

MARCH 2025

DISTRICT DISPATCH

Official Newsletter of the Three Notch'd District

Hope for the Lenten Journey

BY REV. HYO J. LEE, PH.D., DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT

Lent is a sacred season—a time of reflection, preparation, and renewal. It invites us to walk closer with the Lord, deepening both our personal and communal holiness. As we journey through this season, we seek to align our hearts with Christ's path, recalling His journey toward Jerusalem, the place of rejection, suffering, and ultimate sacrifice. There is a certain weight to this time, a solemn awareness of the trials He endured.

Yet, beyond the spiritual heaviness of Lent, many of us—and our loved ones—are facing real and pressing struggles. Some have lost jobs unjustly, others are burdened with medical concerns and financial hardships, and the effects of inflation are making even the simplest necessities, like a loaf of bread or a carton of eggs, feel out of reach. In times like these, how do we hold onto peace? How do we remain steadfast in faith?

Lately, my morning devotions have led me to dwell on John 14-16 and Psalms 37 and 46, scriptures that remind us of God's presence in difficult times. One passage, in particular, speaks to this moment:

"I have said this to you so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution, but take courage: I have conquered the world!" – John 16:33 (NRSVUE)

The word "persecution" here carries the sense of being pressed or squeezed in a tight space—an image that may resonate deeply with many of us today. The pressures of the world can feel overwhelming, yet Jesus reassures us that in Him, we can find true peace.

This peace is not an escape from reality, nor is it a denial of our hardships. Instead, it is the gift of abiding in Christ—choosing to walk by faith, embracing God's presence, and trusting His promises even in the midst of trials.

As clergy and laity journey through Lent, may we find strength in Christ's words. May we hold fast to the hope that, even in the turbulence of life, we can experience God's peace and joy. You are not alone. In Christ, we have the One who has overcome the world.



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UPCOMING EVENTS



MARCH 12 - CLERGY DAY APART

Hope is Here - A Day of Spiritual Renewal at Shady Grove UMC, Mechanicsville. Do you feel overwhelmed and stressed by all the things? Does your heart break for those who are suffering due to injustice and oppression, in whatever forms they take? Are you concerned about the planet and those impacted by natural disasters? Do you need a reminder that hope is here?

All clergy are invited to join us for a day of hope and spiritual renewal, engage in spiritual practices, and learn from Dr. Luther Smith, Professor Emeritus of Church and Community, Candler School of Theology, Emory University. This unique event, coordinated by the Spiritual Formation team of the Board of Ordained Ministry, is a time for clergy to set aside all anxieties, stress, and concerns and to be present in the Hope of Jesus Christ.

The cost is \$35 per person and includes lunch and supplies. .5 CEU is available for attending the event. If you also read Dr. Smith's book, *Hope is Here* (sold on Amazon, Cokesbury), 1 CEU is available. Event registration is available [here](#).

MARCH 15 - DISCERNMENT DAY

Every Christian is called by God in a myriad of ways! Discernment Day is an opportunity offered by the Virginia Annual Conference for you to explore your sense of call with others. Through prayer practices, age-appropriate small groups, and topical discussion groups, you will be provided with space to learn more, connect with others, and discover next steps. This is a free event on Saturday, March 15, at Ebenezer UMC in Stafford. It is open to all high school aged and older. To learn more and to register, go to <https://vaumc.org/discernment-day/>



APRIL 5 - AUTISM SYMPOSIUM

Alexandra Jackman is coming to the Valley Ridge District United Methodist Church and will be doing a TED talk style conversation with Shannon White, along with a keynote talk about embracing those with autism. The event will be held at Calvary UMC in Stuarts Draft, 8:00am-12:30pm. The cost is \$10/ticket and includes a breakfast bar. Click [here](#) to register.



Alexandra Jackman is a dynamic and accomplished advocate and public speaker with over 10 years of experience. Alexandra's presentations often include a screening of her award-winning documentary, *A Teens Guide To Understanding and Communicating with People with Autism*. (www.alexandrajackman.com. Questions? Contact Dale White, 910-546-3380.

Candle lighting ... meditation ... space to breathe ...
inspired by ancient Celtic worship

Reflect ... Refresh ... Renew

5:55 - 6:35 p.m.

Thursdays March 13, 20, 27, April 3, 10
Duncan Memorial UMC



LENTEN CELTIC WORSHIP

Do you need a personal, prayerful respite during the hectic activities of Lent? The Office of the Chaplain at Randolph-Macon College and Duncan Memorial United Methodist Church invite you to REFLECT, REFRESH, and RENEW in a weekly 40-minute gathering based on the ancient Celtic worship tradition of candle lighting, music, prayers, quiet reflection and space to breathe.

Clergy and laity speakers will give their short reflections about God at work in their lives. On April 3, our reflection will be led by Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson. Services will be from 5:55 to 6:35 p.m. Thursdays, March 13, 20, 27 and April 3 and 10 in the sanctuary of Duncan Memorial United Methodist Church, 201 Henry Street, Ashland, VA 23005. All are welcome.



2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The 2025 Annual Conference will be held in Roanoke at the Berglund Center, June 12-14. Hotel information was published Feb. 17. Be sure to visit www.vaumc.org/ac2025/ for updated information.

DISTRICT RESOURCES



TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Creating and improving your church website help your church be more accessible to new people. Websites are invaluable tools as central hubs for information, attracting new members, communicating core values, and providing essential church details like service times, location, and contact information to both current members and newcomers, while also enabling features like online giving, event registration, and access to digital sermon archives, which can significantly enhance engagement and outreach within the community.

The District has worked with the Ridgefield Group to create websites for churches that do not already have a website. It is now time to kick off training with someone in your congregation that is willing to help keep the information on the new website up-to-date. **Training will be held on Thursday, March 20, 6:00pm by Zoom.** Details including the Zoom link will be emailed to you from the District Office.

NOTE: The 2025 District Administrative Training sessions for Pastor-Staff Parish Relations, Trustees, Finance, and Lay Leaders have been posted on the District website. The recordings are available for viewing at www.threenotchd.org/resources/.

FAITH SHARING TRAINING COMING SOON

Have you been in a situation where you wanted to share your faith story with someone but just didn't feel you were prepared to do it? This is a common reason for not sharing your faith story. To help us feel more comfortable and confident, the District is working with Rev. Chip Giessler (lead pastor at Aldersgate UMC in Charlottesville) who has a strong passion to help people share their faith stories. He is preparing a video on faith sharing that can be watched in small groups at your church at your convenience. More information about this exciting opportunity will be available in the April District Dispatch.

DIRECTOR OF TRADITIONAL WORSHIP NEEDED

Mt. Pisgah UMC, located at 1100 Mt. Pisgah Dr., Midlothian, is seeking a part-time director of traditional worship. The primary function of this position is to provide worship leadership through the traditional worship music ministry of MPUMC. This includes regular leadership each Sunday morning for one service as well as for special services or occasions (Lent, Christmas Eve, funerals, weddings, etc.) as indicated by the church calendar or requested by the Lead Pastor. The position is approximately 20 hours per week. For a complete position description, please email Pastor Michael Whaley, michaelwhaley@vaumc.org. Interested persons should send a resume and cover letter to Pastor Michael.



A LENTEN DEVOTIONAL RESOURCE

Our District Superintendent, Rev. Hyo Lee, Ph.D., has published his second book, *Pray This Way*. Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, along with Bishop Joe Pennel and Mrs. Martha Stokes, reviewed the book. Bishop Sue wrote, "If you want to reclaim devotional time and enhance your prayer life, I highly recommend Dr. Hyo Lee's new book. Through his family heritage of prayer, his deep spirituality, and his academic acumen, Dr. Lee guides us in deep reflection on The Lord's Prayer and encourages us to build our prayer lives around it. I am grateful for this re-introduction to The Lord's Prayer and have found it to be a vital stimulus to my prayer life. I think this book will do the same for you."

Both paperback and Kindle versions are available. You can search for *Pray This Way* Hyo Lee on Amazon or click [here](#).

As we prepare for the Lenten season, may this new resource deepen our spiritual reflection and prayer life.





DISTRICT GOALS FOR 2025 & 2026

The District's mission is to be and make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world (Matthew 28:18-20). Its vision is to resource churches for revitalization and launching new expressions of faith (Acts 2:37-47).

Seven goals for the Three Notch'd District (TND) have been developed to help churches continue focusing on the mission and vision. The TND will provide collaborative resources to assist churches/clusters in meeting the following goals by the 2025 Charge Conferences. Because of the importance of these goals and the need to allow time for prayer and discernment on how to implement the goals, the District Leadership Board decided to extend the timeframe of these goals to include calendar year 2026 as well.

Please share and discuss these TND goals with your church as the progress on these goals (especially goal #1 and goal #2) will be reported at the October 2025 Cluster Charge Conferences.

Individual Church Goals:

1. Incorporate one (1) way to help members become effective witnesses for Jesus by providing educational opportunities on how to write and share faith stories, resulting in an increase of 5% in New Professions of Faith district wide.
 - The District will provide training on faith sharing in the spring of 2025, which will be recorded and made available for all churches' use.
 - A list of faith sharing resources will be posted on the District's website.
 - Highlights of how members are sharing their faith will be printed in District newsletters.
2. Implement one (1) way your church will reach the least, the last, and the lost in your community (responses of ways your church would accomplish this were provided at the October 2024 Cluster Charge Conferences, so your church can use this as a starting point).
3. Attend, participate in, or develop an event or activity outside of your church to connect and engage people within your local community.

District Goals:

1. Churches/Clusters are to launch one (1) dinner church, messy church, or other fresh expression (something new).
2. The TND will assist a church(es) to begin one (1) new church plant in the district.
3. The TND will assist a cluster to start at least one (1) collaborative cluster ministry focusing on either youth ministry or community outreach ministry.
4. The TND can help churches strengthen their focus on effective ministry.
 - Ensure core elements (such as Hospitality, Worship, Discipleship, Service, and Generosity) are vital and fruitful
 - Consider using "Shift 2.0" book by Phil Maynard

For more information regarding the District Goals, please contact the District Office, TNDistrict@vaumc.org.

Three Notch'd District Leadership

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Chair & Property Manager - Jim Mallon
District Leadership Board Chair - Don Vaught
Executive Administrator - MaryKaye Cochran
Lay Leader - Elizabeth Farrell
Associate Lay Leaders - George Batten, Susan
Custer
Treasurer - Tina Gudgel
Youth Coordinator (Richmond area) - Andy
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