

MEMORIAL DAY 2021



DWAYNE CARPENTER

Remembering our HEROES

Monday, May 31, is Memorial Day, and as we mark this day, we should take the time to reflect on its true meaning.

On Veterans Day each November, we celebrate and thank all who served in our armed forces. But on Memorial Day, we honor the hundreds of thousands who made the ultimate sacrifice: They gave their lives to protect our values and freedoms.



Ralph Northam

In the midst of World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt said, “Those who have long enjoyed such privileges as we enjoy forget in time that men have died to win them.”

These words are as true today as they were more than 75 years ago, as we honor our brave men and women who gave their lives so that we may live ours.

After World War II, in which nearly 10,000 Virginians were

killed, the commonwealth moved to build the Virginia War Memorial. By the time it was dedicated in the 1950s, there were plans to add those lost in the Korean conflict.

Now, nearly 12,000 Virginians killed in action — in those conflicts, as well as Vietnam, the Gulf wars and 21st-century conflicts like the war on terrorism — are listed on the memorial in Richmond. It is a moving site, dedicated to honoring the memory of all those who made this sacrifice.

On Monday, we will gather there at the memorial — virtually, for most of us — for the Commonwealth’s Memorial Day ceremony — the 65th consecutive year we have done so since the memorial was dedicated in 1956.

Since we marked Memorial Day 2020, four more names of Virginia heroes have been added to the stone and glass walls of the Memorial’s Shrine of Memory:

♦ Army Pfc. Richard Harris of Henrico County, who died in

Every service member who is lost was somebody’s child, or someone’s parent, spouse, sibling or friend, and we must remember these Gold Star families and their loss.

HANOVER SCHOOL BOARD

Rename a school and lose your seat



Michael Paul Williams
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When Kelly Evko replaced Sue Dibble on the Hanover County School Board, Dibble — who’d graduated to the Board of Supervisors — sounded like a fan.

“I believe that she will hit the ground running and will definitely represent South Anna with the same passion and dedication that I have had for six years,” Dibble said in January 2020.

But Wednesday, Evko was told in so many words to hit the road.

Bob May was appointed as the new South Anna representative on the school board, effective July 1.

Evko was among a 4-3 board majority that voted to rename Lee-Davis High School and Stonewall Jackson Middle School in July 2020. Dibble, at the time, wasn’t shy in voicing her displeasure. As chairperson of the school board, she’d supported keeping those school names.

An NAACP lawsuit and the racial reckoning that

followed the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer made keeping those school names bad for business and the county’s image. But that didn’t stop Dibble and fellow supervisor Canova Peterson from detonating into outrage after the board voted to rename the schools.

But asked Friday if that vote played a role in her decision not to reappoint Evko, Dibble replied:

“No, not at all. It was simply based on credentials. Work experience as well as professional experience. I don’t think anyone should really be judged based on one vote at all.”

I’m not buying any of that.

Evko never had a chance after that vote.

But go on. “Having myself served on the board 6 ½ years, I know what it takes,” Dibble said. “And Mr. May is more qualified.”

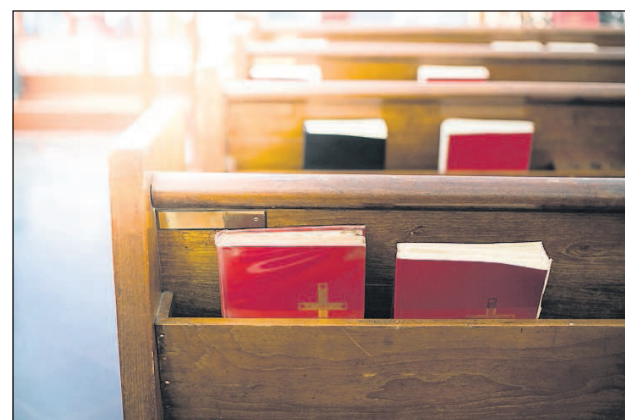
That’s subjective. And the word “qualified,” like “pregnant,” should not need a qualifier.

Asked Friday if she knew her vote to rename the schools had sealed her fate, Evko said: “There was no way for me to know for certain, but I had a feeling (I was going to lose the post).”

Dibble confirmed that

WILLIAMS, Page D3

AFTER COVID-19



GETTY IMAGES

Can the church make a comeback?

For the past 10 years, I have worked for my church. Prior to this, I spent 31 years in public education.

With church work, I observed that churches and schools have commonalities. Each pivots off of people, pennies, buildings, traditions and a desire



Bill Pike

to improve the world. Additionally, churches and schools were turned upside down by COVID-19. Leaders in both environments scrambled to adapt. Technology played an impactful role in meeting the needs of congregations and students.

Ultimately, the ability to bring virtual worship services and classroom instruction to their communities depended upon infrastructure. Churches and school systems that previously had invested in these technologies were able to engage more quickly.

As COVID-19 restrictions retreat, it will be interesting to see how

churches reconnect with their congregations. Based upon results from the most recent Gallup poll on religion, I sense churches are approaching a critical crossroad.

That data revealed that membership in houses of worship in the United States fell below 50% of Americans. Gallup noted this is an eight-decade decline. So how did memberships to a church, synagogue or mosque fall for the first time to 47%?

There are many reasons. But quite simply, the world has changed.

The precedent for a family to be in church on Sunday mornings is not a priority. Now, family calendars are packed every weekend. Families strive to make every minute count, but attending church even for an hour is not always on their schedule.

Additionally, the dismantling of “blue laws” contributed to this decline. Gone are the quiet Sundays in towns and cities when businesses were closed. Now, a person can make all kinds of purchases on Sunday.

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OPINIONS

HOUSING SOLUTIONS

Stability in a time of great need

When the Partnership for Housing Affordability (PHA) launched the Richmond Regional Housing Framework in January 2020, the last thing the document was intended to be was a plan sitting on a shelf. It had to be a vision put into action.

In April 2018, Richmond received national attention in *The New York Times* over its housing struggles. Research from the Eviction Lab at Princeton University found a disturbing local trend: In 2016, 1 in 9 renter households were issued eviction judgments. The first reaction from local leaders and philanthropic partners rightly was: What can we do?

Behind every housing data point are real people in crisis, and there are a host of challenges in addition to evictions. Over 20 months of development and nearly 2,000 conversations with community members, the PHA acquired a strong sense of the needs that shape the framework, from rising rents leaving households in a cost-burdened state, to seniors with fixed incomes and too few living options.

What no one could have known was that by March 2020, a pandemic would hit — and the list of Virginians in need of a helping hand would swell by thousands. But the framework was prepared to adapt, starting with deploying a centralized way to connect people to organizations and services. The Housing Resource Line (HRL) is fostering stability in a time of great need.

Launched on Sept. 1, the HRL is one of the first completed solutions among 60 put forth by the regional housing framework. Open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., the hotline is staffed with specialists who conduct a short intake of questions to best assess how to help callers. A Spanish-speaking staffer also is available on Wednesdays and Fridays from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., and there is an online form option as well.

The HRL operates like an air traffic controller for housing issues. It does not directly provide assistance but it does point central Virginians in the right direction. Residents from the nine localities in the PlanRVA regional area — the town of Ashland, the city of Richmond, and the counties of Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent and Powhatan — are eligible to call.

Data provided by the PHA shows that in roughly nine months' time, the HRL is filling a void. The hotline has fielded nearly 4,700 calls, connecting more than 150 households to nearly \$500,000 in financial assistance for issues including rent, utilities and more.

But the aid extends far beyond money. "Rental options" was the No. 1 service needed (37%), with many people just seeking safe, affordable rooms in the area.

Another 5% of calls were for "legal support." One possible scenario is a tenant trying to understand the ramifications of a pay-or-quit notice — the time when a landlord gives a five-day deadline to either fulfill rent or move, VALegalAid.org explains. If payment is not made in that time frame, the landlord can start an eviction in court.

No matter what the need might be, HRL specialists can step in with expertise on the individual's place in a housing issue, the range of organizations that serve the community, the eligibility requirements for any resources, the status of available aid programs and more guidance.

Perhaps most importantly, the HRL is a mutually beneficial tool for residents and policymakers. The conversations not only inform Virginians about how to get help, but they take stress off of direct service providers, while supplying real-time data for housing leaders to keep pace with critical trends.

When HRL specialists conduct the intake process, the PHA is able to compile basic demographic information that can complement census figures, such as age, gender, income, race and ethnicity, and education. Through May 20, help was provided to a range of age groups: 55 to 64 (21.6%) and 25 to 34 (21.2%) were most common. But two clear trends emerged in the final two categories: 62% of callers identified as Black/African American; 56% had an education level of high school diploma (38.6%) or incomplete K-12 (17.5%).

ZIP codes also help the PHA and its partners drill down by community to learn where housing needs might be most concentrated. Through May 20, the most frequent ones of HRL callers were: Richmond (23222, 23223 and 23224), Chesterfield (23234, 23235 and 23831), Hanover/Ashland (23005, 23111 and 23116) and Henrico (23227, 23231 and 23294).

Finally, the hotline is an apparatus to unearth surprising and/or concerning trends that can better inform our region's housing strategy. Two notable examples: 60% of callers reported a disability or a chronic health issue, while half said their housing needs had been affected by COVID-19.

The pandemic has been a period of loss and grief for so many Virginians, and isolation only magnifies the detrimental effects of the public health crisis. The Housing Resource Line is a model of how to do the opposite: deliver individualized support that helps foster stability in a time of great need.

If you or someone you know needs housing assistance, contact the Housing Resource Line at: (804) 422-5061

If you or someone you know is at risk of or currently is experiencing homelessness, contact the Homeless Connection Line at: (804) 972-0813

— Chris Gentilviso



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In October 2020, a man walked in front of a "For Rent" sign in the window of a residential property in San Francisco.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SUD programs need recovery custodians

EDITOR, TIMES-DISPATCH:

I woke up the other morning and read a May 2020 blog by William Stauffer and William White, who called for "more recovery custodians and less recovery rock stars." Let me openly declare: I am a person in recovery from substance use disorder (SUD). I am a custodian of a life afforded to me as a result of choosing recovery. I am a custodian for the community to whom I feel deep gratitude. While I work in the field of addiction and recovery, I tend to operate behind the scenes, which is where I am most comfortable. I recognize the value in larger voices working to reduce any stigma against SUDs and mental health challenges, of those spreading the word about national and community resources, and of those lobbying for scientific research and legislative changes. We need those voices. But it is boots on the ground, under the guidance and direction of an astute mentorship within the recovery community, that we need most. We need bodies in the field fully armed with life and recovery experiences — not just talkers but real walkers.

The fear and isolation produced from COVID-19 contributed to the highest number of overdoses reported in a 12-month period, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And, that statistic does not include suicides. Individuals released early from incarceration because of the pandemic flooded our recovery houses. Prescriptions for mental health medication greatly increased during quarantine. Those who identify with SUD and mental health now are trying to navigate the new reality with a disease that has insidiously progressed. We are in a period of uncertainty, insecurity, fear and mourning — desperately seeking the panacea of human connection by means of grace, compassion and hope. We survive and flourish by taking care of each other, and through that custodianship, we best take care of ourselves.

KAREN MELCHO,
RICHMOND.

For the People Act puts spotlight on lobbyists

EDITOR, TIMES-DISPATCH:

Throughout my lifetime as a young person, I have seen government inaction due to corporate influence on pressing issues: The fossil fuel industry lobbies the U.S. Congress not to act on the climate crisis, the National Rifle Association lobbies Congress not to act on gun violence and the insurance industry lobbies Congress against passing "Medicare for All" plan. Thanks to lobbying from the pharmaceutical industry, insulin prices in America are much higher than anywhere

CORRESPONDENT OF THE DAY



GETTY IMAGES

Look beyond recycling to aid plastics problem

EDITOR, TIMES-DISPATCH:

Thanks for the recent Times-Dispatch editorial about the plastic pollution problem. I'm in a climate change group and have chosen to concentrate on this issue. What I have learned has been devastating. The #1 bottles, which are the most recycled type, are made from nonrecyclable crude oil. A year's supply of these bottles uses 1.5 million barrels of oil — which could power 100,000 cars annually, the Earth Policy Institute reports.

In researching what the #1 to #7 bottles represent, I contacted Dr. Tom Kinnaman, professor of economics at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pa. Kinnaman noted that #3 to #6 bottles are not recyclable except in laboratory conditions; he is not aware of that being done anywhere in the world. When I asked if other scientists agreed, he referred me to the PBS special, "The Plastic Wars" at: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/plastic-wars/>. Kinnaman added: "Recycling of plastic has never worked. And production is expected to triple

over the next 25 years. We probably need to look beyond recycling."

How can we move beyond plastic?

A bottle deposit bill, the national bottle bill (Senate Bill 984) is under consideration in Congress. In states with bottle bills, 90% are returned and 1,500 jobs added to their economies. The Coca-Cola Co. has stated it will change its largest size to glass and then follow with all of its bottles. That would remove a huge amount of plastic from the stream, according to Greenpeace. To learn about Virginia's bill, go to: www.VABottleBill.org

Talk to your grocery stores: Wegmans successfully has transferred from using plastic bags and now charges 5 cents per paper bag. Customers are ready to help our planet when shown ways to do it. Kroger announced "it will phase out plastic bags by 2025." Why wait?

So charging 5 cents for a plastic bag is just a drop in the bucket toward solving the tremendous damage plastics create. As your editorial noted — only 9% of plastics worldwide are being recycled.

EMILY KIMBALL,
RICHMOND.

else in the world, forcing people with diabetes to ration their medication and potentially face life-threatening complications. This is the status quo in America, and it cannot continue any longer.

U.S. Sens. Mark Warner and Tim Kaine, both Democrats from Virginia, have the opportunity to change this status quo through the For the People Act, a voting rights and anti-corruption bill that includes provisions to limit the power of lobbyists in our democracy.

The bill would close loopholes in existing laws, requiring lobbyists to register with the federal government, to disclose their occupation to officials, and would create a database of lobbyists so that the American people can

know who is lobbying and for what. If Warner and Kaine care about government transparency and accountability, they will work to pass the For the People Act.

GRACIE PATTEN,
WILLIAMSBURG.

Richmond Times-Dispatch

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OPINIONS

EQUALITY OR EQUITY?

Anti-Asian bias disguised as 'diversity'

WASHINGTON
In 1862, when the nation had bigger problems, a California congressman advocated a tariff on a particular rice favored by Chinese immigrants he called people of "vile habits, impossible of assimilation" who "swarm by thousands to our shores, like the frogs of Egypt."

Today's anti-Asian racism usually is expressed in less sulfurous language — in the progressive patois of a "culture" of "diversity."

Thomas Jefferson High School (TJ), a selective STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) magnet school with a national reputation for excellence, has what the school board in Fairfax County considers a problem: Too many Asian American students excel on the admission test.

The current TJ student body is 73% Asian American, 17.7% white, 3.3% Hispanic or Latino, 1% Black and 6% other. So, the board has decided to eliminate the test. Admissions will be based on a "holistic" assessment of applicants, meaning whatever admissions officials want it to mean.

And there will be limits on the number of admissions from particular middle schools. The four

that usually produce a majority of TJ admissions have higher Asian American populations than most other middle schools.

A lawsuit by some TJ parents says: "By severely limiting the number of students who can be accepted at TJ from [these four] middle schools ... future TJ classes will have a radically different racial composition, by design."

In Boston and New York, similar measures with identical motivations are attacking the selectivity of elite public high schools. In both cities, as in Fairfax County, parent groups, with large Asian American participation, are suing.

This past week, a federal district judge, rejecting the Fairfax County School Board's request for dismissal of the racial discrimination lawsuit, said: "Everybody knows the policy is not race-neutral, and that it's designed to affect the racial composition of the school."

Everybody knows because county officials have said that the purpose is to engineer a student body in which racial and ethnic groups are "proportional" to their shares of the county's population.

This means (see paragraph two, above) most beneficiaries will be white: The county is 60% white, 20% Asian or Pacific Islander, 17% His-



In March, Pacific Legal Foundation attorney Erin Wilcox spoke at a news conference outside the federal courthouse in Alexandria about the lawsuit her organization filed against the Fairfax County School Board.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

panic and 10% Black.

The TJ parents' complaint notes that in 2018, a retired county middle school teacher ominously told Virginia's General Assembly that Asian American parents are "ravenous" for opportunities for their children.

In 2020, a member of the state legislature spoke of, but did not specify, "unethical ways" Asian American parents "push their kids into [TJ]." Presumably, they push their children to do well on standardized tests.

At a 2020 town hall meeting, Fairfax County's schools superintendent stigmatized TJ's student body majority by complaining that

Asian American parents spend "thousands upon thousands" on test preparation.

Virginia's secretary of education later denounced such studying as comparable to "performance enhancement drugs" in sports: cheating. In another meeting, TJ's principal regretted that the school is not "more demographically representative of the region" and vowed to "advance the representative demographics."

A school board member spoke of the "culture" of Virginia's selective schools being "not as healthy" as it should be. A less delicate member called TJ's majority Asian

American culture "toxic." There were eight other disparagements of TJ's culture — and implicitly of Asian Americans.

The school principal, who is fluent in the flowery, obfuscating argot resorted to when recommending racial spoils systems, says TJ "is a rich tapestry of heritages" but does not "reflect" the county's "racial composition." As the district judge said in allowing the parents' suit against the county to proceed, "You can say all sorts of beautiful things while you're doing others."

Many have noted that the use, by TJ and others, of "holistic" metrics to limit Asian American

admissions and fine-tune a school's "culture" resembles the use of geographic preferences and "character" considerations employed by Ivy League universities to restrict Jews, before being recycled to restrict Asian Americans.

This is just one school system in one U.S. county, but it reflects today's saturation of national life with government-endorsed and government-enforced racial discrimination, which now affects allocations of vaccines, government loans and much else.

This is the result of replacing the ideal of equality — equal treatment — with "equity," meaning government-engineered racial outcomes.

Fortunately, the U.S. Supreme Court has held that a facially neutral state action violates the 14th Amendment's guarantee of equal protection of the laws when the action is enacted with a racially discriminatory purpose.

Fairfax County School Board officials have announced such a purpose. We shall see them in court, where their racist policies, and perhaps other policies that are multiplying in the name of "equity," have a rendezvous with the U.S. Constitution.

Contact George Will at: georgewill@washpost.com © 2021, Washington Post Writers Group

Northam

From Page D1

Korea in 1951;

♦ Army Staff Sgt. Ben Maxwell of Appomattox County, lost in the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut in 1983;

♦ Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Donald C. May Jr. of Richmond, who died in Iraq in 2003; and

♦ Army Capt. Humayun Khan of Bristow, who died in Iraq in 2004.

These Virginia heroes died at different times during different conflicts, but they all deserve our recognition and prayers — as do their family members. Every service member who is lost was somebody's child, or someone's parent, spouse, sibling or friend, and we must remember these Gold Star families and their loss.

Their sacrifice is great as well, as is their grief. And grief is not an event with a definite end date, but a process that takes time. We must keep them in our thoughts.

As an Army veteran who served on active duty as a physician during Operation Desert Storm, I witnessed the injuries suffered in combat and the deaths of my fellow service members.

As an Army doctor, I treated those injuries — and sometimes, as hard as we tried, the service member we were treating did not survive.

Somewhere, their names are on walls like the one at our War Memorial, and I hope that people take the time to remember their names, and their sacrifice, and to comfort their families. All of our service members deserve that.

This Memorial Day, please join first lady Pamela Northam and me as we remember the brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in the cause of liberty and freedom. They have given us a gift, and I hope we are grateful for it every day.

I also ask that you remember the families who they left behind, for these families also have made a supreme sacrifice.

And finally, may we all remember that when brave men and women are needed to defend our freedom, Virginians always will be first in line.

Ralph Northam is governor of Virginia. Contact him at: (804) 786-2211 For information about the Commonwealth's Memorial Day Ceremony, including how to view the livestream of the event, please visit: www.dvs.virginia.gov or www.vawarmemorial.org

Williams

From Page D1

feeling to Evko on the day of the vote.

This sort of change of heart about a school board member following a vote to separate the Hanover school district from Confederate iconography is not without precedent.

Marla Coleman's credentials were called "impeccable"



Coleman

by her patron, Henry District Supervisor Sean Davis. But after joining Ashland representative Ola Hawkins in 2018 in their unsuccessful vote to rename the

Confederate-named schools, Coleman similarly was fired.

Evko says she has no regrets.

"My job as school board member is to do what is in the best interest of the students. I did not take on the role for a political future or anything else. I moved to Hanover because of the schools, I'm grateful to be a part of the board, I think we did a tremendous job over the past



C. SUAREZ ROJAS/TIMES-DISPATCH/

Hanover County Supervisor Susan Dibble (right) recommended that Kelly Evko (left) succeed her on the Hanover School Board. The Board of Supervisors voted unanimously on Wednesday, Jan. 22, 2020, to confirm Evko's appointment.

14 months. And I felt it was in the best interest of the students to make that decision," she said.

"Was it difficult? Absolutely. Did I catch a lot of grief? Absolutely. But I had a lot of people that reached out to me that are very well known throughout the county, that don't speak politically because it'd be harmful for them, that were very much in favor of that decision."

When she looks back, she will be proud that Hanover opted at the start of this school year to offer five-day, in-person learning — the only local-

ity in Virginia to do so — in addition to offering the option of virtual learning during the pandemic.

She said the board worked well together during "probably the most challenging year for K through 12 education. We faced just unbelievable challenges."

"Hanover was the shining star over the last 14 months. We did things that no other county has done," Evko said. "So what did I do that wasn't good?"

Dibble did not sound terribly impressed at the experience Evko gained helping to

oversee a school district during a pandemic that happened to coincide with a tumultuous moment of racial reckoning.

"I certainly appreciate her 14 months, and I know that they weren't necessarily easy, but it's never easy being on that type of a board," she said.

When Evko leaves, the Hanover School Board will have one woman: Hawkins, its lone African American member. That's a gender imbalance that doesn't bother you if you heavily weigh military experience as a prerequisite for school board membership, as the supervisors appeared to be doing Wednesday.

"Of course, I'm disappointed. I really would have loved to have had a full term," Evko said. "We've tackled the biggest challenges. So I feel like I'm well-equipped at whatever comes my way."

What's coming the way of Sterling Daniel, the Mechanicsville representative who also voted to rename those schools, remains to be seen.

Somehow, I doubt that the score settling over this lost cause is done.

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Pike

From Page D1

But, I think churches have hurt themselves in other ways, too.

Division is present in churches. How we interpret the Bible creates conflicts.

Church leaders and their congregations have struggled with sexual orientation. This has caused difficult splits in some denominations. As a lifelong Methodist, our body is locked in this same hurtful battle.

Additionally, I sense change is difficult for churches.

The mentality — "this is how we have always done it" — hinders churches and their congregations from taking risks.

Lots of risks were taken by church planters in the 1950s and 1960s. Churches were growing. I wonder what planters were thinking? Perhaps, they thought, "If we build it, they will come."

In the Richmond district of

the Virginia United Methodist Conference, there currently are 66 churches. "If we build it, they will come," has lost its dominance.

Before the pandemic, I suspect a number of churches in Richmond were hanging by their financial fingernails. What awaits these struggling churches? Is reducing staff, merging with another congregation or closing in their future?

In difficult times like this, I believe pastors and leaders at the district and conference levels must be willing to listen to the voices in their congregations. I'm not sure congregations always are heard.

And speaking of voices, there is another voice to be heard — the building. Yes, buildings talk. Buildings know when a congregation is suffering from "tired eyesitis." This occurs when congregations fail to see that their beloved building is wearing out.

So, can the church make a comeback?

I'm no expert, but I

think the answer is tied to church leaders and their congregations.

No doubt, the pandemic made worshippers rethink their commitment to church. Some will not return, some are comfortable with the virtual format and some will continue to worry about health. Regardless of their reasoning, church leaders must learn from these worshippers.

In preparing to reopen, churches can't continue down the same predictable program path. Continuing to hold onto the glories of the past is not the way into the future.

Preparing for the future will require careful listening and visioning. Selective listening and visioning with blinders only will continue to restrict the potential for revitalizing churches.

Churches must improve the capacity to tell the heartfelt stories of their congregations. These stories no longer can be contained in silos within the walls of their buildings. Stories

must be shared to connect to communities.

Stories of unwelcoming Sunday morning hospitality for visitors — "You're sitting in my pew" — is not the way to grow a church and reach new communities.

Quite often, I ask myself, "Should churches be accredited?" Would they benefit from a rigorous review from a panel of peers once every three to five years? I wonder if such a review might help to keep churches healthy and effective?

In Beth Macy's book, "Dopesick," I read this James Garfield quote: "Most human organizations that fall short of their goals do so not because of stupidity or faulty doctrines, but because of internal decay and rigidification. They grow stiff in the joints. They get in a rut. They go to seed."

We church people, myself included, need to ponder Garfield's words.

Bill Pike is director of operations at Trinity United Methodist Church. Contact him at: wapike@gmail.com