Seven Young Harris College students engaged with five local United Methodist churches last year through the Jones Ministry Scholars program. The interns were mentored by professional ministers and participated in weekly on-campus conversations with peers about their experiences.

Named in honor of the L. Bevel Jones family, longtime ministers and YHC supporters, the internships were provided through a grant for young adult ministry and vocational exploration by the Smoky Mountain District of the Western North Carolina Annual Conference.

“Spiritual exploration on a college campus is vital to a liberal arts education because it helps form a robust and whole self,” said Dean of the Chapel and Minister to the College Rev. Dr. Tim Moore. “This program is just one effort by YHC’s religious life community to take the role of spiritual exploration to that next stage, directly linking who we are and whose we are with what we do.”

Seniors Trent Jones, of Lakeland, Fla., and Laura Grace Tarpley, of Little Rock, Ark., served in the youth and college ministry at Sharp Memorial United Methodist Church in Young Harris.

“My experience taught me patience and flexibility,” said Tarpley, who led activities like hiking excursions and movie nights. “I believe the kids I worked with had their minds stretched in their understanding of God and His word.”

Juniors Sarah Beth Tankersley, of Gainesville, Ga., and Alexandra McCollough, of Augusta, both interned at First United Methodist Church in Hayesville, N.C. Tankersley worked in children and youth ministry, while McCollough served as a music and worship intern.

“Sarah Beth is a real role model for our children,” said YHC alumna Myra O’Connor, ’81, who serves as director of student ministries for the church. “She has shown them that even as you grow older, your faith never fades—nor does the impact you have on others.”

“I felt like the church community became my family,” said McCollough, who also joined the chancel and handbell choirs. “I learned way more from them than they learned from me. Watching God work in the church was incredible, and it was really great to see things happen and be a part of the changes.”

Juniors Andrea Simmonds, of Suches, Lou Roland, of Woodstock, and Hunter Good, of Sharpsburg, all had the opportunity to impact young minds through their internships.

Continued on page 3
As I reflect on the 2012-2013 academic year, I am amazed at the speed at which it went by and the volume of activities and experiences it held. To begin each academic year, new students gather at the top of Brasstown Bald for an inaugural hike to campus. This tradition is meant to provide balancing symbolism to the graduation hike each May.

Following a short devotional service on top of the mountain, incoming students hike down the Old Wagon Trail, signaling the beginning of a year filled with many new religious life opportunities for our campus—new experiences coupled with our enduring traditions that help define the unique witness that is the YHC spirit.

Last year, we continued to redefine the work and breadth of the YHC student ministry groups, expanding to more than a dozen active student faith-based groups. We helped coordinate a volunteer day on campus in which more than 120 students, faculty and staff worked together on a single project to help eradicate hunger. We inaugurated special on-campus programming like Project Growth, a spiritual and religious literacy campaign intended to engage the campus broadly and deeply in conversations about faith and life. We worked with the Student Government Association to start an annual Martin Luther King, Jr. lecture, bringing a speaker to campus to address the intersection of faith, politics and civil rights. We organized two transformative spring break trips and sent students to religious life conferences in St. Louis, Chicago and Washington, D.C. We launched an internship program in local congregations for students interested in exploring calls to ministry. We did all of these things—and many others—while continuing our already established traditional and enriching programs.

None of this could have been accomplished without great students. The leadership they provide is robust, offering a seemingly inexhaustible supply of dedicated energy that is matched only by faithful sincerity to press themselves and the College they love deeper into a genuine exploration of who and whose they are.

Hundreds of first-year students recently kicked off the 2013-2014 academic year by taking part in a volunteer day at the Hinton Rural Life Center in Hayesville, N.C., as part of YHC’s S.E.R.V.E. (Service, Empowerment, Responsibility, Voice and Engagement) program. It looks like another amazing year in religious life is underway—and I can’t wait to see what else our students will accomplish.

Rev. Dr. Tim Moore
Dean of the Chapel and Minister to the College
YHC STUDENTS EXPLORE DIVERSE RELIGIONS
Through “Coming Together 6”

Four Young Harris College students attended “Coming Together 6,” a national interfaith student leadership conference held in Chicago, Feb. 14-17. Students attended workshops and worship services, enjoyed new cultural experiences, and reflected on individual faith within an increasingly complex society. Seniors Alyssa Lowery, of Conyers, Ashley Cross, of Murphy, N.C., Katie Earle, of Blairsville, and Laura Grace Tarpley, of Little Rock, Ark., (pictured left to right above) experienced religious traditions of other world cultures such as a Jewish Shabbat dinner and Jumu’ah, a congregational Muslim prayer.

“I am grateful for the opportunity to attend such a diverse and informative conference that allowed us to explore the potential difficulties and possible triumphs of interfait work with so many like-minded college students,” said Lowery.

“I’ve had very little opportunity to leave home and experience different cultures and religions,” added Cross. “By learning about various religious practices, I was able to relate and share my own story in return.”

YOUNG HARRIS COLLEGE STUDENTS
Develop Through Project Growth

Young Harris College’s Office of Religious Life and Inter-Religious Council (IRC) kicked off 2013 with “Project Growth,” a new campus-wide initiative that promotes faith-related dialogue by informing students about various aspects of different religions.

The IRC utilized “table tents” in Grace Rollins Dining Hall on campus to inspire conversation by providing interesting data about other religions and examples of variations in Christian doctrine.

“Project Growth was important to me because I am a strong supporter of religious diversity,” said IRC Public Relations Director Taylor Davis, a junior from Kennesaw. “If religions merely coexist with one another, dialogue and a chance to learn from one another are cut short.”

“This collaborative project not only made students more aware of the IRC, but also enlightened students about the diversity of religious life in the world,” added Austin Thomas, ’13, of Kennesaw. “The theme of growth was reflected in our student body’s desire to seek and learn.”

MEET THE 2013-2014
INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL
OFFICERS:

“Young Harris College has a variety of options for students interested in different religions. Our Inter-Religious Council aims to bring these groups together so that students with different beliefs can unite to learn about each other and from each other. The council also provides assistance to each group so that all students can know that their beliefs and interests are valued. When we are united, we can work together and make YHC an even more wonderful place to live and study.”

LAURA GRACE TARPLEY, IRC President

Vice President Sarah
Beth Tankersley, a junior psychology major from Gainesville, Ga.,
Public Relations
Director Taylor Davis,
a junior religious studies major from Kennesaw,
Sophomore Class Representative Jesselyn Armstrong, a sophomore business and public policy major from Hoschton, President Laura Grace
Tarpley, a senior communication studies major from Little Rock, Ark.,
Secretary Hana Kudela, a junior biology major from Moultrie, Junior Class
Representative April Hobbs, a junior communication studies major from Thomson, and Sergeant-at-Arms Jared Lee, a sophomore history major from Lula (Not pictured: Senior Class Representative Alyssa Lowery, a senior religious studies major from Conyers, and Treasurer Emily Hornsby, a senior English major from Nashville, Tenn.)

Students Make A Difference
in Local Churches
Continued from page 1

“I loved leading devotions and talking with the kids,” said Simmonds, who worked at First United Methodist Church in Murphy, N.C. “Working there on Sundays was definitely the highlight of each week.”

Roland coordinated activities at First United Methodist Church in Franklin, N.C., for students participating in World Vision’s 30 Hour Famine that sheds light on the global hunger crisis.

During his time at Andrews United Methodist Church in Andrews, N.C., Good helped develop a new Sunday morning children’s program and Bible study. “I am proud to say that I had the opportunity to impact children and share the love of Christ with them,” he said.

Under the direction of Dr. Moore and their ministerial mentors, the Jones Ministry Scholars advanced their faith while positively affecting the congregations surrounding the College.

“These students see how their lives of faith connect in practical ways to the world,” said Dr. Moore. “They also enrich the YHC community’s faith expressions by bringing those learning experiences back to campus, strengthening the link between the church and College.”
This March, Young Harris College students, faculty and staff took part in an Amish immersion ministry experience in Lancaster, Penn., and completed service projects with Interfaith Appalachia in Harlan County, Ky. The two alternative spring break trips were facilitated by S.E.R.V.E. (Service, Education, Responsibility, Voice and Engagement).

Eight students spent a week in America’s oldest Amish settlement to learn about the life and ministry of the local community. The group participated in service projects, engaged in cultural experiences and participated in faith-based discussions facilitated by the Center for Leadership Development at Lancaster Theological Seminary.

“Tired of the Amish in a week than I had previously accumulated in a lifetime, which shows the invaluable importance of direct cultural engagement and travel that is vital to an educated life of discipleship and faith,” said Dean of the Chapel and Minister to the College Rev. Dr. Tim Moore. “I hope students learned to break down preconceptions and realized that doing so is essential for a faithful life in a complex, evolving world.”

The students attended worship services, toured the seminary and spent time with community members in an effort to discover how Amish perspectives on faith influence their expression and ministry. Students also engaged in cross-cultural conversations regarding the Amish way of life as well as relationships between different faith communities.

“I will always remember playing one of their popular card games called Dutch Blitz and singing everywhere we went with the wonderful people we met,” said junior Kristen Dippold, of Thebes, Ill. “I learned so much about the Amish throughout the week. I was able to look past stereotypes and realize they are just regular people who have chosen to live a different lifestyle.”

A small group from YHC traveled to Kentucky to work with Interfaith Appalachia, an organization that offers lively service learning programs for college students that focus on communities in the Appalachian region. The group attended local church services, repaired homes, prepared meals for local families and took part in interfaith activities organized by Heritage Ministries.

“My favorite part of the week was making and delivering food with a retired couple who decided to use their free time to start a food pantry. I got to spend a day with this inspirational couple hearing about the county and meeting people from the area,” said senior Laura Grace Tarpley, of Little Rock, Ark. “I found that I could learn a lot from the people I met. It was definitely a humbling experience and a reminder to focus on my commonalities with others.”

YHC Students “Imagine What’s NEXT”

Young Harris College students and faculty traveled to St. Louis, Mo., Nov. 9-11, to participate in “Imagine What’s NEXT,” a new biennial collegiate conference sponsored by the General Board of Higher Education & Ministry (GBHEM).

“This event provided an exciting opportunity for students to experience a leadership development and spiritual formation event unlike any previously offered by the church,” said Rev. Bridgette Young Ross, GBHEM assistant general secretary for campus ministry and college chaplaincy.

“Imagine What’s NEXT” draws on the resources of leadership development, community organizing, innovation and social entrepreneurship as well as dynamic preaching, worship and service. Attendees are challenged and inspired to faithfully consider and plan the next steps for their vocations, communities and church.

“The event reached a wide variety of students, and the speakers addressed topics ranging from building churches to assisting victims of sex trafficking,” said senior Laura Grace Tarpley, of Little Rock, Ark. “We were also presented with original approaches to ideas for interfaith exploration.”

Elizabeth Land, a senior from Thomson, added, “The conference provided a great way for us to meet fellow college students interested in furthering their passion for Christian ministry.”

YHC Volunteer Director of Student Ministries Lauren Neal and students Laura Grace Tarpley, Elizabeth Land, Corey Helton, Matt Wilmer, Don Bracewell and Trent Jones
Seventeen Young Harris College faculty, staff and students visited The Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change and The Carter Center in Atlanta on Jan. 19 to celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, which was nationally observed on Jan. 21.

“This marked the second time I was a part of this trip, and I came back even more inspired this time around,” said Karen Rodriguez, ’13, of Springfield, Mo. “It was a very humbling experience to learn more about these two amazing men and all that they accomplished.”

In addition to the excursion, YHC also hosted an inspiring lecture by Senior Vice President of Global Community Connections and Chair of The Coca-Cola Foundation Lisa Borders titled “Faith, Politics and Civil Rights” on Jan. 22 in honor of MLK Day. She shared lessons learned from her grandfather, the Atlanta civil rights leader Rev. Dr. William Holmes Borders, as well as her personal journey through the integration of schools and breaking of other civil rights barriers in Atlanta.

This new annual lecture is part of an initiative by YHC’s Inter-Religious Council and Student Government Association to raise the level of conversation on campus regarding topics essential to becoming informed and engaged members of the global community.

Young Harris College contributed 83 shoe boxes filled with Christmas presents and a check for $245 to Operation Christmas Child, an international outreach project facilitated by Samaritan’s Purse, a nondenominational, evangelical Christian organization that aims to provide worldwide spiritual and physical aid.

Each year, faculty, staff and students are encouraged to make individual contributions or participate in group service projects within organizations or teams. The shoe boxes were presented during a special service in Susan B. Harris Chapel on the YHC campus.

According to YHC Baseball Head Coach Rick Robinson, participating in Operation Christmas Child is an annual tradition for the YHC baseball team. This year, 38 of the team’s players prepared shoe boxes and utilized an EZ Give barcode on the label that allowed the team to receive e-mails revealing the destination of some of their gifts.

“It is with great pleasure that the baseball team prepares boxes for Operation Christmas Child each year,” said Robinson. “We just wish we could actually be there when the child opens their box with all the goodies from YHC.”

“I really enjoy putting together the shoe boxes because it allows us to step back and see the importance in the things we fill the boxes with that will benefit children in need,” added Taylor Topping, a senior from Virginia Beach, Va. “It also brings us together as a team, and it’s a perfect time for us to give back to the global community during the holidays.”

Members of the YHC Dorcas Society and Inter-Religious Council organized the Operation Christmas Child initiative.

YHC PARTICIPATES IN Operation Christmas Child

YHC CELEBRATES MLK Day

YHC HOSTS THIRD ANNUAL Interfaith Thanksgiving Celebration

Young Harris College’s Office of Religious Life and Inter-Religious Council cohosted the third annual Interfaith and Multicultural Thanksgiving Celebration last November. The event represented different faith traditions, nationalities and cultures, allowing attendees to learn about many different ways of giving thanks.

“Each year, I look forward to this time where people of different faiths and ages gather as members of one community to share varied rituals and expressions of gratitude for all the many gifts we have received during the course of the year,” said Rabbi Zvi Altmann, founder and director of the Teshuvah Institute in Hayesville, N.C.

The gathering is intended to celebrate diversity around a common civic holiday, building understanding and fostering a better sense of community. Rabbi Altmann explained, “Living in gratitude is central to all religions and faiths, and the opportunity to do so consciously in a community is especially precious.”

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Members of the YHC Dorcas Society and Inter-Religious Council organized the Operation Christmas Child initiative.
Young Harris College hosted a food-packing event last November in which more than 100 faculty, staff and student volunteers packed 14,000 meals in one hour and raised $3,500 to assist Stop Hunger Now, an international hunger-relief agency that coordinates the distribution of food and other lifesaving aid around the world.

According to Dean of the Chapel and Minister to the College Rev. Dr. Tim Moore, the challenge for the event was brought to all Methodist-affiliated colleges and universities in Georgia as a friendly statewide competition to highlight this international effort to eradicate hunger.

“Each year, nearly one billion of our brothers and sisters go hungry, yet there is plenty to go around. In a world of plenty, no one should go hungry,” Dr. Moore said. “As it turns out, hunger is rarely an agricultural or production problem. Most often, it is a distribution problem, and we can do something about that.”

Stop Hunger Now has been fulfilling its commitment to end hunger for more than 15 years, and the meal-packaging program was created in 2005. The program perfected the assembly process that combines rice, soy, dehydrated vegetables and a flavoring mix including 21 essential vitamins and minerals into small meal packets. Each meal costs only 25 cents, stores easily, has a shelf life of five years and transports quickly.

“YHC came together for one common goal—to help those who are hungry,” said Austin Thomas, ’13, of Kennesaw. “We are so privileged to be somewhere like YHC, and hopefully this event gave students the chance to appreciate what they have.”