Someone said that a church that has too much money is not doing something right. A church that has too little is also not doing something right. A church that is struggling to break even is probably doing about right. Well, that being the case, we are struggling to break even. We are also struggling to identify situations where it makes sense to do the work ourselves and sense to outsource our efforts because of danger or complexity of the task. We work hard to be good stewards since this is what we pledged when we joined the church – to be good stewards of our time, talents, and resources.

Fairfax UMC

5 Practices of a Fruitful Congregation

We decided that the theme of our 2010 Stewardship Campaign would be “The 5 Practices of a Fruitful Congregation.” Additionally, we wanted to increase the number of people that helped run our annual campaign by involving the entire Church Council. During our Church Council Retreat each member self-identified with one of the five practices. They then formed their respective groups and discussed what, as a group, they felt their practice entailed. The groups then proceeded to identify how our church was already functioning in the practice area and what else could be done.

Our Stewardship Campaign lasted 6 weeks with one week dedicated to each of the 5 practices followed by Consecration Sunday. Each group was responsible for presenting the Stewardship Moment at each of the services. Additionally, the group was to have some form of display in the Fellowship Hall after each service that highlighted the work the church was currently involved in and seek to engage additional members from the congregation.

For Radical Hospitality our Stewardship Moment was delivered at each service by a clown with an oversized Bible. The Fellowship Hall was decorated in a carnival motif with tables containing examples of our current hospitality efforts.

Our Passionate Worship Stewardship Moments highlighted how the various areas of the church are such a large part of the worship experience. It showed how it goes well beyond that of our vocal choirs and includes the handbells, youth, drama, and scouting ministries.

Intentional Faith Development focused on getting more people involved in our many small-group ministries. In the Fellowship Hall members had an ‘Ice Cream Sunday’ station for people to make their own sundaes. The message was “Everyone needs more Sundays.” Additionally chocolate bars were wrapped with faux-wrappers with the word “Jesus” on it. They were handed out to people and inside was an invitation to a Sunday School class.

During Risk-Taking Missions week members spoke about how they were changed by the experience of mission work, specifically for ASP (Appalachian Service Project) and JP (Jeremiah Project). They shared stories of how they felt God’s love by helping others. The Fellowship Hall contained a sample wall, showing construction techniques, dry wall installation, and power tools.

For Extravagant Generosity we tried to emphasize that it was more than just about money. It also included being generous with our time, talents, and service. We asked that everyone find a way to give a little more of something. In the Fellowship Hall we handed out a reusable grocery bag to each family. We also had several apple-based baking recipes and asked people to make batches of muffins, breads, cookies, etc. Then, give half the batch to a friend, neighbor, and bring the other half next Sunday to share during our Consecration Sunday brunch.

In addition to focusing on the 5 Practices, we also emphasized the adjectives associated with each practice. A secondary theme emerged organically from each group of stretching ourselves and getting out of our comfort zones. This challenged was issued both to the individual and as well as the church.

A key goal for the Stewardship Purpose Area in our church for 2010 is to keep these 5 practices fresh and in front of the congregation throughout the year. To quote Bishop Schnase, “[the 5 practices are] not phases that, once we get them done, we can move on to something else. These are practices that we have to learn and improve upon constantly.” Our intent is to highlight how our different Purpose Areas are implementing these practices throughout the year and how increasing the involvement of our faith community.

Liberty UMC

Operation: Hamburger – Hot Dog: The Food Booth at the Fauquier County Fair

This year, our Church once again set up a booth at the Fauquier County Fair to sell food as a fund raiser for the Church. It is the single largest revenue producing activity the Church does all year. Without the booth at the fair, our Church may not have been able to meet our financial needs for the past several years. Although it is a wonderful idea for stewardship and for the financial condition of our Church, the reader may beg the question: what does a fund raiser have to do with ministry?

I'm new to Liberty United Methodist Church. Not only that, I'm new to the Commonwealth of Virginia and to the Virginia Conference. I'm on loan from the Mississippi Conference, and as a newly minted Elder, I sometimes feel like I still have no idea what I'm doing. After being appointed to Liberty United Methodist Church (LUMC), I was told by Rev. Reifsnnyder that Liberty participated in an annual county fair as a fund raiser. Upon arriving at Liberty, I was informed that the Fair would take place within the following three weeks. There was a sense of excitement among the congregation as the fair approached.

For the life of me, I could not begin to understand why people were so excited about the fair. I mean, I had been to county fairs before. Heck, I had grown up going to state fairs and the famous "Mid South Fair" in Memphis. I figured we would go to this fair, sell a few burgers and hot dogs, make a little money, and that would be the end of it. I couldn't understand why my new congregation was so excited about it.

I'm a pretty young pastor, but I know enough to understand that when your congregation is excited about something, you better be excited about it with them. So my wife, Kate, and I made plans to participate in the fair as much as we could. I fully admit that I do not understand everything that goes on at the Fair, but as a newcomer, I can tell you what I saw.

Our congregation is a family. I know everybody says that about their church, and undoubtedly it is true, at some level, in every congregation. However, in my entire life, I have never seen a congregation that feels more like a family than LUMC. My Parents and my in-laws have both visited since my wife and I have been at Liberty, and they have said the same thing: Liberty is a close Church family – it's evident from the minute you walk in the door. A Church does not just become a close family overnight or by accident. It is the grace of the Holy Spirit and it takes time and effort on the part of the congregation; it takes the individual members being willing and able to work together. In our church, there is no greater occasion for working together than the Fauquier County Fair.

The amount of preparation it takes to ready for the fair is staggering. I was under the impression that we would just sort of show up with a grill and cook a few hamburgers and hot dogs and call it a day. It became readily apparent that I had no idea what it took to make the fair work... Fortunately, I didn't have to know anything. The congregation took over the planning and execution of what I like to refer as "Operation: Hamburger – Hot Dog" like a well oiled machine.

Every detail was thought out and planned months and weeks ahead of time. Precision in logistical planning execution of this scale could only be attributed to years of experience, thorough planning, and a level of dedication only comparable to that of a war-time military unit (and I mean a unit of Marines or Airborne soldiers, not the Coast Guard). To say that the congregation worked like a machine would fall short of describing all that was accomplished – hamburgers and hot dogs were cooked, prepared, and sold at an alarming rate. It was a well organized assembly line of production and customer service under that tent, we put McDonalds to shame... but it was far more than mechanical in its method of operation. It was *organic*. The food booth functioned like one body – one living organism with different parts doing different jobs, but all coming together for one purpose. And through all the fatigue and sweat, we laughed often, we smiled at our customers, and we handed out brochures about our Church with nearly every order and invited them to Church. We had more than one customer show up that following Sunday.

I was blessed to have my parents visit during the fair. They drove up from Mississippi to see how their son and his new wife were settling in to their new life together, and to see their newly minted preacher or a son with his new Church. They were astounded by what they saw. They showed up on the Wednesday before the fair, and they were immediately drawn into the preparation work at the Church that night. My mom found herself in the kitchen working with the ladies of the church that night, and my Dad found himself the next day cooking hamburgers along side my Lay leader, Mike Egbert. They both loved every minute of it.

The next week, after my parents arrived back in Mississippi, my father called me and said, “Son, I want to talk to you about your new Church.” I could tell from his voice that he had something important that he wanted to say, and he got a little tremble in his voice as he then said, “Son, I’m nearly 60 years old, and I’ve been a Methodist all my life. And I want you to know that I have never seen the Holy Spirit move in a congregation more than I have there at Liberty while y’all were working on the fair. That congregation you’ve got there is a Church family like I have never seen a Church be a family. It’s something special like I have never seen.”

Now, for all of the good that came from the fair, I would be remiss if I didn’t own up to the fact that Operation Hamburger – Hot Dog is a LOT of work. It was my first few weeks of being the pastor, and in the haze of my fatigue I began to wonder if my new congregation was secretly trying to get rid of me. It certainly felt like they were trying to see what I was made of – a trial by the fires of the grill, so to speak. However, in retrospect, I have come to understand something very important about the fair – I could not have invented a better way to get to know my congregation, or for them to get to know me.

Sweat equity may just be the mortar that holds community together. And our community is built upon the trust of a family that knows it can count on one another. We were all dirty, and tired, and hot underneath that tent, but we worked together, kept our spirits up, served the community, and thanked God for every sale we were able to make. My congregation reinforced the love and trust they already had for one another, and they gave my wife and I the opportunity to become members – real, initiated members – of their family. I could not have gained as much connection with the members of my congregation with a year in the pulpit. Words may inspire, but they often fall short of creating real

bonds of trust. Deeds, and working together in the Spirit build the ties that truly sustain a Church – even one that struggles from time to time.

So I learned this from our time at the fair, and I'd like to share this message with you all: Pastors, get out from behind your pulpits and desks. Lay people, stand up and come out of the pews. Find a project and invest some sweat equity together. Worshipping together is great, but in working together – in concert with worshipping together – we at Liberty have found a means to renew the strength that holds the ties that bind our Church family together.

Nokesville UMC

Scrip Program

I. The Concept

- A. Scrip Center is Great Lakes Scrip Center (www.glscrip.com) or (www.shopwithscrip.com).
- B. Gift Cards are purchased at a discount ranging from 2% off to 17% off. Typical discounts are 4% for grocery stores, fast food restaurants, and department stores; 8%-10% for restaurants, and 10%-17% for clothing stores.
- C. Church may purchase cards at discounted rate in order to:
 - 1) Sell cards at face value as a fundraiser, or
 - 2) Sell gift cards at cost as a mission project.
- D. Available vendors – over 100 national chains, including Safeway, Giant, Sears, JC Penny, K-Mart, Wal-Mart, Home Depot, Loews, Red Robin, Olive Garden, Outback, Longhorn, Ruby Tuesday, Applebees, Sheets, Best Buy, Macy's Kohls, Subway, Chipotle, Denny's, Arby's, Wendy's, Burger King, Dominos, Papa John, KFC, Bob Evans, Cracker Barrel, Mimi's Café, and many more.

II. The Nuts & Bolts

- A. Church needs to apply for membership with Great Lakes Scrip. They will assign a non-profit code to your church, which is then used by member families.
- B. Church needs a dedicated bank account to separate funds. Orders are placed on line and payment for those orders is drafted directly from the church account. We use a single volunteer to manage this account; reviewed weekly by the finance chairman.
- C. Families sign up for membership and place orders on line. These orders are then aggregated by the coordinator and placed/paid for by the church. Order day is Wednesday so that cards can be delivered by Friday for delivery on Sunday. If not paid for, cards are held in inventory and/or offered for sale to others.
- D. Cards can be sold two ways: 1) only through on line ordering or 2) Church maintains an inventory, or stock of favorite merchants.
- E. Orders are shipped (this cost is deducted from your profits by FED EX. Price is \$7.50 for ground (two-four day delivery) or \$11.50 for overnight.

III. The Reality

1. In 18 months, NUMC has profited approx. \$2,800 with participation of approx. 10 families. We stress to our families NOT to buy Scrip unless you know you will be making a purchase. We encourage our members not to go into debt to buy scrip.
2. Purchasing/selling scrip has a **financial risk component**. Once purchased, these cards are essentially cash. Each church needs to be sure that they have effective controls in place to protect against loss and maintain financial integrity. Vendor/store could also go out of business.
3. If you promote the availability of scrip cards, families can plan their purchases which they would have been making anyway to benefit your church. Families should be

offered to option to be taught how to log on. Congregation should be kept apprised of availability of scrip.

4. If families purchase scrip cards at face value, IRS has ruled that the difference is **TAX DEDUCTIBLE**. Scrip cards are a discounted price by IRS ruling. Where a family voluntarily allows a church to keep the price difference, it is essentially a charitable gift deduction, based on a July 2009 IRS ruling.
5. GL scrip has a number of automated options which can be used to smooth out the work component of running an operation, including on line payment by the purchased, reporting software, favorite order savings, family on line activity reports, etc. There are fees involved for family on-line payment, so NUMC has thus far no elected to exercise this option.
6. As the economy tightens, offering scrip discounts to both members and non-members is a legal option that can be used to assist those in need. The margin for such stores as Wal Mart and/or Sheets gasoline is only 2%, but if there are other stores that are frequented a 4% margin is more likely available.

IV. Summary

1. If you wish assistance in setting up your program, first check the web sites shown above. If you need practical local assistance, contact Jeff Brown at jeff.brown@browninsurance.com, or call me at 703-368-4776

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeff Brown
Nokesville UMC

Vision Planning

Aldersgate UMC

Implementing the Five Practices

Choosing to implement Bishop Robert Schnase's *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* is proving to be our best ministry idea.

When we initially looked at this book, we found that our existing four council areas: education, worship, operations, and compassion would align well with these practices. In the spring, we created a fifth council area, hospitality.

These five councils and practice areas are now being renamed to embrace Bishop Schnase's terminology. As we implement the five practices, the work within each council will strive to match successes Schnase describes.

Aldersgate kicked off this initiative during the summer, when lay leadership and the church staff attended a weekend retreat. We studied *The Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* in depth. Everyone returned energized and motivated to implement these practices at Aldersgate.

Aldersgate is now promoting the five practices as part of our fall commitment campaign – educating the congregation and rallying our volunteers to action through our newsletter, online communications, bulletin inserts, bulletin boards, etc. The book in which we outline volunteer opportunities was redesigned to reflect the five practices and our website is undergoing similar changes.

During our six-week commitment campaign, the sermon each week will focus on one of the practices. A lay testimony during the service also will reflect the importance of that practice. After each worship service, we will highlight the work of the featured council at a ministry expo.

While Aldersgate has been heading in a similar direction with our ministries for the past few years, the five practices provides our leadership and staff with renewed focus. We now have a proven framework to utilize and best practices to emulate.

We have found that just adding Schnase's choice of descriptive adjectives to each practice area – intentional, passionate, extravagant, risk-taking and radical – has really energized our teams. This is an exciting time to be involved in the ministries of our church!

Annandale UMC

Church-wide Discernment

This time last year, November 2008, Annandale United Methodist Church Council decided, based on encouragement from our Senior Minister, Reverend Clarence Brown, to engage in a church-wide discernment process. We began by reading an Alban Institute publication, Discerning Your Congregation's Future, authored by Roy Oswald and Ralph Friederich.

Believing that the act of discerning means *to uncover that which God has already planned*, we embarked on our journey of discovery. Keeping in accordance with the low stressed and relaxed approach customary to Northern Virginia, we could have chosen to *tactically* activate our type-A leaders, *aggressively* and strategically plan the process, *scrutinize* and select best practices, and *vigorously* engage with a result-oriented approach. This might have lead us to a clear and precise 5-year strategic plan document that could be properly filed away, never again to be seen by human eyes. Have you ever seen such a thing?

However, 2009 was quite different; the Church Council agreed to let go of the reins and inter into uncomfortable territory. We lead from a place of not knowing what might be next, while also absolutely knowing that God would be present and would reveal His desire to us. You might as what this looked like. Well, we danced in the moment with God; we were prayerful present, curious, and open. We attempted to get out of our heads and into our whole being. We learned to prayerfully center our minds, bodies and emotions, and to practice listening and discernment. Are you getting nervous yet?

One might safely conclude that a leadership paradigm shift toward discernment rather than 'best practices' might create some discomfort. All I can say is that discernment is 'the' best practice. It is guided by the all-knowing creator. Every step is painfully and joyfully uncertain and requires close relationship with God. Perhaps Martin Luther King Jr statement sheds some light as he said, "Step out on faith, you don't have to see the whole stair case, just take the first step on faith."

To create an image of our journey, I'll share a few logistics. We began by prayerfully selecting 5 facilitators and 6 scribes who formed the beginnings of the discernment leadership team. They read the book and planned the agenda for 90-minute home discernment meetings. Home meetings normally consisted of 8-12 congregants with approximately 150 total congregants participating in this portion of the process. The facilitators began the meetings with centering prayer and scripture; giving particular focus to Corinthians 12 and 13 regarding the body of Christ and love. The home meeting participants were then asked four questions and each was given the opportunity to share their personal answers. Questions reflected the participants' pleasure with the direction of the church, as well as their worries. They were also asked to identify that which would motive them to invite a neighbor to church. There was not debate or dialog around the answers; the scribes later met with the facilitators to distil that which they had heard during the meetings. Again, the book was extremely helpful in that it provide 6 questions for the facilitator/scribe team to answer that allowed them to distil the data into key themes.

Around this same time, we distributed a congregational questionnaire, compiled and analyzed the data from 320 responses. This process was shepherded by a team of 3 congregants and provides a snap shot of who we are today. We also developed and distributed an external survey for those who are not members of our faith community. Over 50 have answered the external survey and we are about to launch an email campaign that will hopefully yield many more responses and give us a sense of how our community view us.

What's next? In January, we plan to hold a Single Service Sunday with one joint worship service at 10am followed by a church-wide luncheon, in celebration and recognition of our history and culture. In February, we will hold a Congregational meeting, at which time we will share the themes distilled from the home meetings. We will again celebrate our history and review the results from the external and internal surveys. During this meeting, we will come together with curious and open hearts and minds and seek to uncover that which God has planned. Our 'plan' is to address the themes and discuss ways to bring them into being, then to empower Church Council to lead from that place in 2010. However, we will remain open to God's plan. He might have something else in store for us that day. We don't know and we're okay with not knowing.

God reminds us 366 times in the bible to 'fear not.' While happiness and sadness are emotions around something that has occurred, fear is an emotion about that which has not happened. It's an emotion that we think into being. Let's reflect on some things that we 'know.' We know that God has created each of us as whole, complete and inherently resourceful beings. We know that He has promised to always be faithfully present. Therefore, if we are uncomfortable... fear not, for that is good! Only when we workout our bodies to a place of discomfort can we then recover and see that which was built, sculpted and grown from our hard work. It's in those moments when we as church leaders boldly and with faith move into a place of discomfort and uncertainty that God can build, sculpt and grow His people and His church into that which He has planned.

I recently asked a loved one who does not believe in God which floor they worked on in their place of employment. They replied that they worked on the fifth floor. I asked if they had ever taken the stairs to the lobby. They had. I asked if they could see the lobby from the door as they exited onto the top landing of the fifth floor of the staircase. They could not. So I asked, if they could only see to the first landing, what made them so certain that when they turned the corner there might be another flight of steps and how could they be so certain that this would continue all the way to the lobby. Based on all that they have seen and grown to trust, they decided on faith that the stairs would not suddenly stop in mid air, but that the steps would lead them all the way to their destination. I know you see the parallel. As we journey to each new landing in the staircase, a bit more is revealed to us. We have not seen, nor planned the whole journey, but we are intently listening as we take each step and we are consistently and pleasantly surprised as we turn each corner on the landing and see a small peek at what lies just ahead of us. And we believe with certainty that God created our path and will be present with us each step of the way.

We have loved our journey and desire to serve as a resource to others. We would like to share surveys, documents, strategies and approaches so that you won't have to recreate the wheel. If you are

called to venture into this place of church-wide discernment, we pray that you will experience more joy and discomfort than you have ever imagined.

Peace to you all,

Michelle Mock, Church Council Chair
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Worship

Bethel UMC

Holy Humor Sunday

At Bethel, the Sunday after Easter is designated “Holy Humor Sunday”. This year, the service began with two acolytes entering the sanctuary. One carried a cross and placed in the appropriate stand. The other lit the candles on the altar. After a brief pause, the candles were extinguished; the cross was removed; and the acolytes left the sanctuary. Then, the Associate Pastor offered the Dismissal Prayer. The theme for the day was taken from Acts 17:6: “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here too.” Thus, the entire worship service was backwards (upside down).

The concept for Holy Humor Sunday is promoted by the Fellowship of Merry Christians through their “Joy Full Noise Letter”.

Christian Theology and Tradition: A time of humor was a tradition in the early church – particularly, within the orthodox tradition. For the week following Easter Sunday, church members played practical jokes on one another. The use of water was prominent. The Clergy encouraged this behavior expressing the belief that God had played a trick on Satan. Satan knew he had won over Jesus at the cross. The demonic celebration ended on Sunday when God raised Jesus from the dead. A period of joy was appropriate.

Pastoral: Laughter is beneficial for health. Norman Cousins, in his book “Anatomy of an Illness” describes how he cured himself with humor. His doctor had no solution to cure his illness. Cousins did research; then checked himself into a motel room. He injected himself with large amounts of vitamin C (with medical assistance); read joke books; and watched old Marx Brothers movies. He laughed himself to health.

There have been scientific studies confirming that laughter does have positive effects on physiology. Laughter reduces pain; strengthens immune function; decreases stress. Laughter is very good medicine.

At Bethel, we permit ourselves to laugh. Once a year, on the Sunday after Easter, we devote a service to “Holy Humor”. We have had clowns lead worship; sung humorous songs; told jokes. The congregation participates in worship.

Fred Parish

Messiah UMC

Save Your Sundays in September

In 2009 Messiah took on a new approach to get our congregation connected with the many Missions and Ministries that we have to offer at Messiah. We incorporated many of our old practices into our new theme of “Save Your Sundays in September” but presented them in a hands on, experiential setting so that members who were interested could get a feel for the ministry and even participate or get a “taste” of what that ministry does before having to commit.

For three Sundays in September (13th, 20th, & 27th) we took on the following:

Gathering Day (our annual messiah Day Picnic), **Exploring Day** (Taste of Messiah) and **Connecting Day** (time to Connect/Commit). This was preceded for three weeks with announcements online, in the Messiah Messenger newsletter, and in our weekly bulletins to “Save Your Sundays in September” as well as internal promotion through small groups and committee meetings.

Gathering Day – September 13th

This was simply taking our 30 year old tradition of the Messiah Day block party and repositioning it as a kick-off gathering for members, friends, and community to celebrate all that the lord has blessed on Messiah and start building momentum and excitement for our “Taste of Messiah Day” the following Sunday. There were plenty of activities for families and children. We served over 450 hamburger and hot dogs and could have served another 100 or so. Easily a record for attendance.

Taste of Messiah Day – September 20th

The many ministries of Messiah were invited to have a display featuring their activities and focus as well as hands on capability to roll up your sleeves and help with a current project right then and there. Each ministry also provided snacks or food items so that congregations members could get a “taste” of that particular ministry. There were 25 ministries present and there was significant cross-over from the previous week with attendance estimated at 350-400. Many folks were so moved as to go ahead and commit to their ministry of choice after having a taste of what that ministry really does.

Connecting Day – September 27th

This day actually serves two purposes; (1) an opportunity for those who have already experienced Gathering Day and Exploring Day to step forward and commit to the ministry (or ministries!) that they really connected with and (2) an opportunity for those members who may have been out of town to see it for themselves and hopefully find that connection too.

Throughout each of these events there was a collective effort to introduce our Ministry Connection Team as well as using this time to unveil our new “Welcome / Connection Center”. Our Clown Ministry was very active and also acted as an extension of both.

Bottom line is that everyone needs that sense of belonging and needs a greater meaning and purpose. Save Your Sundays in September was a great vehicle to allow our congregation to do just that and was a

great example of how the body of Christ, at its best, comes together. We can do this everyday if we simply listen, obey, and act.

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St. John's UMC

Growing in Faith at St. John's

The Challenge at St. John's

- Attendance at our two Sunday Worship Services had decreased over the past several years
 - Average 140 at 9:30 AM and only 30 at 11:00 AM
- Number of adults participating in Sunday School classes had not changed in years and represented a very small percent of congregation
- Children's Sunday School numbers were starting to decrease
- Young adults ministry was nonexistent

PSPR Recommendation to Pastor Burrough (18 May 2009)

- St. John's should hold one Worship Service on Sundays, preceded by a single Sunday School time for both adults and children.
- The Church Council should establish a formal working group to plan and implement the transition to this new format.
- The working group should establish:
 1. Specific Worship and Sunday School times;
 2. The Sunday School curriculum that will best promote and foster the spiritual growth of our congregation;
 3. A schedule laying out a planning, implementation and roll out plan that will best meet the needs of the church, and;
 4. A communications plan that will inform all members of the congregation on changes and related schedule.
- All efforts should be made to accomplish this transition over a three month period, with a target implementation date of September 2009

Actions Taken in Summer 2009

- Formed a Working Group of key church staff and leadership to plan and implement changes
- Established a single worship service at a new time
- Introduced a new "Growing in Faith" Sunday School curriculum
 - Faith Inkubators Program for Children and Parents
 - 3 new classes added for adults and young adults
- Implemented a significant communications program to inform all members of congregation

“Growing in Faith” Curriculum

Class/Topic	Target	Teacher(s)	Curriculum
Preschool	3 – 5 Year Olds	Kay Donald	Rock Solid Preschool
Elementary	Grades 1 – 5	Judy Gianini	Faith Inkubators
Middle School	Grades 6 – 8	Brenda Romenius and J.R. Stratton	Faith Inkubators
Senior High	Grades 9 – 12	Mike Jennings	Faith Inkubators
Young Adults	College Age Adults	Jean Summers	Misc.
Parents	Parents of Children Grades 1 – 12	Rae Winstead	Parenting 101 – Faith Inkubators
Seekers	Those Asking Basic Faith Questions	Allen Lovell	Beginnings
Maturing Faith	All Adults Seeking to Grow Deeper in Their Faith Journey	Rusty Grimsley Suzanne Dorick Bob Winstead	Misc. Misc. Genesis: First Book in <i>Journey Through the Bible Series</i>

Results to Date

- We are three weeks into our new format and are encouraged so far:
 - Attendance in Worship Service is steady (we haven't scared anyone away!)
 - Number of Sunday School teachers has increased considerably
 - Attendance in adult Sunday School has grown significantly
 - Positive interest in *Faith Inkubators* from children and parents
- Good Results to Date – We Are Optimistic!!

Trinity UMC (Alexandria)**A Story from the Road**

Sharing one's faith story, or doing a "testimonial" can be very uncomfortable or even scary for most United Methodists. We may feel that we're not a "spiritual expert or that response to god's grace and how our local congregation is helping with our journey of discipleship can be of great encouragement to those around us.

Over the past several months our congregation has offered an occasional Story from the Road, a time for a lay person to stand during worship and talk for five minutes or so about what his or her faith means and how Trinity is helping to nurture spiritual growth and outward service. There have been very moving accounts of finding authentic community, discovering deeper meaning in life, or persevering through times of loss or challenge. These testimonials are helping us name how God's grace is at work among us, encouraging us to find ways to tell others how we are being changed through our relationship with Jesus.