



GOOD NEWS

A Publication of the Valle Crucis Conference Center

September 2016

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***Deeply Rooted on
Sacred Ground***

**Good News
September 2016**

Changes

As we bear witness to the softening of summer into fall, the reality of change sinks in. The leaves are burnishing gold in the late afternoon, and morning creeps in later and later now as the days shorten. The sudden crispness to the air in the morning comes as a surprise. I caught myself shivering in the car driving the short commute to work yesterday morning, and realized I should have dug a sweater out of the drawer. Time to put the jackets by the back door again, to hastily thrust little arms into as my family spills out into the morning mist towards the minivan.

We prepare for change, bank on change, and sometimes look forward to it, but when it comes, it is almost always just a little jarring. The Right Reverend G. Porter Taylor, the sixth bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina, is retiring at the end of this month. Of course we knew this change was coming; we hosted a very successful Bishop candidate event in May, we prayed for the phenomenally talented four finalist candidates, and watched online breathlessly as the ballots were cast to elect the Rev. Canon José A.

McLoughlin, Canon to the Ordinary from the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma, as his successor. We know and like Bishop-Elect McLoughlin; he will be an excellent steward of the rich resources of this Diocese and is already a great friend of the Valle Crucis Conference Center. He and his family will be God's hands and heart at work in the High Country and across Western North Carolina.

But we do mourn, just a bit. How could we not? Bishop Taylor has been an advocate for spiritual growth for clergy and lay ministry alike, and a champion of Western North Carolina's amazing wealth of retreat venues. He and his wife, Jo, are gracious, intelligent, and walk the balance-beam of spirituality and politics with seeming ease. We will miss him, even as we welcome Bishop McLoughlin and his lovely family. So please join us in watching the leaves turn from your perch on the Inn porch, or enjoy the crisp air on your stroll up to the waterfalls. And while you're at it, lift up prayers for an easy transition for Bishop Taylor, and for welcoming the McLoughlins to their home in the High Country.

Yours in hospitality,



Bishop-Elect José A. McLoughlin

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2016 VCCC PROGRAMS

COME SPEND SOME TIME ON SACRED GROUND

I Love to Tell the Story Friday, October 28 - Sunday, October 30

The Rev. Pam Webb,
Facilitator
Naomi Faw, Storyteller
Ramona Curtis, Musician
*\$210 Full Program;
\$114 Commuter Rate*

The pages of Scripture are filled with sacred stories of people of faith. Led by Reverend Pam Webb and facilitated by the storytelling of Naomi Faw and the music of Ramona Curtis, we will rediscover, explore, and share the stories of our own faith and discuss how to encourage others to tell their stories.



The Reverend Pam Webb is an ordained Episcopal priest. She was previously Director of Christian Education at a parish in Birmingham, AL. She has also served as an Education for Ministry mentor; rector of two parishes; interim rector at five parishes, including St. Paul's, Wilkesboro; Director of Alumni Affairs and Church Relations at Virginia Theological Seminary; and is an experienced retreat and workshop leader. Rev. Webb is retired and living in Williamsburg, VA with her husband, where she continues to serve the Church.

Published author and storyteller Naomi Faw has appeared at the Heart of North Carolina Storytelling Festival and the Valle Country Fair in Valle Crucis. She has recorded one of her stories for WVTF 89.1 FM in Roanoke, VA, and her writing has appeared in *The Upper Room*, the *North Carolina Disciple*, and *Reflections on the New River*. She and her family live in western North Carolina and are active members of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Wilkesboro, North Carolina.



Ramona Curtis is the organist at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Wilkesboro. She attended Morehead State University in Kentucky.

This workshop is for all experience levels and interests.

Program registration form can be found at www.vccconferences.org. You may also register for any of our programs by calling the office at (828) 963-4453.



2016 VCCC PROGRAMS

COME SPEND SOME TIME ON SACRED GROUND

Art & Quiet Day

Friday, October 28, 10:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.

RaRa Schlitt

\$10 for lunch

Location: 1st Floor of Johnson Hall

Art has long been a way to tap into the divine and unlock the secret depths of the heart. Though a painting stimulates the visual sense, there's something about a painting that also touches the more interior parts of us. Join artist RaRa Schlitt in exploring the relationship between art, prayer, and contemplative worship.

RaRa Schlitt is a renowned folk artist and children's book author and illustrator. Her art is represented in galleries across the US and internationally. RaRa is a physical therapist and volunteers part-time teaching and conducting art projects in her community. She resides in Maryville, Tennessee, with her husband, Tom, and her golden retriever, Rosie.

Paintings will be available for purchase; 20% of sales benefit the Conference Center

Come Thou Long Expected:

A Short Advent Retreat

Friday, December 9, 10:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.

Katerina Whitley

\$40 includes lunch

Location: 1st Floor of Johnson Hall

What comes to your mind when you think of Advent? Can you stop worrying about decorating and gift buying to concentrate on the Coming of the Christ Child? Every year, people of faith long for something different, spiritual and holy, to prepare them fully for a Christmas to remember.

Katerina Whitley will focus and refine this longing. The world waited for this "central event in the history of creation," as C.S. Lewis called it. We will examine this waiting through writings, poetry, the prophets, the Birth Narrative, and our own hopes and desires for peace and joy.

Katerina is well-known in the Diocese of Western NC and beyond. She is the author of several books, including two about Advent, and a writer of Advent Chancel dramas and plays.

Advanced Centering Prayer Retreat: Deepening the Silence

Sunday – Sunday, Nov. 27 – Dec. 4

Becky Hannah, Joan Ricci Thome, &

The Rev. Bob Cook

\$533 Full Program

This retreat is for those who would like a prolonged experience of centering prayer and are interested in entering into the more profound levels of spiritual practice in an atmosphere of silence, solitude, and community.

Centering prayer is a silent form of prayer that directs a person's attention toward God, with ancient roots in the mystical and monastic tradition. The retreat will help develop and sustain a regular centering prayer practice. In addition to several daily centering prayer periods, you will have opportunities for contemplative worship, individual meetings with retreat leaders, hikes, labyrinth walks, and time for solitude and reflection.

Retreat leaders are Becky Hannah, co-coordinator of Contemplative Outreach of Western NC, and Joan Ricci Thome, presenter of contemplative prayer retreats at the Oratory and St. Francis Springs Prayer Center in Stoneville, NC. The Rev. Robert Cook, Vicar of Christ Church, Walnut Grove, NC, is spiritual director for the week. Both Joan and Becky have been trained to facilitate centering prayer by Contemplative Outreach, the organization founded by Father Thomas Keating as a spiritual network committed to living the contemplative dimension of the Gospel in everyday life.

Due to the length of this retreat, each participant should have an established practice of centering prayer for at least a year. **This retreat is limited to the first 20 registrants. Participants must stay on campus and plan to attend the entire retreat.**

If you have questions about the contents or itinerary for the retreat, please feel free to contact Becky Hannah at (828) 702-3518.



Valle Country Fun

Saturday, October 15, 2016 is the 38th Valle Country Fair, the overgrown church bazaar set in the field across the road from the Valle Crucis Conference Center. Holy Cross Church members come together for months in advance to prepare an authentic harvest-season community celebration featuring quality hand-made crafts, with 160+ exhibitors

displaying their art, home-cooked food and mountain music.

Parishioners make jams, jellies, and apple sauce. The sauce is boiled down in copper kettles at the Fair to produce the most delicious apple butter you've ever tasted. Volunteers work all year to ensure a successful fair, planning every detail months in advance.

Holy Cross' Mission and Outreach Commission (MOC) distributes all Fair proceeds to ease the troubles of as many local people as possible, by awarding grants to local non-profits that serve the folks of Watauga and Avery counties. This year \$31,000 in



grants will be distributed to 12 local non-profit organizations.

While the grants assist many people, most Fair funds are directly given to help individuals and families with emergency needs. In 2015 the MOC distributed more than \$38,000 to help folks pay rent or a utility bill, put food on the table, keep a car running to get to work, or fill a medical prescription.

The Valle Crucis Conference Center is proud of the partnership with Holy Cross to provide such a wonderful service to the community. Conference Center

staff assist with parking and infrastructure, help with emergency management, and share the resources of the Conference Center in support of the Fair.

So come on out on **Saturday, October 15** to enjoy local music, lots of homemade food, exhibitors' wares and the kids' activity area with your family. You'll meet nice people and have a great time knowing that every dollar you spend on Fair day will help those with the greatest needs tomorrow.

In 2009, the Valle Crucis Conference Center was blessed to receive a donation of a beautiful house. The Barker House has been loved by many guests; now it's time to pass it along to a family who will love it just as much.

This charming 2-bedroom, 2-bath house has absolutely stunning views of the Upper Valley of Valle Crucis, including the gorgeous swath of protected conservation easement land. The offer includes 5 acres with the 2,046 square foot house and outbuildings. The house has three generous living spaces, including a large sitting room with gas fireplace, beautiful sunroom, and 2 car garage. It comes fully furnished, and is beautifully landscaped with patio and fountain.

The listing price is **\$299,900** through Blue Ridge Realty & Investments. Please call (828) 963-4453 or Jonathan Lehman at (828) 263-8711.



Thank You to Our 2016 Donors

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Sydney Stewart
 Sandy* & Dorcas Jones
Carlton Whelan
 Sandy* & Dorcas Jones
Andy White
 North Am. Academy of Pipe & Drum

In Honor Of...

The 38th Annual Valle Country Fair and all the volunteers that make it happen
 Bob & Polly Capps
Sandy Jones
 John G. Holler
Wendell Seaver
 The Rev. Jane G. Smith
 Diana Mast White
Matt Talbot Men's Group #140
 John Kirkman
The Rt. Rev. G. Porter Taylor
 Georgia G. Herring
 The Rev. Jane G. Smith
 William C. Spencer, Jr.
Mildred Tester's ministry at VCCC
 The Rev. & Mrs. Tim & Beverly McRee
Dale Townsend
 Diana Mast White
VCCC Staff
 Bill & Maxine Hobbs
 Fay King
 Susie Morgan
Dr. Ken Wallenborn in celebration of
 Ken's 29th year at the NAAPD and in
 anticipation of his 30th year in 2017

*Board of Directors



Want to see your name here?

Generous donations such as yours help us continue our ministry of hospitality.
 Donate securely on our web site at www.vccconferences.org or mail to
 P.O. Box 654, Valle Crucis, NC 28691.

Bequeaths, Bothered, and Bewildered...

By Keith T. Martin

As a new VCCC Board member, I have come to learn how very important memorial gifts, bequests, and charitable remainder trusts have become to the fiscal health of the Valle Crucis Conference Center (VCCC). It reaffirms what I have known in my heart since my youth: VCCC has been a special place for so many people for years, decades and, indeed, centuries.

Each time I receive our quarterly newsletter, I scan the columns of names in whose memory a contribution has been made to VCCC and wonder, "What about this venerable piece of heaven was special to that individual?"

One such individual was the late Laura Huntley Stone, a personal friend and kindred spirit.

Laura Huntley Stone



Laura Huntley Stone ca. 1974

An Asheville native and lifelong Episcopalian, Laura grew up at St. Luke's in Asheville, married at All Soul's in Biltmore, and was a parishioner at St. James in Monkton, MD. She unexpectedly passed away last year after moving to Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates with her husband, Neil Midkiff.

Laura told me shortly before her death that Valle Crucis was her spiritual home, as it is mine. It was in our rustic dining hall over four decades ago where Laura was elected to the Diocesan Youth Council, representing the Asheville deanery. One year later, Laura became President of the EYC of the Diocese of WNC and served with distinction until enrolling at UNC Chapel Hill in 1976.

She was a frequent visitor to VCCC during the period of time that encompassed "The Mission School Summer Youth Program," informally known as "The Farm House Gang" after the building in which they were initially housed. Formed in 1974 at the suggestion of Bishop Matthew George Henry by Helen Whitener from Church of the Ascension in Hickory, the program ran for 12 years under the leadership of four different directors: Helen Whitener Tester, Julie Epps Gurganus, Ellen Scruggs and Ginny Walters Brien.

According to Helen, the program had three goals: to teach youth to live and work together in Christian Community; to learn about life in Appalachia from the people of the community; and to learn practical skills by working with local farmers.

Helen remembers that Laura, "was one of those joyful people who would just show up and join in whatever fun was going on." Laura returned "home to the mountains" for the celebration of the ministry of the Rev. Welch K. Tester in September 2014, exactly two years ago this week as I write this remembrance. That event became a mini-reunion of sorts for those of us who knew Laura from Camp Henry, EYC, and the "Farm House Gang." Upon learning of her untimely death just a few months later, the idea quickly emerged to celebrate her life by buying a rocking chair with a memorial plaque for the porch at the venerable Inn, the main building here at VCCC.

As Laura's longtime friend Mike Newton-Ward put it, "This is a place dear to Laura and to many of us, from many youth conferences, summer programs and retreats. The porch looks across a lovely, small valley to mountains on the other side. Rocking on the porch is considered a holy experience by almost everyone who goes to the Valle Crucis Conference Center."

Guilt: a powerful motivator

Some 45 years after first experiencing VCCC during a parish picnic, I have been bothered by the fact that my name has rarely graced the roster of donors. If memory serves, there was a contribution during the sesquicentennial celebration almost a quarter century ago but, having resided in other dioceses or other states, I have failed in my stewardship to this, my spiritual home.

No longer.

Laura's passing, coupled with my relocation to the High Country, have crystallized my priorities with regard to individual philanthropy; I am very proud that my first gift will join other contributions in her memory. The next time you find yourself in the Valle, feel free to sit a spell in Laura's rocking chair, gaze across the Valle, and remember a special person and sacred place where both of us were closer to God.

Thank you, Laura.



Laura, much loved and missed.

Valle Crucis Conference Center 2016 Programs Registration Form

PO Box 654, Valle Crucis, NC 28691 (828) 963-4453 www.vcconferences.org

Please complete entire form and mail with your deposit check to the address above. Registration form can also be found online.
Checks can be made payable to VCCC.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Primary Phone: () _____ ☐ Cell ☐ Home

Email: _____

Confirmations are made by email. Please include an email address when possible.

Non-refundable deposits are required for multi-day workshops, with remainder of balance due on arrival.

October 28

Art & Quiet Day

☐ \$10 Lunch

October 28-30

I Love to Tell the Story

☐ \$210 Full Program

☐ \$114 Commuter

\$90 deposit

Nov. 27 - Dec. 4

Advanced Centering Prayer

☐ \$533 Full Program

\$100 deposit

December 9

Short Advent Retreat

☐ \$40

Total: _____

If attending a multi-day workshop:

I would like to room with: _____

☐ *I am requesting a single room, with knowledge that a single may not be available.*

Diet requests, allergies, or other needs: _____

Registration forms for programs, general information, and policies can also be found on our web site,
www.vcconferences.org. Please feel free to make photocopies of this brochure and any related materials.



Dr. Arthur Taylor listens attentively during his and Bishop Taylor's workshop, "Storytelling as Evangelism," August 20th, 2016



Valle Crucis Conference Center

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Good News
September 2016



The Valle Crucis Conference Center is a ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina. Located on over 450 acres of mountain woodland and verdant farming valley, the Conference Center is truly one of the more beautiful places on Earth. With its beauty comes a sense of timeless spiritual grace that transcends denomination or faith tradition.

The mission of the Valle Crucis Conference Center is to inspire, by loving example and service, those who break bread with us and share in the quest for spiritual renewal, Christian community, and stewardship of this sacred place.

The Valle Crucis Conference Center is located in the historic Mission School, featuring buildings dating from the late 19th Century and early 20th Century, nearly all of which are on the National Historic Register.

The Conference Center is open year-round to accommodate groups of 5 to 150. Rates include three hearty, nutritious meals a day and arguably the best towels in Western North Carolina lodgings.

To inquire about availability of our accommodations or meeting spaces, or to learn about our Hermitage retreat cabins, visit our web site at www.vcconferences.org or call (828) 963-4453.