

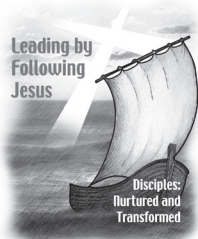
## Up front

### Today's Schedule

7:30 a.m.	Youth Service Fund offering
8:15 a.m.	Singing Our Faith
8:30 a.m.	Bible study
9:15 a.m.	Plenary Pensions report Finance report
11:15 a.m.	Closing worship Fixing of the appointments

### Conference is generous

Several reports offered Tuesday gave tallies of contributions: More than two tractor-trailers and part of a third were filled with 43,443 kits (25,137 health kits; 10,155 school kits; 4,856 birthing kits; 1,154 sewing kits; 1,734 layette kits; and 30 flood buckets). Along with cash donations of \$73,523, the approximate total



value is more than \$600,000. The collection of the conference offering was taken during morning worship; the amount announced before the Tuesday dinner break was \$180,500. Total giving by the conference to relief efforts in Haiti is up to \$1.6 million in the latest total from the General Board of Global Ministry, it was announced by Una Jones of The Advance. And the total number of meals packed on Monday and Tuesday for Stop Hunger Now was 102,000.

### Resolutions

During a plenary session Tuesday evening, the body approved two additional resolutions: Resolution 3, "Coping With Crime," and Resolution 4, "Tobacco Policy in Virginia."

## Conference members vote to reduce districts by two

This Virginia Conference has made history according to the Rev. Clarence Brown. "We passed a major initiative on the first try."

Members approved by a surprisingly wide margin the reduction of districts from 18 to 16. The decrease will happen following the 2011 Annual Conference after a process, led by the Bishop, determines new boundary lines.

The Redistricting Task Force, chaired by The Rev. Susan Garrett, has worked on the proposal since the fall and had representatives at every district orientation sessions to answer questions. In presenting the group's report and recommendation, Garrett brought the entire committee up to the podium with her.

"The task force believes that 16 districts will serve the conference well," Garrett said.

The other report that drew the most discussion Tuesday was by the Site Se-

18 GOING ON 16: Rev. Susan Garrett presents the recommendation of the Redistricting Task Force.



lection Committee, which recommended shortening the length of sessions and two additional years in Hampton, 2015 and 2016. Roanoke District Superintendent The Rev. Steve Hundley made a motion to change meet in Roanoke for those two years, and made an impassioned plea for "the Star City." After much discussion, Hundley's amendment passed.

After the dinner break, there was an attempt by the committee to revisit the Roanoke/Hampton question, but that was defeated. Then, the full Site Selection Committee report was approved as amended.

## Gulley thanks Virginians for Haiti efforts

The Rev. Jim Gulley offered his powerful testimony of survival in the Jan. 12 earthquake in Haiti Tuesday night, but more importantly outlined what faithful United Methodists could continue doing to support the 9 million people who are living in Haiti.

"I know the fact I am alive, while (fellow United Methodist pastors) Sam (Dixon) and Clint (Rabb) and 230,000 Haitians lost their lives, is through grace only. Our loving God is present with us in all circumstances," he said.

Gulley thanked the Virginia Confer-

ence for its giving to Haitian relief, for donation of kits, and for volunteering to physically go to Haiti and help, and also urged listeners to learn as much as we can about the history and culture of Haiti.



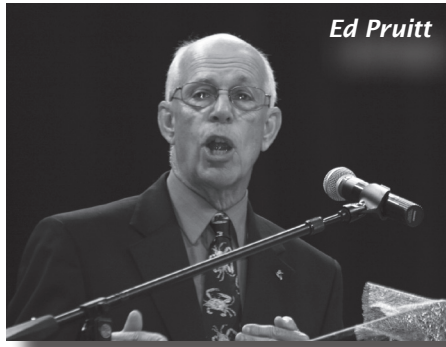
Gulley emphasized that our history as Americans is tied to Haiti, and our future can also be tied to Haiti with hope for the resurrection of that nation to be better than before the earthquake.

## 2010 class of retirees represent 945 years of combined service

The Rev. Ed Pruitt spoke for the recognition of retirees.

"The overall experience of being in ministry has been a thrilling experience," he said. "God will meet us at every corner. That is the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

The retirees were introduced by conference director of Pensions Don Rogers and a statement written by each of the retirees was read.



## Bible study leaders say God invites us to become a part of transformation

The Tuesday morning session began with a Bible study with the Rev. Marc Brown, Ms. Kathy Merry, and the Rev. John Briggs, authors of the book, "Does Your Church Have a Prayer?"

God invites us to be a part of transformation, Brown said.

Brown told about about the disciples who were fishing but followed Jesus' invitation to "follow him" to be "fishers of people." The first part of following Jesus is to be personally transformed, the second is to be a

transformational leader for Jesus.

Briggs said transformational leaders can respond to the needs of a congregation acknowledge their current reality and align their present and future needs for a desired outcome that is different from the past.

A survey for churches asked about challenges, which included finances, attendance and age diversity. Some 39 percent said attendance is a challenge at the same time they said worship is a strength... "so it begs the question of worship relevance."

## 42,000 pounds of potatoes are bagged

At 4:30 Tuesday morning, Skeeter Ramey began unloading a tractor-trailer filled with 840 fifty-pound bags of white potatoes. Using a forklift, the shrink-wrapped pallets were placed onto the parking lot of Ghent UMC to await their distribution to the hungry throughout the Tidewater area.

By 5:30 a.m., an estimated 130 volunteers from Annual Conference, including about 30 youth, were on hand to tackle the project. Within two hours, the volunteers had re-bagged the potatoes into 10-pound mesh bags, then loaded them into the vehicles of 18 regional feeding agencies that are giving them



**POTATO PARTY:** About 130 volunteers showed up in the early hours for the annual 'Potato Drop.'

to hungry families.

"The Potato Drop is a blessed gathering of community to serve one of the most fundamental needs of our brothers and sisters," said Adam Kelchner, student pastor at Belmont UMC in Nashville.

The youth from Byrd Chapel UMC, Charlottesville District, left their church at 12:30

a.m. to arrive at Ghent by 4:30 to be ready to bag potatoes. As a reward for their hard work, the nine youth spent the rest of the day at Water Country USA.

## Look for signs and wonders, Ross advises

In his second sermon to the Virginia Annual Conference, the Rev. Vance Ross said that followers of Christ "have to be willing to see signs and wonders, and have to be willing to see miracles and say that you see them!"

Ross related a humorous story about a visit to see his grandson, 3-year-old Christopher Bryant Harris, who rejected a trip to McDonald's and the mall in favor of experiencing "the wash car thing."

"What is a 'wash car thing'?" Ross asked. His daughter explained it was the automated car wash at the local convenience store. Ross said he was driving a rental car, it was night, AND it was raining. But, of course, he took his grandson to the wash car thing.

"The brushes were running, the soap starts coming, his grandson is just in awe," Ross said in describing his grandson's excitement.

"When's the last time you went to church and were filled with that kind of awe?" he asked.

The first Christians, as described in his text from Acts, were people of different nations and languages rich and poor who were filled with that kind of awe. "They were awe-filled! They were awe-full!"



**The Rev. Denise Honeycutt was honored for her 10 years of service as the conference's Director of Mission. She will start a new appointment on July 1.**