



DECEMBER CIRCUIT

VOLUME 1/NUMBER 12

The West Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church

*The WORD became
flesh and blood,
and moved into
the neighborhood.*

John 1:14

Advent and Christmas

It's not about us!

By Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball

It's not about us! This Christianity thing is not about us. Advent and the upcoming Christmas season reminds us of this. The most important part of the Christian ministry and mission in which we are involved isn't the Christian person or congregation, but the Christ!

It's Jesus, the incarnate Son of God and our Savior, who calls us to go into the world – not for ourselves but to make disciples, baptize, teach! Why? Well, maybe that's the question we fail to ponder, the question out of which we fail to fully live.

Why does Jesus send us and why are we to go? Well, because God made each one of us in God's image – an image of Love – a love so strong it will not let go, a love so powerful it can transform the most grievous of sinners, a love so gripping that nothing can separate us from it. Why are we to go? Because God wants us to spread the Good News of God's love and God's desire that each person hear and receive the invitation to peace, hope, joy, love, and life through Christ.

Jesus prays in John 17:18, "As you (God) sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world." So, like Christ, we are sent into the world and go into this world to be part of God's redemptive mission and share the good news of God's saving love.

Such a sending should be awe-inspiring, whether our particular sending includes a change in geography and culture, or a fresh realization that we are to go and shine Christ's light among people who have yet to know Christ or those who have said yes to Christ, but are not yet walking the road to discipleship.

The Advent season reminds us that we are sent as representatives of the one born in Bethlehem and

crucified at Calvary. We are sent to announce with all we are — with all we think say and do — that God sent Jesus, God's son so that all who come to believe in him may have everlasting life. We are sent to say and show that Jesus was sent into the world to save sinners. What we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus and the good news about him. We are not the message, but the messengers. Unlike Christ who is both message and messenger, both divine and human, we go only as messengers who both benefit and bear witness to the saving love of God through Christ, while seeking to grow into the likeness of Christ.

Christian mission exists only because the Message still needs to be told.

Incarnation is not about what we are to do, but about what has been done for us. So in this Advent season, let us give attention to the Jesus whose mission showed us God and accomplished our eternal salvation. Jesus, sent into this work is the great *missio Dei* (mission of God). What do we learn from that mission that we are called to go and to share?

Well let's look at Jesus. Jesus lived a life of involvement. He was involved with everyone, from the priests and rabbis to the tax collectors and the prostitutes; from the rich to the poor.

Jesus lived where he could see human sin, hear the bad and sacrilegious language used by people, see diseases and observe mortality, poverty and filth.

And Jesus didn't stay away from these people or their situations. Instead he taught people by coming alongside them, becoming one of them and sharing their environment and their problems.



Wow! This, I suspect is difficult to hear for many who call themselves Christian. How can we effectively minister to a lost world if we are not in it? How can we reach the unaware and the poor if we are not with them? How can our churches understand deprived areas and people if the church is not spending time in these places and with these people? How can we be salt and light if we ourselves don't have any effective contacts and relationships with those who are in need of transformation in their lives?

How can we truly carry on Christ's incarnational ministry without coming alongside people and sharing their experience of life at every level. How can we carry out the Great Commission, to Go, if we find that we are unable to put our knees under the table with those who are in need, those who have lost their way, those who are addicted, afflicted, hopeless and living in ways that kill their spirit and deny their value?

This Great Commission to which Jesus sends us, it can be glorious and it can be challenging. It can stop us in our tracks or it can be life changing for us and others. Advent and Christmas remind us that we cannot in fact fulfill the journey on which Christ has sent us unless we are truly and wholeheartedly first seeking Christ for ourselves.

If the principle theme of our lives is not preparing for Jesus, searching for Jesus, worshiping Jesus, enjoying God in him, and being freshly astounded by his grace toward us sinners, we have no good business striving to bring others into an experience that we ourselves aren't enjoying. How can we talk about the peace, hope, joy, and love of Christ if we are not allowing to Christ transform our lives?

Year after year, Advent and Christmas call us to think of ourselves as those who prepare, seek, and worship Jesus and to do this before anything else. Mission is truly important but to sing Christ's song without truly understanding why we sing it, keeps us from effectively reaching the very persons who need the life that only Christ can give. Just going through the motions, doing the right things, is not enough.

We must once again discover our first love. As we re-discover that first love we, no doubt, will sing Christ's song in this world with such love, passion, urgency, inspiration and hope, that people, with tears in their eyes, will come to know that they are loved, they are valued, and that we will come alongside them, journey with them, so that together we all grow more fully into the likeness of Christ and carry on Christ's mission. May it be so!



Making Mission Go Further:

Global Ministries

of the West Virginia Annual Conference

By Pat Mick, Chair, Board of Global Ministries

Have you given food to Tyrand Cooperative Ministries in Mill Creek for its food pantry? Have you donated money to Scott's Run Settlement House in Osage to help provide weekend backpacks for hungry children? Have you volunteered in the Thrift Store at Heart and Hand House in Philippi? Do you participate in Undie Sunday? Have you helped to make apple butter at Burlington?

And what do you do for the other agencies: Community Development Outreach Ministries, Ebenezer Community Outreach Center, House of the Carpenter, Upshur Parish House, and our church and community workers Gayle Lesure and Amy Purdom?

Financial donations, volunteering, providing non-perishable food, and prayers are all crucial to the ministries of our conference agencies which are being highlighted in this December issue of the *Circuit*.

My personal experience with financial giving is that many times the agencies can buy needed food at a lower cost by purchasing in quantity through such outlets as the Mountaineer Food Bank or other discount/wholesale stores. Therefore, I feel like my money goes further.

Our conferece is blessed to have agencies dedicated to making a difference in the lives of families, parents, children, grandparents, and neighbors. It has been my privilege to work with these agencies and to advocate for them.

I pray that everyone in our wonderful conference will support all of these projects in as many ways as possible. Giving of your time, talents and resources is very important to them. And it will richly bless you! "Little is much when God is in it!"

Pat Mick is the Chair of Board of Global Ministries, and may be reached at pdmick47@hotmail.com.



A *Note* from our Mission Coordinator

I've been a long-time member of United Methodist Women at the district and conference levels, and I have had the privilege of participating in the Mission Encounter work weekends at each of the seven Mission Projects in our Annual Conference.

These encounters happen yearly on a rotating basis, which has allowed me to visit each Project at least twice. It wasn't until I visited the sites that I truly realized the wonderful work they do on behalf of women, children, and youth and for the communities they serve. Some of the services our Mission Projects provide include food pantries, clothes closets, and day care centers.

As the new Missions Coordinator for the West Virginia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, I am now getting acquainted with the directors of each project site, and I am even more awed by the work they do and the compassion they have for those they serve.

I am thankful to be a small part of this loving, caring fellowship.

Joyce Board
Mission Coordinator

Joyce Board may be contacted at joyonboard@frontier.com.

Jan Richardson, United Methodist pastor, author and artist, painted the piece that is used on the cover and throughout this publication. It is called **Magnificat**, and is based on the text in Luke 1:46b-55. The Magnificat, or the Cantic of Mary, is a song in praise of the God who turns the world upside down.

This is what Jan has to say about the season of Advent:

God has a fondness for what is fragile. This means us. Advent tells us that God came to us—and comes to us still—with complete vulnerability. Christ is to be found among what is fragile—including us, ourselves, when pain and loss have left us feeling less than whole. In coming to us as a child, Christ chooses to take on our human vulnerability. We see this not only in his birth but also, with awful clarity, at the other end of his life, when on the cross he shows us the lengths he is willing to go to in order to enter into our experience.

The mission sites that are profiled in this month's Circuit represent some of the many ways that we, as the United Methodist Church in the West Virginia Conference, seek to accompany people along the way, especially people who are fragile. It is our advent prayer that we allow Christ to enter into our own vulnerability and allow us to extend love, hope, peace and joy to those most in need.

For more about Jan visit: janrichardson.com. Or her advent devotion blog: Adventdoor.com.

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Burlington United Methodist Family Services

By Michael Price, Director

*"He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to act **justly**, to love **mercy**, and to walk **humbly** with your God." --Micah 6:8*

We at Burlington United Methodist Family Services, Inc. know what is good. God gives us guidance every day and we take God's lead and provide services to hurting children and families. Our services continue to grow as we add more programs and hire additional staff. Just this summer, we have added more Right from the Start, Safe at Home, and Parents as Teachers programs. We are reaching more children and families than we ever have. This is **good**.

Burlington United Methodist Family Services provides superior services to every child in need, regardless of who they are, what they have done, or where they live. We empower them to fulfill their spiritual, academic, personal, and professional dreams and passions. We want them to succeed in life and to see that God is the answer. All that we do is done in the name of Jesus. This is done **justly**.

Burlington United Methodist staff performs its tasks with compassion and forgiveness. We follow in God's ways in the way we treat people. Our deeds and prayers are done with Godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. This is **mercy**.

We have been able to accomplish many great things at Burlington. Over the past 100+ years, we have made a positive difference in people's lives. Our programs have grown, our facilities have improved, and our faith is strong. We do all these things with your help of prayers, money, and time. We do all these things because we walk with God. "All things are possible to him that believes." This is being **humble**.

God's blessings to you and yours,

Michael L. Price
President/CEO

Please take time to visit our updated website:
www.bumfs.org

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Burlington Apple Butter Festival 2016

The Burlington Apple Butter Festival is one of the largest fundraising events for BUMFS.



Services May Change but Faith & Love Stay Strong at *Tyrand*

By Belinda Toms, Director

I have seen a lot of changes at Tyrand in the 30 years I have been here. Changes in the property and building; changes in volunteers; changes in industry in our area with some closing and new ones opening; and changes in our programs to keep up with society. One thing that has not changed over the years is the faith and love showed to the less fortunate from our staff and volunteers. Having only two full time employees, one part time and one seasonal employee we are indebted to over 160 volunteers who help make our ministry work. Our Noah's Ark Thrift Store is operated by volunteers who love being here. The laughter and the compassion shown to others is very humbling. The proceeds from the Thrift Store helps to fund our programs.

The Christmas Store Committee known as the "Crazy Ladies" works making sock monkeys, baby quilts and other crafts to raise money to purchase toys for Christmas to be given to the less fortunate families in our area. The ladies work hard quilting and sewing all year for this project.

In 2009 we took a step into the unknown by setting up an E-bay account. Since then our e-bay sales have helped fund our programs greatly. About four years ago, Pamela G. from New York, purchased an item from our e-bay listing which was under \$3.00. When we mail out our items that sell on e-bay we always add our brochure. Who knew that this lady would give back to Tyrand so much more. Every Christmas since Pamela purchased that item she has requested that all her guests coming to her yearly Hanukah Party bring a new toy for Tyrand. We usually receive eight to 15 boxes of new toys from her. She also sends new coffee pots, toasters, mixers for us to give to families who are starting over.

Just three weeks ago we received 34 boxes of stuff from one of their storage units. Most of the items go to the Thrift Store to be sold. If one lady can make this much of a difference for one mission project we would never have to worry about funding our programs if more people were like her. Mission work does not have any boundaries and emergencies do not always happen during working hours. I am blessed by having staff and volunteers who help no matter what time of day it is.

As we prepare for our Thanksgiving and Christmas Programs please keep Tyrand's staff and volunteers and especially the less fortunate individuals and families we serve in your prayers.

Belinda may be reached at tcm@frontiernet.net.



For nearly a century,

Scott's Run Settlement House

adapts to community's needs

By Shay Petitto, Director

Scott's Run Settlement House (SRSB) was founded in 1922 by the members of the Women's Home Missionary Society of the current-day Wesley United Methodist Church in Morgantown.

This group of incredible women saw the opportunity to help the new families in the area by offering English classes and health education. Nestled right outside of Morgantown, West Virginia, in the small community of Osage, the building that stands today was built in 1927 as a permanent structure for the people of the community to turn to in times of need.

As World War I ended, the demand for coal declined drastically, mines began to close, and many residents lost their jobs. Most were confronted with money shortages, health problems and sub-standard education.

The Women's Home Missionary Society continued to serve the community during this time and started other programs that provided spiritual education, expanded health services, and even recreation to the residents of the area.

Nearly 100 years later, the mission of SRSB remains true to the original philosophy and purpose. The organization has grown and adapted to the changing needs of the community, and now focuses on food insecurity. Serving nearly 10,000 people each year, SRSB is one of the largest non-profit agencies in Monongalia County. More than 600 people are provided a week's worth of groceries each month through the Food Pantry. SRSB prides itself on not only providing canned food, but also fresh produce, dairy, meat, hygiene, and cleaning products.

In addition, more than 40 babies are served each month through the Baby Closet program, which provides diapers, wipes, food, and clothing to those in need.

The Backpack Feeding Program serves more than 750 children in eight schools by providing breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks for the weekend. Seasonal outreach programs serve more than 2,000 people for Easter, Back to School, Thanksgiving, and Christmas by providing food, school supplies, and gifts to those in need.

None of the work SRSB is able to do would be possible without the unwavering support of the United Methodist Church. The Church continues to be SRSB's largest supporter in both monetary and in-kind donations. Looking forward to the next 100 years, SRSB strives to continue the mission of its founders and provide for those in need for the glory of God.

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Photo of Settlement House - estimated 1950's



West Virginia University Retirees pack food bags for the Backpack Feeding Program



Volunteer packs pet food for a Food Pantry client

Miles of Smiles at *Ebenezer!*

By Celes Sheffield, Director

As you enter Ebenezer Community Outreach Center, you are greeted with a hearty “Good morning!” and a broad smile. You can hear the hustle and bustle of tiny feet, little voices, crying, and laughter. Upon entering one of the classrooms, you can see children playing with blocks, animals, and dolls. Kids are writing their names while listening to “The Farmer in the Dell.” This is the daily life of Ebenezer.

Located in Huntington, Ebenezer is a mission project of the WV Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Our philosophy is to help children grow in their self-esteem as well as their relationships with others. We also seek to empower people to conquer economic conditions, literacy, and spiritual hopelessness.

Every day, we serve approximately 100 low-income working people and families. We strive to provide a safe and nurturing environment for all of those we serve.

The programs we currently offer include our state licensed childcare/afterschool program, Baby Bassinette, School Supplies, Christmas Angel, Family Enrichment Center, Clothing Closet, 4-H, and an art program sponsored by the Huntington Museum of Art.

Our motto, “Reaching Out To Others,” speaks for itself. Because of your continuing support, we can provide a safe learning environment for children ages 2-12, and give parents a place to communicate with each other. We can offer children the opportunity to enjoy swimming, bowling, movies, and visits to local parks. We can organize visits to local art centers and to a hands-on interactive museum. We can help

kids participate in a cheer/dance camp. And we can provide clothing to the community.

Nothing is more gratifying than the smile on a child’s face after receiving a backpack full of school supplies, a simple hug from parents for taking care of their children, a thank-you note from a new mother who received a basket full of items to help with her new baby, or a Christmas card thanking you for being a sponsor for someone’s children.

We are grateful for the support of people and churches from throughout the West Virginia Annual Conference, and we continue to pursue our mission with love and joy.

Celes is the Exexecutive Director of Ebenezer Community Outreach Center, and may be reached at ebencomout@gmail.com.





"We strive to provide a safe and nurturing environment for all of those we serve."

Empowerment Through Transformation:

House of Carpenter serves by equipping

By Rev. Dr. Michael Linger, Director

Located on Wheeling Island in Ohio County, the House of the Carpenter is engaged in traditional ministries of mercy: food pantry, backpack program, thrift store, utility assistance, and home repair projects. These programs serve more than 1,200 people each week.

While those services will always be important, HOC is now working to develop more ministries of transformation—seeking to empower our neighbors as they develop skills to improve their own lives. Some of the offerings include cooking classes, financial management classes, the Building Bridges after school program, a literacy camp, and Kids in the Kitchen.

One of our highlights this year was a pilot pre-work program which brought in seven middle school students four days per week for four weeks during the summer. The first step was to learn basic employment skills such as showing up on time, dressing for the job at hand, learning to work with other people, and being accountable for what you do.

Some days the group helped around HOC in the thrift store, food pantry, or on a home repair project. Other days they shadowed various careers and vocations throughout the Ohio Valley. They visited a construction site, a broadcast studio, an attorney's office (including the court room), a hospital, a fire department, a military recruiter, Northern Community College, West Liberty University, and many other places of employment and education. In each setting, they learned about the vocation and the training/education necessary to work in the field.

One of the best learning experiences was a visit to a local car dealership. Our partner for the day

walked the participants through the work of car sales, mechanical repair, and the parts and auto body departments. He then took them to the sales lot and invited them to select the car they would like to have. Once selected, the staff walked them through the process of applying to buy a car, including what a car payment would look like. The staff then showed them how much the payment would increase if they had poor credit. They also explained to the group ways to avoid developing poor credit.



Another eye-opening experience was a class on money management presented by a vice president from a local bank. The class included basics of balancing a checkbook, opening a savings account, paying bills, and managing credit.

The participants were also helped to develop their own resumés, and, with the help of a local Human Resource Department, conducted mock job interviews.

The results were phenomenal. The program began with only one of the seven feeling interested in college, but with no idea of which major or job to pursue. At the end, all seven were considering a college education. They indicated desires to know more about broadcast journalism, the legal field (either as a police officer or an attorney), medical careers (“the hospital fascinated me!”), and helping others learn what they had learned.

One of the boys in the program came in with the goal of playing professional sports. After a discussion on injuries and surgeries, he commented that he was still going to pursue that career, but he needed a backup plan...perhaps something in medicine. Learning about potential injuries caught his attention and he wanted to know more. He also realized, as he put it, "My grades stink so I will have to do some work there."

One of the girls had a habit of looking at her feet when she spoke. After doing her interview and working through the program, she commented on her exit interview that the biggest thing she learned was that, "when I talk with people I should look them in the eye, and what I have to say is important enough that they should be listening to me."

A couple of the students have also adjusted their freshman class schedules to include some STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math)-oriented classes.

Of course, with any job there is a payday. At the end of the program the participants received a stipend of just under \$500 for their participation. Our only request was that they open an account in



a local bank through the WV Saves program, which means the bank will not charge them any fees for the account. We specified that some of the money had to be placed into a savings account, but we didn't specify how much. Four of

the seven deposited the entire check. One student kept \$10, another kept \$20 and the third kept \$30. He almost seemed apologetic as he explained that he was keeping so much because he was traveling to play in a baseball tournament that weekend and it would be the first time he would not have to ask his mother for money to go.

We believe this ministry is truly transformational, and all seven participants want to come back next summer to help mentor the next group to go through the program. We anticipate that we will repeat this program in the summer of 2017.

We spent \$5,000 to pay the stipends, provide work shirts for the participants, offer meals each day, and cover transportation costs. It is a small investment to help a child find a passion for something that gives meaning to their education, that inspires them to do their work in school, and gives them hope for a future. It seems a very reasonable cost to open a door that might help these seven children move beyond poverty in the next 10 years.

We look at this pre-work program as an investment in the lives of children and youth. It is also something that a local church could commit to doing for youth in their own setting. If you would like more information on the process, you can contact the House of the Carpenter and we will help you get started!

Mike Linger may be reached at mlinger@houseofthecarpenter.com.

In January 2017, the House of the Carpenter will launch a Leadership Academy for high school students. The Academy will be a year-long program on learning, developing leadership skills, life skills, and good decision-making skills. It will include a mentoring aspect as well as a service component.

Upshur Parish House: Powered by Prayers, Building Relationships

By Rev. Alicia Randolph Rapking, Director

Twenty-five years ago or so Sarah and Marvin Carr, and the churches of the Upshur Cooperative Parish, had a vision for a place that would house Crosslines, Inc., a utility and food emergency assistance program for the low income families of Upshur County. Having a central place for this ministry meant that Crosslines could operate at no cost and provide more help for its neighbors. Thus was born the Upshur Parish House.

Over the years, the ministries of the Parish House have grown to include a thrift store, a home repair program, community gardens, Bible studies, mission trips, and much, much more. We

work in partnership with all the United Methodist Churches throughout the Upshur Cooperative Parish, as well as churches of all denominations in the county and beyond.

We do what most mission projects do: assist in emergency situations for our neighbors. Although the total figures for 2016 will not be available until the end of the year, Crosslines, Inc. will exceed the amount of help given last year. There will be nearly 10,000 assists that will include more than 3,000 food packages and 1,700 clothing vouchers. We will spend more than \$65,000 in utility assistance, \$7,000 in housing assistance, and \$13,000 in transient and homeless assistance.

In addition, we will give out nearly 1,400 holiday meal packages. We will spend more than \$26,000 on food for the food pantry and the meat for the holiday packages, and our total cash payout will be somewhere around \$135,000. We continue to offer hot, well-cooked meals from volunteers and church and civic groups who believe that it is important for everyone to have food for sustenance and fellowship around tables. And on Christmas Day, somewhere around

80 volunteers will help prepare and serve more than 400 meals.

Our other programs are busy as well. Through the clothes closet we provide very low cost or free clothing and necessities to the community. Through our home repair program we make much-needed improvements for our neighbor families' homes and provide an experience for work teams and neighbors to work in partnership and forge relationships. We offer programs in community health through the leadership of our AmeriCorps

member. We offer healthy cooking classes and basic budgeting classes. We also work with other agencies in our community daily to provide help and assistance for the whole of Upshur County.

Our staff and volunteers are amazing and dedicated. We have six passionate part-time staff members and approximately 25 regular volunteers working with the Crosslines Help Desk, food pantry, and clothes closet. Our volunteer base expands during November and December as we distribute holiday meal packages and host the Christmas Day dinner.



Each Monday and Friday we offer meals, which are cooked by a number of church and civic groups and individuals, which also adds to our volunteer base. All in all we have more than 130 staff and volunteers who work with us throughout the year. I am grateful for their tireless efforts and for the amount of compassion that each of them brings to their work. Our staff and volunteers are a blessing to our neighbors.

Among all the ministries that we provide, one of the most exciting programs in which we participate is the Community Partner program through the Center for Community Engagement at West Virginia Wesleyan College. Through the CCE, Service Scholars are placed in community sites to offer volunteer service. We have six students working in the food pantry and at the clothes closet. During their time with us, they learn about everything that we do. The both become proficient at their various jobs and at seeing needs, offering suggestions, and making things happen.

Each student that volunteers with us gets to know some of our neighbors by name and learns a little bit about their families. It is exciting to see the students engage with our families and see things from a different point of view. Our neighbor families change the lives of our service scholars in many ways, helping these young people to understand the Gospel a little better. They see our neighbor families as children of God who have a lot to offer, even though their resources are scarce. It is exciting to hear the service scholars and our neighbors talking together and laughing together and sharing together a moment of life.

I am grateful to the WV Annual Conference for the prayer, volunteer, and financial support that we receive. I will also take this time to remind you all that you are invited to join us for our famous salad lunches during Annual Conference!

Alicia may be contacted at aliciarapking@gmail.com.



Colton Moor, WVWC Service Scholar Student Site Leader



WVWC student Daniel Scheiner hard at work

CDOM Partners with Churches, Schools, Communities to Love Neighbors, Make Friends

By Vicki Ballengee, Director

Community Development Outreach Ministries was founded in 1974 and is the mission project of the Midland South District of the West Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. Our mission at CDOM is to demonstrate the love of Christ as we seek to alleviate poverty, oppression, and injustice in all of its forms.

Heart & Hand South Charleston has been helping families in South Charleston, St Albans, Dunbar, Institute, and Alum Creek for more than 50 years. We provide assistance to those at risk of losing their utilities or their homes. We help with food, clothing, diapers, formula, and household items. We also support those who want to help themselves by purchasing their work boots or nonskid shoes.

We were blessed this year when the trustees of St. John United Methodist Church chose to donate their former day care building to our mission project. The community rallied around us, and volunteers painted the 8,000-square-foot structure in two weeks. Many



groups contributed their time and talents to quickly bring this project together. On September 15, 2016, the CDOM office, the Heart & Hand Thrift Store, Food Pantry, and Social Service offices moved to 212 D Street, South Charleston.

Heart & Hand Putnam County opened on January 20, 2015. Winfield United Methodist Church graciously provides us with free office space, utilities, and internet service. Our part-time program manager serves the impoverished with utility or rent assistance, diapers, baby formula, and emergency food.

Coal Branch Heights Community Center was a free after school program that we permanently closed September 30, 2016, due to a change in the needs of the community. CDOM proudly served the Coal Branch Heights community for more than half a century.

Eastern Kanawha County benefitted in April and July of 2016 as we partnered with East Bank United Methodist Church. Roncalli High School of Indianapolis, IN, has a 20-plus-year history of working through CDOM to providing weatherization, home repairs, and flood cleanup in our area. They provided much needed repairs to homes in the East Bank area as well as at Chesapeake United Methodist Church. They arrived just after the flooding this summer and helped with clothing and supplies distributed at Elkview. They also helped clear old landscaping from our new building.



Boone County schools are suffering financially from the loss of coal industry tax revenue and jobs. We are partnering with Ramage Elementary School in Danville to provide needed resources for the students. We provided 10 large boxes of school supplies, and we are transferring the Coal Branch Heights Labels for Education points to give Ramage Elementary \$450 in Visa gift cards.

We are currently preparing for the annual Christmas food baskets and toys programs. Through the leadership of the Heart & Hand locations in South Charleston and Putnam County, more than 900 people are expected to benefit from Christmas food baskets, and 900 children will receive toys and clothing. We collaborate with the community to assist families suffering from job loss, substance abuse, physical and mental disabilities, and other unfortunate situations. We unite those who have much with those who have little.

We were thankful for St. Paul, Morris Memorial, and First United Methodist churches, along with other members of the community, that participated in our annual Kay Hall Hike for Hunger on October 2, 2016. The total amount raised this year was \$2,157.

While we receive grant funding for our emergency assistance programs, we could not deliver the services our communities so desperately need without the support of the Midland South District churches. We are grateful for the financial support and prayers of the West Virginia Annual Conference. We ask for your continuing support as we seek to help those in most need.

Vicki Ballengee is the Executive Director of CDOM, and may be reached at executivedirector@wvcdom.net.



Relationships Are the Heart of *Heart and Hand House*

By Brenda Hunt, Director

For more than 50 years Heart and Hand House Inc., has ministered to the needs of low-income families in Barbour County, WV. Though much has changed since our humble beginnings in 1965 as a two-year, \$50,000 grant project of the Women's Society of World Service of the EUB Church, our mission has remained the same: to minister to the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional needs of families and individuals in crisis. In a rural county that continues to be plagued by poverty and related issues, our work is as relevant and necessary today as it was when the ministry began.

In the book "When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor and Yourself," authors Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert suggest that poverty is not merely the lack of something such as food, shelter, or clothing; rather, it is the result of broken relationships—with God, with self, with others, or with the creation.

They suggest, therefore, that alleviating poverty is a ministry of reconciliation...a mending of broken relationships. It goes beyond providing financial assistance or tangible goods. It's about loving others with the same love God has shown to us. It's about transforming something broken into something beautiful.

While Heart and Hand programs do provide food, clothing, shelter, and other critical needs, each encounter also offers an opportunity to engage and build relationships. In all our services areas, staff often get the opportunity to pray, share their faith, or otherwise provide words of hope and encouragement.

- In our food and baby pantries, staff members do more than just hand out boxes of food or diapers. They listen, encourage, and help connect people with other resources they may need.

- Our thrift stores encourage self-sufficiency and promote self-esteem by providing a welcoming environment and an affordable place to shop.

- The Community Garden Market not only offers an income opportunity for those who have a green thumb, but also encourages healthier food choices and provides information on how to prepare healthy, affordable meals.

- Our home repair and construction program gives families an opportunity to participate in the work that is being done, giving them some ownership of the process and encouraging them to form bonds of friendship with the volunteers who have come to serve.

- The backpack-feeding program lets children know that someone cares and wants them to focus on doing their best in school rather than worrying about whether they have enough to eat.

- Our Christmas baskets provide food and other items to encourage and enable families to enjoy holiday time together.



*Volunteers from AB Uni
cleaning items to go wit*

While our work is often measured by the number of food boxes we distribute from the food pantry, how many articles of clothing we give away through the thrift stores, or how much is spent on repairing homes or constructing a new house, the real measure of what we do is found in the impact of relationships that are built with those who come through our doors. It's a measure that's difficult to calculate at times. We are often the seed planters or, perhaps, the waterers that the Apostle Paul speaks about in 1 Corinthians 3:6, through a kind word spoken, a prayer of encouragement, or a welcoming smile. When we are privileged to see the fruit produced by living out Jesus' command to love our neighbors, it's at that moment we find that we are blessed as much, or more, than those we serve.

Brenda can be reached at brenda@heartandhandhouse.org.



Volunteers from Cornwall UMC (Cornwall, PA) work on new home construction



Volunteers help assemble Christmas Baskets



Young volunteers help stock food pantry shelves

Alderson Ministerial Association

Uniting to Serve: Providing Help, Hope, and Opportunity

By Rev. Rick Duncan, Alderson Charge

We see ministry many places in the West Virginia Conference. Although not an official Mission Site, Rev. Rick Duncan shares with us how the Alderson Ministerial Association changes lives in his community.

The Alderson Ministerial Association is made up of six ministers in the Alderson area. Dr. Bill Bryan, pastor of Old Greenbrier Baptist; Lanny Howe, pastor of Alderson Presbyterian; Anthony Carter, pastor of River of Life Church of God; Retired UMC pastor Sam Groves; Pastor Kathy Keadle of the Alderson Charge; Rich Lohmeyer of the Lutheran Church; and Pastor Rick Duncan of the Alderson Charge. Located in the Greenbrier District, Alderson is a small town of about 1,100 people. And even though we are a small community, we are doing great things in the name of Jesus.

The AMA has several ministries that are reaching the least of these and making disciples for the transformation of the world. They are The AMA Thrift Store, The AMA Food Pantry, The AMA Work Team Program, and The AMA benevolence Program. Our staff consists only of a bookkeeper, who keeps track of our accounts and expenditures. Every pastor has a role in the success of AMA, and we have found that not one of us is as good as all of us. We work collectively to reach the burdened and neglected in our community. We take our responsibilities to reach the least and the lost very seriously.

The AMA Thrift Store is the engine that runs our ministries. All profits go back to the community, helping us do everything from paying utility bills to buying food for our pantry. We have several volunteers that run the thrift store. Forest Thomas oversees daily operations. Forest makes sure that the donated items are separated and in good

condition and then put on display, and makes sure that the money we receive is deposited each day. The volunteers take their jobs very seriously and show up on time each day Tuesday through Saturday. The Thrift Store receives about \$60,000-\$65,000 each year. After expenses are paid, the rest of the money goes toward our ministries.

The AMA Food Pantry is open on the third Friday of the month and serves 100-140 people each month. Our annual budget is \$12,000, but usually exceeds that amount. Like the Thrift Store, volunteers do all of the work. Brian Derouen, who works through Bethlehem Farms and runs the Alderson Prison Hospitality House, takes care of the day-to-day operations of the pantry. His tasks are to see that the groceries are bought, packaged, and distributed in a timely manner, and to see to that there is a good variety of food available each month.

The AMA Work Team Project brings work teams to our community each summer to do home repairs. We usually host 4-5 work teams annually, and the pastors in the AMA lead the teams. AMA supplies meals and housing at \$275 per person for the week. Teams are housed at the Alderson Community Center, where a full service kitchen allows us to prepare and store their food. We get referrals for home repairs by placing applications in each church and in strategic locations in our town. Each year we do thousands of dollars of repairs for needy recipients.

The AMA benevolence hotline processes hundreds of requests each year for power bills, water bills, rent, etc. Each successful applicant can receive a maximum of \$100 once in an 18-month period.

“As you have done to the least of these, you have done also to me.” Our goal is to be the church, the body of Christ, loving and visible in our communities. For more information call 304-647-8119, or email rickaduncan@gmail.com. If you would like to do a one- or two-day mission trip to Alderson this winter, or a week in the spring, summer, or fall, please give us a call or send us an e-mail.

God bless,
Pastor Rick Duncan



*The AMA has purchased a building in the Alderson area to house our ministries. The name of the building is **The Center of Hope**. The second floor is dedicated to Tammy Skaggs and named **Tammy's Second Story**. Tammy was a very civic-minded woman in our community whose life was cut short by cancer. We are in the process of finishing our building and need work teams who can help us complete it. We will have a carpenter at the building each Tuesday-Saturday from January-March, and we are seeking those who are willing to give their time, talents, gifts, service, and witness so the AMA can do more ministry to serve the needy in our community.*

Church & Community Workers

Enhance Mission Efforts in W.Va.

By Rev. Joe Webb

Among the lesser-known, less publicized ministry work in the West Virginia Annual Conference is being carried out, often quietly, by a group of United Methodist missionaries who are living out their calling to serve as change agents in local communities.

Church and Community Workers are commissioned missionaries serving under the General Board of Global Ministries. There are currently three Church and Community Workers in our Annual Conference. Amy Purdom serves at the House of the

Carpenter in Wheeling. Gayle Lesure serves in the Greater Clarksburg Cooperative Parish. Joanne Davis is the most recent addition and just began serving in the Southern District as of Dec. 1.

The ministry of Church and Community Workers dates back to 1885, when “Rural Workers” (mostly women) began serving rural communities, first in Oklahoma, and later in West Virginia. It is the longest-serving US-based mission group in our denomination. Today, 30 people are serving as Church and Community Workers throughout the nation.

Gayle describes their work as “kaleidoscopic” as they “seek to be the transforming power of the love of God for the people and communities they serve.” Among the fields where you might find these dedicated missionaries at work are immigration,

education, nursing, nutrition and health, housing, and economic development. They are placed in locations ranging from Appalachia to Alaska and from Native American communities to prisons to the North Dakota oil fields.



(Left) Gayle Lesure
(Right) Amy Purdom

“Wherever we are placed, we serve as bridges between the church and community by building relationships and partnerships that evolve into distinct and often unique ministries,” Gayle shared.

Mission funding and compensation for

Church and Community Workers come through a four-way partnership between the General Board of Global Ministries, the Annual Conference, the local area, and mission projects. The United Methodist Women are among the most generous benefactors to their ministries.

For information on how to become a Church and Community Worker, or to learn how to request a project in your area, visit the GBGM website at <http://www.umcmmission.org/Get-Involved/Missionary-Service/Church-and-Community-Worker>.

A *Note* from the Editors...

It has been a privilege and, frankly, a lot of fun to edit this issue of the monthly Circuit. As a new Provisional Deacon in our Annual Conference, working through this month's content gave me a deeper appreciation both for the mission work happening in our various districts and for the people who are doing it.

The relationships being built with people and communities through our Mission Projects and the churches who partner with them are foundational to fulfilling our vision to be a Christ-led, spiritual breath of fresh air that changes the world. I hope these articles will serve as a catalyst for you and your congregations to support our Mission Projects and associated ministries with your prayers, gifts, and service.

Shalom,
Joe Webb



Scarlett Kellerman sharing the Wellspring Ministries story with Bishop Sandra.



All hands on deck to help BUMFS at Apple Butter time.

When I was brand new to the West Virginia Annual Conference, I visited Wellspring Ministry in Rupert and was inspired by the outreach that is done there. When I told JF Lacaria about my experience, he smiled and then challenged me to visit all of the mission sites that are supported by the conference.

And so I did just that. I drove hundreds of miles through some of the most beautiful countryside I have ever seen. Each stop led me to conversations with deeply committed Christ followers who are engaged in meaningful ministries of hospitality, healing and hope. For a detailed journal about my travels visit www.wvumc.org/News.

This issue of the **Monthly Circuit** was born out of gratitude for the commitment of the West Virginia

Annual Conference to equip and transform people and places for God's mission. We hope that as you read these stories you will be inspired to volunteer and support our mission sites. We also invite you to share this issue with others in your faith community as our conference looks ahead to our COME (Celebration of Missions Event) in April.

There is much yet to be done in our communities. Physical, emotional, spiritual, and justice needs abound in our communities. Christ is depending on us to be His hands and feet as we move forward in mission. We do so with joy because we have been given the greatest gift of all: the love of God through Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

In Christ, together,
Deborah Coble

Gratitude and Generosity

By Jeff Taylor, President, United Methodist Foundation of West Virginia

On June 23, 2016, torrential storms brought one-day accumulated rainfall amounts of almost 10 inches to parts of West Virginia. The resultant flash flooding devastated communities such as Richwood, Rainelle, White Sulphur Springs and Clendenin. Lives were lost, homes were destroyed, schools were rendered unusable, and businesses closed. It's hard to imagine how a community could recover from such a destructive event.

The late Fred Rogers, the familiar host of PBS children's television show, Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood, advised parents to share the reassurance that his mother had given to him: "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping." After the flood, generosity flowed forth from West Virginia and from across the country. Volunteers arrived with willing hands and donations of supplies poured forth.

The United Methodist Foundation serves as the administrator of the West Virginia Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster Recovery Account. We also received online gifts for the Annual Conference's Disaster Response efforts. The "helpers" gave thousands of gifts, and with them came phone calls, cards, and letters of grace and support.

I am a widow on Social Security, but I would like to share what I have....I hope that this check will give someone a 'hug' from Illinois.

Enclosed is a donation collected thru community members in Rolesburg and matched by the Fire Department.

I am a retired United Methodist pastor, and I want to make a sacrificial gift to the flood recovery. I'm sending you my house payment.

The children at Cave Quest VBS would like to bless the flood victims from West Virginia with a gift from our VBS offering. The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched; they must be felt with the heart. (Children from Prosperity United Methodist VBS, Flintstone, Maryland)

This isn't a lot of money, but perhaps the Lord will multiply it.

The Lord does multiply the efforts of the helpers so that light shines in the darkness of devastation. Thanks be to God.

Jeff may be reached at jefftaylor@umfwv.org.

CALENDAR

Conference Event Highlights - The role of the Conference Calendar is to share the event and business of conference level agencies and ministries.

December

24-31 Conference Center Closed

January

1-2 Conference Center Closed

29 Board of Ordained Ministry Interviews

March

17-19 Course of Study - Spring Term

April

Month-long
Celebration of Ministry Events

For full details and event locations,
visit the conference calendar online at
wvumc.org/events

We Remember

Lila Blankenship died Saturday, October 22.

Dawn Banal died Monday, October 24.

Netty Tribett died Thursday, October 27.

Patricia James died Thursday, November 3.

Shirley Lashley died Saturday, November 5.

Christoper Mace died Saturday, November 5.

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The West Virginia Conference Board of Global Ministries RESHAPING PARISH MINISTRY - SKILLS DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP



May 5-6, 2017

Suncrest UMC
Morgantown, WV

Registration info available soon!
Catch the Super Early Bird special.

Look for more details in December about the keynote speakers, workshops, and lodging!