

The Charlottesville Apartment Project has a new name!

Our vision for a safe, supportive place for adults with intellectual disabilities to call home is coming closer and closer to reality. As it does, the Vision Team is excited to announce its new name – **Rachel's Haven**. The name helps us remember Rev. Rachel Downs-Lewis, whose passion in ministry was for those too often excluded and forgotten. During her pastorate of Bents Green Methodist Church in Sheffield, England, Rachel was chaplain to a local charity, WORK, Ltd (Worthwhile Occupational and Recreational Krafts). WORK provides hands-on opportunities for adults with learning disabilities to develop life skills, confidence, and self-esteem. They teach woodworking, gardening, textiles, arts & crafts, dance, music, and drama; crafts produced by students are sold in the gift shop/garden center/café staffed by the students themselves. One of Rachel's greatest joys was hosting worship for WORK students, families, and Bents Green church members together. She loved this almost as much as chatting with students in the café over coffee and cake! Rachel died of breast cancer in 2016 while a member of Hinton Avenue UMC, where her husband, Robert, serves as pastor. The vision of releasing an under-utilized educational wing for development as a fully inclusive, accessible, apartment community exemplifies the creative approaches to ministry Rachel pursued throughout her life. In addition, we find in the book of Jeremiah the prophet's image of a people in exile: "Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more." Yet the Lord offers this word of promise for Rachel and her children:

Keep your voice from weeping,
and your eyes from tears;
for there is a reward for your work,
says the Lord:
...there is hope for your future,
says the Lord:
your children shall come back to their own country.

- Jeremiah 31:16-17

It is our prayer that Rachel's Haven will dry many parent's tears as they consider what the future holds for adult children with intellectual disabilities. For them and for those beloved individuals, there will be a future and a hope. Thanks be to God!