

# UNREASONABLE HOPEFULNESS



## *A Letter From Pastor Dave*

Somehow, it's already October. Political invective swirls, wildfires crackle...and yet still I have a curious sense of *unreasonable hopefulness*.

No, it does not have to do with my plan to exploit my size to go Trick-or-Treating. Rather it has to do with the emergence of a renewed sense of encouraged expectation (in some ways expressed in the pages of this Newsletter), and with how this impulse is leading to new forms of lay leadership here at Williamsburg UMC of late.

Two weekends ago, many of us felt strangely warmed to watch a spontaneous crew – of the diverse ages, backgrounds and theological dispositions that typify our church – come together to address a howling need like *world hunger*. Together, we and our local neighbors (including Boy Scouts and students of the College of William and Mary) made more than 40,000 meals through an organization called Rise Against Hunger. (Frankly, with all the distrust and inhumanity that fills the airways these days, reaching out to a neighbor who is in need *anywhere* seems rather encouraging.)

But that's not what I'd call *unreasonable*. What defies reason is how many confident strides in ministry our

faith family at Williamsburg is undertaking at once. This fall, in just a few weeks, we have launched five new fellowship groups, two "Wesleyan" small groups, two covenanted 34-week Bible studies, and four support/study groups for the college-aged, parents and older adults. And that's not a *complete* list, nor does it include new growth opportunities expected to bloom in the coming months.

It is almost as if the gloom and anxiety around us (and even within our broader United Methodist family) is giving ground. *The tension implied is right where I believe the Holy Spirit is to be found working!* The Scriptures show us an early Church quite often at odds with the culture around it – a Church that instead of bowing to the false gods of war, sex and commerce instead expected maturation in grace, unfettered spiritual gifts and compassion for widows and orphans. This distinctive witness made the pagan world sit up and take notice, leading one emperor reputedly to say "*If we had pagans like this, perhaps no one would be a Christian!*"

*Unreasonable hopefulness.*

Like leaves, grace falls silently around us in the autumn. Come and connect more deeply with a generous and hopeful people, and I bet you too will see.

*Dave Rochford*