



THE STAUNTON DISTRICT VOICE

"We envision churches where all God's people are welcomed at table, nurtured and transformed to be Christ to others in the world."

(Virginia Conference Vision Statement)

P. O. Box 1048, Fishersville, VA 22939; Phone: 932-1055

December 2003

Issue 12



Dates To Remember

**December 21 – January 2
District Office will be closed**

**January 5-8
Ministers' Convocation
VUMAC**

**January 10 at 9:30 a.m.
District Council on Ministries
Mint Spring UMC**

**January 15
Cut Off Date For Clergy and Church Profiles**

**January 24 9:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
Choir Workshop
Greenville UMC**

marvelous, surprising truth, John wrote, in words many of us can recite from our hearts, **"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us"** (John 1:14a, Revised Standard Version).

Imagine then, my surprise when I read this same passage in *The Message*, the ancient scriptures in everyday language: **"The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood."** There can be no sense now of missing the meaning through the lovely poetry, no sense that John is talking about something somewhere other than the here and now. I remember learning in seminary that the original language literally means, "pitched his tent," but that really seemed no more helpful than the ancient "dwelt," the image that went through my mind was not the glory of God present here, but of some camping trip with tent flaps blowing in the gusts. But now to hear this in my language, "moved into the neighborhood," is to hear and see and experience this mystery of God present in a whole new way. This is about God moving in, settling down, and changing the look of everything outside my door, my window. And it makes me curious about my neighbors now in a completely new way, where is God in this neighborhood, who shows me the face of God present in Christ in their words and actions and deed and needs? And the reality is it's not just my neighborhood but also yours, yours where people are moving in at a rapid rate changing bucolic country to new suburbia, yours where declining population mirrors loss of jobs and changes future dreams, yours where neighbors come from far away and bring different language and culture and food. For all of us, if God is moving into the neighborhood what shall we do to greet and meet and welcome and nurture God present with us in this place and time? How shall we be the Church, the Body of Christ, the Incarnate One, to a world where God is in the neighborhood?

Journeying with you in the grace of Christ,
Kathleen

From The District Superintendent:

Dear co-workers in ministry,

The boxes, so recently stacked away after moving, are out again. Their contents spill onto the floor, lights and crèches, candles and Santas, rocking horses and ribbons and musical globes.

Each item reminds us of previous homes and appointments, of people who have touched our lives in friendship and family relationship. Reminders of childhood and college, prayer groups, and Bible studies are all there. Now in this new space each piece needs to find its own place for these seasons. Despite the effort and the disruption to rather recently created order (finally all the pictures are hung and the boxes unpacked), I find a need in myself to unpack these decorations as a part of my December-January journey. These myriad things do help me set aside this sacred time of advent and incarnation and epiphany and in this new neighborhood to hear clearly the ancient story of birth and mystery, angel song and good news.

This "stuff" of Christmas, the dishes and gifts and scents, reminds me in a small way that God is present with us, incarnate among us. That the awesome and glorious God of creation has indeed taken on the form and shape and look and smell of human beings and lived among us eating good food, visiting friends, breaking bread, and bringing health and wholeness to body, mind, and spirit. To tell this



Our Deepest Sympathy Is Extended To: Mrs. Reba Edwards and her family on the death of her husband Rev. Howard Edwards. Rev. Edwards was a retired clergy on our District.

**To: The Wilson Family on the death of Mrs. Mimi Wilson who was the widow of Rev. Robert Wilson.
To: The Compton Family on the death of Mrs. Ann Compton who was the widow of Rev. Norman Compton.
To: Mary Creech and her family on the death of her daughter, Kristle Hodnett.**



From The District Program

Director:

During this time of year of reflection, hope and love, take time out of the hustle and bustle of your busy life to reflect, to hope and to love. Take time to reflect on the year passed and look at how God has worked in your life. Reflect on years passed, on those favorite moments of the Christmas season. Was it the warmth of the love of family and friends that gather during the holidays, or was it the hope of that present you just had to have—that wonderful expectation of what was to come? Isn't Christmas that awesome time when we feel the love and hope that must have been there that very night that Christ was born? As we hurry and scurry around to make things just right and look hard for the perfect gift to give. Let us remember God's most perfect gift of love, His Son, Jesus Christ. The gift He gave us all on that first Christmas night; and all we have to do to receive that gift is to ask God into our hearts. Let us celebrate Christmas with the sharing of the love God has so generously given us. Let us take time to share that love with one another. Give an extra smile, a hug, a simple touch, or share a listening hear. These gifts don't cost anything but a little time. Go to a hospital or nursing home and hold someone's hand and listen to them. The time you give may be the greatest gift you give all Christmas. Let us look forward with hope and anticipation of what God has in store for us in our faith journeys in the coming year.

The District Council on Ministries is designating 2004 to be a year of prayer and reflection. We will be meeting in cluster groups throughout the district starting sometime in January or February for a time of prayer and reflection. To seek God for a new vision of who we are, whose we are and why we are. We would like not only for laity and clergy cluster groups to meet together for prayer but we would also like to encourage church prayer groups to pray for a new vision for the district that we might be able to minister more effectively to the churches in the Staunton District.

Comfort, Comfort my people, says your God. Isaiah 40:1

May your Christmas be blessed with family and friends as God's Love surrounds you. Look forward to the New Year with hope and anticipation as God leads you in your journey of life.

Martha

Relive Christmas at Camp Overlook December 19 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

The Friday before Christmas, we turn back the clocks of time and return to that holy night of 2000 years ago. Bring your family or church group in your own caravan, report for the census at Overlook's Bethlehem Census Center, and become a shepherd /participant as the story of God coming into our world unfolds before your very eyes. Dress warmly and with protective footwear; your experience will keep you outside about 30 minutes. Shepherds' apparel and staffs are provided! No fees or



offerings will be received. Join the other shepherds, angels, creatures and wise men! Come let us adore Him!



St. John's UMC (Staunton) invites the community to join us in our **"Times of Refreshing"** Series when we will have *National known Author and Gifted Speaker, Ruth Graham* as our guest speaker. The

service will be at **St. John's UMC on Wednesday Evening, December 10th, 2003 at 7:30 p.m.** The church is located at 1716 North Augusta Street, Staunton at the Corner of Fallon Street and Augusta on North Business Route # 11. A light reception will follow the service in our Social Hall where you can meet and talk with Ms. Graham, and view and buy any of her books or tapes, which she will autograph for you. A children's nursery will be available. This is free to all, so no love offerings will be received. For further information or directions, you can call our church office Monday through Thursdays between 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.



Ministers' Convocation 2004

for all clergy and diaconal ministers

Be sure to register now for the Ministers' Convocation, January 5-8. Don't fail to get to Blackstone for a refreshing time of fellowship and theological reflection with our dynamic ecumenical leadership! Our faculty will include: Bruce Birch - Dean of Wesley Seminary; John Kinney - Dean of Virginia-Union Seminary in Richmond, Louis Weeks - President of Union-PSCE, Erv Stutzman - Dean of Eastern Mennonite Seminary.

The theme for the Convocation is "Forming Leaders for the 21st Century: The Culture of the Called". These leaders will enable us to explore and dialogue about the need and vision for clergy leadership including the heritage, present challenges and formation of those whom Christ has called.

Also, you won't want to miss our Bible study this year! Created by the Rev. Bass Mitchell (Hot Springs - Staunton) a team of newer conference clergy will facilitate interactive, small group reflections on hearing and heading God's call. If you haven't yet encountered them through your district or other gatherings, you will enjoy their fresh presence! Come participate with them as they lead these small groups each morning: Charles Bates - Leemont, Eastern Shore; Amanda Garber - Warwick Memorial, Peninsula; Morris Fleischer - Pleasant Grove, Danville; Kay Hwang - Korean UMC of Greater Washington, Arlington; Samantha Jesse - Centreville, Arlington; Jason Michelli - St. John's (Buena Vista), Staunton; Derrick Parson - JMU Wesley Foundation, Harrisonburg; Christy Haga Turner - Bon Air, Richmond

I don't want to miss this! How do I register? Visit the Virginia Conference Web site at <http://www.vaumc.org/events.htm> and click on the event. Download the brochure and mail in the registration slip to VUMAC in Blackstone. Or call Phyllis Crow in the Conference Office of Ministerial Services for more information at 1-800-768-6040, ext. 126 or 804-521-1126.



Criminal Justice and Mercy Ministries Report:

Did you know that the United States holds the dubious distinction of having a larger incarcerated population than any other country in the world, with over two million persons behind bars? Although the U.S. has only five percent of the world's population, it holds twenty-five percent of the world's prisoners. What are our churches doing to minister to this enormous national problem?

A survey made earlier this year indicates that at certain levels a goodly amount of Criminal Justice and Mercy Ministries (CJAMM) work has been done during the past three years on the Staunton District. For example, 69 percent of those responding reported having visited someone in jail or prison, around 40 percent had provided the special Bibles needed in jails and prisons, written or sent birthday cards to inmates, and/or provided Christmas gifts for children of incarcerated parents, and 11 percent had provided 'camperships' of \$275.00 to enable children of incarcerated parents to attend "All God's Children Camp."

Also, the majority (61 percent) indicated they had plans to continue work in these areas during this conference year, about one-third (36 percent) expressed interest in having someone come to their church to talk about criminal justice ministries/restorative justice, and one-fourth (25 percent) indicated an interest in sending someone from their church for training in these areas.

Some of these activities involved lay members, such as sending cards, providing Bibles, and preparing Christmas gifts for children of incarcerated parents. Many of the visits to jails and prisons were by pastors, but several lay members also made such visits.

The support provided was in some cases primarily to help with work done by others, such as Camp Overlook or Kingsway Prison & Family Outreach. However, quite a few jail and prison contacts were with relatives of church members, and some reported, "We have members that are incarcerated that we must minister to." Only a few indicated, "nothing has been done in this (CJAMM) area."

An important question is, to what extent is the above information representative of the entire Staunton District? Let us look at how the survey was conducted. A survey form was sent to all pastors, and three follow up contacts were made. Responses gradually came in over a period of four months. Thirty-seven out of sixty churches/charges on the District replied, providing a sixty-two percent response rate. On the basis of other information, it appears that while twenty-three churches did not respond at least a few of these have conducted some CJAMM activities. At the same time, judging by the trend of replies, with those responding late reporting fewer CJAMM activities, it appears likely that the majority of those who did not reply had no CJAMM activities to report. If this is true, then the above figures for the responding churches are somewhat higher than would be the case for all churches in the District.

Even so, it is gratifying to learn that a good number of churches on the District have undertaken one or more

CJAMM activities. At the same time, their reports were based on what had been done during the previous three years, some of these did not have plans for such involvements during this conference year, and some churches on the District have not undertaken any CJAMM activities.

With the continued growth in the number of persons in jails and prisons in our society, with some of these being church members, relatives of church members, and persons from communities in which we live, there is clearly a need for expanding the criminal justice and mercy ministries of our churches. As we move into 2004, we hope that more of our churches will promote such ministries, and that even wider range of CJAMM activities will be undertaken. Two events are already planned to help equip clergy and laity for this. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find announcements about a gathering in January for clergy who have engaged in criminal justice ministries, and a District Death Penalty Workshop in March as a follow up to the Conference workshop held in October. Stay tuned for more information!

– Hunter Mabry, District Coordinator, CJAMM

Criminal Justice and Mercy Ministries Event – January 12th

As indicated above in this newsletter, information gathered earlier this year indicates that a good number of churches on the Staunton District have undertaken some form of Criminal Justice and Mercy Ministries (CJAMM), or have an interest in developing such ministries.

Pastors from churches already engaged in criminal justice ministries, or interested in becoming involved in such ministries, are invited to come for a CJAMM meeting on January 12th, 10:00 am -12:00 noon, at Fishersville United Methodist Church, for a time of sharing and learning from each, discovering new resources, networking, and finding ways to grow and strengthen such ministries.



District Death Penalty Workshop – March 13th

As Virginia continues to execute both adult and juvenile offenders, and is second only to Texas in the number of such executions, it is important that United Methodists be clear in their witness on this issue.

To help meet this need, a Staunton District Death Penalty Workshop will be conducted on Saturday, March 13th, 2004. The workshop will aim toward helping clergy and laity participants clarify their thinking on the death penalty, and equipping participants to help others in their churches in dealing with this issue. One important resource will be Abingdon's *Capital Punishment: A Faith-Based Study*. The planning committee is working out details such as place, schedule and related matters. Reserve the date now, and watch for more information!

***The giver makes the gift precious.**

*****Evaluation Material Video** –We have the training video/CD that goes with the SPPR material “Annual Evaluation” to be used in the spring. You may borrow it from the District Office or we can order a copy for you. Please contact the District Office to make your request.



+Evangelism-Emerging Ministries+

I want to express my gratitude to all who came out to the District Conference and the Leadership Training Event. We had good attendance with most churches represented.

We have prayed about and examined how we can be about our task of making Disciples both through using the tried and true methods we are familiar with, (some call this ‘in the box’) and the Nex+Gen ministries (‘out of the box’) using what some call “unconventional” evangelism. Going to the local strip Mall or larger Shopping Mall, renting space, involved in caring ministries, not as a “brand name” denomination but simply being our Christ selves, taking risk, being vulnerable, all ages sharing God’s love in new and different ways 24/7.

And, yet, this is nothing new. Jesus went about the towns and cities, the river shores, in the market places taking the God News in a quite different manner from the Scribes and Pharisees. “And the common people heard Him gladly.”

What about the Apostles? It says over Acts that these men and women, often facing persecution, but being fill with the Holy Spirit, turned the world upside down. And how was this accomplished? “The people took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.” (4:13)

What about John Wesley? “I look upon all the world as my parish.” He boldly stated. And that “world” was not confined to the four walls of a church building or just to the established clergy. Having a burden for lost souls he went so far as to state, “Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergy or lay, such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth.”

Now, what about us? It’s our turn. I pray we will be worthy of the high calling and the task before us—all over the Staunton District. May we respond in such a way that all on the street, in the church, in the mall will say about us, “They have been with Jesus and that’s where I want to be too.”

--Richard C. Benninghove

The Xmas of Christmas

Someone has written that people use Xmas and it means Xhaustion, Xcuses, Xchanges, Xcesses, Xtravangances, Xasperations, Xhibitions and worldly Xcitement.

How much better to make Christ the very center of our Christmas observances and know joy, happiness sharing and contentment in him. Keep Christ in Christmas!

*Focus on Christ
this Season*



Project Transformation Wants You!

Are You Ready to Be Transformed?



Project Transformation is a new outreach program of the Wesley Foundation at the University of Virginia, and we want you to be a part of it! Project Transformation is an 8-week Monday-Thursday day camp for children in first through fifth grades, hosted by churches in Charlottesville and Waynesboro, and operated by college interns. Interns provide a full slate of activities, beginning each morning with a time of singing, called Harambee (Swahili for “coming together”), followed by Bible lessons and worship, and an hour of reading with volunteer tutors. Next there are crafts projects, recreation, lunch, and a time of afternoon enrichment when church and community volunteers introduce children to their passions and professions. This summer we had visits from firefighters, police officers, a fiddler, a potter, a hula dancer, an artist, a storyteller, an orthopedist, a biologist and more. Part vacation Bible school and part academic enrichment, Project Transformation focuses on reading skills and community involvement, giving children exposure to a variety of experiences and people within a Christian context.

In 2003, our first summer of operation, we served 47 children, mostly from low-income neighborhoods near the two host churches – Belmont and Friendship Court in Charlottesville and the Hispanic community in Waynesboro. As part of the program, children and their families came together with churches and community volunteers twice during each camp for special Family Fun Nights, gathering for a meal and watching children perform songs and skits they learned during camp and show off some of their artwork.

Project Transformation is designed: 1. to provide children in low-income neighborhoods with a safe, stimulating summer camp experience with a focus on reading and exposure to interested and caring adults. 2. to challenge college students in a hands-on ministry to make connections between faith and action, vocation and career, and to help them envision and consider full-time ministry in the future. 3. to give churches a way to reach out to the communities surrounding them, building relationships that can continue to be developed beyond the summer.

This exciting program depends on local churches and community volunteers and we would love to have your church participate next summer. Our staff is available to meet with your church and talk about ways we can partner together. We also have a Project Transformation video, which gives a good overview of the program.

For more information on how you or your church can be involved, or for an intern application please contact Deborah Lewis at 434-977-6500 or go to our website: www.wesleyuva.org/pt

***The first Christmas was a myrrhy Christmas.**

Remember those
who are less
fortunate



Come and help us DO SOMETHING ABOUT HUNGER in 2004!

Harvest of Hope has had a great 2003. We ended up with 596 participants; they gleaned over 240,000 pounds of produce, which is

our highest Harvest of Hope gleaned year ever! There were 7 weeklong events and 6 weekend events. Thank you to everybody that helped on staff and everyone that participated!

The 2004 Schedule is now complete. It is as follows:

Sr High Week long events: Benton, MO – June 27-July 3, Denton, MD – July 4-10, Wilmington, NC – July 4-10, Eastern Shore, VA – July 11-17, Ashland, VA – July 18-24
***NEW* Jr. high/Middle School Weekend:** Eastern Shore, VA – July 9-11. **Intergenerational Weekend events:** Leesburg, FL – March 12-14, John's Island, SC – July 23-25, Fincastle, VA – Oct. 1-3, *NEW* Dixon, IL – Oct. 1-3, Dahlonega, GA – Oct. 15-17, Fairfield, PA – Oct. 22-24, John's Island, SC – Nov. 5-7. **College and young adult Weekend:** Keezletown, VA – Oct. 1-3. **Phase II** (for Sr. high and college students who have attended a HoH event before): Washington, DC – June 26-July 3.

Everyone should be receiving the schedule in the mail soon. If you do not and you want one or for more information about Harvest of Hope you can reply to this email or call me at 800-333-4597. You can also visit our web site at www.endhunger.org to download an application to attend and information about all of the Society of St. Andrew's programs. Thanks and I hope to see you in 2004!

God Bless,
Shawn Kiger, Harvest of Hope Director
Society of St. Andrew

DISTRICT YOUTH NEWS

(web site: stauntondistrict.tripod.com)

District Youth Christmas Caroling at

A.M.C. – 7:00-8:00 p.m. Wednesday, December 10, 2003. All Staunton District Youth are invited to gather and sing Christmas Carols in the lobby of Augusta Medical Center Hospital, Fishersville, VA. I'll bring the song sheets. Your singing will surely be a blessing to those in the hospital. Hope to see you there!

Voices of Youth Health Kit Challenge – The Voices of Youth have challenged the Staunton District to assemble and donate 9,000 Health Kits for UMCOR to help the needy throughout the country and the world. Challenge your church to help by setting a goal of some number of Kits to provide. (Suggested goal is 1 Kit per church member). Bring the Kit contents loose to the "R & R" January 17, 2004, (do not assemble the Kits), where the Kits will be assembled by the Youth of the District. See next page "R & R" for Kit contents. Staunton District's effort would help to meet the "Voices" overall challenge to the Virginia Conference to assemble and donate 150,000 Kits by the Annual Conference in June 2004.



Staunton District Youth R & R and LOCK-IN - "R & R", 6-10 p.m., Saturday, January 17, 2004 at St. Paul's UMC, Staunton. Fun, Fellowship, Games, Mission Project, Praise & Worship, Music! Cost: \$5
Immediately following the R & R we will move to Skatetown, Staunton.

"Lock-In", 11:00 p.m., Saturday til 6:00 a.m. Sunday morning. Skating, Games, Mission Project, Praise & Worship. Cost: \$5. See next page.

Report on Middle School Retreat – Staunton District Youth from Calvary, Main Street, Jollivue and Greenville joined with over 850 Middle School Youth from throughout the Virginia Conference for a great weekend on November 14-16, 2003 at Eagle Eyrie, Lynchburg. Joe Torrence, the keynote speaker did a great job of effectively sharing the message of Jesus. Fun times with "Super Motts" and awesome praise and worship led by Waterproof Feat" rounded out a wonderful weekend. Over \$6,000 was raised for Youth Service Fund during the weekend.

Acquire The Fire – January 30-31, 2004, Keynote speakers: Ron Luce, Josh McDowell, Lakita Garth. Band: "Kutless." Richmond Coliseum, Richmond, VA. See more details at web site: www.acquirethefire.com.

Staunton District Youth Retreat – Mark your calendar, March 12-14, 2004, Staunton District Youth Retreat. Praise and worship led by Jamie Hudgins and Fish Force throughout the weekend at Camp Overlook. Cost: \$55. Don't miss it? More details next month.

Voices of Youth – Attention High School Students! Sign up now for Voices of Youth 2004 "Mission tour to John and Charles Wesley's home in England. From June 25 – July 18, 2004. For applications contact: Barry Foster, Voices of Youth, Office of the Chaplain, Shenandoah University, 1460 University Drive, Winchester, VA, 22601, 540-545-7237, email: bfoster@su.edu or Gail Brill at gbrill@su.edu.
2003-2004 Staunton District Youth Statement: "Ignite the faith. We are the youth sent here by God to make disciples."

--Steve Joplin.

The Christmas Spirit

When the Christmas spirit springs to life
In the human heart each year,
The world becomes, for a little time,
A haven of love and cheer.

The poor in body are clothed and fed,
And the lonely know once more
The warmth of hearing a welcome knock
On a too-long silent door.

For these few days we remember well
That all humankind is kin,
Bound by the love of the Babe who found
No room in that long-ago inn.

--Virginia Blanck Moore





**Young Adult Missionaries:
Is God calling you?**

The General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) is recruiting young adults for a new class of US-2

missionaries in 2004. US-2 missionaries are young adults ages 20-30 who are trained by the GBGM and then assigned to various placement sites across the United States. Their term of service is two years.

These young missionaries are committed to justice and social change. US-2s have been involved in ministries addressing issues of homelessness, children at risk, illiteracy, substance abuse, racism, domestic violence, poverty, and hunger. US-2 placement sites provide opportunities for mission service, advocacy, and leadership development.

Many US-2 placement sites are related to the United Methodist Church and all work to bring Christ's love and justice to marginalized communities. The US-2 program provides an opportunity for a stronger connection to be made between young adults and mission service at these agencies.

The US-2 program develops leaders with the skills and sensitivities to respond to the challenges of human suffering. Their experiences provide direction for the church in the midst of a broken world.

Applications are available for US-2s and US-2 placement sites from the Young Adult Program Office, Mission Personnel, GBGM. The application deadline for young adults is January 30, 2004. Applications for placement sites are due March 1, 2004.

For more information or to receive an application, please contact Barbara Wheeler, Missionary in Residence for Young Adult Programs at (212) 870-3660 or miryap1@gbgm-umc.org or the Virginia Conference office of Mission at mission@vaumc.org or 9804-521-1144.

***The Staunton District United Methodist Church
P. O. Box 1048
Fishersville, Virginia 22939***

Return Service Requested



*The virgin will be with
child and will give
birth to a son,
and will call him
Immanuel.
Isaiah 7:14*

United Methodist Men's News

Seven men from the Staunton District attended the Virginia Conference Spiritual Retreat at Blackstone. 318 men were registered for the Retreat. It was a spirit filled weekend with Dr. George Morris talking about "What the World Needs Now." The men hosted a Society of Saint Andrews Potato Drop. Staunton District Men contributed 860 pounds of potatoes. \$6400.00 was collected for Heart Haven and Camp Rainbow. Approximately 1,300 scouts camped on the Assembly grounds for the weekend.

2004 President's Information Packets should have been received from the General Commission on United Methodist Men recently. In the packet is the re-chartering form. If you did not receive a packet or need chartering form, please contact Earl Cash 540-464-1496.

January 25, 2004 – Staunton District Board Meeting at Marquis Memorial UMC in Staunton. A must-make-it meeting for new unit officers.

April 3, 2004 – Leadership/Development Day at Bon Air UMC

April 24, 2004 – Staunton District Board Meeting

May 21 & 22, 2004 – Tri-District Retreat at Camp Overlook

Earl Cash
District President

We at the Staunton District Office wish for you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a most blessed of New Years!

**NONPROFIT ORG.
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 178**

