



The Central Connection

MESSAGES & OPPORTUNITIES FROM CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH TO YOU!

August 2009

DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE SCRIPTURE VERSE OR VERSES?

This might be a meaningful family exercise for the summer—to read a book of the New Testament and share with each other which verse is most meaningful and why. I suggest this because when life gets challenging, these verses can encourage and sustain us. Familiar passages can connect us with God, calm our hearts, and direct our lives.

Although many of us have been in church for years, we may not know our Bibles. Not just memorizing chapter and verse, but memorizing and understanding key Scripture passages that remind us of God's promises.

Familiar passages can connect us with God,
calm our hearts, and direct our lives.

Too often as I prepare a funeral service for someone, the family doesn't know the deceased favorite Scripture passages. Or when I prepare for a wedding, the couple doesn't know Bible passages that would be relevant, nor can they name or find 1 Corinthians 13. When young adults go off to college, do they have Scripture verses memorized to remind them of God's love for them? When going through a family crisis, which words from God will sustain you?

On Sunday morning, as Scriptures are read, we respond, "This is the word of the Lord—Thanks be to God." If it's really a word from God, why aren't we more interested in reading and understanding what God is saying to us?

One reason people give for not reading the Bible is that they don't have enough time or they don't

understand.

Summer can be a good time to include regular reading of Scripture, and discussing it as a family. If you don't understand something, pray

about it and ask God to send his interpreter, the Holy Spirit. Or purchase a one-volume commentary. Or come discuss your questions with the pastor. Or form a neighborhood Bible study using some reliable resources. Put scripture passages in conspicuous places where you can be reminded every day.

If you do have a favorite Scripture verse or verses, please write them down and share them with me—we will publish them in a future edition of the church newsletter to be an encouragement to others.

One of my favorites is, "My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19

This is the word of the Lord—thanks be to God.

Pastor Stephanie

If you do have a favorite Scripture verse or verses, please write them down and share them with me—we will publish them in a future edition of the church newsletter to be an encouragement to others.





NEW ASSISTANT TO THE PASTOR

The Staff Parish-Relations Committee is excited to announce that the new Assistant to the Pastor is Daniel Purdom. His start date is August 6. Dan is currently attending Eastern Mennonite Seminary in preparation for ordained ministry. He has a strong background in Christian Education, including both youth and adult education. His most recent employment has been with Liberty Point Healthcare as a teacher. However, he left that position last year to pursue his Masters Degree in Divinity.

Dan and his wife, Amy, live in Weyers Cave with their two sons, Sam and Kirby. Sam is 17 and is entering Virginia Tech in August. Kirby is 14 and a 9th grader at Ft. Defiance High School.

Please welcome Dan and his family on their first Sunday, August 9, as we look forward to our fruitful and faithful ministry together.

—Anita Jackson, Chairperson
Staff-Parish Relations Committee

BEGINNING IN SEPT. – 2 CLASSES

“EXPERIENCING GOD”

This is a daily experiential study that will help participants develop a God-centered way of life. The workbook covers 12 weeks and will help you come to know God intimately, to recognize His voice, and to understand His will for your life. Sign up in the gathering area; this class will be taught by Pastor Stephanie.

“PATHWAY TO RENEWAL”

This is a book that helps congregations pray and plan their way to renewal with practical steps. The Strategic Planning Committee will be going through this book together and invites other interested members of the congregation to join them. This book has six chapters, but discussion and response may take us longer than six weeks! Sign up in the gathering area; this class will be led by various members of the Strategic Planning Committee.

The Central Connection is the monthly newsletter of Central United Methodist Church, Lewis and Beverley Streets, Staunton, VA.

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The Central Connection Editor: Agnes Campbell

IN MINISTRY

The Mission of Central UMC is to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

- Resident Bishop Charlene Payne Kammerer
- District Superintendent Kathleen Overby Webster
- Pastor Stephanie M. Sault
- Retired Missionary Professor Hunter P. Mabry
- Professor MBC Kenneth A. Beals
- Minister of Music/Organist Sherry von Oeyen
- Church Secretary Agnes Campbell
- Custodian Janet Nuckoles

STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATE

It has been an honor to serve God and the Central UMC congregation as Chairperson of the Strategic Planning Team for the last two years. I am grateful for the support I have received, especially from the members of the team. Together we have faithfully worked to discern God's will for Central. At times our efforts have felt like a journey across a desert. Much of the time has been spent wandering with no clear direction. But then we would arrive at an oasis where God would open our eyes to the possibilities he has in store for us. I'd like to share just a few of the important insights we have gained through our work. First, and maybe most importantly, we are convinced that God has a plan for Central to thrive right here in downtown Staunton. We're to be an active and vibrant leader in the community.

In understanding that we are to remain here, God has also convicted us of having turned too much of our energy and attention inward. We have become too concerned with the needs of the church and not enough with the great needs of the surrounding community. The difficult economic times we're experiencing have made all too clear the physical needs of those around us. But more important than that are the spiritual needs of the community. We are surrounded by people who need to know the love of Christ. This is clearly our mission here.

Before we can more actively engage the community though, God has placed a clear challenge before us—to renew our own hearts. We must recapture the burning passion of our Christian faith. Our service to God isn't a Sunday morning activity and it's not the work of just a few. The entire

congregation must burn with the desire of the Apostles, John Wesley, and Sampson Eagon.

Our most recent work has been focused on distilling what we have discerned into a draft mission statement for Central:

*Central UMC is a vital congregation
of diverse people...
Centered in faithful worship of God...
Growing as disciples of Jesus Christ...
Moving out in compassionate service to others,
in the power of the Holy Spirit.*



While this mission statement needs to be processed and owned by the congregation, we believe that it is the essence of who we are called to be as a people of God. We should be able to connect most of our activities to one of the elements of this statement.

As we turn from the work of understanding God's vision and mission for Central, the Strategic Planning effort must now transition to translating that vision into more concrete actions. To facilitate this, we will begin a study this September of the book, *Pathway to Renewal*, by Daniel P. Smith and Mary K. Sellon. The book will be used to guide a broad cross section of the

congregation in developing plans for spiritual renewal and community engagement. You'll be hearing much more about this in the coming days, and I would encourage each of you to become active in the process.

There is still much hard work ahead, but move into the future knowing that "with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:26)

God's Blessings to All, Steve Huffer



**GUESS WHO'S
COMING TO
THE TABLE**



At our June 5 meeting, the UMW Executive Committee decided to have someone in charge of devotions for meetings such as the Executive Committee, Unit Meetings, and other special events. Suzanne Peeler and Martha Bushman favored our request, and for that we are so grateful. They will help lead our devotions alternately.

The job description for UMW Mission Coordinator for Spiritual Growth indicates that..."she shall coordinate opportunities for spiritual and theological development related to mission. She shall:

- understand and communicate the connection between personal spiritual development and mission as expressed through social and global involvement;
- coordinate and/or promote special times and events for worship, prayer, and meditation such as A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial, ecumenical worship, retreats and devotions at meetings;
- incorporate language and images into worship that are inclusive and affirming to women, people of color and people with disabilities;
- involve women in biblical and theological study, utilizing the annual spiritual growth study, *Response*, *New World Outlook*, the *UMW Program Book*, and the Reading Program;
- provide opportunities for study of theology, starting with the United Methodist *Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task* in the *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* and serve on the Executive Committee and, where they exist, the Committees on Program and Finance."

We are simplifying those responsibilities in our unit, but will not limit our Spiritual Growth Coordinator in her offerings for spiritual development related to mission and for the fulfillment of the UMW PURPOSE.

We look forward to having one big happy family at our Sept. 4 Executive Committee Meeting and again at our Sept. 8 Unit Meeting. See you there!

–Luz de Tablan, President

FALL FESTIVAL:

SATURDAY, SEPT. 26

Pancake Breakfast 8:30–12:00

Silent Auction 8:30–1:00

Bake Sale * * * Door Prizes!

We invite your contributions of Items for this special fund raiser. Some suggestions include:

- New / Like New
 - Household Items, small appliances
 - Decor–general & seasonal
 - Tools–home, auto, garden
 - Theme Baskets
 - Gift items, jewelry
- Gift Certificates for Services, Meals
 - Restaurant, fast food, pizza, coffee
 - Oil change, car wash, auto parts store
 - Beauty salon, massage, facial, manicure
 - Pet grooming, boarding, sitting
 - Yard work, house work
 - Entertainment–concerts, sports events, Black Friars
- Craft Items – all kinds
 - Knit, Crochet, Sew
 - Art
 - Jewelry, beading
 - Woodworking
 - Other medium

This new fund raising venture for Central is being sponsored by the Finance Committee. Please feel free to contact the Church Office with any questions. (We have sufficient storage space and can accept items as you make or “discover” them.)

MUSIC NOTES

There's a song in *The Faith We Sing* hymnal that is very familiar—"I Have Decided to Follow Jesus." It is noted that the words and music are anonymous, yet "Assam" is given as the tune name. Coincidentally, while looking through a book of hymn stories I came across this one, which was evidently first heard in the United States in the 1950's.



Man from Garo tribe

"Assam" is actually the name of one of the 21 states of India. It's in northeast India, partly bordering the Himalayan Mountain range. About two-thirds of the 15 million Assamese are Hindus and about a fourth are Muslims. However, many of the hill tribes have been converted to Christianity by missionaries.

It seems that "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus" originated with the Garo tribe. Becoming a Christian is a very significant decision for the Garos. It may mean separation from family or community or even the loss of a job. It's not a simple matter, but very important. In 1960 there was a Baptist minister from Assam at the Baptist World Alliance Meeting in Rio de Janeiro. This song was sung and the minister, Longri Ao, recognized it. He confirmed that the song was used with new believers as a statement of their decision to accept Christ and to encourage them in their determination to follow Christ so that there will be "no turning back."

From Luke 9:57-62:

As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you where you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home."

Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

I hope by remembering this simple song we can be strong enough to continue to follow Jesus in all that we do and share his love with others.

Sherry von Oeyen, Minister of Music

(Information from *Songs of Glory* by William J. Reynolds)



from the
*Cohasset/Appalachia
Service Project,
Cohasset, Massachusetts*

Dear Friends,

Just a note and a small token (check) to express our gratitude for your generosity in extending to our group the opportunity to stay overnight in our travel south to our work project in Appalachia.

It was another banner year for the 161 volunteers who were able to spend a week working on 27 homes of needy folks in Kentucky, Virginia, and West Virginia. Your church has become a powerful link in what has become known as the "Cohasset-Appalachia Miracle."

Thanks again for a wonderful overnight!

Gary Ritts, Project Coordinator

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is a highly prized mission project for the Cohasset high school students who participate. They and their parents must sign a year-long commitment and participate in fund raisers and training sessions before the trip. The standards are high, and evidently the teens rise to the occasion. (Check out their website: www.cohassetasp.org)

Central UMC is blessed to be a small part of this project—by providing sleeping space and restrooms for a small group of the volunteers for one night of their trip. (They bring sleeping bags.) So, thank you to the congregation of Central for your contribution to this special mission project; and thanks to Jim Clemmer for meeting the group and helping them get settled in for the night!

2009 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

REPORT, Part 1

By Esther Galima Mabry,
Central UMC Delegate to Annual Conference

It was a privilege to represent Central Church at the Annual Conference this year and inspiring to hear some of the new things happening in our conference.

The conference theme was LET'S GET GROWING: DIVERSE PEOPLE. The planning committee put together an excellent program that made conferencing a wonderful offering to God. The selection of worship materials, leaders, musicians, preachers, Bible study leader, visitors, and video clip reports was done with sensitivity and grace that hopefully made people called United Methodist proud of who they are and whose they are.

The conference was ushered in by the service of remembrance for those who "have entered the Church Triumphant," a service to honor those who have labored in the Lord's vineyard: clergy and clergy spouses, diaconal ministers, spouses of deceased clergy, and lay members of the conference. I have noticed that during the past few years the preacher for this service is an upcoming fairly young clergy person who has an innovative and successful ministry. The preacher, Dr. Sherry Daniels, is fairly new in the Virginia Conference but has brought in a significant leadership in her Norfolk church and has started a non-profit corporation to train urban church leaders to equip them in church growth and revitalization. In her sermon based on the story of the valley of dry bones in the book of Ezekiel, Dr. Daniels stated that finding more diversity in church is a great challenge, but encouraged us to wait and see how God works. The laity session on Monday morning was a very challenging session led by Ms. Shirley Cauffman, the Conference Lay Leader, and Rev. Tom Berlin, who gave a very compelling testimony about surviving a car accident. That was twenty years ago, but it gave him a very gripping vision of the world, of a different world and how it should be. He said, "We need to see things that have grown dull to our eyes" and do something about it. He further said that that has been this way since Acts 1. Lay members should protest the declining membership of the church and worship participation. He asked, "When are we going to be offended by what offends Christ? I think Christ is offended by poverty and injustice. We need laity-generated programs to reach those in our neighborhood, initiate partnership with others and fight poverty here and abroad. We are United Methodists. What are we waiting for?"

When are we going to be offended by what offends Christ? I think Christ is offended by poverty and injustice... We are United Methodists. What are we waiting for?

—Rev. Tom Berlin



The 2009 Virginia Annual Conference Session was held June 14-17 at the Scope in Norfolk, Va.

The 2009 Virginia Annual Conference logo reflects the third phrase of the conference challenge and flows from the original 2007 logo created by the conference communications staff. The Virginia Conference challenge is "Let's get growing! More people, more young people, more diverse people. All for Jesus!" The 2009 logo was created by Linda Rhodes, conference Director of Communications. It features the word "welcome" in four languages: English, Korean, Spanish and Cherokee.

Dr. Anne Burkholder led the Bible Study and was also the guest speaker at the Laity Banquet. She served churches in Florida and North Carolina, and is now the Associate Dean of Methodist Studies at the Candler School of Theology in Atlanta. I was touched by the way she used familiar stories to remind us that the apostles were given visions to reach to diverse people early in the life of the growing community of Christians. First, the story of Annaeas healing the blind Saul (later renamed Paul) against his will but with the urging of the Lord was, I believe, God's way of using people most unlikely to be acceptable to be used as an instrument in God's plan. (Acts 9). Saul, a Jew, well versed in Jewish law, especially in the laws of purity and pollution in social interaction, was chosen by God to bring God's name among the Gentiles. This, in spite of his previous persecution of Christians? And equally surprising story is that of Peter having had a vision of various living animals served in front of him and asked to eat them. While puzzling what this meant, people sent by Cornelius, a centurion, arrived to see him. Although Peter was reminded the Jews and Gentiles do not associate with each other, he followed as he was told and went to see Cornelius. This story reminds us once more of the great value in the outreach for diverse people. To Peter's reaction to the vision God told him, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." (Acts 10:15b) Not only was Cornelius converted; but Peter, now called to go preach to the Gentiles, stated, "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. (Acts 10:34-35) Later when the people who listened to him believed and started to speak in tongues like that of Pentecost, Peter said, "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"

(Watch for Part 2 in the September *Central Connection*.)



SHOES FOR KENYA = HOMES FOR WIDOWS

Many African women toil all their lives on land that they do not own, to produce what they do not control. Then, at the end of the marriage, through divorce or death, they can be sent away empty-handed. Well of Hope is out to help teach the poor widows how to be prepared in the case of such eventualities.

One of the widows' greatest needs is 'hope'. In an effort, to help give them hope and feel a sense of stability, Well of Hope International is trying to subdivide a plot of ground to give 1/8 acre to a widow and her family to build a small home on to call her own. This relieves them of the fear of being 'run off' of their property after losing their husband, as quite often happens. A widow in Kenya has no rights once her husband is gone and is quite often is run out of her home and property, by her husband's living relatives.

(Other on-going plans include helping promote education by supporting orphans and children of needy widows. Many of these have dropped out of school, due to a lack of funds, especially children of bed-ridden widows who have already succumbed to AIDS complications.)

The Well of Hope America's Shoes for Kenya program collects used and new shoes, then ships them to Kenya to sell. The funds are used to buy land to help settle the homeless widows.

Last year Central's congregation donated many dozens of pairs of shoes, which were added to the shipping container. When sold, the shoes from that container netted enough money to buy 2 acres of land in Kiserian which will provide housing for the first batch of 28 widows. (They hope to help at least 200 widows.) The next stage of construction will be the community center which will consist of: a clinic, a meeting hall for the widows, a kitchen, and some dormitories.

So, please bring shoes, all kinds of shoes—used, gently used, even new! The shoes we no longer wear can give hope to widows and orphans of Kenya!

A collection box will be available in the South Narthex. For more information, please contact the Church Secretary.





Central United Methodist Church

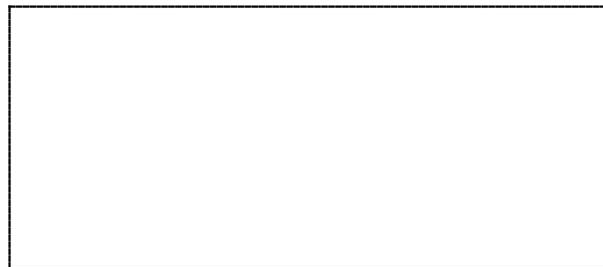
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August
2009

Return Service Requested



ANNUAL CHURCH PICNIC

SATURDAY, AUG. 8

1:00—5:00

Please bring:

- your favorite picnic foods
- lawn chair(s)
- a friend or two



(Tableware, drinks, and fried chicken will be provided.)

A copy of the directions to the Hamrick Camp may be picked up in the Gathering Area; or you may contact the Church Office 886-3441.