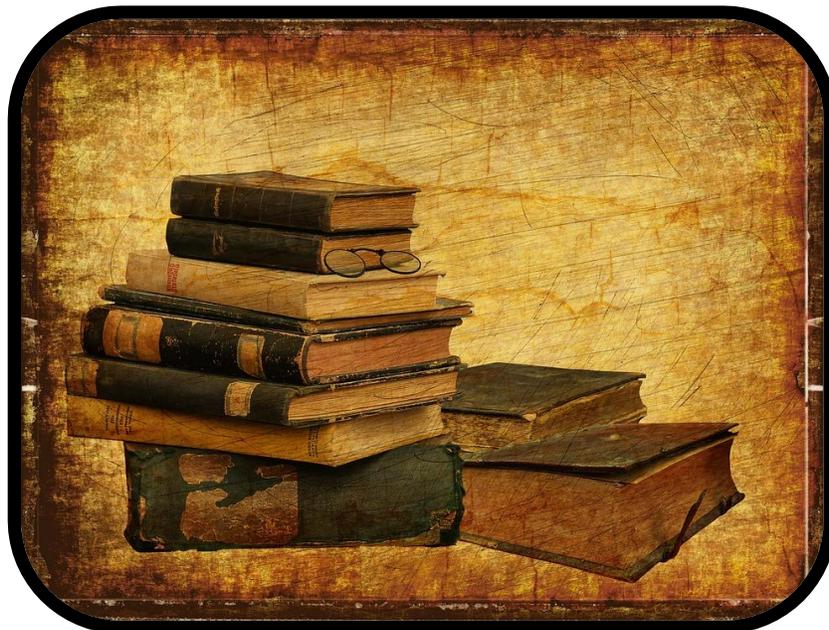


Virginia Church Library Association (VCLA)

Our History

from 1958—2023



Celebrating 65 years of Serving Together to
Promote Church Library Ministry
in the Commonwealth of Virginia and Beyond!



VCLA/Virginia Church Library Association



vacla.org



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VCLA

A HISTORY

1958-2023

Information for the years, 1958-2003, compiled by Betty Watson with contributors: Darlene Slater Herod, Frances Hogrefe, Janie Hughes, Maxine Bersch-Lovern, Percy Smith, and Mrs. J. M. Sprouse.

Information for the years, 2004-2023, compiled by Darlene Slater Herod with contributors: Edith Fensom, and Lee Smith.

History is updated every 5 years.

Updated October 2023.

VCLA – A HISTORY

ORGANIZATION

Virginia Baptist church media librarians and those interested in church libraries attending conferences at Ridgecrest Conference Center, Black Mountain, North Carolina felt the need for a state media library organization to spearhead library work among Virginia Baptist churches. Mrs. Floyd H. North of Richmond and Miss Jane Cornwell (later Mrs. Cecil F. Spires), president of the Norfolk Baptist Library Association, were appointed to lead this endeavor.

During the annual meeting of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, the State Church Library Convention of Virginia was organized on November 11, 1958, at a luncheon meeting held at the Saxony Motel, Virginia Beach, Virginia. Miss Jane Cornwell was asked to preside. There were twenty-eight (28) people present.

Speakers of the day were Mrs. I. B. Sawyer, Committee Chairman of the Park Place Baptist Church, Norfolk, Virginia, and Mrs. Floyd North, Church Librarian of the First Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia. Mrs. Sawyer spoke on the organization and purpose of a Church Library Associational Council. She stated the purpose was to provide a channel through which church librarians and staff members could share ideas and train themselves for more effective service. Its ultimate goal was to promote Christian education through an efficient and dedicated church library.

Mrs. North spoke on the organization and purpose of the State Church Library Convention. She outlined the purpose as follows: to encourage the book ministry in every Baptist Church; to inform and train church librarians; to raise the standard of home life; to correlate the church library promotion with the program of the church; to aid the teaching and training program of the church in an evangelistic effort to win and train the people; to encourage the existing Southern Baptist Convention organizations.

At this organizational meeting, By-Laws were presented and adopted.

Dr. Walker N. Stockburger, Pastor of Trinity Baptist Church, Norfolk, Virginia, was elected the first president. Dr. Stockburger was a member of the Virginia Baptist General Board and was able to give much promotion and support by emphasizing the work the State Church Library Convention of Virginia could do in the state.

For many years the meetings were held in conjunction with the Annual Meeting of the Baptist General Association of Virginia. Also, for many years, those serving as president were pastors of Virginia Baptist churches.

At the time of organization, five (5) Virginia Baptist Associations had organized Associational Councils. The first such Council was organized in the Norfolk Association by Mrs. I. B. Sawyer in September of 1958 with six (6) churches and twenty-eight (28) charter members. The Richmond Library Association Council was organized soon after.

THE EARLY YEARS

Membership and interest grew immediately. Dr. Stockburger and other leaders appealed to Dr. Frank Voight, then Secretary of the Sunday School Department of the Virginia Baptist for his support. This was given most graciously at that time and continued until he died in 1982.

The Second Annual Meeting of the State Church Library Convention of Virginia was held at the William Byrd Hotel, Richmond, Virginia on November 11, 1959. Dr. Walker N. Stockburger presided over the business session. The name of the organization was changed to Virginia Baptist Church Library Association (VBCLA).

At this time, VBCLA was not funded by the Virginia Baptist Board of Missions and Education. The Richmond and Norfolk Associational Councils each contributed \$25.00 to support the organization.

In 1959 VBCLA decided to hold a training conference at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center, Lynchburg, Virginia, in the spring of 1960 for church library workers. The first Spring Workshop was held on May 12-13, 1960 with forty-two (42) attending.

A special committee was appointed in 1959 to formulate plans to sponsor a library and book ministry at the Baptist Home in Culpepper, Virginia. Mr. H. C. Ramsey was the chairman. The special committee met on May 13, 1960. The project was approved. VBCLA donated \$66.00 for books for this project in 1962. In 1964 local churches were asked to donate the cost of a book for this special library.

In 1961, the Sunday School Department of the Virginia Baptist Board of Missions and Education allocated \$300.00 for VBCLA in the 1962 budget. Associational Councils continued to offer monetary support. Newsletters were sent to six hundred (600) individuals.

In reports given in 1961 by the Associational Councils, Mrs. H. C. Ramsey reported that the Norfolk Associational Council had eighteen (18) members and held workshops during the year. Mrs. Floyd North, Richmond Association Council, reported they had started eleven (11) new church libraries in three (3) years and held three (3) workshops. Mrs. Florence Turner, Mount Vernon Association Council, reported thirty-eight (38) churches in the Association with seventeen (17) church libraries in 1959. 1961 saw forty-four (44) churches with twenty-eight (28) church libraries.

In 1962 there were three hundred and eighty-nine (389) church libraries in Virginia Baptist churches. Fifty-nine (59) new church libraries were established in 1963.

VBCLA proposed in 1962 that church library work be declared a separate department of the Baptist General Association of Virginia with a secretary to be employed to direct the work. This recommendation was taken to the Baptist General Association of Virginia in 1964. Leaders of VBCLA lobbied vigorously for this, but it was deemed too costly and dismissed in 1965.

A special meeting was called at Ridgecrest Conference Center on August 29, 1962, with the resulting recommendation that the Virginia state meeting be lengthened to three (3) days in 1963.

H. C. Ramsey of the Norfolk Association of Councils built two (2) mobile library units for the use of churches. In 1964 it was decided that one of these units would be displayed at various conferences at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center during the summer months and at conferences throughout the state during the rest of the year.

1964 also saw the inclusion of church libraries in the Fall Regional Conferences for the first time. The conference leaders would be consultants from Church Library Services, Nashville, Tennessee. At this time VBCLA made annual reports directly to the Baptist General Association of Virginia.

The 1964 Treasurer's Report was as follows:

Beginning Balance.....	\$132.95
Expenses to President.....	\$10.32
Books for Baptist Home.....	\$20.95
Ending Balance.....	\$101.32

By the Fall meeting on November 8, 1965, there were five hundred (500) Virginia Baptist churches with church libraries.

In 1968 the Church Library Services, Nashville, Tennessee approved Mrs. J. C. Fisher and Mrs. L. H. Litchfield of Walnut Hills Baptist Church, Petersburg, Virginia, and Ralph W. Riley of Mount Vernon Church, Richmond, Virginia as church library workers endorsed to lead clinics, workshops, etc.

The whole organizational structure of the Virginia Baptist work was studied and reorganized in 1969. At this time VBCLA officially became a part of the new department known as The Teaching and Training Department with Dr. F. Lawson Pankey as the secretary of the department. Mr. Cecil Marsh was at that time assisting the VBCLA as the part-time director working under the direction of Dr. Pankey.

The goals of VBCLA in 1969 were: that every Baptist Church in Virginia have a church library service; the second, (adopted at the March 1969 Semi-annual meeting held at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center) and that the VBCLA encourage and obtain financial gifts from Virginia Baptists for the purpose of building and furnishing with the necessary equipment and books a much needed Media Center at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center, the State Baptist Assembly. It was deemed that the gifts could be outright, in memorial or honorarium, and tax deductible.

PROGRESS THROUGH THE 1970s and 1980s

The largest accomplishment of VBCLA during the 1970s was the establishment of the Media Center at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center. Clint Kersey was the first chairman of this project and was very instrumental in making it a reality. The Media Center (later known as the Media Library) became a reality in April 1974.

For a year prior to this date, books were collected and monetary gifts were given to purchase media with which to stock the shelves and furnishing to equip the room. The Media Center was located at first in the "White House". It was relocated to the Voight Conference Center upon its completion in 1980. For many years' volunteers kept the Media Center open during the summer conferences. Margaret Sowder of Lynchburg, Virginia, must be mentioned as one who contributed a great deal of time and effort to the Media Center during the 1980s and 1990s.

To carry on the ministry of the Media Center at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center, the VBCLA voted in 1973 to ask church librarians in Virginia Baptist churches to contribute \$5.00 a year. This was to be used toward the purchase of materials.

In 1980, Rev. Joe Vaughan became the Director of the Church Training Department of the Virginia Baptist General Board. VBCLA became his responsibility with the help of his secretary, Dot Yarbrough. Judy Lee replaced Dot Yarbrough in 1982. Rev. Joe Vaughan and Judy Lee served Virginia Baptist church librarians graciously and well on into the 1990s.

The VBCLA name was changed to the Virginia Baptist Media Library Association (VBMLA) at the meeting held in November 1981. VBMLA celebrated its 25th Anniversary on November 21, 1983, at Mount Vernon Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia. Cecil Spires was the president.

Recognizing the need to reach out with training to all geographical regions in Virginia, VBMLA began Regional Workshops in 1987, with the first workshop being held at Mount Vernon Baptist Association in Woodbridge, Virginia.

VBMLA By-Laws were revised in 1989. The titles of the top three (3) officers, (President, 1st Vice President, and 2nd Vice President) were changed to Director, Assistant Director, and Associate Director, respectively, to better reflect the National terminology.

In 1989 the Regional Workshops were combined with the Fall Banquet making it a two (2) day event on Friday and Saturday. The first combined event was held at Crozet Baptist Church, Crozet, Virginia, in November 1989. The banquet was held on Friday night with workshops on Saturday. The Spring Workshop continued to be a three (3) day event, Friday through Sunday, at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center in Lynchburg, Virginia.

1990s – CHANGING TOWARD 2000

The 1990s proved to be a time of great change for VBMLA. Rev. Joe Vaughan retired in 1992 as Director of the Church Training Department and was replaced by Rev. William Alphin. Judy Lee was promoted in 1995 thus leaving the Church Training Department. She was replaced by Jennifer Cullinan.

In 1994 VBMLA voted to prepare a display table as part of the exhibits at the Baptist General Association of Virginia Annual Meeting held in November each year. This fell under the responsibility of the Assistant Director, Kay Jarratt, Middle District Association. A lighted display board was purchased in 1996. This continues to be an excellent promotion tool for VBMLA.

In 1995 it was determined that due to circumstances (lack of funding, sparse usage, lack of staffing, etc.), the Eagle Eyrie Library would be closed. The library closed its doors in 1996. The books were divided between five (5) new church libraries established the previous year. Some furnishings and equipment were sold and some were taken to Richmond, for the newly created Curriculum Resource Lab at the Virginia Baptist Resource Center.

Reflecting the new organization of the Virginia Baptist General Board in the Virginia Baptist Resource Center in October 1996, VBMLA was informed it would no longer be funded by the Resource Center after 1997. Rev. Bill Alphin and his office would be liaisons only. VBMLA would have to become completely self-supporting.

Recognizing a need to be financially independent in order to continue offering workshops and other assistance to Virginia Baptist church libraries, VBMLA instituted a \$10.00 Program Fee for the Spring and Fall conferences. Memberships were changed from church memberships to individual memberships with yearly dues of \$10.00, the membership year running from January to December.

During the mid-1990s VBMLA experimented with fast track Spring Conferences limiting them to two (2) days. In 1998 the three (3) day conference at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center was resumed.

The locations of the Semi-Annual Spring and Fall conferences were changed in 1997 due to scheduling conflicts at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center. The two-day conference formerly known as the Fall Banquet and Workshops was changed to the Spring to be held at various locations. The Spring Conference was changed to September at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center.

A Craft Sale featuring donated handicrafts was held during the September meeting in 1997. \$300.00 was raised and designated for four (4) scholarships for first-time attendants at National Conferences. VBMLA decided to make this an annual event. However, after several years, participation declined to a small number of donors, and the Craft Sale was ended.

For many years VBMLA did not send out a newsletter having relied on the printings of the VBGB. In 1996 VBMLA voted to start publishing its own newsletter with the Assistant Director as editor. These began in 1997. In that year, there were seven hundred (700) Virginia Baptist churches reporting church libraries. In 1998 an Ellison die-cutting machine was purchased to be made available for the use of the VBLMA membership to prepare promotional displays.

1998 also found Virginia church librarians making two different international mission trips. Charlotte Ganzert, Staples Mill Road Baptist Church, Glen Allen, Virginia, spent twenty-eight (28) days in Guyana in February. Charlotte classified and cataloged books for national pastors' use, working with local church members. A group of three librarians (Jeanne Woodside, Mount Vernon Association; Jackie Wheeler, Fredericksburg Association; and Betty Watson, Roanoke Valley Baptist Association) went to Barbados, West Indies for two (2) weeks in April 1998. They classified, cataloged, and processed books for the library of the Barbados Baptist College. They prepared over eleven hundred (1,100) books in two (2) weeks. VBMLA members contributed \$75.00 for the shipping cost of a thirty (30) drawer card catalog cabinet which the group took with them to the college.

VBMLA observed the 40th Anniversary of the organization at the annual Fall Conference at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center on September 25-27, 1998. Fred Anderson, Executive Director of the Virginia Baptist Historical Society, was the guest speaker at the Friday night Banquet.

Maxine Bersch, VBMLA Past-President (1986-1988), was the featured author having just published a book on storytelling entitled “*Storytelling in a Nutshell.*”

In 1990 VBMLA voted to begin a Virginia Christian Growth Study Plan with certificates awarded for study courses completed. Jeanne Woodside, Mount Vernon Association, organized this endeavor. The first certificates were awarded in 2000 for courses dating back to 1998.

The 21st Century - 2000 & Beyond

Lorene Sherman, Development Committee chairperson, and her committee developed a packet for all Virginia TAMM Directors (The Association Media Ministry) to be used in developing new church libraries and revitalizing existing church libraries. These were distributed to all TAMM Directors.

A total of twenty-two (22) new church libraries were planned, established, or revitalized in Virginia, between April 2000 and April 2001. In September of 2000, VBMLA had a total of one hundred sixty (160) individual members.

Mary Blakemore, VBMLA Past-President (1973-1975), was honored at Eastmore Plantation on May 6, 2001, for her work in establishing church libraries in the state of Virginia. VBMLA honored Mary Blackmore during the Spring Conference at Liberty Baptist Church, Hampton, Virginia, on April 19, 2002.

As of April 2002, the VBMLA mailing list included eight hundred (800) names. In September 2002, the VBMLA Executive Board voted to form a Long Range Planning Committee to determine the direction of VBMLA.

Jeanne Woodside, Mount Vernon Association, was honored at the Banquet during the Fall Conference held on September 28-30, 2002 at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center for her many years of outstanding service to VBMLA and Virginia Baptist Church Libraries.

VBMLA continued to grow as it worked its way along the road of complete independence. In September 2002, the treasury had a balance of \$12,212.39. A budget for 2003 was approved in the amount of \$6,370.00. The membership was as follows: Members – one hundred sixty-eight (168), Associations represented – twenty-two (22), and Churches represented – ninety-one (91).

The newsletter received a new name and new look with the publication of the Fall Issue, 2002. These were the contributions of Karen Jones, computer wizard, and church librarian at First Baptist Church, Alexandria, Virginia.

The location of the Semi-Annual Spring and Fall Conference was once again changed in 2003 when a convenient date in May became available at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center. The Spring Conference would be held at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center and the Fall Conference at various locations. Some churches had conflicts with scheduling a Spring Conference because of Easter.

VBMLA celebrated its 45th Anniversary on May 16-18, 2003, at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center with the theme, "Reach Out and Touch Someone." Sue Berthelot, LifeWay consultant, and friend, led several classes throughout the weekend. Rev. Joe Vaughan, one of our strongest supporters, shared his thoughts about media library ministry at the Celebration Banquet on Saturday evening. Morlee Maynard, our enthusiastic LifeWay advocate in Nashville, Tennessee, and special guest, spoke at the Sunday morning worship service.

"Church Libraries.... Preparing Laborers for the Harvest" was the theme of the Fall Conference and Banquet hosted by Crozet Baptist Church, Crozet, Virginia, on October 10-12, 2003. Richmond author Patricia Brightwell spoke at the Friday evening banquet and Bill Jones of Book Systems, Inc., was guest instructor/consultant on Concourse during two training sessions on Saturday. The Long Range Planning Committee held its first meeting on October 11, 2003, after the conclusion of the conference.

VBMLA bid farewell to Lorene Sherman and Bonnie Turner during the Spring 2004. Lorene Sherman had served on various VBMLA committees, taught classes, mentored new church librarians, partnered with Jackie Wheeler to do church media library ministry at Shiloh Baptist Church, King George, Virginia, and the Fredericksburg Association, and to develop the VBMLA New Start Kit. Bonnie Turner had served on VBMLA committees and taught classes while serving in Woolridge Baptist Church and the Middle District Association. During her years on the mission field, she served in the library at the Baptist Seminary in Kenya.

The Long Range Planning Committee report was first presented to the Executive Committee and then to the VBMLA membership in May 2004. A revision of the By-Laws was presented and approved by the membership on October 16, 2004.

Janie Hughes was honored for 40 years of service as a church librarian to churches and the Portsmouth Baptist Association on October 7, 2005, during the Fall Conference at Calvary Baptist Church, Portsmouth, Virginia. She had served as VBMLA President, 1975-1977.

A new brochure telling who we are and how we can help the churches was produced. The graphics were done by Candice Monaghan, granddaughter of Betty Watson, Bonsack Baptist Church, Roanoke, Virginia, and Bob Mitchell, Millfield Baptist Church, Wakefield, Virginia, VBMLA treasurer, who arranged for the printing.

In response to Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005, a fund was established by VBMLA “in an attempt to restore one church library destroyed by the storm.” The monies were held by our treasurer until a match of our financial abilities with a church in one of the storm-damaged states could be made by a LifeWay consultant.

VBMLA honored Maxine Bersch, Past-President, 1986-1988; storyteller, and author of *Storytelling in a Nutshell*, at the Spring Conference held at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center on May 19-21, 2006.

“On June 16, 2006, God welcomed our beloved Mary Blakemore into eternal fellowship with Him and she was reunited with her husband of 51 years. For those of us fortunate to come under her tutelage as church librarians, we found her knowledge vast, her willingness to share immense, and her thoroughness in detail and carrying a task through to its finish inspiring.”

The Fall Conference in 2006 was hosted by Jeanne Woodside and Jackie Harris at Winchester Baptist Church, Winchester, Virginia. Carolyn Walker was our LifeWay consultant and the theme was “Harvest Time in Winchester” based on Deuteronomy 16:15b, “For the Lord your God will bless you in all your harvest and in the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete.”

Spring 2007 saw another revision of the By-Laws. The Executive Committee voted to approve the By-Laws at its session on May 18, 2007. Then, the full membership voted to approve them during the business session on the following afternoon. Under the newly-adopted By-Laws VBMLA changed its name to Virginia Baptist Library Association and changed titles for officers and clarified their duties.

Percy Smith, church library director at Monument Heights Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia, was recognized by his pastor, Rev. Dr. Randy Clipp, in the morning service on January 28, 2007, for 36 years of service to the church library. Combined with his service at Tabernacle Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia, Percy Smith has been in church library work for about 50 years! He has retired as church library director but will remain on the church library staff. VBMLA honored him at the Saturday evening Banquet, May 19, 2007, during the Spring Conference at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center. He had served as VBMLA Director, from 1992-1994.

There was a special feature to the Fall Conference hosted by First Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia, on October 12-13, 2007. The Virginia Baptist Historical Society, at the request of VBLA, held a pre-conference session on Friday afternoon for the first twelve (12) registrants wishing to participate. Executive director, Fred Anderson, and research assistant, Darlene Slater Herod, gave both a public and a behind-the-scenes tour of the Society, provided instruction on “Collecting and Preserving your Church History” and transported the group to River Road Church, Baptist, Richmond, Virginia, for a tour of that church’s archives. Church member and archivist, Barbara Jackson, shared insights and answered questions about guidelines and procedures.

On October 12, 2007, VBLA honored Nancy Edwards, Past-President, from 1979-1981, for some 40 years of church library ministry. She trained at Ridgecrest Conference Center, as well as at Glorieta Conference Center, Glorieta, New Mexico, where she also served as the summer librarian. Nancy Edwards began the church library at Chester Baptist Church, Chester, Virginia. When the White House at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center was to be torn down, she packed up the library and it went into storage until the Voight Center was constructed. She has been a district worker helping churches create and rejuvenate their church libraries. Even today, if the church library at

Ironbridge Baptist Church, Chester, Virginia, purchases a book and then a member provides a copy, the duplicate will be set aside for another church library to add to its collection.

A two-part celebration of “50 Golden Years” of ministry was kicked off during the Spring Conference at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center on May 16-18, 2008. LifeWay consultant Sue Berthelot led sessions on book repair, administration, and classification. Maxine Bersch-Lovern, storyteller and published author, taught a class on her brand of storytelling and later shared a monologue at the Celebration Banquet. Cathy Wallin, member of First Baptist Church, Roanoke, Virginia, led a class on “Faithbooking” – “scrapbooks that reflect what God had done and is doing in the lives of people and their families.”

The second part of the celebration was held during the Fall Conference at Liberty Baptist Church, Hampton, Virginia, on October 3-4, 2008. Special entertainment was provided on Friday evening by “The Bible Babes” who made ‘the women of the Bible come to life.’ On Saturday, Bill Jones, CEO/President of Book Systems, Inc., led an advanced Concourse class.

With the theme, “51 & Growing...the Best is Yet to Come!” VBLA started the new decade with Bev League, LifeWay consultant, as our guest consultant for the Spring Conference on May 15-17, 2009. Additional highlights included music by Dr. Mike Fitzgerald, pastor of Clifford Baptist Church, Amherst, Virginia, the testimony of author Carolyn Tyree Feagans, the installation of VBLA officers by Rev. Joe Vaughan, and worship by Rev. Bill Alphin and Carol Spencer. Rev. Alphin spoke on “51 Years and Growing: Just Don’t Split Your Britches” and, as a memento of the occasion, Jean McChesney presented a pair of *miniature britches* to him!

Dottie Lewis and the church library staff of First Baptist Church, Martinsville, Virginia, hosted the association on October 9-10, 2009. “Roots Are for Branching Out: 51 Years and Growing!” served as the theme. The newsletter promoting the conference had been condensed to a two-page format to best utilize funds and carried the notice that our website www.vachurchlibrary.org should be consulted for additional information. Those without internet access were advised to contact Nancy King, Data/Mailing List Administrator.

The theme of the previous meeting was updated for the Spring Conference at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center on May 14-15, 2010, where the association focused on “Roots Are for Branching Out: 52 Years and Growing!” Eva Nell Hunter, LifeWay consultant, returned as our consultant to lead sessions on church library administration, cataloging and classification, promotion – card making and bookmarks, and questions/answers – Book Systems, Inc. She also provided book reviews and author Jean Reynolds made a presentation.

In the LifeWay Church Library eNewsletter, Spring 2010, Morlee Maynard explained that LifeWay Christian Resources would no longer be maintaining the Christian Growth Study Plan participant information due to the change in software. Individuals working toward one or all of the Church Library Ministry Certificate plans would now be required to track their own credits.

“Wherever you go, go with all your heart” compelled the association to go to Temple Baptist Church, Newport News, Virginia, for its Fall Conference on October 15-16, 2010. Beth Maxwell and the church library staff led us on a journey of training. Children’s author Susan Allen-Foster inspired us with her testimony as well as her fictional characters. The Roanoke Valley Baptist Association thanked VBLA for collecting books for a Powell River mission project.

In 2011, the Spring Conference at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center was canceled for lack of registrants. Under the mechanizations of Nancy King, a one-day Fall Conference was held at the Dover Baptist Association Office, Ashland, Virginia. A training session took place before the fellowship lunch. In the afternoon, the Executive Committee and the VBLA membership began a revision of the By-Laws.

In an open letter format, Rev. Bill Alphin challenged us to keep VBLA relevant. “The VBMLA [VBLA] is a network of people helping each other and church leaders with information. So how can the VBMLA [VBLA] develop new ways of networking? Connect with others that are doing it. Examine how the news industry has taken to the internet. Magazines are now operating online and not just in print. Dynamic interaction is part of their new DNA. Notice how the Virginia Baptist Mission Board and the Baptist General Association of Virginia have changed the way they network: www.vbmb.org. ‘No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away

from the garment, and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put in fresh wineskins, and both are preserved.’ (Matthew 9:16-17, ESV). May God guide and bless the VMBLA [VBLA] as you dream of new ways to minister to others.”

The Spring Conference on March 30-31, 2012, challenged VBLA to “Build Renew Refresh.” Carolyn Walker, LifeWay consultant, was the guest consultant who led us in meeting the challenge through the design of church library space, the selection of media, and the weeding of titles and materials. “Administration Using 21st Technology,” E-readers and software programs were among other training opportunities.

Lee Smith and the church library staff welcomed us to Monument Heights Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia, for the Fall Conference on October 12-13, 2012, where we found ourselves “Reaching New Horizons” in church library work.

The revised By-Laws were adopted on October 13, 2012, and reaffirmed the stated purpose of the organization as follows:

- To promote church library ministry
- To assist churches in establishing or revitalizing church libraries
- To inform and train church library workers
- To provide a strong support network for church library workers
- To promote the correlation of the church library ministry with all ministries of the church
- To help pastoral staff and church program leaders understand the ministry of [the] church library and its resources.

Jacquelyn (“Jackie”) Anderson, retired Church Library Ministry Specialist, died on December 5, 2012. During her thirty-seven (37) year tenure with “The Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources), she authored books and articles on church media library work and helped develop the first library-related computer program - now called Concourse - offered by the Sunday School Board and Book Systems, Inc.” Jackie Anderson last made the trip from Nashville, Tennessee to Eagle Eyrie Conference Center for the Spring Conference, on May 14-16, 2004. She instructed us on how to match personnel with church library positions, taught sessions on beginning and advanced classification, and shared media reviews as her vision for church library work.

The Religious Herald, the state Baptist news journal, published an article on church libraries in its May 20, 2013 issue. The article, entitled “Book Shifts,” featured the downsizing of the church library at First Baptist Church, Alexandria, Virginia. Church librarian Karen Jones was featured, and in the larger context of the article, so were Lee Smith, church librarian at Monument Heights Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia, and VBLA Education Director; and Beth Maxwell church librarian at Temple Baptist Church, Newport News, Virginia. VBLA was well represented and the article provided significant promotion, both in print and E-format, for the association.

Mari Ellis, Jewel Barger, and the church library staff of Chester Baptist Church, Chester, Virginia, helped us in “Harvesting 55 Years of Church Library Ministry” during the Fall Conference on October 4-5, 2013. Jeanie Tucker, Church Library Ministry Consultant for North Carolina Baptists, has strong Virginia Baptist friendships. So strong that after having led three classes at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center in the spring, she was willing to make a return trip to Virginia and lead two more in the fall.

This was the last VBLA conference Percy Smith would attend. He took part in the Executive Committee meeting on Friday evening and the training and fellowship throughout the day on Saturday. A copy of Maxine (“Mackie”) Bersch-Lovern newest book, *Under the Gooseberry Bush*, arrived around Thanksgiving. While he may not have had time to read it in its entirety, he had read it in part and was telling everyone who would listen about Mackie’s book. Her loving inscription made it a special treasure. On December 5, 2013, one year after Jackie Anderson, he “joined the Lord in

Heaven.” VBLA remembered him with a memorial display at the Spring Conference in 2014. He had served as past-president from 1992-1994.

The Spring Conference theme was “Library on a Mission” and “Celebrating 55 Years of Serving Together to Promote Church Library Ministry in Virginia and Beyond” at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center on April 4-6, 2014. Due to the anniversary emphasis, the schedule of activities was expanded to include Sunday morning through lunch with a worship service prior to the meal. This full weekend included training by LifeWay consultant, Eva Nell Hunter, an Inspirational Faire, individual book discussions with both authors Maxine Bersch-Lovern and Don Brown, and the 55th Anniversary reception.

We proved we were “Still Alive” and “Stay[ing] Alive” at 55” with a road trip on October 3-4, 2014 to Liberty Baptist Church, Hampton, Virginia, where Nancy Boyd, Joan Hite, and their church library team made us feel like we wanted to stay longer when the Fall Conference was over. We had in-house instruction with VBLA leaders and church library friends teaching the training sessions. The special guest author was Dr. Harry Kraus, a surgeon, medical missionary to East Africa, and accomplished writer of both non-fiction and fiction books.

During the business session of the Fall 2014 Conference, the organization voted to change its name to Virginia Church Library Association. The name change had been recommended by the Executive Committee with the intention of being more inclusive and welcoming to all church librarians and their team members of all denominations.

Jean Cotton McChesney served as Director for the terms 1997-1999, 2001-2003, and 2005-2007. She passed into eternity on November 8, 2014. We miss her wonderful smile and beautiful laughter. She would laugh with us but never at us and she knew how not to take herself too seriously. She would admit that she was directionally challenged, as she would stand in the Voight Center and almost always point in the wrong direction when trying to give instructions as to where she wanted us to go.

VCLA and North Carolina Church Library Ministry “teamed up” for the Spring Conference at Eagle Eyrie Conference Center on April 17-19, 2015. The theme was “Hand in Hand – Libraries Without Borders.” Our LifeWay consultants were Hope Ferguson and Bev League. Guest instructors, Glenn and Anne McEowen, president/owner of PC Concepts, gave us lessons on technology like the PC card catalog, E-books and E-readers, and promotion using technology. Although we also had Robert Whitlow, North Carolina resident, author, and winner of the prestigious Christy Award for Contemporary Fiction, participating in the conference as well, the attendance from our fellow church librarians across the state line was small. “*Nothing ventured, nothing gained.*” We were certainly being more inclusive.

Fall breezes found us “Branching in New Directions” at North Run Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia, on October 9-10, 2015. Darlene Slater Herod was honored to have VCLA gather for training at her church home. Ruth Elswick, Susan Swisher, Brenda Clarke, and Susan Gaskins were among the church hostesses. Judy Furr, North Carolina Church Library Ministry, and Amanda Lott, Central Virginia Baptist Church Ministries, were among the teachers and leaders. Local children’s author and retired principal, Bill Pike, spoke briefly about his books, “*The Last Pumpkin*” and “*Murray and the MudMumblers.*” A small fan club among the North Run church members joined VCLA for his author talk.

During the business session, we voted to approve changes to our By-Laws. These changes included adding the positions of Assistant Education Director and Assistant Development Director as well as explaining the description and duties of the Public Relations Committee.

The Eagle Eyrie Conference Center staff welcomed us back for the Spring Conference on April 15-17, 2016. The theme was “Lighting the Path to Church Library Ministry.” Bev League came from Tennessee as our LifeWay consultant, while Bill Jones joined us from Alabama and reacquainted us with Book Systems, Inc. Timmy Williamson, a recent Liberty University graduate, with a fellow student as his accompanist, led us in the Sunday morning worship service.

We held a Craft & Baked Goods Auction. This was our first silent auction. Over thirty-five (35) items were donated from wooden birdhouses, crocheted lap throws and scarfs, baked goods, and more. Due to the generosity of the participants, we collected \$650 towards the future work of VCLA. Lee Smith transitioned from VCLA Education Director to VCLA Director, as Darlene Slater Herod “handed over the gavel.”

The duo of Jeanne Woodside and Jackie Harris hosted a Coffee & Chat session for the church librarians in Northern Virginia on May 21, 2016, just one of many that they have offered over the years. Finally, the Central Virginia area librarians experienced one such session at Monument Heights Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia, on June 4, 2016. Jackie Harris was the consultant on site to share information, offer suggested guidelines for various library-related topics, and answer specific questions.

Time marched on and Maxine Bersch-Lovern kept right in step with it. Her new book, *“Eternity in an Hour: The Storyteller’s Little Book about God’s Big Gift of Time”* was released in paperback and Kindle format through Amazon.

Dottie Lewis and the church library team from First Baptist Church, Martinsville, Virginia, helped us train under the theme of *“Getting the Pieces to Fall into Place,”* on October 14-15, 2016. Judy Furr joined us from North Carolina Church Library Ministry to lead a training session. Guest speakers were Jo Dyches, who told us the tale of Rev. Bob Childress of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and Cricket Haley, owner of Abe Books & Book Repair, Conservation and Bookbinding of Virginia.

Bob and Jean Mitchell, longtime members of VCLA, were active in creating and maintaining the church library at Millfield Baptist Church, Wakefield, Virginia. The couple was tragically killed in a car accident in early December 2016. Bob Mitchell had started out supporting Jean in her church library ministry but then in 2004, he agreed to serve as VCLA’s treasurer and continued until his death. While we regret their dual loss, we cannot think of either one without the other, “together in life and death.”

Up the mountain again we went, this time to discover “Libraries: Your Ticket to the World,” on April 21-23, 2017. Carolyn Walker, who enjoys nothing better than a well-written Christian crime novel, was our LifeWay consultant. Allison Maynard served as our computer expert, leading an overview of Concourse and Atrium and more detailed classes on these Book System, Inc. programs. Judy Furr from North Carolina Church Library Ministry completed the trio of guest teachers. A new instructor among our own VCLA members led a free media resource class. Ron Buckles introduced us to VLC Media Player and other media software. We held the second silent auction to raise funds for the work of VCLA.

A small group of Central Virginia church librarians met for a Coffee & Chat at North Run Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia, on July 29, 2017. Ron and Carol Buckles decided they wanted to have the experience and traveled from Newport News to join us. Susan Swisher and the church library team made us feel welcomed and valued as church librarians.

LifeWay consultant Beth Andrews died in August 2017. Many of us enjoyed her conferences through the years as well as her church library magazine articles and her chapters in the resource books published by LifeWay.

We were so appreciative of their expertise and leadership that we asked Carolyn Walker, Allison Maynard, and Judy Furr to be with us at the Fall Conference, on October 13-14, 2017. They agreed to come and helped us explore “Libraries: Caring and Sharing,” based on Hebrews 13:16 “And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” Cool Spring Baptist Church, Mechanicsville, Virginia, church librarian Sandi Higgins and Lee Smith, VCLA Director, put together the entire conference with assistance from just Sandi’s husband Ken, and a few helpers. Small libraries and their staff can produce great things! Local authors, Dr. Roberta Damon and Jill Baughan shared their lives and their writings. Dr. Damon highlighted her new book, *“Dear Mrs. Noah: Letters to Unnamed Women of the Bible.”*

Added to the excitement of the weekend we had two students from The Resource Center, Richmond, Virginia, participate as scholarship recipients. This was the first time in several years that scholarships had been awarded to first-time attendees. LifeWay consultant Hope Ferguson also led classes, since she and her husband were traveling in our direction that weekend. A mini silent auction was held with an emphasis on new children's books. Lee Smith was then coordinating a Children's Book Drive for St. Mary's Hospital Pediatric Emergency Department.

As something new for our VCLA members only, Lee Smith has started an online newsletter and mailed it to those without internet access, *News, Reviews, & More*. He has circulated two issues, March and April 2018. Book reviews are welcome from our members.

When we climbed the mountain on April 13-15, 2018, we were nearly 60 years old. The theme of the conference was "Disciple Making Through Your Church Library." Of the eleven (11) first-time attendees, four were scholarship recipients. There were twenty-eight (28) churches represented with participants coming from Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

Morlee Maynard, our LifeWay Church Library Ministry Specialist from Nashville, Tennessee was with us at Eagle Eyrie after a long absence. If you have ever ordered from Amazon or Christian Book Distributors, by first accessing the churchlibrarians.ning.com website, a donation is made to keep this site available and free as a resource. We are grateful for all she does to keep this website maintained. Dr. Maynard has worked through the ups and downs of church library ministry at the national level. Advocating for church librarians through innumerable changes, we could not have a better friend than we have in her.

She was joined by Carolyn Walker and Allison Maynard as our guest consultants and training experts. We kicked off the 60th Anniversary Celebration with Big Island Bluegrass, had the third annual silent auction, and returned home with a renewed commitment to "Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples...and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19a-20a)

“Libraries: Diamonds In Our Midst” was the theme as we gathered at Monument Heights Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia, for the 60th Anniversary Celebration and Fall 2018 Conference on November 9-10, 2018. The trio of Morlee Maynard, Carolyn Walker, and Allison Maynard joined us again to lead and train. We had a mission project of collecting new preschool and children’s books for the River City Faith Network’s three intercity community centers. Danette Moen, a local author, as well as pastor’s wife and mother, shared how she came to write “From Brat to Boss: Life Lessons from Joseph”, for children ages 8-12.

\ Spring 2019 took us to Chester Baptist Church, Chester, Virginia, on May 3-4, 2019 where the theme was “Libraries – Heartbeat of the Church.” We had Hope Ferguson, Allison Maynard, and Jennifer Hobgood as guest facilitators with the remainder of the training sessions led by our own VCLA members and officers. Local authors, Dr. Roberta Damon and Carter Stuart spoke about their writing and book publishing experiences.

We also had Maxine Bersch-Lovern as the author of her newest books *Eternity in an Hour: The Storyteller's Little Book about God's Big Gift of Time & Storytelling in a Nutshell: Storytelling in Christian Education (Revised & Updated)*. Her family also joined us for this special occasion. She was the main program Friday night doing one of her monologues followed by celebrating her 100th birthday. She passed away at 101 on September 13, 2020. Her motto we will never forget is “Look up! Laugh! Love! and Lift!

The 2019 Fall Conference theme was “Book Your Vacation” where we traveled around the world with various maps and decorations. Nancy Boyd, Joan Hite, and the church library staff of Liberty Baptist Church, Hampton, Virginia welcomed us once again. Guest conference leaders were LifeWay consultant Carolyn Walker, Book Systems, Inc. Allison Maynard, and various VCLA members. The guest authors were husband and wife team David & Diane Munson who have written numerous fiction books. This was also Nancy Boyd’s last conference with VCLA before she moved to Florida.

Covid-19 changed the world. The Fall Conference for 2019 was our last in-person conference before the pandemic. Conferences for 2020 and 2021 were planned but did not occur due to restrictions and high levels of infection at the actual times when the conferences were to have been held. Out of necessity, we conducted our business meetings in electronic format, sending out the Slates of Officers and Committees, Proposed Budgets, and other matters to be voted on by the membership. The monthly VCLA newsletter continued to be posted with numerous book reviews in each issue.

Lee Smith hosted a Coffee & Chat at Monument Heights Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia, on April 17, 2021. There were twelve (12) people in attendance representing seven (7) churches.

Our beloved friend and library supporter, Rev. Joe Vaughan died three days after his 92nd birthday, on June 27, 2021. Joe had been a staff liaison for the VCLA during much of his time at the Virginia Baptist Mission Board (BGAV). Even after financial support was withdrawn, Joe was always a willing participant in our conferences when his schedule allowed.

The first physical VCLA Conference post-COVID-19 was held on June 4, 2022, at Monument Heights Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia. This was the first conference where training and participation was available online via Zoom. Instructors Bev League, Morlee Maynard, and Janice Baker spoke to us from their homes in Tennessee! Most of us gathered at Monument Heights but some joined by Zoom. The Silent Auction, unfortunately, was not the successful fundraiser that it had been in previous years.

For lack of a hosting church, the Fall Conference in 2022 was held at the Dover Baptist Association office on October 15, 2022. Again, we went hybrid with guest speakers Bev League via Zoom and Rod Mason was in-person. They filled in at the last minute for Hope Ferguson. This event showed that the dual format could be our “new normal.” Local author, Kathy Fogg Berry, joined us to talk about her book about Alzheimer's, *When Words Fail: Practical Ministry to People with Dementia and their Caregivers*.

The VCLA Bylaws were revised and adopted, as of October 15, 2022. Many bright minds convened and many long hours were expended in the process of going from the start of the revision to the vote by the membership.

Eva Nell Hunter, LifeWay Church Ministry Specialist extraordinaire, whose own church library serves as a cataloging resource, died on November 21, 2022. Church librarians across the Southern Baptist Convention would check the library catalog of Central Baptist Church, Decatur, Alabama, to see how Eva Nell had cataloged particular books. She was an author who wrote *A Classification System for Church Libraries: Based on the Dewey Decimal Classification System* which most church librarians use for cataloging.

We have lost many other VCLA friends and members in the last five years: Barbara Proffitt, longtime church library director at Bon Air Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia; Ruth Elswick, church library director at North Run Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia, and media center volunteer at the Dover Baptist Association, Ashland, Virginia; Janie Hughes, church library director at Bethany Baptist Church, Portsmouth, Virginia, and leader in church library work in the Portsmouth Baptist Association, Portsmouth, Virginia are among them.

February 4, 2023, found us at Monument Heights Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia, for a Coffee & Chat hosted by Lee Smith. Rev. Evelyn Penn, Beulah United Methodist Church, Lively, Virginia, joined us for the first time and immediately offered to host a Coffee & Chat at her Methodist church in the Northern Neck of Virginia in June 2023. With thirteen (13) participants it was our most successful to date.

Chester Baptist Church, Chester, Virginia, hosted the Spring Conference on May 5-6, 2023. Our theme was “Transforming Lives through Church Libraries.” There were thirty-eight (38) registered representing multiple denominations. Five (5) attendees were first-timers and Candi Bowles was the scholarship recipient. She is the new church librarian at Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church in Colonial Heights, Virginia. Her church is planning to host the Spring Conference on May 3-4, 2024.

Jeanne Woodside died on June 9, 2023. She was the librarian for her church, Calvary Hill Baptist Church, Fairfax, Virginia, and the librarian of the Mount Vernon Baptist Association, Annandale, Virginia, and the NorthStar Church Network, Manassas, Virginia. She and fellow associational worker, Jackie Harris, held the very first Coffee & Chat in their region. It was a success and the process multiplied.

Rev. Evelyn Penn welcomed us to Bethel United Methodist Church, Lively, Virginia, on Saturday, June 10, 2023. There were eleven (11) people present from eight (8) churches. The discussion was interesting and the fellowship was sweet. This Coffee & Chat almost turned into a workday, but Rev. Evelyn would not let us do much in the church library. She said that the members would do the work and thereby be invested and more likely to use the church library in the future. Words of wisdom.

Carol and Ron Buckles hosted a Coffee & Chat on Saturday, July 29, 2023, at Tabernacle Baptist Church in Newport News, Virginia. Carol led a session on “How the Church Can Aid in Bible Journaling.” There were six (6) in attendance representing four (4) churches one of those was a new church in Hampton, Virginia. They did express interest in wanting Carol to teach the training session, “Marketing your Church Library.” She is already planning another Coffee & Chat in the near future.

Here we are turning 65 years old! North Run Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia, is hosting our Fall Conference and 65th Anniversary Celebration on Saturday, October 21, 2023, with the theme “Celebrating 65 Years of VCLA.” In-person and via Zoom options will be available. Guest conference leaders are Morlee Maynard, Coordinator & Church Library Specialist, Church Librarians Network; Carolyn Walker, Church Library Specialist, Church Librarians Network; Lee Smith, VCLA Director; Julie Grimes, VCLA Public Relations Director; Kim Britton-Oliver & Becky Moore, Church Library Resources Center Staff, Monuments Heights Baptist Church. Holly Desvignes, local author and member of North Run Baptist Church, will be speaking and selling her books: *The Start of the Home Again* and *Tales from Home Again*.

Save the date: VCLA Spring Conference – Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Colonial Heights, Virginia – May 3-4, 2024.

PRESIDENTS / DIRECTORS

1958-1960	Walter Stockburger
1960-1962	James White, III
1962-1964	John Chandler
1964-1965	William Jessup
1965-1967	James Harris
1967	Ralph W. Bailey
1967-1969	Mrs. I. B. Sawyer
1969-1971	Thomas Wood
1971-1973	Victor I. Klassen
1973-1975	Mary Blakemore
1975-1977	Janie Hughes
1977-1979	Colon R, McMath, Jr.
1979-1981	Nancy Edwards
1981-1983	Cecil F Spires
1983-1986	Fred Walls
1986-1988	Maxine Bersch
1988-1990	Peggy Anderson
1990-1992	Jewel Barger
1992-1994	Percy Smith
1994-1996	Betty Watson
1996-1997	Kay Jarrett
1997-1999	Jean McChesney
1999-2001	Kay Davis
2001-2003	Jean McChesney
2003-2005	Nancy King
2005-2007	Jean McChesney
2007-2008	Jewel Barger
2008-2010	Fred Walls
2010-2013	Jewel Barger
2013-2016	Darlene Slater Herod
2016-present	Lee Smith