



FEB CIRCUIT

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FRIDAY NIGHTS BRING LIGHT

Community members enjoy dinner at Friday Nite Lite - a meal and worship service at St. Marks UMC, Charleston Jan. 16. Photo: Laura Allen

Sitting on a bench by the back door of St. Marks United Methodist Church in Charleston, "Cindy" is waiting. A light rain is falling, and at 5 o'clock on a Friday afternoon in January, it's getting cold.

"Come on in," said church member Martha Hill. Cindy gets up slowly, hands gripping the handles of her walker. "I don't move like I used to," she said, maneuvering through the glass doors into the church. A random collection of grocery bags full of dry food, clothes, and what looks like toiletries hang from the basket on the front of her walker.

Cindy is about an hour early for movie night at St. Marks, one of two Friday night activities hosted by the church each month, which sits in downtown Charleston, a few blocks from two homeless shelters. It's hard to tell for sure whether or not Cindy is homeless - it does not feel right to ask - but movie night gives her a place to sit, eat, and enjoy a movie.

"We usually see about 100 - 120 people at movie night," said Pat Gallagher, another church member who volunteers for the ministry. We talk as he offers pizza and lasagna to a table of seven in the church basement during Friday Nite Lite (FNL), the other Friday night ministry at St. Marks.

A man approaches Gallagher and hands him a card, which lists his prayer concerns for the week. Attendees listen as scripture and a brief devotional are read. "God is what it's all about," said another man, who later told me he was a veteran who lives on the streets.

Seventy or so people showed up for the service; it's the biggest crowd the church has had for Friday Nite Lite. "Maybe because it is so cold," said Gallagher.

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AROUND THE CONFERENCE

St. Luke's UMC in Harrisville, Ritchie County, made the decision last year to hire youth pastor, Anthony Farr. The really cool thing is that they now have 50 youth involved in their ministry on Sunday evenings. Many of these high school youth also gather before school to pray and support each other. Recently Anthony discussed exploring candidacy into ordained ministry as well. In a time when many churches in our rural communities struggle to provide youth ministry, this congregation has found a way to develop the leading youth ministry program in the district.

Submitted by Rev. Dr. Ken Krimmel, Little Kanawha District Superintendent

Cross Lanes United Methodist Church opened a thrift store in their community. It is a ministry of the church started the youth group who experienced a similar ministry on a mission trip. They returned with the dream and dogged it until it happened. It took a year of work and prayer because those who made it happen made a commitment to not use any money from the church budget or operational account. Also, the youth at the church pack 200 backpacks weekly for area schools. This is the third year for this ministry.

Submitted Rev. Dr. JF Lacaria, Director of Connectional Ministries

Blacksville UMC had their fourth annual "pink" tea. What started out as a way to gather young grade school girls to learn basics of health and hygiene became a "camo change" this year as young boys were invited for the first time. The attendance was capped at 20 boys and girls and increasing the age range from 3-6 graders to 6-8 graders. The event included a testimonial by a local person known to all the children, a class on cyber safety, and a session on manners, and a talk about bullying.

Submitted by Sarah Lowther Hensley, MonValley District Communications Coordinator via Mary Bane

Have something to share? Send it to us at wvumc@wvumc.org.

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WE REMEMBER

Betty Clay, wife of George Clay (FE-R)

Irene Dotson, mother of Rev. Gerald Dotson (FE-R) and grandmother of Rev. Matthew Dotson (FE)

Mildred Frances Wilhelmina Yancy, mother of Rev. Dr. F. Olive Davis (FE-R)

Mark Jasper, brother of the Rev. Jeremiah Jasper (FE)

Megan Elizabeth Amory, daughter of Mike Amory (FE)

Dana Edward "Chip" Hickman, brother of Rev. Mark Hickman (FE)

Mary Elizabeth Frame, surviving spouse of Rev. Marvan Frame

Helen Louise Belcher, surviving spouse of Rev. Arnold Belcher

Sawyer Andrew Wolford, newborn son of Jamion and Taran Wolford, grandson of the Rev. Gwen Wolford (LP) and her husband, Jim

Laura Kathryn Crawford, surviving spouse of Rev. Maynard Crawford

Rev. Harold Slate (LP-R), associate pastor of Saint Marks UMC Charleston and immediate past director of Community Development Outreach Ministries (CDOM)

Ruth Robertson, widow of Rev. Graham Robertson

Rev. Roger Parsons (PTLP-Little Kanawha)

CALENDAR

FEBRUARY

15 Volunteers in Mission Awareness Special Sunday
18 Lent begins

MARCH

7 Covenant Council
9-10 Sisters in the Spirit Clergywomen Retreat
13 Growing Church Leaders Training
15 One Great Hour of Sharing Special Sunday

APRIL

3 Good Friday (Conference Center Closed)
5 Easter Sunday
9-10 UMW Spiritual Growth Retreat
12 United Methodist Foundation Special Sunday
19 Native American Ministries Special Sunday
26 Golden Cross Special Sunday

View the full schedule online at wvumc.org/events.



NEW WVUMC.ORG



Over the Christmas holiday, the communications team launched a redesigned and updated website at wvumc.org. The website features new tools and information to better tell the story of the West Virginia Conference, including a new blog and social media links. We've also redesigned the website to help you stay connected and take advantage of new technology. It looks great on a computer, a tablet, or a smartphone - and we've better organized information so it's easier to find what you're looking for. We've written a blog post about how to navigate the new site. You can find it on the homepage at wvumc.org.

Have questions? The Contact Us page points you to email, phone numbers, and mailing addresses for conference staff and other leaders. But, this is only the beginning. As we listen to your feedback, we'll continue to hone and improve the information presented. Tell us what you think! Email us at wvumc@wvumc.org to share your thoughts and how you use the website.

FRIDAY NIGHTS BRING LIGHT

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Led by laity, it is the fastest growing worship service at the church according to the Rev. Janet Harman, deacon associate pastor of St. Marks. "Between both Friday nights, we are probably serving 150 - 200 people in the community a month," she said.



St. Marks calls itself "the downtown church that feels like home," and the Friday night ministries are certainly ways this faith community lives out those words. But perhaps it should borrow from a well-known hotel chain slogan as well. This church not only leaves the light on, it shines the light of Christ into the community. - Laura Allen

GLOBAL AIDS

In the Bible we find story after story of Jesus encountering people who sought wholeness in their lives. Jesus responded with a healing touch with few or no questions asked. The United Methodist Church calls us to respond to people who need wholeness and love, including those with HIV/AIDS. Our Social Principles state: "All individuals living with HIV and AIDS should be treated with dignity and respect. We support their rights to employment, appropriate medical care, full participation in public education, and full participation in the Church."

Here are some facts to consider: 22 million people live with HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa, 33 million people worldwide live with HIV/AIDS, and 1.1 million people in the U.S. have diagnosed and undiagnosed HIV/AIDS.

The West Virginia Annual Conference has adopted a "Just Save One" campaign for 2014-2015. A goal of \$53,374 has been set for June 2015, bringing the total giving as a Conference to \$150,000. Submitted by Pat Mick.



As a fundraising idea, consider this: For every \$10 donated, color a paper doll and place it on display in your local church. Each doll represents a life saved, and let's the colors be a sign of your hope, love, and wholeness.

Bring your church's paper dolls to Annual Conference in June 2015 to be displayed with others from around the Conference.



HEALTHY CHURCH INITIATIVE

The West Virginia Annual Conference is partnering with other denominations and Try This, WV! Our goal: to get our beautiful state off the top of worst health lists; and we believe churches can make a big difference.

A healthy lifestyle can start with small changes. You can swap out chips for carrots or other veggies, start a walking club, or work with your church to make healthy food choices available at potluck dinners.

New Martinsville United Methodist Church will relaunch their healthy lifestyle ministry in During Lent with The Daniel Plan, described on the program's website as "a groundbreaking healthy lifestyle program founded on biblical principles and focused on Faith, Food, Fitness, Focus and Friends."

Church member Bernadette Hood said an unhealthy addiction to food inspired her to lead the group. It's a switch for Hood, who has given up things like television after 8 p.m. and soda temporarily during Lent; her new outlook on health is the result of a more permanent change. "I'm changing because of God and owning who I am in Christ," she said.

The Rev. Sharletta Green, pastor at New Martinsville UMC, is very supportive of the plan and has incorporated essential oils and Yoga into the church's health ministry. The idea came to her after she used lavender to help her sleep at night, which led to a study on the essential oils of the Bible. The church now has a small group participating in yoga and walking.

Is your church engaged in a healthy lifestyle ministry? Share your stories with us by dropping an email to wvumc@wvumc.org or mailing them to:

West Virginia Conference
Communications, % Laura Allen
P.O. Box 2313 Charleston WV 25328

We also would like to encourage you to fill out our healthy church survey at wvumc.org/healthychurch or fill out the survey (see pg. 5) and mail it to the address above. - Adam Cunningham, Laura Allen



DID YOU KNOW?

John Wesley believed that good health was something everyone should experience. He wrote *Primitive Physick* in 1747 to share practical health and medical advice with the working people of England. At the time, only the wealthy had access to proper medical care. He writes:

"The power of exercise, both to preserve and restore health, is greater than can well be conceived; especially in those who add temperance* thereto; who if they do not confine themselves altogether to eat either "bread or the herb of the field," (which God does not require them to do) yet steadily observe both that kind and measure of food, which experience shews to be most friendly to health and strength."



HEALTHY CHURCH INITIATIVE SURVEY

Let's start a healthy church movement! This survey was created by West Virginians of faith who want to get our beautiful state off the top of every worst health list. Churches can make a big difference! We want to create a program that will give churches the tools they need to develop "healthy church" programs for our congregations, communities and missions. We'll partner with the statewide healthy lifestyle group, Try This, WV! Interested? Fill out the survey!

YES! I AM INTERESTED IN A HEALTHY CHURCH PROJECT, PLEASE:

- Invite me to a statewide meeting next spring. Keep me in the loop.

NAME: _____ EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ CHURCH NAME: _____

CHURCH LOCATION (and Web URL if applicable): _____

I AM A (check all that apply):

- Lay Person
- Pastor
- Medical/nutrition professional
- Other: _____

MY CHURCH OFFERS (check all that apply):

- Food Pantry
- Soup Kitchen
- Regular church meals and fellowship
- Backpack program
- After school program
- Special projects (holiday meals/food baskets)
- Other: _____

TELL US A LITTLE MORE ABOUT WHAT YOUR CHURCH IS ALREADY DOING: _____

OUR CHURCH IS INTERESTED IN THE FOLLOWING

(check all that apply):

- Books and other resources on healthy church programs
- 5-10 minute videos in which other WV churches show what they have done. Suitable for Sunday school or other small group setting.
- Workshops on creating a healthy church plan
- Books and videos on ways we can make our mission projects more healthy (backpack, soup kitchen, pantries, etc.)

WHY DO YOU BELIEVE HEALTHY LIFESTYLE MINISTRIES ARE IMPORTANT FROM A SPIRITUAL AND THEOLOGICAL STANDPOINT IN THE WORK OF THE CHURCH?

I WOULD LIKE TO:

- Serve on a Statewide planning team
- Receive how-to info or workshops
- Offer training or workshops

PLEASE MAIL COMPLETED SURVEY TO:

West Virginia Conference
Communications, % Laura Allen
P.O. Box 2313
Charleston WV 25328



EDITOR'S NOTE:

Each year, retired United Methodist Bishop Woodie W. White writes a "birthday letter" to the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. White, now bishop-in-residence at Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, was the first general secretary of the General Commission on Religion and Race.



Bishop Woodie White.
Photo: Rev. Joseph Brayer

A LETTER TO DR. KING

Dear Martin:

I begin this letter mindful of the events that took place in our nation 50 years ago, events that changed the United States.

As you and other leaders of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference accelerated the challenge to the discriminatory practices prohibiting black people from registering and voting in several Southern states, a special campaign was launched in Alabama.

A march from Selma to Montgomery was planned. At the end, the demonstrators were to present the governor with a list of practices encountered by black citizens of the state. Hundreds gathered on Sunday, March 7, 1965.

State officials had determined the march would not occur and banned the planned demonstration.

As the marchers began to move across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, they were met by a sizable police presence on the bridge. Some of the police were on horses. When the peaceful marchers refused to disband, they were attacked by the police, beaten and trampled by horses. Mass hysteria erupted. Wounded and bloody, the nonviolent, peaceful protesters were turned back.

Millions witnessed the brutal attacks on television and in newspaper photos. So vicious were they that the day became known as Bloody Sunday. The nation was horrified to see peaceful citizens so brutalized as they sought to be granted the right to vote in their own country.

Only days later, Martin, you called for a second march. This time thousands responded. Celebrities, church leaders, pastors and ordinary citizens gathered — and the march was fully racially integrated. It ended on the steps of the Capitol in Montgomery, with leaders presenting their concerns, grievances and demands.

Five months later, in August, what is commonly called the Voting Rights Act was law. Congress passed the 1965 Civil Rights Act because of the bold leadership of President Lyndon B. Johnson. For the first time, black citizens anywhere in America had the right to register and the right to vote protected against intimidation, unfair and discriminatory regulations, fear of reprisals or violence.

Imagine, Martin, it was only 50 years ago, that the most basic right of a democracy, the right to vote, was guaranteed to black American citizens! Only 50 years ago!



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In a few months, thousands of us will again gather at the Edmund Pettus Bridge. We will remember those who led the way, some even giving their lives, that we might today exercise the right to cast a ballot freely.

Sadly, we will do so in the face of new threats to that right, as many state legislatures enact laws to make it more difficult for citizens to exercise that right.

The struggle continues.

Martin, we are again reminded of the deep racial divide in America. The deaths of a number of unarmed black youth and men at the hands of police have drawn national attention. Those who died in Brooklyn, N.Y.; Cleveland; and Ferguson, Mo., were males in their teens. Two of the deaths — one in Ferguson and the other in Staten Island, N.Y. — went before a grand jury. Neither resulted in an indictment against the police involved. The failures to indict have resulted in thousands demonstrating in major cities across the nation. There is general outrage and anger in the black community and beyond.

Is America again to have two societies, one black (or non-white), and one white, separate and unequal? And composed, as many hold, of two justice systems, one for white citizens and one for non-white citizens?

Is there the belief that black life is not as valued in our nation as white life? Indeed, a new slogan has emerged: “Black Lives Matter.”

A national conversation on race is emerging. With it is coming the revelation that white and black citizens view race dramatically differently. Even in these two widely known incidents of unarmed black young men meeting death as the result of police action, a significant number of white citizens conclude the deaths were clearly the fault of the black men, while black citizens believe they were caused by an underlying racism that views white and black people differently. White life is valued more than black.

Perhaps, Martin, that is still what is at the heart of the great racial divide in America. Still, it appears, the matter of one’s worth as a human being is finally about the color of one’s skin — not the content of one’s character, morality, ability or competence. Indeed, there seems no correlation between scoring a winning touchdown or basket, or between one’s abilities, political positions or party and one’s determined ultimate worth as a human being. Could it be that in the minds and hearts of so many, skin color determines worth and value?

We continue to face a lot of work in this nation on the issue of race. At times, we appear to move backward and forward simultaneously. The truth is, Martin, the events of the last 50 years are evidence of how far we have come on our journey to become “one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” But, the last 50 days are evidence as well of how far we have yet to go!

But, I still believe, Martin.

We shall overcome!

Woodie



FEB CIRCUIT

WEST VIRGINIA CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



West Virginia Governor Earl Ray Tomblin and Appalachian Children's Chorus members ring a Liberty Bell replica at the state capitol. The annual ringing of the bell concludes the Martin Luther King Day celebration that starts with a special service at Asbury United Methodist Church. The bell includes this verse from Leviticus 25:10: "And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family." Photo: Laura Allen