

## Outreach ideas for Easter

Easter offers an opportunity to tell the story of Christ's Resurrection and defeat of death, the ultimate message of hope to the largest attendance weekend of the year for churches. Start planning now to develop ways to introduce your community to your church, so they may come and hear the story of the risen Christ.

Marketing and advertising are meant to support the much more effective methods of making connections through love and friendship, so check out the ideas below.

1. Spring cleanup. Spread the love of Christ by looking for people who may need help with home repairs or cleanup projects.

2. Canned-food donations. Encourage everyone who attends your Palm Sunday or Easter service to bring canned food for a local food bank. Seeing the church serve others can offer a different view of the church and ultimately cause seekers to be more open to hearing the gospel.

3. Easter egg decoration contest and art show. Ask the children of the community to submit decorated eggs and other pieces of art for Easter.

4. Egg-vitations. The Sunday before Easter, give each child ten plastic eggs with candy and an invitation for their friends and families to attend the Easter service. It is great to involve children as inviters.

5. Film festival. Sponsor a film festival displaying new works by local artists that express the love of Christ or the Easter story or show commercially produced films about the story of Jesus' life, death and Resurrection. If you show commercially produced films, make sure to understand the copyright and licensing issues before showing them. Check out the Bible Film Blog for ideas on potential films.

6. Art exhibit. Ask local artists or artists in your church to create art inspired by the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Invite the community to view the creations and interact with the artists to hear their stories and perspectives. Or ask each artist to focus on one station of the cross and allow him or her to interpret it through painting, sculpture, performance art, music or other arts. This can convey the emotion of the Passion story in new and different ways.

With a little planning, your church can provide welcoming experiences to help convey the message of Easter to your community and spread the importance of the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

— United Methodist Communications

## Register now for Bishop's Convocation on Prayer

Both clergy and laity are invited to attend the Bishop's Convocation on Prayer on Saturday, Apr. 1, 2017, at Trinity UMC, 903 Forest Ave., Henrico, VA 23229 from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. The Rev. Juanita Campbell Rasmus will be the plenary speaker. The event will feature a plenary session followed by two workshop sessions, lunch and a worship service. Click the link to view the schedule, register and to view workshops. Deadline to register is Mar. 27 and the cost is \$10 which includes lunch. Learn more and register, by visiting the conference website at [www.vaumc.org](http://www.vaumc.org) and click on "Conference calendar" at the top right and click on the corresponding date.

## 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](http://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](http://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](http://www.umcom.org). For questions, email [localchurchgrants@umcom.org](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:Advocate@vaumc.org). Unless indicated, all news compiled courtesy of the *Virginia Advocate*, the weekly *e-Advocate* or United Methodist News Service.