

**LORD, RENEW US WITH YOUR SPIRIT**  
**2014 VIRGINIA UNITED METHODIST CONFERENCE**

**Friday afternoon**

To begin the conference, laity and clergy met separately. State Conference Lay Leader Warren Harper brought the message, "What is Creative Worship?" concerning how well the worship in church engages all the people. It's important that we are all connected, one in Christ, one with each other, one in ministry to the whole world. The pastor cannot do it all--it involves everyone in the church.

Three youth, Austin Parker, Josh Bowman, and Leigh Wrabley, presented a video on *Fusion 14*, a three-district program led by youth at Eagle Eyrie, that included mission work (Stop Hunger Now) and small groups. The weekend also included worship with the message, "Illuminate" to show that people can spread the word. Some 350 youth participated. One of the speakers, Josh Bowman, was from Journey UMC in Amelia on the Farmville District.

There was a dramatic presentation depicting the need for more chaplains in the correctional centers. Some prisons have only part-time chaplains and some have no chaplain at all. Rev. Paul Beighley (who served this charge in the early 1980's is the part-time chaplain at Greensville Correctional Center.

Bishop Young Jin Cho then gave his episcopal address stressing three goals for the coming year:

- 1) Systemic completion of all things new. This is checking the churches' vital signs (new members, mission giving, professions of faith). Included in this is having the clergy join together in a circle of clergy. The DS in Farmville has done this with the circles throughout the district. The clergy in each district meet together periodically and in the fall, charge conference is held at a church in each circle instead of at each charge. Lunenburg County is a circle and last fall, charge conference was held at Kenbridge UMC.
- 2) Imagine No Malaria project where Virginia conference church members donate their spare change to purchase netting.
- 3) Start three new faith communities.

More than 200 churches in the Virginia conference have promised to be a prayer covenant congregation (spend one hour per day in prayer).

Then churches that are closing this year were recognized, including two churches in our area: Rocky Run in Brunswick County and Pleasant Grove in Mecklenburg County.

**Saturday morning**

It was reported that the conference has been working on meeting the goals of All Things New - Equipping Vital Congregations set out by the 2012 General Conference. The new EVC Web site will eliminate unnecessary reporting and paper work. Then they will need to determine how to use the data to effectively provide much-needed help for churches. The mission is to give churches a tool called Discipleship Circles.

Bishop Robert E. Hayes Jr. from the Oklahoma Area led the late morning worship. He noted that when you are ready to give up and it seems that all you've done has happened and nothing has changed, it is at that point that God performs His best miracles. It is often when God takes over and takes charge.

## **Saturday afternoon**

Saturday afternoon the retiring clergy were recognized. Brant Hayes who served our charge in the mid-1980's was one of the retirees.

The mission office brought the recommendation of supporting the Imagine No Malaria initiative. The conference could save at least 100,000 lives and they are asking each church to take part in the initiative. The bishop asked those in favor stand and everyone in the convention stood. After this, Bishop Cho did the "Happy" dance; and afterwards, he and his wife donated \$3,000 to save 300 lives. An orange fly swatter and birthday card were given out – the fly swatter to kill the mosquitoes and the birthday card give a gift of a life by helping to eradicate Malaria.

## **Saturday evening**

A Service for the Ordering of Ministry was the focus this evening. Rev. Alan Layman was commissioned as a provisional member. Later that evening Rev. Andrew Book was ordained as elder. This year, 27 persons were licensed as local pastors; 22 were commissioned as provisional members; one was ordained a deacon; 13 were ordained as elder; and one had orders recognized.

## **Sunday morning**

Bishop Young Jin Cho's sermon title was "Sing the Lord's Song in a Foreign Land" calling for a renewal and revival of the United Methodist Church. Our Lord is the same yesterday and today and forever.

The Bishop then offered a reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant. Members of the congregation were invited to come to the water.

There were 3 resolutions presented throughout the conference:

- 1) supported increasing the minimum wage which passed.
- 2) asked the annual conference to divest from fossil fuel companies was referred to committee
- 3) asked that the Book of Discipline be changed to remove the statement that homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching was deferred because Bishop Cho has asked for a year of Holy Conferencing around this.

Virginia United Methodist church members donated \$1,100,000 to UMCOR over the past year. It was also reported that people in the Virginia Conference have packaged 2,361,590 meals through Stop Hunger Now. The Bishop reported that so far the conference offering total is \$145,000, which has now increased to \$175,000. Imagine No Malaria has already reached being able to save 1,100 lives. 41,218 Kits for Conference and 8,500 pounds of food were donated.

Throughout the conference we heard testimonies from small churches being revitalized. It can happen. And it's very encouraging to those of us who are members of small congregations. God is present with us always whether we are large or small.

Bishop Cho is very good for Virginia. He has these words in his office, "Work as if everything depended on you. Pray, as if everything depended on God."

*Nancy Turner, Lunenburg Charge Delegate*