

Out-of-the-box ideas for men's ministry

It's time to get creative with your United Methodist Men's ministry. According to a Pew Research study, women are more likely than men to say religion is 'very important' in their lives (60% of women vs. 47% of men) and American women also are more likely than American men to say they pray daily (64% vs. 47%) and attend religious services at least once a week (40% vs. 32%). Here are some ideas to move your men's ministry beyond the traditional breakfast Bible study and reach men in your community.

1. Host an un-conference for men

Expenses for a traditional conference with guest speakers can pile up quickly. What's more, they ignore the wealth of wisdom within your congregation. Rather than finding outside experts, you leverage the wisdom of the participants.

Though an un-conference can be structured in many ways, the goal is to connect people and spread knowledge through those connections. You might begin the day by having people write topics they'd like to discuss or in which they feel they have particular expertise. Then, allow participants to vote anonymously. Once the voting is complete, have a couple of leaders decide how to group the participants to discuss the most popular topics.

United Methodist Men offers ongoing webinars and videos on various topics of concern to men's ministry. These webinars are available live-feed at various time throughout the year, and are archived for later use.

2. Be a kid with the kids

Sometimes we get stuck thinking that every meeting must be focused around teaching, so try planning an event or two that helps fathers and grandfathers have fun with kids in a safe environment. This could be a dance party, a field game day or an outdoor adventure in a local park. Men could attend and support youth sporting events or volunteer to be badge counselors or adult support for scouting groups. United Methodist Men have several resources on scouting and mentoring programs. As you plan these fun times, be creative and think through ways to enable the father figures to have spiritual conversations with the children.

3. Faith-and-film meeting

Here's another option for bringing the church to a place it is not often seen: the movie theater. Instead of showing the newest Christian DVD at your church, consider going to see the latest blockbuster in the theater together. Thinking about movies as powerful modern parables can transform them into faith-forming material.

The General Commission on United Methodist Men is also available to re-source church men's ministry groups to do out-of-the-box ministry and activities. Find them at www.gcumm.org.

Read more of this article at umcom.org.

— Jeremy Steele, United Methodist Communications

New award announced for Annual Conference 2017

The Virginia Annual Conference Board of Discipleship has announced a new award to be given at Annual Conference. The award, "One Matters," recognizes significant improvement of baptisms and professions of faith. "With the One Matters Discipleship Award, we want to lift up the importance of discipleship and help interpret, across the connection what zeros in professions of faith and baptism mean and what moving away from the zeros means," said Jeff Campbell, director of Annual Conference Relationships at Discipleship Ministries. "Each 'one' in those categories represents a transformed life – a life that matters to God, and a life that should matter to us."

The award, which includes \$1,000 and a One Matters Discipleship Award plaque, will be presented to the pastor and lay leaders of a congregation that has done significant work to make its zeros from previous years become positive numbers.

Criteria for the award is a church that has a history of zero baptisms and zero professions of faith for a minimum of three to five years and has significant increases in these two areas in 2016. Nominations should include the historical record which can be verified through Year End Statistics for at least four to six years. Included in the application should be a short story of how the church has turned itself around. Applications are due no later than Friday, Apr. 21, 2017. More information available at <http://www.vaumc.org/ncflerepository/Events/OneMatters.pdf>

Mentors for All God's Children Camp needed

All God's Children Camp is in need of mentors this summer for all three locations. The camp has been expanded to three weeks and 30 mentors are needed for each location (Richmond, Jun. 18-24; Harrisonburg, Jun. 25-30; and Eastern Shore, Jul. 31-Aug. 4). Please prayerfully consider giving a week of your time to love some at risk children this summer. It could turn out to be the best week of your summer. Please contact Lori Smith, lttlelori@gmail.com or 571-245-9591 for more information.

Keep up with 2017 Bible reading challenge

In a Facebook Live video last week on the conference Facebook page, Bishop Lewis encouraged the Virginia Conference to join in the 2017 challenge even if they haven't started yet. You can find the readings for April at this link: <http://www.vaumc.org/pages/bishop-lewis/biblechallenge>.

Readings for the whole year can be found: <http://backtothebible.org/reading-guide/15/1>.

Let Bishop Lewis know you're reading alongside her at: <http://www.vaumc.org/pages/ministries/communications/biblechallengesurvey>.

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.