

Coming after him whose shoes I thought he was not worthy to untie
I found that was he that stood by him & found great Love in my heart
to him after that the first opportunity I had I went to hear Mr. John W. ...
and my confidence soon told me that it was the true Gospel of Christ that he
preached & likewise began to think how I had spent my life having lived

Bringing our past to light at Reveille UMC

By Anne Vaden Hodges

The past of Reveille UMC in Richmond is deep, both historically and spiritually. The power of our calling to be rooted in the light of Christ Jesus our Lord is what constantly sustains us as we also seek to be rooted in those who came before us to do God's work and make Reveille what it is today.

If you went back in Reveille's history to 1720, the land was quiet and filled with God's natural beauty as it became part of an expansive Royal Land Patent to the Kennon family.

Today in 2017, seven acres of this original Land Patent

are still filled with God's beauty, and now, the footprints of those doing God's work at the church. Almost 300 years of history encompass the grounds and life of the church.

Within the "layers" of our church history is, first, 18th-century Reveille House and its historic gardens and dependencies, an outgrowth of the Land Patent. The next two "layers" brought the house and grounds into Methodism, when Union Station Methodist Church (est. 1843) and Monument Methodist Church (est. 1911) joined to purchase Reveille House and its "seven acres set apart." This purchase created our fourth, and most recent "layer" of history, Reveille United Methodist Church, formed in 1951. With this uniting of God's people into one church, their legacies are embodied in Reveille's history.

Over the years, many persons connected with our church worked to save and organize our collective history and undertake the restoration of Reveille House and its grounds. The house, now on the National Register of Historic Places,



A photo, circa 1936 of the Crutchfield house, now called the "Reveille House." Today the house is on the Register of National Historic Places and preserved by the United Methodist Church. Johnston, Frances Benjamin, photographer. Reveille House, 4200 Cary Street, Richmond, Henrico County, Virginia. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress.

...in my forty years in this world of mine I thought my self as good as my neighbours and a great deal better than some of them that die curs and swear and get drunk I always had a good name amongst my acquaintance which was pleasing to flesh and blood but the Lord soon shew'd me that I was a devil and had only deceiv'd my self and all that...

"It is said that one of the responsibilities of any pastor is to exegete the history of the congregation one is appointed to serve."

Rev. Douglas Forrester

is "home" to the offices of our ministers and staff and a constant location for meetings, classes, Bible studies and receptions.

Over time, Reveille's keepers of church life had to manage a growing collection amidst limited space and resources. This collection grew into a number of closets and offices, creating a great need to bring this rich and sacred collection into greater care and a larger, singular space.

The creation of a Reveille Archives Center has now been realized with the support of our ministers, staff, Church Council, Board of Trustees, committees and congregants. Cooperative work with our Memorial Library is ongoing.

As charged by *The Book of Discipline*, a re-established Records and History Committee, dedicated to Reveille and historical research, is composed of church members. Additionally, ex-officio members who serve include the chair of the Memorial Library Committee and members of the Reveille House Guild.

Working with all manner of recently ordered archival storage and conservation materials, this committee will begin to consolidate, reorganize and catalog Reveille's large collection for the purposes of conserving, preserving, researching and exhibiting our history. The committee is working on a mission statement, and a list of responsibilities has been written as a guide for our work.

The process will first involve categorizing the collection into the four major "layers of history": 1) Reveille House, Gardens and Grounds; 2) Union Station Methodist Church; 3) Monument Methodist Church; 4) Reveille.

As that work moves forward, a further delineation will proceed by refining those areas into Bibles and church-related books, all other books, archival material, photographs and artifacts. These classifications, with subtopics, were observed during a visit to historic St. John's Church where we were encouraged to adapt them to our needs. In addition to this process, we will look to everyone serving in any capacity of church life to assist in the gathering of pertinent records. Software systems are currently being researched for

future use.

With the establishment of the Archives Center, renewed interest in Reveille's history has been evident. Charter members and families have shared memories of Union Station and Monument churches, also showing interest in old documents of family involvement. Members who previously worked on our congregational history are re-engaged. Questions arise as to how to preserve particular elements of early church life no longer in use, such as the old reel-to-reel steeple chimes. Congregants seek historical information and are contributing personal Reveille papers and objects. As well, people apart from Reveille's membership visit to seek records of ancestral involvement. It is a solace to hear about the importance of spiritual life within genealogical research.

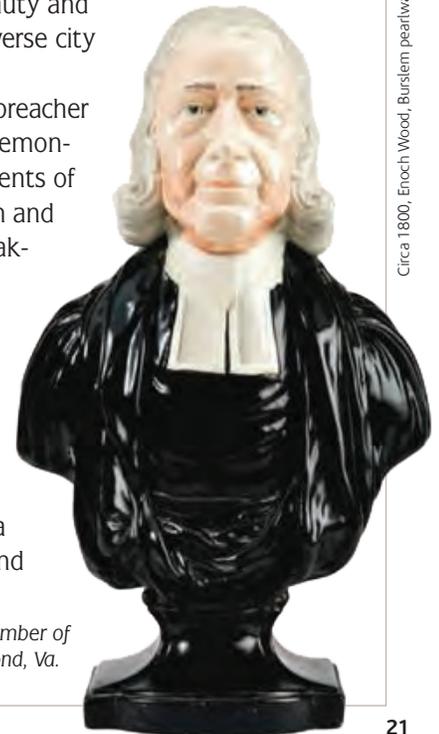
The Rev. Douglas Forrester, lead pastor of the church, said he sees the effort of preserving the church's history as vital, especially for the pastoral leadership.

"It is said that one of the responsibilities of any pastor is to exegete the history of the congregation one is appointed to serve. That is, to interpret the church's history in light of the Gospel, to explain the points of intersection between the story of God's salvation of the world and how that story is lived out within a specific congregation of God's people," Forrester said. "Doing so allows the pastor to speak God's truth in a language that repeats the refrains of a church's specific narrative."

For Forrester, the story of Reveille is about the people and congregations coming together, radical generosity and creating beauty and order in the midst of the diverse city of Richmond.

"One of the roles of the preacher at Reveille, therefore, is to demonstrate how those core elements of our narrative can still inform and inspire our task today, of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," Forrester said. "Solid church history can enable us to remember our core values, our 'DNA' as we minister to our community and beyond in a way that is both effective and authentic." 

—Anne Vaden Hodges is a member of Reveille UMC in Richmond, Va.



Circa 1800, Enoch Wood, Burslem pearlware figure depicting a bust of Reverend John Wesley lions.