

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)**

Volume 1, Issue 3

April 2004



It's a Celebration

Of

Lay Speaking Ministry

April 25, 2004

Trinity United Methodist Church

Lexington, VA

3:00 p.m.— 5:00 p.m.

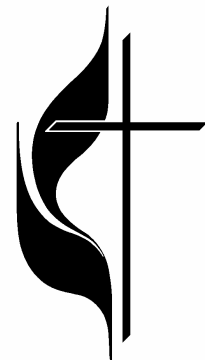
Board of Missions Annual Meeting

May 2, 2004

St. John's United Methodist Church

Buena Vista, VA

3:00—5:00 p.m.



A Thank You from Bishop Pennel

Thank You, Thank You, Thank You

Numbers are not everything but they do indicate trends and vital signs in an annual conference. I am overjoyed to report that we showed a net gain in membership for 2003 for the third consecutive year. Our conference membership now totals 341,867. The Arlington, Ashland, Rappahannock, Richmond and Winchester Districts posted significant gains while all other districts reported losses in total membership. The gains in those districts counter balanced the losses in other districts, which put us on the plus side for last year. The Ashland District led the conference with a net gain of 550.



In addition, the believers of the Virginia Conference contributed \$24,409,012 to all connectional causes, which represents an increase of 3.18 percent in total giving. Our apportioned funds were supported at the rate of 95.58 percent, which is highly commendable in a time when so many important causes are struggling. In so doing, we have strengthened the witness of the church all across the Virginia Conference and in 167 countries in the world.

The laity and clergy of this conference have allowed themselves to be used of God in loving and thoughtful ways and we are most grateful.

Joe E. Pennel, Jr.

Bishop Pennel Appoints New District Superintendents

Bishop Joe E. Pennel, Jr. has announced the appointment of two new district superintendents to the Cabinet effective June 27. The Rev. Myrtle Frances Hatcher will serve the Peninsula District and the Rev. David T. Forrest will serve the Winchester District

Rev. Hatcher is a native of Staunton, where her home church was Augusta Street UMC. She was ordained an elder in full connection in 1988. She presently serves St. James UMC on the Peninsula District. Hatcher is married to John Hatcher, Jr. and they have one adult son, daughter-in-law, Marie and five grandchildren.

Rev. Forrest was born in Williamsburg and is the son of a pastor. He served as a missionary in Sierra Leone from 1986 to 1990. He is presently serving Main Street UMC on the Lynchburg District. David and his wife, Nancy, have three sons: Andrew, 24, Peter, 21, and Robbie, 14.

From Our District Superintendent

Dear Friends,

I started writing this letter several weeks ago, when I thought the main focus would be the challenge put before us to live boldly as resurrection people. That is, emboldened by the power of the Holy Spirit, to leave behind the safety of familiar sanctuaries and venture into the community proclaiming in word and compassionate deed the good news of new life that is the gift from God to us in Jesus Christ, crucified and resurrected. That challenge is ever before us! And if we truly lived it as individuals and congregations there would be no dying or plateauing or maintenance congregations, there would only be vital communities of faith where people are welcomed in all their brokenness and sin, formed by Scripture, washed in the waters of baptism, fed at Christ's table and nurtured in the fellowship of believers, and sent again into the world to live as those who are forgiven, refocused, reborn – that's resurrection life!

It is, I think, even more critically important in light of recent events and in anticipation of General, Annual, and Jurisdictional Conferences to claim the promises of resurrection: new life not bound by graves of sin and despair, hope reborn from hopelessness, and intimate relationship with Jesus Christ who redeems us.

Hold the church and those who serve in prayer. Pray intently that God's work and will be done at General Conference. And hold fast to the promise of Christ Resurrected:

God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:18-20, [The Message](#))

In resurrection hope,

Kathleen

The Verdict - A Statement From Bishop Joe Pennel

I was appalled and shocked that a jury composed of 13 clergy could render a verdict so contrary to the law of The United Methodist Church as expressed in *The Book of Discipline*. It is important to remember that this one jury does not speak for the entire United Methodist Church. Only the General Conference, which meets every four years, has that authority.

In my opinion, the verdict of “not guilty” in the recent clergy trial of the Reverend Karen Dammann is not supported by *The 2000 Book of Discipline*. Those members of the trial jury who for reasons of conscience or otherwise could not uphold *The Discipline* should have stepped aside so that others who would have upheld the law of the church could have been selected.

Numerous Judicial Council decisions have quoted and affirmed that *The 2000 Book of Discipline* expressly states that “we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider the practice incompatible with Christian teaching” (par. 161G). Paragraph 304.3 of *The 2000 Book of Discipline* likewise declares, “While persons set apart by the Church for ordained ministry are subject to all the frailties of the human condition and the pressures of society, they are required to maintain the highest standards of holy living in the world. Since the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching, self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be accepted as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.”

At the conclusion of its deliberations, the jury issued the following statement:

“The only charge brought against the Rev. Karen T. Dammann is ‘practices declared by The United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teachings,’ under paragraph 2702.1b relating to the Judicial Complaint of Bishop Elias Galvan. While sustaining the specification that Rev. Karen Dammann is a self-avowed practicing homosexual, we, the trial court, do not find the evidence presented by church counsel to be clear and convincing that Karen Dammann has engaged in any ‘practices declared by the United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teachings.’ We cannot sustain the charge.

“We, the trial court, reached our decisions after many hours of painful and prayerful deliberation, and listening for and to the word of God. We depended on the prayers of the whole church, which undergirded our process. We depended on the leading of the Holy Spirit.

“We have made every attempt to be faithful to *The Book of Discipline* in its entirety. We have taken very seriously the mandate to presume innocence unless there is sufficient evidence to bring a different verdict. The church’s obligation is to present clear and convincing evidence to sustain the charge. We searched the *Discipline* and did not find a declaration that ‘the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.’

“We did see in the *Discipline* many declarative statements. An example is: ‘Inclusiveness means openness, acceptance, and support that enables all persons to participate in the life of the Church, the community, and the world. Thus, inclusiveness denies every semblance of discrimination.’ (Section 6 of The Ministry of all Christians, section VI, ‘Called to Inclusiveness,’ paragraph 138, p. 93, second paragraph)

“Although we, the trial court, found passages that contain the phrasing ‘incompatible with Christian teaching,’ we did not find that any of them constitute a declaration.

“We realize that the church is divided regarding issues of homosexuality. We, as the trial court, are far from unanimous regarding biblical and theological understandings.

“The beginning sentence of ‘Our Theological Task,’ paragraph 104, conclusion, p. 85, says: ‘Doctrine arises out of the life of the Church—its faith, its worship, its discipline, its conflicts, its challenges from the world it would serve.’ In this spirit, we have engaged in this judicial task.”

This verdict, in my judgment, cannot be upheld by either the intention or the language of *The 2000 Book of Discipline*.

This verdict of “not guilty” will, without a doubt, heighten the United Methodist Church’s theological discussion around issues related to homosexuality, the authority of scripture, the meaning of marriage, the meaning of family and the witness of the church in all areas related to sexuality. Such conferencing needs to be informed by grace, which beckons us to remember that those about whom we speak on either side of this vexing issue are children of God and should be treated with reverence and respect.

While bishops do not have a voice or a vote at General Conference, it is my persistent and fervent prayer that the lay and clergy delegates to the upcoming General Conference will find a way to be redemptive while holding steadfast to that which affirms the highest standards of sexual expression. Likewise, I hope that a way can be found to hold this jury accountable for its misinterpretation of our *Book of Discipline*. Please remember that only General Conference speaks for the whole church.

This issue must not cause us to lose our central focus, which is to make disciples. We must stay focused on worship, nurture, missions and evangelism. To be distracted by this one verdict, rather than to be called by our primary mission, is the greater evil.



Staunton District Camp Meeting
July 10
11:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Glenn Maury Park
Buena Vista, VA
A Camp Meeting for All God's Children

We need the entire district's help!

We are looking for Praise Bands, Gospel singing groups, someone to lead in old fashioned hymn sings, Drama Groups and other groups to make our day of worship complete. We also need folk who enjoy working with children to set up a children's program of story telling, crafts, music, etc.

If you or your group is interested in being a part of worship or if you can take charge of the children's program call Martha Reynolds at 932-1055.

From Our District Program Director



The District Youth Retreat was held March 12-14. Steve Joplin, the District Youth Coordinator, did a terrific job of organizing the event. The workshops were great. "Thank you" to all of you who led them. Jamie Huggins and Fish Force led the youth in praise and worship. "Thank you" to everyone who made the weekend a great time for our youth to *ignite* their faith.

On April 25th, the Staunton District will celebrate our Lay Speaking Ministries. I encourage you all to come to Trinity UMC in Lexington from 3:00-5:00 p.m., and join us in the celebration of this very important ministry to the life of the church.

On May 2nd, the Full Board of Missions will meet at St. John's UMC in Buena Vista from 3:00-5:00 p.m. Come and be a part of strengthening and expanding this vital district ministry.

Spring is officially here! It arrived on March 20th. I love Spring...the air is fresh and crisp and you can feel it getting warmer every day. The sun is rising earlier and the birds are singing wonderful songs. To me, Spring signifies the opportunity for the new life Christ has given to each of us. If we have faith and develop a personal relationship with Him, we can shed the darkness of our old ways and step into the light that is God's love, renewing our soul so we are equipped to be God's hands and feet in the world.

Grace and peace,
 Martha

It's not too late to sign up for a summer Harvest of Hope event!

A couple of our events are full for this coming summer, but we do still have room at several of our events. The following events still have space: Weeklong events: June 27-July 3 – Benton, MO; July 4-10 – Wilmington, NC; June 4-10 – Denton, MD; July 11-17 – Exmore, VA; Intergeneration weekend: July 23-25 – John's Island, SC; Phase II (for those who have attended HoH before) June 26-July 3 – Washington, DC. We also still have room at all of our fall weekend events. If you are interested in any of these events email me back or call at 800-333-4597. You can also check out our web page at 222.endhunger.org. I hope you will come out this summer and help us DO SOMETHING ABOUT HUNGER!

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

INVITATION TO JOIN LaityNet

Laity may want to consider subscribing to the LaityNet, a new Internet communication service that keeps laity of the Conference abreast of all current events related to the church as well as other information. To subscribe, send a blank e-mail addressed to:

< VaLaityNet-subscribe@yahoogroups.com >. No message is needed.

Ron Hardman, Conference Lay Leader

Our Deepest Sympathy Is Extended To:



Mrs. Ella Louise Plunkett and her family on the death of her husband, Rev. Edward Plunkett. Rev. Plunkett served before his retirement on the Staunton District and was residing in Waynesboro.

Rev. & Mrs. Edward Rigg and their family on the death of Ed's sister, Connie Brown. The Riggs serve Parrish Court UMC in Covington.

United Methodist Men

Conference Annual Leadership Development Day at Bon Air UMC, Richmond on Saturday, April 3. We will have a van departing the Park and Ride lot at I-64/340 interchange at 6:45 a.m. Last year we had the van full. Hoping to have to take an additional vehicle this year. This is a great opportunity to take advantage of men's training and learn what is happening with Conference UMM. It is especially desirable for new presidents. There will be several workshops offered for the individual interest. Lunch will be provided by the Bon Air UMM. Pre-registration is required in order to have a count for lunch. Contact Earl Cash 540-464-1496.



District Board and Executive Meeting on Saturday, April 24, at Trinity UMC. Coffee will be available at 9:30 a.m. with the meeting beginning at 10:00 a.m. UMM presidents or a stand-in are invited to attend, especially new presidents.

Tri-District Spiritual Retreat at Camp Overlook, May 21-22. We are excited about having three District Superintendents (Staunton, Harrisonburg and Winchester) as our speakers. The theme for the retreat is "Living as Christians in a Non-Christian World." Staunton District UMM are the sponsors and planners for this year's Retreat. We are very happy to have our District Superintendent, Kathleen Overby Webster, as one of the leaders. It is incumbent on each of us to encourage men from our churches to attend. See your local president for a flyer with information and registration form.

Annual Conference UMM Breakfast—The UMM Breakfast will be on Tuesday, June 15. at Bethany UMC at 6:30 a.m. Clarence Brown (Charlottesville District Superintendent) will be the speaker. Tickets are \$8.00.

Earl Cash, President

Staunton District Spouses' Association



The Spouses' Association of our District elected officers for next year. This was done early due to our present treasurer's need to give up her responsibilities at this time. In an election at the March 2 Clergy-Spouses Dinner meeting in Lexington, Chris Pettyjohn was chosen to be our new secretary-treasurer. She has agreed to begin her duties immediately. Claudette Freeman and Christy Gresham were elected to share the President-Vice President responsibilities jointly. They will begin their official work in June. We are grateful to these spouses for sharing their time for our benefit.

Willie Carrier has been sending our cards and paying our expenses for the past 7 years. We owe her many thanks. Walter Taylor had been our Vice President for over a year until he and Elizabeth relocated. This was after being our President for two years. We are grateful for all his efforts on our behalf as well.

I'm glad that you allowed me to be an active part of your group for these two years. You are a talented, vital group of support people to our ministry on the Staunton District. I hope this association has been and will be a supportive, spiritually uplifting link in our fine District.

Love in Christ,
Donna Nelson

Annual Conference Clergy Spouses' Luncheon

The theme for this year's luncheon is, "From Our Hearts to Yours." It is scheduled for Monday, June 14, 12:30 p.m. at Bethany UMC in Hampton. Cost is \$10.00. Childcare and child's lunch will be provided at no additional cost. Mail check payable to "Annual Conference Clergy Spouses' Luncheon," to Cynthia Nobles, 75 Shoe Lane, Newport News, VA 23606-2947. For more information contact Linda Edmonds at 804-986-3459 or Cynthia Nobles at 757-596-3476. Reservation forms were mailed out in the Clergy and Spouses Meeting notice for April. If you did not receive one, extras are available in the District Office.



CONFERENCE-WIDE PRAYER VIGILS FOR VIRGINIA CONFERENCE

The 2004 session of General Conference which is the governing body of The United Methodist Church convenes in Pittsburgh on April 27 and ends on May 7. During this time, you are asked to pray daily for all the delegates, Bishops, volunteers and all those who are a part of this conference that they will be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit as they make decisions that will affect the direction of the church for the next quadrennium.

Please organize a prayer vigil in your local church for a day during General Conference when your congregation will be praying for delegates from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. If every church will select a day of their choosing during that two week period, then we can saturate General Conference with prayer.

In addition to the local church prayer vigils, we are asking that you participate in a conference-wide prayer vigil on **Tuesday, April 27**, which is the opening day of General Conference. It is important that delegates know they are being lifted up in prayer by the entire Virginia Conference as they go to be your representatives. The vigil would cover the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

A prayer vigil consists of inviting people to take an hour during the day to pray for the needs of General Conference: God's presence to guide all that is done, discernment, unity and holy conferencing for delegates, bishops and all attending; enough volunteers to care for delegates' needs; and for traveling mercies for all.

When you have organized your local church prayer vigil, please let Shirley Cauffman know by either telephone at 703-241-1948 or by e-mail at shirleyc@bellatlantic.net. The delegation will be informed at General Conference which churches are praying for them that particular day.

The people of God are called to pray, for that is where the power is!

Each local church is asked to use the attached Litany for General Conference Delegates on **Sunday, April 25**. This is the Sunday before General Conference begins on Tuesday, April 27. At this time in the life of our church, we need to be much in prayer for the delegation. This is a critical time in our church and future directions will be decided at this General Conference session.

LITANY FOR GENERAL CONFERENCE DELEGATES SUNDAY, APRIL 25, 2004

Leader: General Conference is the law-making body of the United Methodist Church and will convene on Tuesday, April 27th, in Pittsburgh. Let us offer our prayers and support for all the delegates, Bishops and all who are in any way connected with General Conference.

Response: **Our prayer is that these delegates will trust in the Lord and in all ways acknowledge that God is our strength and our refuge.**

Leader: To pray is to enter the presence of God. Before we speak any words, the Spirit of God praying in us will make the Lord's presence known and will speak words of wisdom to those who will make decisions for our church.

Response: **We pray that these delegates will know that the beginning of wisdom is to receive understanding and that they will receive their understanding by listening to God's voice.**

Leader: During the long hours of deliberations, may they not grow weary or discouraged, but know that faith and trust in God will give them strength and courage as they seek to be faithful to what they have been called to do.

Response: **Seek the Lord for the strength you need. Seek the face of the Lord continually.**

Leader: God gives strength to the weary so they may know even before there is a word on their tongue that the Lord's hand is upon them.

Response: **As we pray for these delegates, may they rejoice in hope, prevail in tribulation, be devoted to prayer, practice hospitality and show Christian love to all people.**

Unison Prayer: **To you, O God, we give thanks for each delegate who will go to General Conference to represent the Virginia Annual Conference and we pray that you will give them guidance, strength and wisdom to discern your holy words. We pray, O God, that you will open their ears to hear that still, small voice that comes from you whether it is in the midst of a busy day or in the quiet of the night. Lift them above the mundane things that too often occupy our minds so they may be attuned to your will and the leading of your Holy Spirit. May they be empowered by Your Word. We give you thanks for our church and pray that you will save it from evil and perfect it in your love. We pray these things in Jesus name, Amen**

United Methodist Women's News

The Staunton District UMW will be meeting at Marquis Memorial UMC for our Day Apart. The theme will be "Who Is My Sister?" Our speaker will be Rev. Loretta Benninghove. Registration begins at 9:30 AM and worship will begin at 10:00 AM. Lunch will be served at a cost of \$5.00. Please join us for a "Day Apart," a time of worship and reflection for all women.

Beth-Horon will be the host church for the Homie Clark Prayer Breakfast on April 17th. Registration for this event will begin at 8:30 AM and breakfast will be served at 9:00 AM. Rev. Jeane Dunkum will be the speaker. The cost of this meal is \$5.00.

I do have the tickets for the Annual Conference UMW breakfast scheduled for June 15th. If you are interested in a ticket you may purchase them at either of the events listed above or call me at home, 540-291-2146.

Do not forget the Conference Spiritual Life Retreat at VUMAC on April 30-May 2 and the School of Christian Missions, July 23rd-29th. Your local unit president should have details on these events.

Serving Together,

Doris Hedrick, Staunton District President.

District Youth News (Web Site: stauntondistrict.tripod.com)



Staunton District Youth Retreat was held at Camp Overlook on March 12-14. We had about 125 attendees and 18 churches represented. Keynote speaker, Jamie Hudgins, led us in praise and worship and Ignited our Faith with his messages and music throughout the weekend. A great big hug and thank you to all the youth and adults who helped facilitate the Workshops and Family Groups times. An offering of \$515 was collected for YSF (Youth Service Fund) during fundraising times.

Over 100 Health Kits were brought to the retreat by Main Street UMC, Christ UMC –Staunton and

Jollivue UMC. **Congratulations to Brianna Hamilton**, a 7th grader from Cherryvale UMC. She won the t-shirt design contest for the retreat with a great design. There are many examples of the youth of the Staunton District reaching out and inviting other to attend events to experience God. The Youth in the Staunton District are the greatest.

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. Bring the Kit content loose to the Staunton District office before June 11, 2004.

“Youth Service Fund Sunday” – All churches in the Staunton District are requested to choose any Sunday of your choice, in April/May to celebrate YSF. Encourage Youth to lead the worship service and to collect an offering for YSF on that Sunday. Please make checks out to YSF and mail to Smitty at the Conference office. Please mark “Staunton District” on your check so that our district will receive proper credit. Questions? Contact Steve Joplin.

Scholarships to College Bound Youth – the Virginia United Methodist Credit Union is offering Scholarships to College Bound Virginia United Methodist Youth. You must be a member of the Virginia UM Credit Union. To become a member, simply apply along with a \$5.00 deposit. For scholarship information and applications, contact Trisha Bryant in the Credit Union at 1-866-657-0004 or e-mail trishabryant@vumcu.org.

Virginia United Methodist District Youth Leaders Assembly at Blackstone, VA, August 5-7, 2004. This is where we plan our district youth events for the upcoming year. We would like to have 2-3 youth (leaders and potential leaders) along with an adult from each church in the district attend this event. It is also a great opportunity to glean new ideas from other districts and to experience inspiring worship and music. Come also to learn more about CCYM opportunities for youth in leadership. The district pays for 17 to go. If more than 17 attend, then the cost is divided to that all will pay a little. Cost in the past = \$20-\$25 each. Contact Steve Joplin at 886-9367 or email: steve.joplin@hollister.com

Staunton District Youth Planning Meeting – Youth and Adult Youth Leaders are invited to our next planning meeting 2:00-4:00 p.m., Sunday, April 18, at Greenville UMC. We will review the past retreat and look at future events.

Don't forget Awakening 2004, Norfolk/ Virginia Beach, VA, April 2-3, 2004. It is still not too late to contact “Smitty” at waverlysmith@vaumc.org. Contact Steve Joplin for lodging and transportation.

2003-2004 Staunton District Youth Statement: “Ignite the faith. We are the youth sent here by God to make disciples.”

Steve Joplin

Mark Your Calendars:

April 3 – UMM Leadership Development Day – Bon-Air UMC
April 6 – Clergy and Spouses Meeting – Mint Spring UMC – 9:30 a.m.
April 14 - Directors, Board of Missions - 10:00 a.m. - District Office
April 14 - Lay Speakers Planning Committee - 11:30 a.m. - District Office
April 17 – Homie Clark UMW Zone Breakfast
April 17-18 - 2004 Spring Laity Spiritual Life Retreat - VUMAC, Blackstone
April 24 – UMW Executive Meeting
April 25 - Affirmation & Commitment of Lay Speakers - Trinity UMC - 3:00-5:00 p.m.
April 27-May 7 – General Conference
April 30-May 2 - Glory Kids – Camp Overlook
May 2 - Full Board of Missions Meeting - St. John's UMC (Buena Vista) - 3:00-5:00 p.m.
May 5 - Directors, Board of Missions - 10:00 a.m. - District Office
May 7 - Kamp for Kids - Camp Overlook
May 15 – District Council on Ministries Planning and Goal Setting Retreat - Fairfield UMC - 9:00 a.m.
May 20-28 – Licensing School
May 21-22 – United Methodist Men Tri-District Spiritual Retreat – Camp Overlook
May 23 - Annual Conference Orientation - 3:00 p.m. - Mint Spring UMC
May 25 – Clergy and Spouses Meeting – St. John's UMC (Buena Vista) - 6:00 p.m.
June 13-16 – Annual Conference – Hampton
June 23 - Clergy Moving Day
June 25-July - Voices of Youth in England
July 10 - Camp Meeting - 11:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. - Glenn Maury Park, Buena Vista
July 15-18 - South Eastern Jurisdictional Conference
July 24 - UMW Executive Meeting
July 23-25 - School of Christian Mission - VUMAC
July 26-29 - School of Christian Mission - VUMAC



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*Open Hearts,
Open Minds, Open Doors,
The United Methodist Church*