



# NOVEMBER CIRCUIT

VOLUME 1/NUMBER 11

The West Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church

## Here I Am Lord...



...Use Me.





# CALLED

ONE WORD, MANY WAYS.

## Creating a culture of **Call** in You

**ALMOST EVERY**

lay and clergy - call  
and influenced the  
encouraged them

The congregation  
in the local church

the language of call  
nurturing their voice  
own faith, commu

God calls **everyone**

Together, we are  
passionate spirit  
for the transfor



## VERY UNITED METHODIST -

can point to a member of the church who inspired them at some point in their journey, perhaps who even led them to consider a particular **Vocation** or to pursue a **Gift**.

Personal vitality of The United Methodist Church begins in the church, where the faith is **formed** and nurtured in people of all ages, especially the young.

**Our Church** Equipping congregations to speak to the world's call and move intentionally toward discovering and living out their vocation will contribute to the health and vitality of their community, and of the denomination.

**One** into ministry, but ministry means more than ordination.

We are called to **Discover, Develop, and Deploy** spiritual leaders who make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world!

# Many Gifts, *One Spirit*

By Rev. Dr. Bonnie MacDonald

*There are different spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; and there are different ministries and the same Lord; and there are different activities but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. A demonstration of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good.*  
**1 Corinthians 12:4-7, CEB**

I am continually amazed at the ways that God calls us and brings to life those spiritual gifts and talents within us! We are walking, breathing, potential of that “demonstration of the Spirit” that is “given to each person for the common good.”

Each of us is called to use those gifts of the Spirit in ways that minister to others. We are all meant to use our gifts to demonstrate God’s tremendous love for all, every day. Some are called for the set-apart leadership of licensed or ordained ministry. Most of us are intended to grow as disciples of Christ who then work to transform the world.

The fact that Paul used the metaphor of the Body of Christ frequently and powerfully (see also Romans 12 and Ephesians 4) tells us that there is an important message for us here in how he understood the early church was meant to work and grow. Their focus was on developing followers of Christ and strengthening the community of believers *for the purpose of helping others to experience the transforming love of God.*

In order to do this, everyone needed to be part of the body, contributing to its healthy functioning so that one part did not overwork and all parts were able to grow into what they were meant to be. Without each one’s gifts, the community would suffer.

**Calling begins at baptism**, when we are initiated into Christ’s church and given new birth through

water and the Spirit. We in the worshipping community promise to surround the newly baptized *with a community of love and forgiveness that they may grow in their service to others. We promise to pray for them they may be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life.*

The metaphor of the body and remembering that faith is meant to be lived in community helps us consider the nature of God’s calling on each of our lives. We all benefit from others who help identify our giftedness and help us discern our calling. If we are not careful, we can fall into categorizing putting ministry into boxes and hierarchy. But Paul only speaks of the uniqueness of spiritual gifts and talents that contribute to the common good and “equip the saints for the work of ministry.” (Ephesians 4:12)

The word translated as  
“ministry”  
comes from the Greek word  
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“service,”

The word translated as “ministry” comes from the greek word “diakonia,” meaning “service,” which is used to refer to serving others (including waiting tables to feeding the poor to equipping the saints). All are expected to grow as disciples. All are called by God to action.

All are needed for service. Remember, in the same way that the eye can’t discount the ear’s importance to the body, every follower of Christ is valuable for God’s reaching those who need to experience love.

So while you may be tempted to ask *whether* you are “called to ministry,” what might you hear differently if you asked *how am I being called to use the gifts with which God has equipped me?*

**How might God** want to use the unique set of gifts, talents, experiences and context that contribute to who I am—the demonstration of the Spirit that I might contribute for the common good? And what is the “common good”—the church—missing by my holding back? What part of the body is underdeveloped and would benefit from my service?

*Bonnie is the director of leadership formation and ministry support for the West Virginia Conference and is an ordained deacon. She delights in helping others discern their calling and in connecting them with the resources they need to pursue it. She grew up in a pastor’s home and is mom to three sons and a daughter-in-law: Alex, Patrick, Kyle and Becca.*



**Pastoral Ministry Licensing School** is held annually at Bishop Hodges Pastoral Center, Huttonsville WV. The PMLS is a basic step in preparing persons to be eligible for a license for ministry in the local church and to be authorized to perform the basic duties of pastors under appointment, including sacramental privileges within the bounds of their appointment. Pictured is the class of 2016! *For more information about serving as a licensed or ordained pastor, contact your District Superintendent.*

**Nathan Weaver** is a commissioned elder of the West Virginia annual conference appointed to seminary studies at Asbury in Wilmore, Kentucky. Nathan remembers a very clear call to ministry as a young child, a call that became unmistakable when he was a student at WV Wesleyan college and affirmed as he served as a summer intern at Duff Street UMC in Clarksburg. Since February Nathan has been the assistant to the Dean of Chapel at Asbury Seminary. Graduating in May, 2017, he eagerly awaits his first appointment in the West Virginia Annual Conference.

Nathan experiences great joy; “seeing others experiencing God in their hearts and seeking reconciliation and love through the sacraments.”

“I know that Christ is present in the bread and the cup and as I serve communion I trust that in that moment those receiving are encountering Jesus.”





# We Are Called

*By Kristi Wilkerson, Conference Associate Lay Leader*



True listening can be hard, very hard. There are sights and sounds all around us constantly demanding our attention. We are busy folks. There is always something else to do, somewhere to be, someone to call, text or email. In the

midst of exceedingly busy lives, hearing and listening to or for God can be a challenge. Yet, when God wants our attention, He gets it.

Receiving a “call” to do God’s work, to engage in ministry, comes in different ways and each call is likely vastly different from all others, especially when it comes to laity.

Those of us participating in ministry and part of the United Methodist Church family who are not clergy are “laity.” Do we experience a calling to ministry similar to that of clergy? Absolutely. Is that calling ever unclear or even confusing? Of course.

Discerning a call to church work is often a lifelong process. Lay members are called to small tasks and big projects alike, sometimes the call is quite specific and other times it is overwhelmingly general. In my personal experience, I see that calls to ministry always have two

commonalities. For me, serving God as laity requires great patience and in-depth listening.

My call to be in ministry came while a student at West Virginia Wesleyan College in the late 1990s. Some had suggested that I should explore pulpit ministry. I knew that was not for me. Serving God is part of my life and always will be.

My passion is to grow the church and encourage others along in their faith journey. I use my God-given gifts and talents to do that. I can plan events. I can teach Sunday School. I can cook food for potluck dinners, our local food pantry hot lunches or local college student breakfasts. This calling is a general one where I can also nudge my brothers and sisters in Christ to join me. Some folks say they witness the family-like nature of church when they see this kind of fellowship and outreach happening. Then, there comes a time when the call becomes more specific, a lot more specific actually.

About a dozen years ago, as I sat in worship one Sunday, I heard a voice whisper. A bit later I thought I must have been mistaken and ignored it. The whisper happened again, and again, and again until I got the nerve to share it with my husband. We were newly married, so I knew this was a risk. As I now know, recognizing and answering a call from God tends to always involve risk-taking.

The voice was telling me that there are children in the world who need homes and families. I told my husband one day that I believed God was calling me to adopt a child, to provide a home and family for a child that did not have that. We immediately learned a great deal about adoption, including the process, the costs, domestic versus international and so on. We gathered information and spoke with adoptive families for several years.

I am not known to be a great risk taker. I hesitate to go into the unknown. I like a plan. With adoption, there is a large amount of unknown and there's a lot of waiting. We have taken our time and waited for God's guidance. During this wait time, we have moved from Charleston to Buckhannon, sold a house and bought another one, and welcomed our biological daughter Rebekah into our lives. Through those major life changes, the call to adopt a child has never gone away. It has remained constant and we have continued to prepare.

A few years ago we completed our home study and then selected an adoption agency for placement. After a year with that agency, it became clear that was not the process for us. While the calling to open our home to a child in need still exists, we have to regroup and consider other options. And so our wait continues. In the meantime, I learn more of how to be patient and how to let go of the need for planning. One day, in God's time, we will fully realize this calling.

To say that this process requires patience would be an understatement. It is easy to get frustrated and it would be so much easier to reach the end of the story, the conclusion, much faster. However, the path and journey that God has prepared is always more exciting and insightful. I suppose that's how it is with most callings. The patience required is incredible. But the One who makes the call is always there to support and provide guidance.

Patience requires listening, I've found. Callings require moving outside a comfort zone. I continually need and refer back to Psalm 46:10 – “Be still, and know that I am God.” If there is quiet, if life slows down just a touch, if there is a bit of stillness, what is God saying?

What are you being called to do? What do you hear when you listen closely? Perhaps there is a little something extra needed for a church program or project that you can provide. Maybe there is someone you see in need of care. Or is it something larger? Does it require taking a big risk and challenging

yourself to go where you have never gone before? All of these calls help build a stronger, larger kingdom of God.

Even in the midst of hectic lives, God still calls us to do His work, and He even works it out so that the details fall into place and we have the time to do it.

Listen closely and you will discover where you are most needed. If you have answered the call in the past, listen to find if anything has changed. Is it the same, has it been tweaked or is it something new altogether?

Be patient and God will guide you there. Ministry for laity happens in all places, at all times. Each step and each action is significant. What is God whispering to you today? No need to worry. He will lead you to the right place at the right time, equipping you with everything you need at exactly the right moment.

*Kristi Wilkerson is Associate Lay Leader of the West Virginia Annual Conference. She serves as Director of Christian Education and Programming at First United Methodist Church in Buckhannon. Kristi may be reached at [krlwilkerson@gmail.com](mailto:krlwilkerson@gmail.com).*

# One Lord, One Faith,

# One Baptism

By Rev. Deborah Coble, Director of Communications

*“God calls us to action—to put down our nets; climb down from the tree; pray for those who persecute us; love God and neighbor. It is, as it has been for many who have answered the call before, a beckoning in our lives to live according to the example of Christ and to serve our neighbor in all we do.”* (Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook of the United Methodist Church, General Board of Higher Education & Ministry)

A few weeks ago I was in western Pennsylvania to pick a friend up from the airport. Due to some flight delays



I had time on my hands. So I went on a pilgrimage of sorts. I visited First United Methodist Church, Butler, Pennsylvania, the church where I was baptized 55 years ago. My family moved 2 years after my baptism, we had no family or friends in the area, so this was my first time to visit the church

where my faith journey began.

I spent some time in prayer in the sanctuary, I marveled at the stained glass windows and I thought about my parents who presented me for baptism that summer day in 1961 and the journey that God and I have been on. I have to believe that God has a sense of humor!

In my 13 years in the pulpit I knew, without a doubt, that not everyone is called to be a pastor. But every Christ follower IS called by God, claimed by God and commissioned, by God, to be people of hope, peace, justice and mercy. To this end the sacrament of Baptism is the focal point of our life together as a church.

Each baptism is a teachable moment, an opportunity to pause and remember our own faith journey and to reaffirm God's call and claim on our own lives. It's a time to ask; how am I living out the promises made on my behalf?

A good place to start is to look at the vows that are made at baptism:

- Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin? ***I do.***

As I consider the first question I ask myself: what are the “spiritual forces of wickedness” and “the evil powers of this world?” What are some ways that I am tempted to sin? What does it mean for my life to repent of my sin?

- Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever form they present themselves? ***I do.***

Now we dig a little deeper and have to ask ourselves: what does it mean to have freedom and power from God to resist evil, injustice and oppression? How can I use the power that God gives me to resist evil, injustice and oppression? What would my corner of the world look like if I were to do more of this?

- Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as your Lord, in union with the church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races? ***I do.***

Our final question asks us to consider: what does it mean to confess Jesus Christ as Savior? What is Grace, and what does it mean to put your trust in God's Grace?



As we take time to reflect on these questions we realize that baptism is not a singular event in our lives, 'baptism is the first step in a process that began before we entered the waters and will continue throughout our lives.' (Come to the Waters\*)

By reflecting on the questions that were made on our behalf in our baptism, and confirmed by our profession of faith in confirmation, we are empowered to live a more abundant and vital faith! Here's the really great part, we don't journey alone. We have companions in the way!

Baptism in the United Methodist Church is a joyous community celebration of the goodness of God! The newly baptized is welcomed into the family with language that not only promises of adoption, the newly baptized is incorporated into the family of God, and this, is what makes all of the difference in the world!

- Will you nurture one another in the Christian faith and life and include these persons now before you in your care?

With God's help we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ.

We will surround these persons with a community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in their trust of God, and be found faithful in their service to others. We will pray for them, that they may be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life.

Called by God, claimed by God, commissioned to go out into the world to be people of hope, peace, justice and mercy. This is how we are equipped to put down our nets; climb down from the tree; pray for those who persecute us; love God and neighbor.

I give thanks for the people of Butler Methodist Church, but I also have to give thanks to the other churches that nourished me along the way.

There are many, many faithful churches from Pennsylvania to Tennessee, Georgia to Iowa, that have been an important part of my story. More important than names of churches and cities, this list reflects the faithful men and women who have said yes to Christ and who seek to live into their baptismal vows each and every day.



What about your faith story? How has the Church created a safe place to work out your faith and God's call and claim on your life? How is your faith community helping women and men, children of all ages to discover their passion and ministry for which they were gifted and called? To God be the glory!

*Deborah Lynn Coble was baptized in the summer of 1961. Her parents, Jay and Elinor-Ann Coble modeled their faith through service to God and their community, wherever they lived. Deborah is having a great time exploring her new call to serve the United Methodist Church in the West Virginia Conference!*

*Deborah is the Director of Communications for the West Virginia Annual Conference and may be reached via email [dcoble@wvumc.org](mailto:dcoble@wvumc.org).*

\*Come to the Waters is the Official United Methodist study about Baptism. It's available from Cokesbury or on-line at [www.umc.org/what-we-believe/by-water-and-the-spirit-a-united-methodist-understanding-of-baptism](http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/by-water-and-the-spirit-a-united-methodist-understanding-of-baptism)

# *Give* joy and peace



*Angela cherishes the memory of singing duets with her mother, Eva Jones.*

**Angela Jones** is a lay person who's blessed with the gift of music. Angela, a member of St. Marks UMC in Charleston, shares her gift as a singer and flutist in worship at St. Marks. She also sees herself as community musician; "outside the church I play with the Kanawha County Community Band, I sing with the OPUS chorale and I play periodically with orchestra for Charleston Light Opera Guild."

When asked how God uses her as a musician Angela shares; "I feel that my God given purpose in worship is to bring peace and to bring a quietness to the soul that, hopefully, will be an open doorway to someone's own relationship and conversation with God."

She adds; "I pray before I play that my purposes are to honor and glorify God, and to bring joy and enjoyment to others." Angela also serves on the St. Mark's altar guild, which she explains; "has become very meaningful to me, on the surface I am lighting candles before worship but this is also preparing the house of the Lord for corporate worship."

"I feel that some people have the gift of talking about faith and God, the way I express my gift is to say through music: let me show you – this is what God gave me. If someone then remarks on their experience of my music then I have an opportunity to say, 'thanks to God, who has given me this gift!'"

Angela was shaped musically by her parents; "mom was an amazing singer and very much in demand for her beautiful voice. My dad played lots of instruments, Army band as well as jazz combos." Angela will be accompanying the Light Opera Guild in their upcoming show; Jesus Christ, Superstar. "I love to talk about faith and music – just ask me."



..... **Eva Faulkner** experienced her call to ministry as a Certified Lay Minister gradually. Her participation in the 5 Day Academy for Spiritual Formation led to participation in the Two Year Academy. The daily rhythm of prayer and study resonates with Eva, who feels called to small group ministries. In her home church, Carr Memorial in Princeton, WV, Eva leads a Bible study, teaches and occasionally fills the pulpit.

She serves on the Southern District lead team as a co-facilitator, and is also on the conference Discover team. “I was part of a Bible study at Carr UMC, a Ladies Bible study and we had as many as 40-50 women every Monday night from 6 different churches! It made such a difference in the church and the women. It fed my soul and made a difference in the world to me...you get the women in the church fired up for God and you have a powerful thing going there!”

**Jill Steele**, an elementary school principal and active member of Bridgeport UMC, is responding to the call that God has placed on her heart to encourage and equip women. Every step of the way she has paused to allow the Spirit to guide and direct her and this has led to some exciting ministries along the way; including a vibrant women’s Bible Study at Bridgeport UMC and an ecumenical women’s conference this spring that touched the hearts and lives of women from 94 different faith communities in the region!

“My plate is so full, but God’s response is: I’m going to give you a bigger plate! So whatever God gives me to do I’m going to do it.” As Jill discerns her call, she gives thanks for her loving husband, her encouraging pastor and God for calling and claiming her to stretch out in faith and to lead in new ways. “Fasten on your seat belts for an adventure!” Jill says with a smile, but then adds; “I don’t want to just do good things, I want to do what I am called to do...I want to follow the voice of the Holy Spirit.”

*Discerning one’s call to ministry takes time and intentionality. The process begins with conversations with your local pastor and/or District Superintendent. If this intentional time of prayer leads one on the path of licensed or ordained servant leadership, candidates for ministry are invited to the conference candidacy retreat. Jill is pictured here sharing a meal with other candidates at the Fall 2016, candidacy retreat.*



..... give faith to hear your *Call*





**Broad Street UMC** in Weston welcomes children of all ages on Wednesday evenings for Pioneer Club. The evening is full with dinner, Bible lesson, crafts, games and music!



**Bruceton Mills UMC** in the MonValley District, has a gift of hospitality. They live this out with monthly meals and by welcoming groups that meet in their church. Home baked goodies and meals made from scratch extend the table of plenty and grace.



**Romney First UMC** opens their doors Fridays at noon for **Celebrate Recovery** worship. Hands on service, meals and youth programs are also part of a lay led ministry that accompanies those who are on the road to recovery.

A 1,000 year flood didn't prevent the **Perry Memorial UMC Lay Mobilization Institute** team from their monthly covenant meeting. The group met at the New Vision Depot in Beaver, WV while Pastor Scott Mayberry was helping with flood relief efforts.



Laity and clergy from across the annual conference gather for orientation at the **Covenant Council quadrennial training**. Living into God's call and claim on one's life can sometimes include committee work!

# and readiness for each . . . . .

# ● ● ● ● ● ● ● to work for *all*

The young lady at the front of the line for the Palm Sunday worship service is Miss Ella Poling, a kindergartner from **Duffey Memorial UMC** in Moorefield, WV. Her pastor, Jeff Anderson, shares that Ella is fearless – she gets up front of the church, sings acapella and shares Bible verses she learned at Awana with the confidence and presence of someone four times her age! .....



Laity and clergy from several churches in the **Midland South District** teamed up over several weekends to pull up flood damaged flooring at Wallback UMC and then install new flooring! .....

In response to the June floods, the ladies of the **Meadow Bridge Charge**, hand made quilts for flood victims. Over 36 quilts have been anointed and prayed over to be "gifted" to neighbors.



**Jason Stewart serves the Itmann/Milam Charge** in the Southern District as a part time licensed local pastor. Jason has completed Course of Study, but has no plans to be a full time local pastor. He feels called to remain a part time local pastor to serve the churches to which he is appointed; “my heart and desire is to help smaller churches that are struggling, who can’t afford to have a full time pastor. I don’t have to depend on them to pay for all that I need and it frees them to use their resources to be in ministry to community.”

“It was important for me to come [to Clergy School] to learn about stewardship,” Jason shared during a break, “Clergy school gives me time to get away and reflect on my calling more – to think about how I use my time. As a PTLP managing my time is sometimes tough for me, with a full time job, young children and the two churches.”

Jason and his wife, Carla, are grateful for the joy of knowing that their young sons are growing up in a loving church; ‘they have people in the church who are helping them to learn about God.



# *Stir* Up the Gift!

By Rev. Dr. Felica Wooten-Williams, PhD

Two coal miners became close friends earlier in life on the Winding Gulf. Both were outstanding men and were known throughout the community.

*They affectionately called each other Gamma and Sigma – their code names or nicknames. (The code names have been changed to protect the innocent though Sigma’s offspring is the preacher known as Beta the Fighting Fish.) These two friends were very busy with caring for their families and community activities; yet, they both held multiple jobs.*

*Gamma was a pastor and Sigma was a barber. Sure, this sounds funny, but this actually happened. This is a true story that happened nearly 50 years ago; so, some of the facts are fuzzy. Nonetheless, Sigma was particularly busy on Saturdays cutting hair, or lowering ears as he called it. Men and boys from near and far would come for haircuts in preparation for Sunday morning.*

*Invariably, the conversation would turn to the Bible and Sigma would tell them the good news of Jesus Christ. As he talked, somebody would shout “Preach!” And, “Amen!” They had church! Afterwards, Sigma’s wife said to him, “If you ever say that you have been called to preach, I’m leaving!” She grumbled, “I refuse to be a preacher’s wife.” Alas, she was a preacher’s kid (a PK).*

*But, why did she have this reaction to their glad hallelujahs? Her reaction stemmed from her knowledge, attitude, beliefs, values, and ideas that had been shaped by the society in which she lived. In sum, culture dictated her sensibilities and perception of calling. She had firsthand knowledge of the great things that people expect from a pastor and the pastor’s family.*

*Those great expectations are related to the tendency of placing pastors on pedestals. She knew that pastors are humans but when their humanness shows up, people*

*knock them down and dub them failures. Afterall, her precious husband enjoyed an occasional beer and she liked to dance. She was concerned about vulnerability and transparency.*

*How would they survive the scrutiny? Moreover, was he pastor material?*

Like Sigma, many sense the call of God. Some are called to pastoral leadership in the Church as preacher, teacher, evangelist, etc. Many people sense the calling but lack support and encouragement from family and friends as well as from the Church. People have been discouraged and ignored all while trying to discern God’s will and plan for their lives and ministry. Even when some have had the courage to step out on faith, we have allowed or caused some people to fall through the cracks.

Think of someone who tried but failed. Some were never acknowledged by their pastor or congregation and they never started the arduous process from the District Committee all the way to kneeling for the laying-on of hands on Sunday morning at Annual Conference.

Were you ignored when you expressed your calling to the work of an evangelist? Did you receive zero encouragement to become a missionary?

One African American brother from a rural area, in another conference, was discouraged because his speech was “country.” Thankfully, he persisted and went to seminary on a full scholarship!



What about the people who do not have the courage to persist through the abrasiveness of entering ministry. Yet, we have the audacity wonder why we have a shortage of pastors and struggle with declining memberships.

So what happens to those who have been shunned or scorned? Maybe, they join those who are most critical of pastors because they know a better way of doing the work of worship but they never had the opportunity. Maybe, they become closet pastors or bootleg pastors. Can you imagine someone bootlegging the Gospel? People do it all of the time, giving a sermon in a prayer or preaching to people in the parking lot at the grocery store. Their doctrine and theology might be a little off-base but that's understandable because they have never been nurtured in the continuance of apostolic ministry as a gift from God (BOD ¶303).

So, what should we do to nurture people in the culture of call? It requires affirming words. Affirm that teenager who insists that she's a deacon. Help her to explore what it really means. Help the called person to explore or search through all of the ways in which ministry forms and takes shape.

Encourage people who started the exploration but did not pursue or finish. Stay alert and receptive to the call of God surfacing in the most unlikely places, people, and circumstances. Church leaders, clergy and laity, must never forget what it felt like to need encouragement.

Here's the challenge. If you know someone who expressed a call to ordained ministry, help them: do not be a hindrance. Be their greatest cheerleader who finds every opportunity to remind them that you see a champion every time that you look at him or her.

The challenge continues. If you have heard the call to ordained ministry, receive the gift. Yes, stir up the gift that is within you. Indeed, "I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline (2Timothy 1:6-7)."

Do not be afraid because God empowers you.

If you are called to the work of an evangelist, then be an evangelist. Proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching (2 Timothy 4:2).

*So, Sigma was content with proclaiming the Gospel among friends in the coal mines, with friends who sat in his barber's chair, in his music at the church, to his family as they sat around the dinner table and however the opportunity presented itself. Often, people would gather around the piano in Sigma's living room to sing hymns and gospel music.*



*Frequently, he would be found witnessing to young men while repairing a car or playing horseshoes. He shared the gospel and ministered to people in his own way, reminding people*

*that we are all called to serve God and all people. Was Sigma called to ordained ministry? We will never know because he worked in the coal mines for nearly fifty years and he died, perhaps prematurely, after suffering with black lung.*

Don't wait. Don't despair.

Stir up the gift!

*Rev. Dr. Felica Wooten Williams responded to God's call and claim on her life and now serves as pastor of Simpson UMC and St. Stephens UMC.*

*Felica is also the chairperson of the Conference Commission on Race and Religion. She may be reached at felica@vt.edu.*

# Youth have a purpose!

*By Rev. Shea James, Director of Youth and Outdoor Ministries*

In the baptismal covenant of The United Methodist Church the congregation promises “With God’s help we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ.

We will surround these persons with a community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in their trust of God, and be found faithful in their service to others. We will pray for them, that they may be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life.” We do not simply baptize folks and leave them to their own devices!

Rather, people are baptized and we as the church promise to pray for them and surround them with a community of love and forgiveness. This beloved community continues to witness to them as they develop into disciples of Christ so they may transform the world.

The West Virginia Annual Conference is excited about how the Spirit is at work in the lives of our young people. Youth deepen their roots in faith by studying scripture in youth group and Sunday school. Camps such as Asbury Woods, Crossroads, and Spring Heights give our young people opportunities to retreat from the chaos of school and extracurricular activities in order to focus on exploring creation and delving deeper into their faith. Conference wide youth events like Fall Workshop and Rally on the Mountain remind our youth they are not alone and that they are part of a great cloud of witnesses. There youth gather together to hear from God and to seek understanding about what the Spirit is doing in their hearts and minds.

Programs such the Radical Discipleship Academy of Appalachia work closely with youth to grow them as disciples of Jesus Christ and to discern who God is calling them to be and what God is calling them to do with their lives. Youth come together for a week in the summer where they form covenant groups which include adult mentors. While together participants learn

that calling is more profound than profession, and that Christ calls them to live a faithful life. After the summer week covenant groups continue to meet once a month for discipleship formation.

Two youth from Radical Discipleship Academy of Appalachia have gone on to complete lay servant training offered by their districts. They spent time learning from pastors and teachers about how the church changes the world and how they can change the church. These young people heard God calling and desired a stronger leadership role in their churches; because of their radical discipleship they decided to act. They understood that they could make an impact as faithful people and they did not let age stop them! What a gift. Our youth are listening to God’s call and following after Christ, I pray we follow their most excellent example.

For more information about the Radical Discipleship Academy of Appalachia please visit the website [www.springheights.org/radical-discipleship](http://www.springheights.org/radical-discipleship).

*Shea James is the Director of Youth and Outdoor Ministries for the West Virginia Annual Conference. Shea was ordained an Elder in 2014 in the Kentucky Annual Conference and can be contacted at [sjames@wvumc.org](mailto:sjames@wvumc.org).*





## Youth Fall Workshop: November 18-20 at Cedar Lakes Conference Center!

We are excited to have Rev. Maria Wiblin join us as our preacher and #awesome is returning as our worship artists. All 6th-12th graders are welcome to join us for a fantastic weekend! Online registration for this event closes November 1; however, youth are welcomed and encouraged to register on-site the Friday of Fall Workshop!

Fall Workshop begins with registration at 7:30 pm on Friday, November 18 in the Vocational Building and registration cost is \$90. Fall Workshop ends at 11:00 am on Sunday, November 20.



# A Culture of Call

## One Church's story about trusting the leading of the Holy Spirit

By Rev. Jenny Williams, Avery UMC

As I grow in faith, I've come to see that the Holy Spirit works in different places and on different people at the same time to bring about a good work. Different puzzle pieces create a whole more amazing than any human can design. I've learned that from the [story](#) of Peter and Cornelius and from getting to participate in the ministry of the charges to which I've been appointed.

And it's happened again.

A number of years ago when I served in the Potomac Highlands District, then-District Superintendent Rev. Dallas Forren invited Marilyn Uhl, a United Methodist from the Seneca Rocks area, to be the guest speaker at a clergy meeting. Marilyn has a tremendous [call story](#) (See stories listed under "Seeds of Hope"). She heard the voice of God – audibly – in her kitchen one morning. She went on to sell all she had, move to Kenya, and found Living Hope High School ([www.livinghopehighschool.org](http://www.livinghopehighschool.org)) for impoverished and orphaned high schoolers.

As I prepared to preach in early May of this year, her call story came to mind. I was focusing on Acts 16:6-15, when Paul, Silas and Timothy tried to go to several places to spread the gospel, but the Holy Spirit had something different in mind. Paul received a vision of a man pleading with him to come to Macedonia, and so they went. I told Marilyn's story in my sermon because

I wanted to show that God still speaks to people today, calling them to a place of God's choosing.

After the worship service Anthony, one of our church's youth leaders, approached me. Anthony and his wife Sarah create the PowerPoint slides we project for worship each week.

They usually look at some images I select for the bulletin, read the appointed Scripture lessons, look at my sermon title if I have one, and then find a background image that seems to fit all of that.

The day I told Marilyn's story Anthony excitedly asked me how I liked the slides. Face palm - I usually compliment them on their selection of backgrounds and had forgotten to that week. When I thanked him, he said, "No. How do you like the slides?!" Responding to my puzzled looks, he said, "That background! It was Seneca Rocks!" He'd had no idea I would tell a story about a woman from Seneca Rocks. As I told the congregation later, it was the Holy Spirit. It wasn't terribly profound, but it was beautiful. It was like the Holy Spirit was winking at us, saying, "I'm here!"

A couple months later, in June, Anthony and Sarah led a team of youth from our church in a day of service at one of our homebound members' homes. During the day, Anthony had the chance to work with Karl Barth, a member of our church and father of two students in our youth group. Anthony mentioned that he'd like to try to take the youth on an international mission trip. Karl said he'd do whatever he could to help; he'd done work teams in other parts of the world but had never been to Africa.

While they were painting and working they remembered that I'd mentioned Living Hope High School and by the end of the day had themselves convinced to try to take a team there.



*Photo courtesy of Barbara Nitz  
Marilyn Uhl speaking on October 9  
in Avery UMC worship services.*

When they brought the idea to me, I told them they needed to contact Sandy Binotto, Volunteers in Mission Director, to see if we could make it a VIM trip, and Helen Markwell, sister of Marilyn Uhl and stateside coordinator of efforts to support Living Hope.

A few weeks later I received an email from Karl. He'd spoken with Helen and was absolutely astonished at how the conversation had gone. When he asked Helen what work could be helpful to the high school and surrounding community, she said, "It's kind of technical. I don't know if you could do it." He said, "Lay it on me." She said, "We need a bridge built across a river so we can get to the other side." A bridge would help the students but would also help the people of the community.

About 50-100 people (plus motorcycles!) cross the existing, ramshackle bridge each day to go to work, see the chief, or visit the doctor. People risk their lives traversing this bridge, and people have fallen in the river. A bridge would be a gift that LHHS could give the community around them.

Karl said...wait for it...

"I am a professor of civil engineering at WVU, and my specialty is bridges. And I've worked on bridge projects in other parts of the world before." Helen screamed what we have all come to understand: "This is a God thing!"

Anthony, Karl, Sarah, and I met and pieced together the story. God clearly wants our church to go to Kenya. So we are going.

On October 9, Marilyn and Helen came to our church. Marilyn shared her story in worship and told us about the high school and how God continues to lead the way to help it be a success.

Karl will be going on a VIM trip with our Annual Conference at the end of this year to scope out the site of the bridge, design it, and work with a graduate of LHHS to equip the students to build the first phases of the bridge. One year later, a group of youth and adults from our church and around the Annual Conference will go to complete the bridge.

This is the beginning of a new journey for our congregation that did not originate with any one person. The Holy Spirit moved in ways we couldn't to bring this about. Dallas Forren probably never imagined that having Marilyn Uhl speak to pastors might one day prompt a church in another district to turn towards LHHS. I did not imagine that telling Marilyn's call story would result in connecting our congregation to the school. Karl did not imagine, when going to serve the house of homebound member, that he would walk away with an idea to go to Africa. And Anthony did not imagine that his slide selection would have any impact other than beauty in that day's worship service.



*Photo courtesy of Barbara Nitz*  
L to R: Rev. Jenny Williams, Karl Barth, Marilyn Uhl, youth leaders Sarah Portner and Anthony Shillingburg.

It's always awe-inspiring when the Spirit moves so plainly, in a way that we can point to. We treasure those times, right? Pondering them in our hearts? But in this case it's doubly special because our congregation's life has not been without difficulties in the past year. In the midst of that, God is clearly and undeniably reminding us that God has work for us to do and that it depends not on any one of us, but on God. Thank you, Holy Spirit.

*Jenny Williams is the pastor of Avery United Methodist Church in Morgantown. If you're interested in learning more about the Avery UMC mission team as they prepare travel to Kenya, please contact Jenny at [jcwilliams29@frontier.com](mailto:jcwilliams29@frontier.com).*



# West Virginia Conference **LEADERSHIP STANDARDS**

*Like Jesus' disciples, we are intended to grow closer to God, always learning how our gifts can be developed and offered to lead others to experience God's love. By following these standards or practices for leadership, with grace-filled support from fellow leaders along the way, God is able to work within us to more fully transform us and those around us.*

Jesus identified, called, taught and sent his disciples into the world as leaders. Therefore, leadership has always been an essential part of sharing God's love. West Virginia Conference leaders look to Jesus' guiding of his disciples for basic standards of leadership. We also draw upon the fullness of scripture, our theological tradition, Wesley's guidance for spiritual formation, and our experience as they contribute to transformational leadership standards.

## **Lay and clergy leaders in the West Virginia Conference are:**

- grounded in God's calling to serve;
- empowered by the Holy Spirit through the gifts given to each;
- aware of their own unique context and style;
- committed to the values of the West Virginia Conference, reflecting Christ; Wesleyan & UM theology; grace; compassion; repentance; a courageous, risk-taking faith; integrity; intentional spiritual formation and intercultural competency.
- intentionally self aware, balanced, self-confident and humble.
- committed to improving the ministry and mission of the West Virginia Conference and its congregations through a team process of loving, learning and leading.



# LOVING

- A leader actively commits to growing in faith through membership in a local congregation (or the Conference as clergy), participating through worship & sacraments, gifts, service, witness, prayer & financial support.
- A leader is able to articulate their relationship with Jesus Christ and tells their faith story.
- A leader prays, discerns, and attempts to be submissive to the power and leading of the Holy Spirit in all things.
- A leader understands spiritual formation to be an essential part of leadership and therefore commits to a discipline of prayer, bible study, personal health (physical, mental, emotional, financial, relational),

# LEARNING

- A leader commits to continuous learning.
- A leader understands how their authority and the purpose of their ministry (team) is connected relationally to other ministries (teams) and to the body of the West Virginia Conference.
- A leader understands how conflict is often part of leadership, and learns how to navigate conflict with love.

# LEADING

- A leader articulates a clear plan and focus.
- A leader commits to determine and measure the fruitfulness of their ministry.
- A leader commits to identify and develop other leaders.
- A leader commits to meet people where they are: across racial, cultural, theological, emotional and socio-economic boundaries.

*As a follower of Christ, and servant-leader,  
I will strive to live by the above leadership standards  
and will be willing to seek and receive grace-filled assistance  
in those areas where I need to grow.*

*The West Virginia Conference is committed to developing transformational leaders.*

*For resources or assistance, you may contact your District Superintendent  
or Bonnie MacDonald, Director of Leadership Formation & Ministry Support.*

*Developed by the Conference Develop Team and Adopted by Bishop's Lead Team.*

# Hearing A Call?



If you would like to talk with someone about discerning your call, here are some people who would be happy to help:

## Your District Superintendent:

**Melissa Shortridge**  
**Greenbrier District**

304-645-1357

[greenbrierdistrict@suddenlinkmail.com](mailto:greenbrierdistrict@suddenlinkmail.com)

**Rick DeQuasie**  
**Little Kanawha District**

304-428-6461

[lkumc@icloud.com](mailto:lkumc@icloud.com)

**Frank Shomo**  
**Midland South District**

304-342-8843

[office@midlandsouthumc.org](mailto:office@midlandsouthumc.org)

**Rick Sale**  
**Mon Valley District**

304-366-6811

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**Martha Ognibene**  
**Northern District**

304-232-5687

[NOoffice@comcast.net](mailto:NOoffice@comcast.net)

**Mike Estep**  
**Potomac Highlands District**

304-822-4191

[PotomacHighDistrict@yahoo.com](mailto:PotomacHighDistrict@yahoo.com)

**Joe Kenaston**  
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304-252-7985

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**Mary Ellen Finegan**  
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304-472-1095

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**Greg Hayes**  
**Western District**

304-736-9962

[WesternUMC@aol.com](mailto:WesternUMC@aol.com)

**Bonnie MacDonald**  
**Director of Leadership Formation & Ministry Support**  
304-344-8331, ext 27  
[bmacdonald@wvumc.org](mailto:bmacdonald@wvumc.org)

**Suzanne Ellis**  
**Vocational Discernment Coordinator**  
304-544-0328  
[sedolly@aol.com](mailto:sedolly@aol.com)

**Shea James**  
**Director of Youth and Outdoor Ministry**  
304-344-8331, ext 25  
[sjames@wvumc.org](mailto:sjames@wvumc.org)

**Your Pastor or Campus Minister**



# Resources for DISCERNMENT

This webpage on the **conference website** contains information for those interested in candidacy, licensing, seminary funds, Course of Study, continuing formation and other documents relating to licensed and ordained ministry in the WV Conference.

[www.wvumc.org/About/Board-of-Ordained-Ministry](http://www.wvumc.org/About/Board-of-Ordained-Ministry)

**Our mission** is to lead and serve The United Methodist Church in the recruitment, preparation, nurture, education, and support of Christian leaders — lay and clergy — for the work of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

[www.gbhem.org](http://www.gbhem.org)

**The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry** offers resources to help you in discerning your calling. [www.ExploreCalling.org](http://www.ExploreCalling.org)

**Forum for Theological Education:** Resources for the exploration of passion, purpose and call including guides, articles, books and sound clips about vocation. [www.fteleaders.org](http://www.fteleaders.org)

**For clergy and laypeople** employed to lead the church in specialized ministries like Christian education, youth ministry, spiritual formation, ministry with people with disabilities, and other areas. Certification is The United Methodist Church's recognition that an individual has been called, made a commitment to serve, and has fulfilled the required standards for academic training, experience, and continuing study to serve with excellence in an area of specialized ministry. [www.gbhem.org/education/certification](http://www.gbhem.org/education/certification)

*“God calls us to action—to put down our nets; climb down from the tree; pray for those who persecute us; love God and neighbor. It is, as it has been for many who have answered the call before, a beckoning in our lives to live according to the example of Christ and to serve our neighbor in all we do.”*

*Answering the Call: Candidacy Guidebook of the United Methodist Church,  
General Board of Higher Education & Ministry, Nashville, TN 2016*





November 29, 2016

[umcmmission.org/give](http://umcmmission.org/give)

Because we have received, we

GIVE LIGHT  
GIVE LOVE  
GIVE LIFE



Help your friends and family extend the spirit of giving thanks into the Advent season by participating in UMC #GivingTuesday November 29.

We've created UMC #GivingTuesday Toolkits to help you spread the word.

The toolkits include everything you need to share with your friends and constituents about UMC #GivingTuesday and The Advance. You'll find unique ways to get involved, plus sample emails, social media tips, and much more.

Through UMC #GivingTuesday, individuals, churches, and conferences can combine seasonal giving with global mission and outreach opportunities. As a partner with The Advance, you provide United Methodists and others with a way to build missional relationships through a designated giving channel we can trust. As always, 100 percent of your gift to The Advance goes directly to the project of your choice.

This Advent, "Give Light, Give Love, and Give Life" through The Advance at [umcmmission.org/give](http://umcmmission.org/give).

Download UMC #GivingTuesday resources at [umcmmission.org/giving-tuesday/resources](http://umcmmission.org/giving-tuesday/resources) and share them today.

Thank you for your passion as we live out God's mission together.

With blessings and thanks for your generosity,

Thomas Kemper  
General Secretary  
General Board of Global Ministries

# CALENDAR

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



## November

**11-12** Reaching New People

**19** Lay Mobilization Institute

**18-20** Fall Workshop

For full details and event locations,  
visit the conference calendar online at  
[wvumc.org/events](http://wvumc.org/events)



## We Remember

**Dr. Manfred A. Biondi** died Wednesday, September 28.

**Dorothy “Jean” Gardner** died Thursday, September 29.

**Betty Sue Scott** died Friday, September 30.

**Rev. Joel Robert “Bob” Harshberger**, died Sunday, October 9.

**Velma Lea Riegel** died Friday, October 14.

**Normagene G. Mullins**, died Saturday, October 15.

**Dorothy Lee Litton Hatcher**, died Sunday, October 16.



### The Monthly Circuit

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Charleston, WV 25328

Voice: 304.344.8331

Email: [wvumc@wvumc.org](mailto:wvumc@wvumc.org)

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Sandra Steiner Ball

### Director of Connectional Ministries

Ken Krimmel

### Communications Director:

Deborah Coble

### Communications Assistant:

Whitney Cherry

### Communications Chair:

Cheryl George, Potomac Highlands



### Conference Communications Team:

\*Maria Wiblin, MonValley

\*Brad Bennett, MonValley

\*Jake Steele, Northern

\*Jonathan Nettles, Little Kanawha

\*Joe Webb, Little Kanawha

\*Jennifer Kniceley Sprouse, Wesleyan

Judy Pysell, Greenbrier

Ken Peters, Little Kanawha

Carl Tribett, Northern

Dusty Merrill, MonValley

*\*At Large*

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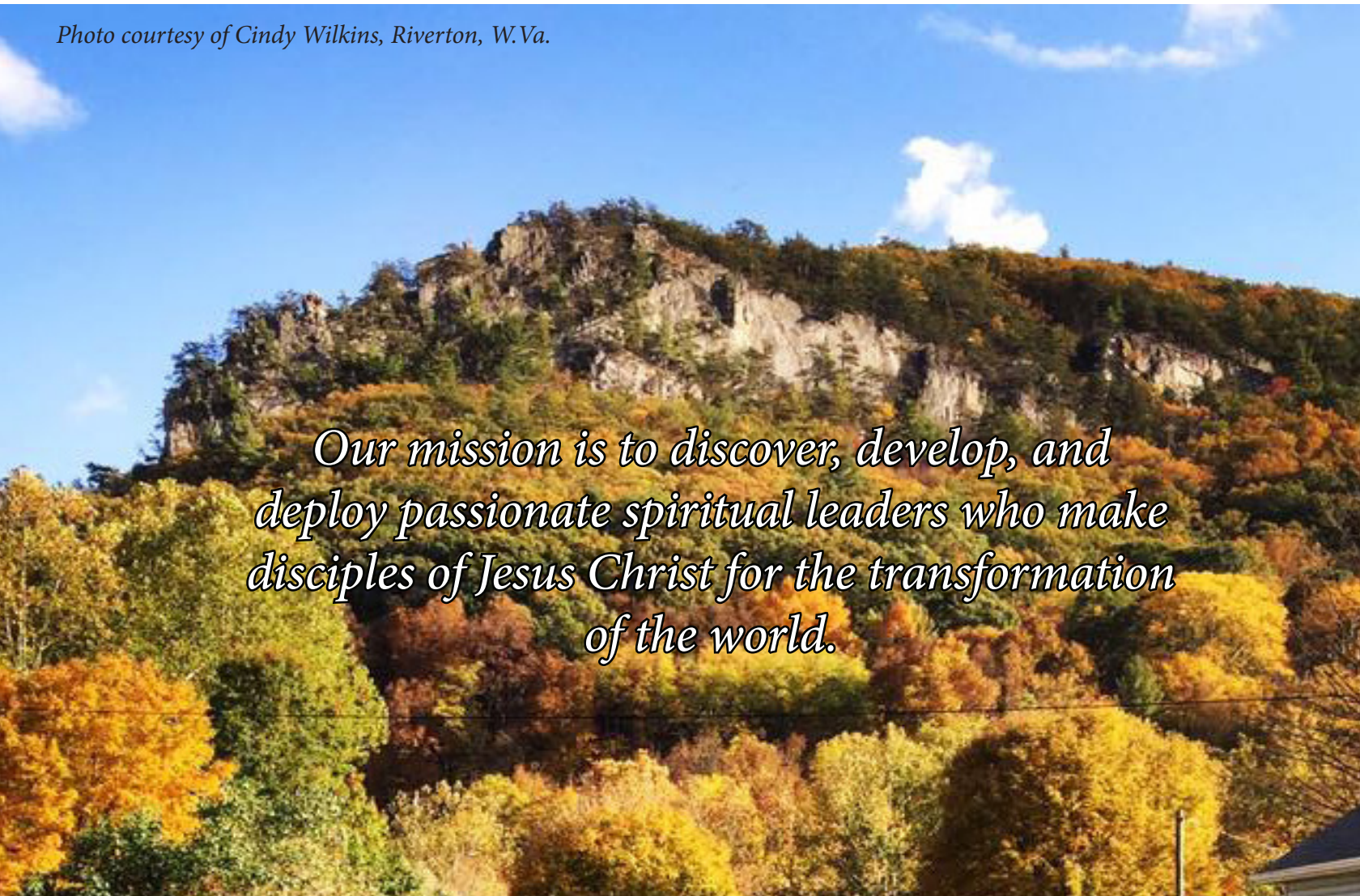


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*Photo courtesy of Cindy Wilkins, Riverton, W.Va.*



*Our mission is to discover, develop, and  
deploy passionate spiritual leaders who make  
disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation  
of the world.*