

# Sunday Advocate

Virginia United Methodist

Weekly supplement to the *Virginia United Methodist Advocate* newsmagazine

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Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

## Finally, some positive news for apportionment receipts

As the financial books for 2011 are closed, Virginia Conference apportionment receipts exceeded estimates and reversed an eight-year trend of downturns.

Funds received by the conference Treasurer's office totaled 86.83 percent of the apportionment askings, up 2.43 percent from last year, according to the treasurer, David Dommissie. That represents the second largest increase in the past 30 years, he said.

"It was well beyond what I was hoping for," Dommissie said.

The increase was primarily lead by late receipts. "More than \$3 million came in after December 31," Dommissie said.

Dommissie said there were several factors in the positive financial news from the conference office.

"The Cabinet started paying more attention (to churches paying their apportionments)," he said. "Plus the economy has stabilized, or at least we've had a period where it's not gotten worse, there were no major disasters in third world countries ... and we had good weather late in the year. But pastoral leadership, at both the local church and DS level, is most important."

Director of Connectional Ministries the Rev. Marc Brown said that United Methodists in Virginia have also responded positively to conference efforts to reduce spending.

"Keeping the conference budget relatively flat has allowed churches to catch up," Brown said. "People are sensing that we on a conference level have made adjustments that reflect the economic reality we are living in."

The conference office laid off several employees in 2010, and has cut back on most all of its programs.

Brown also credited Bishop Charlene Kammerer's emphasis on stewardship during 2011. She mandated that each district superintendent meet with the conference treasurer to discuss improving apportionment giving.

"She deserves a lot of credit," Brown said.

Published weekly, the electronic *Sunday Advocate* summarizes news events affecting Virginia United Methodists and serves as a link to the in-depth reporting of the *Virginia United Methodist Advocate*, the official newsmagazine of the Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church. To subscribe to the award-winning monthly *Virginia Advocate* newsmagazine, call (804) 521-1110 or 1-800-768-6040, ext. 110; or e-mail <Advocate@vaumc.org>.

**February is Heart Havens Month:** February is the time the Virginia Conference has set aside for the organization to raise awareness in churches about Heart Havens, which provides group homes for adults with intellectual disabilities. Twelve homes are currently operational throughout the Commonwealth, providing supported independence for more than 50 individuals. If you would like a Heart Havens representative to speak to your congregation or group, call 1-877-442-8368 or (804) 237-6097, or visit Heart Havens' Web site at <www.hearthavens.org>.

**Scholarship nominations available:** The conference office of Ministries with Young People is accepting nominations for the Wasena F. Wright Jr. Merit Award for high school seniors who are planning to attend a United Methodist college or university in the fall. Applications are due by **Feb. 27** (note that the due date for the applications is a change from past years). For more information, contact the conference director, the Rev. Derrick Parson, at (804) 521-1179 or <derrickparson@vaumc.org>.

**Virginia Wesleyan adds engineering option:** United Methodist-related Virginia Wesleyan College has recently entered into an agreement with Old Dominion University that provides students the opportunity to earn both a Bachelor of Science degree from Virginia Wesleyan and a master's degree in civil, environmental, mechanical, electrical, computer, aerospace engineering or modeling and simulation from Old Dominion.

**Still openings for summer youth choir:** Voices of Youth is still accepting applications for both youth and adult volunteers. The choir will travel to Joplin, Mo., for a mission experience, then throughout the conference to share their stories and music. Trip dates are June 27 through July 15. For details, contact Jennifer Dixon at (757) 348-7084 or <coordinator@voyva.org>. Applications can be found at <www.voyva.org>.

**Wesleyan Building Brothers training offered:** Pastors and one or two men among the leadership of each church are invited to participate in the third annual "Pastors' Overview: An Introduction to the Wesleyan Building Brothers Process" to be held at the United Methodist Center in Glen Allen on Feb. 10. The event is to acquaint pastors and laymen to this process of spiritual transformation. For more information, contact Larry Burian at (804) 453-4004 or <wbb@vacumm.org>.

**Quote of the Week:** "My prayer is that we may know God's embrace is strong enough, wide enough and tender enough to carry the important conversations that are put before us." – *The Rev. Stephanie Hixon, co-executive director of the JustPeace Center for Mediation and Conflict Transformation, speaking during the recent pre-General Conference News Briefing in Tampa.*

Unless indicated, all news compiled courtesy of the *Virginia Advocate*, United Methodist News Service, or the United Methodist *Newscope*.