

# Sunday Advocate

Virginia United Methodist

Weekly supplement to the *Virginia United Methodist Advocate* newsmagazine

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First Sunday After Pentecost

## Clergy pledge to offer same-sex ceremonies

Last week 70 clergy at Minnesota's Annual Conference signed a statement saying that they would "offer the grace of the Church's blessing" to same-sex couples. Then a few days later, 166 deacons, elders and licensed local pastors at the Northern Illinois Annual Conference signed a statement which "joyfully affirms that we will offer the grace of the church's blessing to any prepared couple desiring Christian ceremonies for civil unions or marriage."

Civil recognition is available to same-gender couples in Illinois as a new law went into effect June 1. Meanwhile, residents of Minnesota are debating an amendment that would enshrine only heterosexual marriage in the state constitution.

The Rev. Bruce Robbins, pastor of Hennepin Avenue UMC in Minneapolis, said he was part of a group of clergy who "want to challenge parts of the United Methodist polity with which we disagree ... which relates to the lesbian, gay, transgender, and bisexual community and Christian marriage."

*The Book of Discipline* currently states that ceremonies celebrating "homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches," and officiating at such unions is a chargeable offense for clergy.

"We believe The United Methodist Church's discriminatory policies tarnish the witness of Christ's love and justice to the world," said the Rev. Greg Gross, a deacon in Chicago.

"As we teach people about how God is revealed in Jesus, we are called to teach that no one is left out," said the Rev. Bonnie Beckonchrist, senior pastor of First UMC of Arlington Heights.

"The global United Methodist Church lives in the tension of differing understandings of sexuality as we reflect many diverse cultures and countries," said Northern Illinois Bishop Hee-Soo Jung in a statement. "It is a painful, dividing conversation, that calls for patience, respect, grace and a willingness to struggle together as we hold one another in prayer and community."

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

**Today is Peace with Justice Sunday:** Peace with Justice Sunday, one of The United Methodist Church's six church-wide Special Sunday offerings, is celebrated on the first Sunday after Pentecost. Peace with Justice Sunday enables the church to have a voice in advocating for peace and justice through a broad spectrum of global programs. The annual conference keeps half of the receipts for Peace with Justice ministries in the conference. The remaining half is used for Peace with Justice ministries related to the General Board of Church & Society.

## Georgia church supports Brazilian children's trip to Virginia:

Tuckston UMC in Athens, Ga., has made a generous contribution toward the expenses of the Brazil Shade and Fresh Water Team who attended Annual Conference in Roanoke this week. Tuckston has a long history of support for this ministry of the Brazil Methodist Church with at-risk children and wanted to help make the trip possible. Churches and individuals who would also like to contribute to the expenses of bringing our Brazilian partners in mission to Virginia may send their contributions to the conference's Mission and Global Justice Office, P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058. Checks should be made out to "Virginia Conference UMC" with "AC-Brazil Team" on the memo line.

**Allen says he'll support Aldersgate:** U.S. Senate candidate George Allen said in a statement he will continue to attend Aldersgate UMC in the Alexandria District despite some criticism of the decision to allow members of a nearby mosque to make use of the church building. The issue was brought up by a blogger who pointed out that the former senator and governor's membership in the church might not sit well with "evangelical conservatives." The Allen family has been attending Aldersgate since they first arrived to the Mount Vernon area almost 10 years ago. Earlier this year, Allen hosted Aldersgate's annual pancake dinner, which raised thousands of dollars for the church's mission work. Allen's two youngest children were confirmed in the church. Aldersgate allows members of a mosque to hold Friday prayers in the church's Guback Center.

**Tompkins is new Foundation president:** E. Deal Tompkins has been elected president and executive director of the Virginia United Methodist Foundation succeeding Jim Bergdoll, who retires on June 30. Tompkins was most recently director of Gift Planning at Emory and Henry College. He has more than 25 years of experience in development work at several colleges and hospitals, including four years as director of Planned Giving at Randolph-Macon College in Ashland.

**Quote of the Week:** "We do not have to be quiet to be Methodist and we do not have to be boring to be holy." – *The Rev. Telley Gadson, pastor at St. Mark UMC in Sumter, S.C.*

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