

CONNECTION

Reston ♦ Oak Hill Herndon ♦ Chantilly ♦ CENTRE VIEW

The In-Person and At-Home Class is One Community

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'I'm Excited about the Church's Bright Future'

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Food Insecurity is Not Going Away

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A young Lake Anne Elementary School learner descends from the bus steps on the first day of in-person instruction for Group 5A-School Year 2020-21. Her eyes smile just a tad as she looks toward Principal Jill Stewart and she balances all her required school supplies.

PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION OPINION, PAGE 4 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 6

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Food Insecurity is Not Going Away

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Rotary Club of Herndon's Satellite Club was at it once again. On the last Saturday of every month since the summer of 2020, Rotarians collect non-perishable food donations to benefit the increasing number of food-insecure neighbors struggling to put meals on the table for themselves and their families. The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines food insecurity as "limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods or uncertain ability to acquire these foods in socially acceptable ways."

According to Signe Friedrichs, Chair of the Satellite Club, members collect at different locations in the town each month and distribute items on a rotating basis to Cornerstones and LINK Against Hunger, two of the largest food pantries in the area.

On Feb. 27, the Club set up its touchless drop-off site in front of ArtSpace Herndon, 750 Center Street, open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. with LINK Against Hunger, the beneficiary organization.

Volunteers stood ready to accept cash, gift cards, and non-perishable grocery items on the LINK Wish List of Donations. Bags filled with hearty soups, canned pasta, fruit, and vegetables, dried beans, boxed potatoes, toiletries, and cleaning products began stacking up.

Kimra Traynor of Herndon arrived with her grocery bags full of items. "We are lucky to be fortunate enough to be in the position to help others less fortunate," she said.

The Green Lizard Foundation is the charitable arm of Green Lizard Cycling in Herndon. The Foundation presented a check for \$1000. "The Green Lizard Foundation is proud to work with the Herndon Rotary Club in support of LINK. We look forward to helping local children stay active and healthy through... partnering with other local organizations. The past year has demonstrated the tremendous food insecurity right here in our neighborhoods," said Dan Fischer, President.

He added they had some exciting fundraisers planned and scheduling their next children's bike giveaway for kids. "We are hopeful that the COVID vaccine will enable us to continue our mission full speed ahead," Fischer said.

The need for food is not going away any time soon. Herndon Rotary will be at it again every month, helping to support neighbors in

need. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Herndon Rotary Club is currently meeting virtually. The Main Club continues to meet at 7:30 a.m. every Wednesday, while the Satellite Club meets on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays at 6 p.m. For connection information, email the club administrator at stevan.porter@gmail.com. Visit the Cornerstones, LINK Against Hunger, websites to learn more about donation and volunteer opportunities.

"We are hopeful that the COVID vaccine will enable us to continue our mission full speed ahead."

— Dan Fischer, President,
Green Lizard Foundation

Herndon Rotary holds food drives.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

(From left) Garcia, Elysa Birman, Signe Friedrichs, Kimra Bonnet, and Eric Kemble at the Feb. 27 drop-off donation location outside ArtSpace Herndon to benefit LINK Against Hunger.

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NEWS

The In-Person and At-Home Class is One Community

Lake Anne ES Welcomes Kindergarteners, Pre-K, and Special Ed Students in the Building.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

On Tuesday, Feb. 23, Fairfax County Public Schools continued to welcome additional grade levels and groups to school buildings for in-person learning as part of its Return to School plan.

At Lake Anne Elementary School in Reston, Group 5A, Kindergarten, Pre-K, and Special Education learners whose families opted for concurrent instruction arrived for their first day of in-school learning for School Year 2020-21. Under FCPS Return to School plans, all families had been presented a choice between either a concurrent schedule of two days a week of teacher-led in-school instruction and two days at-home virtual instruction or four days a week of teacher-led at-home virtual instruction. Mondays would be independent work.

“Students remain at the forefront of everything our teachers have done, and they are excited about today,” said Jill Stewart, Principal Lake Anne Elementary School in Reston.

Deputy Superintendent Dr. Frances Ivey joined Stewart, Assistant Principal Jihoon Shin, and teachers in welcoming students to the building. Time after time, Ivey bent down, getting on the students’ levels. She shared positive words of encouragement, helping the young learners feel comfortable in the new environment. The scene at Lake Anne ES played out the same as any first day of school.

CHILDREN AND PARENTS exhibited typical emotions from joy to jitters. Most students arrived all smiles, sporting new backpacks and water bottles. Others momentarily froze on the sidewalk, looking back at their families, their new shoes not moving them forward. Buses arrived but social distancing requirements limited capacity. One bus transported a sole child.

“We know that health and safety is our primary concern, and equally so, we also know that being able to offer in-person instruction to any new student and family that desires this at this point has been our goal,” Ivey said.

According to Stewart, in 2019, kindergarteners came with a box of tissues, crayons, and markers to share. Now, instead of communal items, students would use their own labeled supplies. If students did not have the supplies the school would provide. “We want to be sure it is equitable...that all our dolphins have the same materials to use for learning, and that would be for those in-person, as well as at-home,” Stewart said. Students also wore masks and carried something a little heavier in their backpacks, laptops.

STEWART said the school would no longer send home the traditional weekly “take-home folders.” Instead, they converted it to News
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FCPS Deputy Superintendent Dr. Frances Ivey talks with arrivals at Lake Anne Elementary School in Reston on the first day of face-to-face, teacher-led instruction in school buildings for Group 5 Kindergarten, Pre-K, and Special Education students.



A family walks to Door 1 at Lake Anne Elementary School in Reston on the first day of face-to-face, teacher-led instruction in the school building for Group 5A Kindergarten, Pre-K, and Special Education students.

You Can Use in a digital format. It is available in Spanish and English and can be converted through a universal service in other languages. Lake Anne Elementary School serves a diverse population speaking 30 languages.

Shin added that all students could receive free breakfasts and lunches as part of school. “It is provided to everybody... who would

like to participate...as a grab-and-go and eat it,” he said.

Stewart explained that an “interesting challenge” afforded a growth opportunity. Teachers and administrators required that in-person and at-home students integrate as one class, with one community feel, environment, and function. “It started with chang-



Principal Jill Stewart maintains her social distance and greets a young learner on his first day of in-person instruction.



A family arrives at Lake Anne Elementary School in Reston on the first day of face-to-face, teacher-led instruction in the school building for Group 5A, Kindergarten, Pre-K, and Special Education students.

ing mindsets about what ‘school’ meant and looked like for all students. Our teachers have done a phenomenal job of preparing instruction. They are creative. They include rigor, and they’re making sure they’re fun as well.”

“Because there is not one space, better than the other,” Stewart said.

A Progressive State if We Can Keep It

BY KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM
STATE DELEGATE (D-36)



COMMENTARY

To paraphrase Benjamin Franklin who when asked at the conclusion of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia what kind of government had been formed replied, "a republic if we can keep it!" As the General Assembly concluded the work of its annual session this past weekend the same kind of question could be posed as the changes in the Commonwealth's laws and governance have been so profound. The answer I believe is a progressive state measured not by southern standards but by comparison to all the other states. At the ballot box the state over the last several years has gone from red to purple to blue. All statewide elected officials are Democrats, and both houses of the General Assembly have been controlled by Democrats since the elections in 2019. Far more meaningful than the partisan labels of elected officials are the changes that have taken place in the laws of the Commonwealth.

In the regular and a special session of the General Assembly last year, historic legislation

was passed including ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and lifting of barriers to abortion. Jim Crow era laws were repealed, and the Virginia Values Act prohibiting discrimination in housing and employment was passed. Bills to reduce gun violence were passed as were bills to reduce the school to prison pipeline. Criminal justice and policing reform bills were passed. And more.

In the session that just ended, criminal justice reform continued. The death penalty was abolished, and criminal defendants and civil litigants were granted an automatic right to appeal that exists in every other state. My bill that ended excessive fines and prison time for petit larceny passed. Criminal records for many non-violent offenses will be expunged under a new law. And more. Details for both sessions are at <https://lis.virginia.gov>.

All of these changes along with record levels of funding for COVID-19 relief and pay raises for teachers, police and other essential workers have led to references about Virginia

being the leader among states in progressive legislation. The first ever woman Speaker of the House of Delegates Eileen Filler-Corn said that the House Democratic majority elected in 2019 "has kept its promise to protect families, keep Virginia healthy and rebuild our economy stronger."

As one who served during years when the news coming from Richmond was not so good, I am aware that these reforms passed with barely a majority of Democratic legislator votes and a rare and scant few of Republican legislator votes. Attention is already shifting to the fall when the governor, lieutenant governor and attorney general will be elected along with all 100 members of the House of Delegates. The progressive reforms will be on the ballot: do we build on them in the future or do we turn back the clock? Already a former governor, two Black women, and a self-avowed socialist are running for the Democratic nomination for governor and a self-proclaimed "Trump in high heels" and a staunch opponent of abortion rights are among those seeking the Republican nomination. There is likely to be a record number of candidates running for the House of Delegates. The voters in November will ultimately decide if we keep our progressive state!

Reston Association Elections and Covid

BY JOHN LOVAAS
COMMUNITY ACTIVIST AND FOUNDER OF RESTON FARMERS MARKET



INDEPENDENT PROGRESSIVE

Is it my imagination or is Covid 19 still playing an outsized role in my life, perhaps also in yours? We find ourselves preoccupied with progress getting appointments for vaccine jabs. We watch local restaurants close and administrators unable to get kids back into empty schools.

Covid is a drag everywhere, even in Reston Association's Board of Directors Election, the subject of this column. Ballots for this year's election were mailed to you, Monday, March 1 in fact. This election is an important one, but you'll hardly know it. You won't see candidates outside your supermarket handing out their literature and asking for your vote. They won't be knocking on your door to ask for your vote. Why? Because they fear no one will like pressing the flesh due to..., here it comes...COVID 19. And, a Candidates Forum on ZOOM last Wednesday drew just twenty participants from Reston's 23,000 households.

Three Director seats are open on the nine-member RA Board—two At-Large (AL) and one for the South Lakes District. There are four candidates for the two AL seats: John Farrell, a land-use attorney, President of his cluster association and former President of Fairfax Girls Softball; Sarah Selvaraj-D'Souza, a small business owner, Founder of RESTON STRONG, and member of GMU School of Music Board; Timothy Dowling, attorney, former Judicial Officer at EPA and Justice Dept. Environmental advisor; and, Vincent Dory, a professional software

developer and former fraternity president. If you can, watch the RA Candidates Forum on YouTube to get the full picture.

For me, as a former RA Board VP having watched the Candidates Forum and read the available material on all of them, my favorites are John Farrell and Sarah Selvaraj D'Souza. Both are clearly marked for success as members, and likely leaders, of the Reston Association Board. What differentiated them from the others were: their Reston experience, understanding of how RA operates, and specific ideas for improvements in RA.

Farrell points to the millions in capital expenses confronting RA and recognizes that the most logical sources of revenue to pay for them as our population grows by 40,000 or so should come from development in the rail corridor and proffers going to the Fairfax County Park Authority for new development. Ms. Selvaraj D'Souza has shown the makings of a leader in her one year of Board service. Just last week, she successfully guided the Board to a course of action acknowledging to RA members recent breaches in RA's financial management systems, revealing their extent and setting forth corrective actions to secure a shaky IT situation. She stepped up when others were reluctant to lead. Further, she is the advocate of a greater role for RA's capable but underutilized Fiscal Advisory Committee to tighten the budget and financial management systems.

One more star on the RA horizon is Jennifer Jushchuk, another action-oriented candidate.

She is unopposed for the South Lakes Director's post. Among other things, Ms. Jushchuk is a Certified Association Executive who has prepared herself for the Board by being a dedicated student of RA for the last two years, while serving as a Mom and company executive at the same time. For those of you in the South Lakes district of RA, please vote for her on your ballot to assure that she gets the required minimum of 10 percent of those eligible to vote in order to validate her election.

I said earlier this election is important. I'm not kidding. Management and financial controls in RA are shaky, in part due to an understaffed IT operation. RA's finances are not up to the coming membership growth and aging infrastructure. Many believe current management is, in fact, looking in the wrong places for solutions as Mr. Farrell and others point out. All this would not happen if we had a strong Board's policy direction and oversight. That is missing. Help change it with your vote.

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SPORTS

Bruins Beat Bulldogs in Season-opening Game

Lake Braddock 26
Westfield 7.

The Westfield Bulldogs and the Lake Braddock Bruins battled it out in a cold rain in Burke on Feb. 26, in both teams' first game of the season.

Lake Braddock would open scoring with a field goal, midway through the first quarter. Later Westfield would take the lead 7-3 after a 55 yard touchdown by Mikal Legall. The Bruins would add another field goal to pull within a point, 7-6 in the 2nd quarter. Lake Braddock would hold the Bulldogs scoreless in the final 3 quarters, while scoring 3 touchdowns in the second half, including the second half kickoff by Dillon Corey. The Bruins final two touchdowns were scored by QB Billy Edwards and Elliot Meine to give the Bruins a 26-7 win.

Lake Braddock will play at Robinson on March 5. Westfield will host West Potomac on March 4.

— WILL PALENSCAR

PHOTOS BY WILL PALENSCAR



Westfield QB Toviell Jung prepares to hand the ball off to a teammate



The Lake Braddock Bruins take the field before their game with the Westfield Bulldogs

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Fox Mill Road and Pinecrest Road Intersection Improvements Fairfax County

Virtual Public Information Meeting

Monday, March 15, 2021, 7-8:30 p.m.
www.virginiadot.org/FoxMillPinecrest

Find out about planned improvements at the intersection of Fox Mill Road (Route 665) and Pinecrest Road. The improvements include installing a new traffic signal and constructing left-turn lanes on northbound and southbound Fox Mill Road.

The meeting will be held as a **virtual/online meeting**. Information for accessing and participating in the virtual meeting is available at www.virginiadot.org/FoxMillPinecrest. The project team will make a short presentation beginning at 7 p.m. and answer questions for about an hour after the presentation.

Review project information and meeting details on the webpage above or during business hours at VDOT's Northern Virginia District Office, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030. Please call ahead at 703-259-2768 or TTY/TDD 711 to make an appointment with appropriate personnel.

Give your comments during the meeting, or by **March 25, 2021** via the comment form on the project website, by mail to Mr. Christopher Barksdale, P.E., Virginia Department of Transportation, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030 or by email to meetingcomments@VDOT.virginia.gov. Please reference "Fox Mill Road and Pinecrest Road Intersection Improvements" in the subject line.

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State Project: 0665-029-428, P101, R201, C501
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In case an alternate date is needed, the meeting will be held Monday, March 22, 2021 at the same time.

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Obituary



Erik Landberg, 87, of Reston, VA, beloved husband of the late Michelle De Cou-Landberg, passed away on February 23. Born in Andover, MA, the family shortly thereafter moved to Seneca Falls, NY, in the heart of the Finger Lakes, where he grew up. Upon graduating from Cornell University in 1955, he was commissioned as an Air Force officer, where he attained the rank of captain. He also attended GWU Law College while stationed in Washington, DC. Following his time in service, he joined the firm of Merrill Lynch. A vice president of the firm, he retired after 37 years with the company in April 1997.

He and his late wife, Michelle, were active in the Reston community, working with Herndon-Reston F.I.S.H. and Kids R First. He served as a trustee of the Virginia chapter of The Nature Conservancy, and was the president of the Cornell Club of Washington, DC. His philosophy, honed from the loss of his parents in his youth, was strongly based on one's capacity for developing resiliency in one's life and the appreciation and acceptance of the moral goodness in others, especially among the less fortunate. This was reflected in a large number of overseas foster children sponsorships that he and his late wife undertook, in addition to supporting organizations in the pursuit of justice and equality for all.

He is survived by his brother George, of Cary, NC; by his children Vicki Peters of Westerville, OH; Claire De Cou of Centreville, VA; Michael De Cou of Mesa, AZ; Jack De Cou of Alpine, WY; as well as six grandchildren, two nieces, and a nephew. A private service will be held by the family at a future date. Contributions in lieu of flowers to the family can be made to your favorite charity.

Obituary

Legals

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(From left) Herndon High School freshman William McClough, senior Cooper Hill, junior Justin Tyrell (alternate), freshman Rian Graham, and sophomore Noah Dyer

Record-Setting Day at States for HHS Boys Swim Team

Hornets place as two champions. ican Consideration.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Members of the Herndon High School Boys Swim Team won two champion places and ranked eighth overall, with only four swimmers, at the Virginia High School League (VHSL) Class 6 State Championship at the Jeff Rouse Swim and Sport Center in Stafford, Va., on Thursday, Feb. 25. Even with the season's disrupted training and the meet postponed twice due to inclement weather, the team arrived strong and ready to win.

Swimmers Noah Dyer (senior), Cooper Hill (senior), Will McClough (freshman), and Rian Graham (freshman) placed 1st in the 400 Free Relay becoming State Champions. Their time was an All American Consideration and just missed the Herndon High School record. Nonetheless, Dyer posted the top leadoff time of 45.50, which helped them win 1st place.

Dyer captured the top spot in the 200 Free and was the only swimmer to crack 1:40, posting a time of 1:38.82. In the process, Dyer became State Champion, set a new Herndon High School record and All Amer-

ican Consideration. In the 100 Free, Dyer placed 2nd, setting another new Herndon High School record. He battled Aiken Do from Woodson to the finish, touching behind in 45.61 to 45.57. Dyer's 200 Free and 100 Free were personal best times.

Graham placed 3rd in the 100 Fly, swimming a personal best time of 50.66.

Swimmers Dyer, McClough, Hill, and Graham placed 5th in the 200 Freestyle Relay. Dyer anchored and set another new Herndon High School record in the 50 Free in 21.31. His strong showing and racing skills broke one of the longest-standing records on the Herndon High School record board, one that Reinaldo Faberlle set and held since 1995.

"What a way to end the season," said Kathy McLaughlin, Coach HHS Head Boys/Girls Swim and Dive team.

According to Jamie Graham, mother of Rian Graham, the boys were dedicated and trained hard. "We are thankful for the coaches and older swimmers, like Noah, who have taken Rian under the wings. We are excited about what this team can do in a 'normal' season next year," she said.

The results of the 2021 VHSL Class 6 Meet 2/9/2021-2/25/2021 are available online.



Coach of the Herndon High Boys/Girls Swim and Dive Team Amy Keffer, senior Cooper Hill, freshman Rian Graham, freshman William McClough, sophomore Noah Dyer, and Coach of the Herndon High Boys/Girls Swim and Dive Team Kathy McLaughlin

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Back to Abnormal



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Well, those last two weeks were kind of fun (comparatively speaking), to the dozen or so previous weeks. 'Fun', when you're a cancer patient experiencing side effects from treatment, is a moderation, absence even of said effects. My recent two-week break from taking my thyroid cancer medication was due to those side effects. Mentioned in a previous column, I was having balance and dizziness issues. In short, I couldn't walk or drive - for that matter, in a straight line. After consulting with my oncologist who deferred to the oncology pharmacist who's been monitoring/adjusting my medication dosage, it was agreed that I should cease and desist until my symptoms subsided. As of this past Thursday, my symptoms had mostly disappeared so I have resumed my treatment, albeit at a lower dose. (This will be the second reduction in my dose since we've been trying to find the sweet spot where the tumors are stable and the side effects are manageable.)

Actually, these last two weeks of being side-effect free was more than just a break in the action. It was a revelation of sorts. The infirmity/muscle weakness I was having was not due to the older age I have become. It was the medication. During this past fortnight, I began to feel like myself again. I could get in and out of chairs without pacing myself. I could roll over in bed and pull up the covers without a fuss. And of course, I could walk and drive a straight line. It was wonderful. When one is in the midst of a cancer diagnosis/existence, any indication that your bodily functions are performing "within normal parameters," to quote Lt. Comm. Data from "Star Trek: Next Generation" is somewhere between reassuring and life affirming.

Generally speaking, we all know that cancer doesn't make its diagnoses big and strong. Realistically speaking, you're happy with normal. Conversely, when 'normal' isn't how you feel, it's hard to portend that death/disability is not fast-approaching. Moreover, it's an especially slippery slope when one has been given a "terminal" diagnosis originally and more recently had that diagnosis modified to include a second type of cancer: papillary thyroid cancer stage IV, to go along with my pre-existing non small lung cancer, also stage IV. One has to fight emotionally to keep from getting lost/going down that rabbit hole. Any good news/an unexpected positive reaction with your disease, like your mind and body returning to pre-cancer normalcy is about as good as it gets. So even though I'm back on the medicine, I feel empowered, upbeat, hopeful even. To that end/continuation of life, I am not going to worry yet that the reduced dose will allow my tumors to grow. I'm just not going to go there. What would be the point? I'll find out soon enough, a few days after my next CT scan in mid-March. Until then, I am going to bask in my semi return to glory.

Speaking of 'glory,' as a cancer patient, one has to grasp and hold on to anything of emotional, physical, psychological or spiritual value. In addition, what information you receive which is not particularly positive, in that it's premature/unproven/not corroborated by science, has to be compartmentalized. As with Jerry Seinfeld, you have to put it in the vault and almost throw away the key. Allowing negative possibilities or unpalatable scenarios to take root in your brain really does a disservice to your potential survival. Ever since I was diagnosed with a "terminal" form of cancer, I've tried not to put the cart in front of the horse, if you know what I mean? The diagnosis was bad enough on its own. I didn't need to make it worse by piling on. If and when my life becomes more challenging/more cancer centric than it is now, I'll deal with it. I don't need to bring it on any sooner than is absolutely necessary. I've had 12 years I wasn't expecting since receiving an initial "13 month to two" year prognosis. Twelve years later, I don't see any reason to change my approach.

Kenny Lourie is an Advertising Representative for The Potomac Almanac & The Connection Newspapers.

'I'm Excited about the Church's Bright Future'

Centreville Presbyterian pastor retires after three decades there.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

The Rev. Rob Bromhead has been a pastor for nearly 40 years – 31-1/2 of them at Centreville Presbyterian Church. But as a college freshman in Indiana, he was a biology major, before realizing he was on the wrong path.

"I had a relentless stirring in my heart and spirit that this wasn't the direction I was supposed to go in," he recalled. "So that spring, I said, 'God, I'll do whatever you want.' I then switched majors and colleges and enrolled in the Biblical Studies program at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Ill. I realized that theology and church were in my future."

Ordained in July 1979, Bromhead became associate pastor of Little Falls Presbyterian Church in Arlington, where he served for almost seven years. After that, he was the solo pastor for a church in southwest Philadelphia for 3-1/2 years.

"One day, Pete James, pastor at Vienna Presbyterian, called and told me the pastor position at Centreville Presbyterian Church was open and asked if I was interested," said Bromhead. "It was a new church planted by his church and was meeting at Cub Run Elementary."

He took the job, beginning in October 1989 with a congregation of about 30 people. "When I started, I thought I'd stay the average length of time for a pastor, five to seven years," he said.

URNS OUT, he was there for more than three decades. Meanwhile, the church grew steadily and, in 1992, moved to the vacated Methodist Church building at the intersection of Route 28 and I-66 in Centreville.

"Fairfax County owned it, and we were told the building was slated for demolition [for future I-66 improvements] – and they'd give us a 90-day notice to vacate," said Bromhead. "The irony is that they only demolished it, a month ago, so we had lots of advance notice."

But it didn't matter because – eventually needing more space and a permanent home – Centreville Presbyterian left there long ago. In April 2003, it broke ground for its new church on Route 29 in Centreville, and the congregation of about 500 moved into it in December 2005.

"I didn't know how to plan for a new building or what was involved with fundraising, architects and engineering," said Bromhead. "At times, I thought I was in over my head; but through the travail, it all worked out."

His ministry was filled with countless highlights; but most rewarding, he said, was ministering to people in times of need and crisis. Although, he admitted, "I sometimes felt ill-prepared. For example, what do you say to a parent whose child has been murdered? And what do you say in the church service that brings true hope and help? You lean on God."

PHOTOS COURTESY OF KIM GILBERT



Centreville Presbyterian Church's pastor, Rob Bromhead, retires after three decades there.

"I sometimes felt ill-prepared. For example, what do you say to a parent whose child has been murdered? And what do you say in the church service that brings true hope and help? You lean on God."

— Rob Bromhead, retiring pastor of Centreville Presbyterian Church

Bromhead recalled a young, local woman who'd died suddenly of a drug overdose. One of her friends was a member of his church, so he performed the graveside ceremony. "It's in those times that God filled the gap," he said. "And because of her death, a group of Centreville churches came together and held the Thriving Family Summit, the following year. County resources helped the families deal with the drug problem here."

And when two Westfield High graduates were killed in the 2007 Virginia Tech massacre, Westfield's administration asked to use Centreville Presbyterian's building for a prayer vigil. The church was in partnership with the school, and hundreds of parents and students attended this event.

Some happier memories of his time as pastor there, said Bromhead, were when the church had a community-theater program. Some of its most noteworthy productions were "Godspell," "Les Miserables," "Dirty Dancing" and "Sound of Music."

Regarding his sermons, he said two series particularly resonated with the congregation. One, called "Christ's Home," was based on Robert Boyd Munger's book of the same name.

"We represented the human heart as being made up of the rooms of a house," explained Bromhead. "Each sermon was given in one of



The Rev. Rob Bromhead speaks to children and parents at a CPC Communion Workshop.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHARON HOOVER

the rooms, such as the kitchen, by decorating the front stage that way. And each message talked about what it's like to have Jesus in charge of that room, and how much He's in charge of what we feed ourselves via food, books, social media, TV and movies, etc."

The congregation even explored the hall closet because, said Bromhead, "That's where the skeletons are kept. It has a key, but we have to be willing to give Jesus that key to clean it out." The other memorable series – done over a whole summer – examined what heaven is like. It even asked questions such as, "Is there coffee in heaven?"

HIS TOUGHEST CHALLENGE came when Centreville Presbyterian had to make a significant and difficult change. "We didn't stand in agreement with some of the beliefs or doctrines of our denomination," he said. "[The rift] was over the authority of Scripture; we didn't believe the denomination was committed to using Scripture in making decisions."

So Centreville Presbyterian had to break from its denomination – and it was costly. "To leave the denomination with our building, we had to pay it \$833,000," said Bromhead. "We thought it would take seven years to come up with the money, but our members raised it in six weeks."

As for his greatest satisfaction, he said it's "seeing God transform people's lives. That's by far the most rewarding – the Bible refers to it as a metamorphosis."

So why retire now? "I really believe the church is ready and in need of new leadership, fresh ideas and someone younger," explained Bromhead, 66. So for the past year, the Rev. Aaron McMillan, 45, has co-pastored with him to learn the ropes and receive his coaching.

"I was the church's organizing pastor, so it was important to have this transition time so people could get to know Aaron and see him as their pastor," said Bromhead. He and his wife have three sons and seven grandchildren, so retirement will enable them to eventually visit with them more often. He also enjoys playing pickleball and would like to travel to France, where his wife grew up. But Bromhead also plans to keep working.

"I'd like to coach pastors just starting out in planting churches and encourage them through their early years," he said. "I've done it before and found it rewarding. I also want to teach people in foreign countries preparing to be pastors, but without access to seminaries. I did that once on the Thailand/Myanmar border and in Moscow, and these folks are hungry for whatever resources you offer."

Bromhead said his career taught him "how few things in my life are under my control, and how so much of what happens – either in my life or my ministry – is the result of God's hand at work. And I realized that it's the only way you can be a pastor; you have to have a sense of being called by God."

In some ways, he said, retiring is like leaving his family, because that's what his congregation has become to him. "So that makes this a difficult goodbye," said Bromhead. "But I'm excited about the church's bright future under the able leadership of Pastor Aaron."

**NEXT WEEK: Community Shares
Memories of Retiring Pastor**

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