

Simple holy week and Easter ideas that inspire

Holy Week and Easter suggest a variety of possibilities to inspire worshipers to understand the events leading up to and following Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection.

Keep in mind your worshipers may include persons returning after a long absence, coming for the first time and "regulars" who may not be actively involved throughout the week. Your congregation also will be multigenerational and possibly culturally diverse. Simple imagery will enhance, rather than distract from, the intended message.

Consider the following ideas:

1. Arrange a space in the narthex, a wide hallway or the sanctuary. Choose a daily symbol that tells the story of the events leading up to Easter. Change the symbols every day to keep through Easter Sunday. An alternate idea is to use a large enough table to add symbols each day. By Easter, the story is complete!

2. Set up an Easter tree and provide small pieces of paper for persons to write and hang prayers as they enter. During a special time in the service, display the tree and include the prayers during the service. Plant the slips of paper in a flower garden. The paper decomposes as fertilizer.

3. Make potted lilies available ahead of time for persons to purchase for members and friends who are ill or unable to attend church. Provide cards for special notes. Display the lilies during the Easter service and instruct the donors to retrieve them after the service to deliver to their honoree.

4. Help the children to make Easter bookmarks for visitors attending the worship service.

5. Photograph worshipers and have a team print the photos for pickup after the service. Each photo can include the name of the church, the date and a special greeting of thanks.

6. Develop a memorial garden where children can plant flowers.

7. Develop an outdoor sunrise service where various characters portray the discovery at the tomb. Set aside an area near the church so the congregation can walk back for the continued celebration. Begin the "formal" service with the women running and shouting, "He is not here. Jesus is not here. He is risen."

Consider pageantry an option throughout Holy Week and the Easter season. Music, portrayal, visual worship spaces, liturgical dance, electronic image projection and sermon drama are just a few ways to help make the story come alive! Have fun!

— *United Methodist Communications*

New series seeks to answer questions about apportionments

A new series by the Communications office at the conference center will offer in-depth information about apportionments. From what they are to how they fit into the United Methodist connection, the series will provide information from the Rev. Marc Brown, Virginia Conference director of Connectional Ministries, as well as David Domnisse, conference treasurer, and John Fuller, executive director of the Pensions office. Have questions about apportionments? Share them with Madeline Pillow, Virginia Conference director of Communications and *Advocate* editor, at MadelinePillow@vaumc.org to be shared in future articles in the series. The article may be read at www.vaumc.org or in the April edition of the *Advocate* magazine.

Conference-wide Week of Prayer will be Apr. 2-8

A prayer movement in response to the Council of Bishops initiative is called Praying Our Way Forward. You are invited whether clergy or laity to pray for God's guidance. The Virginia Conference will hold its designated Week of Prayer from Apr. 2-8. The website umcprays.org will host prayer resources and prayer support for the church. Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett of North Alabama Conference and Bishop Al Gwinn serve as co-chairs of the Praying Our Way Forward movement. "Our prayer focus is two-fold: We are praying that God will help us to fulfill the mission of the church, and we are praying to be one in Christ," said Bishop Wallace-Padgett. Virginia Conference resources are available at vaumc.org/prayforward.

UM Communications offering local church grants

United Methodist Communications has established a series of grants and resources to support local church communications. All grants are awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis. Grants include website development, new church starts and demographic data. Visit www.umcom.org. For questions, email localchurchgrants@umcom.org.

Caretakers of God's Creation Climate Justice Conference will take place in Northern Virginia

The 10th Annual United Methodist Caretakers of God's Creation Conference will be held in the Washington, D.C. area this year to complement the National People's Climate Justice March on Apr. 29. Mt. Olivet UMC in Arlington will act as host for the event. The conference will be a day of inspiration, education and preparation. It will begin with worship, including a message of hope brought by United Methodist Bishop C. Joseph Sprague, will include major addresses by the Rev. Fletcher Harper, the Rev. Jenny Phillips, and will conclude with worship and communion with sermons by Bill McKibben and Michelle Roberts. Please contact Jaydee Hanson at jaydeehanson@gmail.com or 703-231-5956 with questions.

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 magazine of the Virginia Conference. To subscribe to the monthly *Virginia Advocate* magazine, call (804) 521-1110 or 1-800-768-6040, ext. 110; or e-mail Advocate@vaumc.org. Unless indicated, all news compiled courtesy of the *Virginia Advocate*, the weekly *e-Advocate* or United Methodist News Service.