



## Winchester District E - News May 2020

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### A Word From DS Summers



Dear Winchester District Family,

Not too many weeks ago, I was often praying and thinking about how our United Methodist Church might radically change after General Conference 2020. General Conference would have ended today (5-15-20), but the COVID-19 pandemic changed those plans. Indeed, many assert it has already changed *everything*, including Christ's Church.

*But has it really changed **everything**?*

Without a doubt there is a great deal of loss, pain, struggle, and disorientation taking place globally caused by this viral pandemic, one that some pundits are calling the largest global loss of the last century or in modern times. It certainly has impacted everyone's life in an abundance of ways that are both common and unique to each of us.

Truly, we are all in an unprecedented season of change, not of choice, but with us nonetheless. This radical, unexpected change is having a variety of consequences on every level of society and culture. Even the best practices we develop as a Church and people are shifting daily as we learn more and more about the virus and how to live with it in our midst.

One constant I am finding is the many ways in which one essential question is being asked, *What do we do to get through this thing to the 'other side'?* For me, however, the two more vital questions adaptive leaders and all the people of God need to ask within a season of profound disturbance is: ***What hasn't changed, and what will not change?***

The answers to these questions will help us find our grounding *and* develop the appropriate frameworks to move ahead with courage and resiliency. As we do this, we will thrive in this liminal season of uncertainties, for God is with us.

**Here are just a few things I know beyond a showdown of a doubt that have not and will not change:**

**"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."** (Hebrews 13:8; all

Scriptural references NRSV)

**“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** (Romans 8:38-39)

**“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you.”** (Jeremiah 29:11-12)

[Jesus said] **“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.”** (Matthew 16:18)

**“For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.”**  
(2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

Psalm 91: see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Svwe8nbnupg>

[Jesus said] **“And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”** (Matthew 28:20b)

These Scriptures, and others, remind me of what hasn't changed and what will not change, *no matter what. In and through them I find greater orientation, grounding, hope, and strength for the day* as I live and serve Christ. My prayer is that you will experience this with me in God's grace and through God's Holy and precious Word.

There is one other thing I'd like to mention that will remain steadfast: *I greatly appreciate and care for each of you as the laity and clergy of the Winchester District.* You are a very special people, and we are mightily blessed to be together at this time. Thanks for all that you are doing for the cause of Christ. Through your work, I sense in my heart, is a revival in the making by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Easter Hope, *DS Steve*

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The Winchester District Office has Re-Opened. Everyone may not be there all the time but you will be able to contact us or leave messages as needed. We will be taking some health and safety precautions with our re-opening. A protocol will be provided when completed.



The United Methodist  
Church  
&  
The COVID-19  
Coronavirus

All staff can be contacted through e-mail if needed.

Information for contact:

District Office Phone Number: (540) 662-7332

Steve Summers, District Superintendent: [WinchesterDS@vaumc.org](mailto:WinchesterDS@vaumc.org) or  
(804) 822-2824

Melanie Melester, District Administrator: [melaniemelester@vaumc.org](mailto:melaniemelester@vaumc.org)

Chad Hrbek, District Director of Congregational  
Excellence: [chadhrbek@vaumc.org](mailto:chadhrbek@vaumc.org)

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**Dates to be Aware of:**

June 20: Pastor Evaluations and Parsonage  
Reviews Due to the District Office

June 30: VA Conference Clergy Moving Day



July 1: 2019 Audits Due to the District Office  
July 26: District Stewards Meeting (Setting the District Budget for 2021)  
August 16: Annual Conference Orientation  
September 18 - 19: VA Annual Conference  
October 25: District Conference

## Information related to COVID - 19 from the Annual Conference



### In the Virginia Annual Conference

#### Introduction

When Bishop Sharma D. Lewis announced the cessation of in-person worship in the Virginia Conference due to COVID-19 in March of 2020, she did so only after significant prayer and thoughtful consultation with experts in the religious, legal, and scientific communities. Her closure of our churches was done with the singular goal of saving lives and keeping individuals and their communities healthy, as we did our part as United Methodists to help stop the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Likewise, when Bishop Lewis formed a workgroup in late April to develop plans and procedures for resuming in-person worship in our churches, she did so with the same goal of keeping individuals and their communities healthy and safe. Following Bishop Lewis' example, the workgroup also consulted professionals and resources from a variety of disciplines in order to develop the resources you will find on this web page.

It is the vision of the work group that what you find here will be dynamic documents that will be updated with information gleaned from churches around the Conference as we walk together and learn from one another in these difficult and uncertain times.

"I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

—Joshua 1:9

[Introduction Video from Bishop Lewis and Rev. Alex Joyner](#)

[Graphical Presentation](#) (pdf)

The Graphical Presentation is a helpful resource for all members of congregations. It provides information found in the Plan Summary in a handy, checklist format while also offering succinct summaries of the different stages of reopening.

[Plan Summary](#) (pdf)

The Plan Summary condenses the full Handbook for Local Churches. This document is a helpful resource for both congregational Healthy Church Teams as well as the broader

leadership of the church, as it offers a snapshot of the tasks before us, including necessary things churches can begin doing immediately.

[A Handbook for Local Churches](#) (pdf)

The Handbook for Local Churches is the master document. It provides detailed lists of steps congregations must take in order to gradually return to in-person worship in the Virginia Conference. The Handbook includes, in granular detail, what requirements are necessary while providing specific actions to meet these requirements.

[Health Acknowledgement Form](#) (pdf)

The Health Acknowledgement Form is the document referenced in the Handbook for Local Churches.

### Conference Treasurer's Office unveils new Donation Site

The Virginia Conference Treasurer's Office is pleased to announce the launch of a donation website. The Virginia Conference recognizes this is a period of hardship for many and in an effort to assist and facilitate giving for those churches that may not be able to do so on their own, this website has been created for online giving as well as offering the option to support the Pandemic Relief Fund. This is a collection of funds on behalf of the conference in an effort to support those organizations who are affected by or providing assistance in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. [More...](#)

### Council on Finance and Administration (CFA) prioritizes 2020 Apportionments

The Council on Finance and Administration (CFA) recognizes the impact that the pandemic is having on local churches in the Virginia Conference. After meeting over the last week, CFA is responding by prioritizing the apportionments for 2020 in an effort to relieve the impact our local churches are experiencing. By prioritizing apportionments, this will allow churches to pay the critical and essential amounts to support the Virginia Conference clergy and connection. [More...](#)



## General Conference Postponed

**2020 General Conference**, which was to be held in Minneapolis on May 5-15, 2020, HAS BEEN POSTPONED to 2021. When rescheduled this world-wide United Methodist Conference will consider legislation for changes in the United Methodist Church, budgets, and revisions to The Social Principles. The Executive Committee, has begun exploring new dates.

[General Conference Resources](#)

The **District Committee on Congregational Excellence** has created videos, with the help of the Conference Communications staff, with introductions from the different members. These videos can be found on the Winchester District website under Videos. We hope this will help congregations understand how we are able to assist in the different ministry areas throughout the Winchester District.



# District Mission News

## District Mission Update:

Hoping you are all well during this time of the Pandemic. Below is an update on District Mission Activities. We hope you put some of these dates on your calendar!

**District Rebuilding Trips** have been postponed by the NC UMC Disaster Office due to the Pandemic. We will have updates once things are back up and running.

**Spring District Mission Sharing Encounter** was put on hold due to the Pandemic. We are looking into setting up a virtual meeting in order to connect and share what we are doing at our churches with regard to outreach/mission. We hear there are many wonderful things being done around the district so please stay tuned so you can join us and share!

**District Wide Potato Drop** is still on the calendar for Saturday October 24th. We will be packing 40 thousand lbs of potato's for those in need and need 100 - 150 people to make it happen. All churches are encouraged to get this on your calendar to have a team be a part of the event. People can come for an hour, few hours or part of the day! We also need a few more people to be a part of the planning team. Please let Joann know if you are interested at 540-338-3007 or [jballard1902@gmail.com](mailto:jballard1902@gmail.com) - meetings will start the end of May.



## Mission Trailer

Taking a team on mission this year and needing the equipment to take with you? The District has a trailer packed and ready to go for you to take. You do need a vehicle and experience pulling a large trailer to take it, but we'd love to see the trailer go out more this year! To reserve the trailer, please contact [Joann Ballard](#), District Mission Chair.

[Click Here to Go to the District Mission Facebook Page](#)

## Events across the District and Conference

### Virginia Annual Conference 2020 - Postponed until September

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the June 2020 session of the Virginia Annual Conference has been postponed until September 18 -19, 2020. Information regarding the location of the September 2020 Annual Conference is forthcoming.



The Annual Conference session postponement will not impact the clergy appointment process. Moving Day has been set for June 30.

## All 2020 U.S. Jurisdictional Conferences scheduled for July postponed

The Southeastern Jurisdictional of The United Methodist Church announced on April 6 that the decision has been made to postpone all 2020 U.S. Jurisdictional Conferences scheduled for July. According to the Book of Discipline, all Jurisdictional Conferences occur simultaneously on a date set by the Council of Bishops. As soon as the dates for the rescheduled General Conference are released, the Council of Bishops will set a new date for the opening of the Jurisdictional Conferences. [More...](#)

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Mark your calendar now for this Winchester District United Methodist Men Event

September 10 – Bill Owen Memorial Golf Tournament at Shenandoah Valley Golf Club – 9:00 AM

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### An Update from Overlook Outdoor Retreat & Camp Ministries

We are still at the moment planning on beginning camp June 21st! With the most recent news of opening in phases we may have to limit the number of camper spots to adhere to guidelines so go ahead and get those campers registered!

Should things work out to where we cannot host summer camp as planned we will deal with the registration money in 3 ways, you could forward that despite towards another overlook program registration or rental, donate that amount to camp, or we will give a full refund.

Also, we are making plans on some measures we can take to provide the safest environment possible. Some measures will include temperature checks at registration for all campers, specific spacing in the bunk rooms to ensure maximum distance, possible altered meal schedules, and intentional daily cleaning measures beyond our normal sanitation practices.

As more information comes available we will let you know!  
Blessings!



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### Campus Ministers Need Your Help to Get Incoming Students Connected!!

Hey friends!

I pray you are doing as well as you can during these challenging and crazy times! My name is Bret Gresham and I am the campus minister at Wesley at Virginia Tech. I am writing to you on behalf of our Campus Ministries asking for your help in getting your youth who are going to college this fall connected NOW to one of our VAUMC Campus Ministries!

With the unknown effect of the pandemic on the fall semester and how it has affected this past semester, it is especially important for incoming students to get connected quickly to build community and belonging. Many of our campus ministries are offering opportunities (small groups, worship, etc) to engage in ministry over the summer due to the changing environment in higher education. Right now, more than ever, it is vital for students starting college to have a community that can support and love them. However, it will be more difficult, due to the changing landscape of higher education, for them to get connected after stepping on campus.

That is why WE NEED YOUR HELP! We understand that you normally send names and

information in later in the summer (and you will still be asked to do this in a more comprehensive way later), but we would really like to get connected to your youth sooner rather than later. So please send names, emails, and phone numbers of your youth to the respective campus ministries (see below).

ARISE Campus Ministry (United College Ministries of Northern VA & George Mason University)

- [Pastor@arisegmu.org](mailto:Pastor@arisegmu.org)
- Campus Christian Community of the University of Mary Washington [washingtonelizabethsnader@vaumc.org](mailto:washingtonelizabethsnader@vaumc.org)

Farmville Wesley (Longwood University and Hampden-Sydney College)

- [Farmvillewesley1@gmail.com](mailto:Farmvillewesley1@gmail.com)

FLOW (Virginia State University)

- [jasmyn90@gmail.com](mailto:jasmyn90@gmail.com)

Ignite (Old Dominion University)

- [randytimmerman@vaumc.org](mailto:randytimmerman@vaumc.org)

The Pace Center for Campus and Community Ministries (VCU)

- [director@thepacecenter.com](mailto:director@thepacecenter.com)

Wesley Foundation at UVA

- [deborah@wesleyatuva.org](mailto:deborah@wesleyatuva.org)

Wesley at Virginia Tech

- [wesfound@vt.edu](mailto:wesfound@vt.edu)

Wesley at William & Mary

- [mwblalock@wm.edu](mailto:mwblalock@wm.edu)

Thanks so much for your help in this regard!

Blessings,

Your VAUMC Campus Ministers

## Glory Sightings on the Winchester District



Church members from the **Mt. Olive/Relief Charge** provided 33 Easter Baskets and the baskets were taken to Bright Futures who we have supported as our mission project. Also, one member has made close to 400 masks and we have delivered them to our church members and community! We have still find many blessings do come amidst the storm and our spirit of love and passion never stopped.

**White Hall UMC** (Frederick County) Stitchers got right to their sewing machines when the need for masks arose. Jayne, Matt, Virginia, Lisa, Jason, Pam, Linda, and Christen worked together, while at their individual homes, to make masks to distribute to those in need. Mask recipients included Kingdom Animal Hospital, Apple Valley Animal Hospital, Shenandoah Oncology, local Health Department, Labor and Delivery at Winchester Medical Center, Heart and Vascular Center at Winchester Medical Center, Envoy Nursing Home, local postal workers, and Singhas and Michael Corp. Friends and family including those from White Hall, Rest, and Hites Chapel UMC were also given masks. In addition, masks were mailed to relatives and friends in southern Virginia, West Virginia, New York (upstate and NYC), North Carolina, Arizona, and Florida. Also, surgery caps were made for friends in need in New York and Florida. A big thank you to Kevin Comstock for donating fabric from his late wife's fabric collection. The remainder of the fabric came from the individual sewers' inventories. To date 557 masks have been made and donated!

**Bruce town UMC** (Frederick County) has been active in serving and spreading the mission of the Good News of God's love and grace. We have delivered food to those in need/and shut-ins. We have Zoomed our Bible Study and a Prayer Connection-time to pray together. We have offered Livestream "Bruce town Cafe" which has featured our Kingdom Stringers group sharing hope through music as well as "special guest" all done following safe-distance guidelines. Folks have enjoyed seeing some of their church family members in these avenues. We also offered 2 Zooms (youthbunch squares) where the youth/children could see each other through Zoom and hear a story from Pastor Susan. Last Saturday, we had 4 teams of 2 (again following safe guidelines) place pinwheels into all the folks who are members or attending BUMC as a way to offer cheer! It was so well received, many comments of love and joy shared, especially from folks without internet who were feeling more isolated. The pinwheels had a message attached; "Your Bruce town Church Family is sending you 'whirls' of Love". Some of our children helped with this project, all felt blessed.

### **A Story about Applying for and use of the PPP Loan from Leesburg UMC**

In late February, our Leesburg UM Church Leadership Team appointed a task force to look at ways to increase giving and revenue. Their first meeting was right after the CARES Act passed. One of the participants in that meeting is also on the board of the GC Marshall center and he relayed that they were applying for a PPP loan/grant and suggested LUMC do the same. Our Finance Chair jumped on it right away with our new bank, Atlantic Union Bank, and just a few days we applied and were approved.

In our CLT discussion on whether to accept the loan/grant now that we were approved, several of us asked the question, "Just because we can, should we?"

In our conversation around "should we", several factors came into play.

1) We have 4 full-time staff, two clergy and two laity; 7 part-time staff. Several had significant concerns and fears about losing part or all of their salary. There was a significant sense of relief and boost in morale when they realized that our leadership cared enough to make taking care of staff priority 1.

2) We discovered that our Bishop and other Bishops were encouraging churches to apply and that non-profits were included in the legislation.

And, 3) we could not ignore the timing of all of this coming as it did in conjunction with our task force beginning to meet (sort of like the guy sitting on the roof of his flooded house trusting God to provide, while turning down one rescue opportunity after another until he drowned). Yes, we all realized that this came as one answer to our prayers.

Following our acceptance of the loan, I felt the Lord leading me to recommend that we do something more to help those hurting locally. We had already approved a designated fund for "Pandemic Relief". Since I have long believed in the transformational nature of tithing, I asked our leadership team to set aside an amount from our regular operations funds (not the PPP loan/grant funds) equal to 10% of our loan/grant, with the funds to be used for local pandemic relief. With very little deliberation, the entire CLT approved this. I pray that



this provides a lesson in stewardship to our leadership that I learned decades ago, we cannot outgive God; and, that the provision of God flows through open hands and hearts. I look forward to seeing the grace of God at work!



**From the  
Bishop**

## 2020 Bible Challenge

Bishop Lewis has been encouraging the clergy and laity of the Virginia Conference to read the Bible in a year since 2017. Each year has featured a different way of reading.

- 2017- read the Bible straight through
- 2018- read the Bible chronologically
- 2019- read the Bible in a blended style; a mixture of Old Testament readings and New Testament each day.

For 2020, Bishop Lewis is challenging the entire conference to read the Bible with a thematic reading plan.

The thematic plan is found on [www.intentionalbygrace.com](http://www.intentionalbygrace.com) and Bishop Lewis has

selected the following themes below for 2020. Links are provided below as well to access the Bible readings for each theme .

- May 6- May 26 (21-day plan): [Fruit of the Spirit: Peace](#)
- May 27- June 16 (21-day plan): [Fruit of the Spirit: Patience](#)
- June 17- July 7 (21-day plan): [Fruit of the Spirit: Kindness](#)
- July 8- July 28 (21-day plan): [Fruit of the Spirit: Goodness](#)
- July 29- August 18 (21-day plan): [Fruit of the Spirit: Faithfulness](#)
- August 19- September 8 (21-day plan): [Fruit of the Spirit: Gentleness](#)
- September 9- September 29: [Fruit of the Spirit: Self-Control](#)
- September 30- October 20: [Trust](#)
- October 21- November 10: [Mercy](#)
- November 11–December 1: [Bearing Fruit](#)
- December 2-December 23: [Cares of this world](#)
- December 24- January 13: [Rest](#)

There are 18 plans to cover this year. Each is 21 days long. Start at the beginning and work through the year (and a few days into January 2021)!

In this new year, challenge yourself to study the Bible and strengthen your faith in the process.

Tips on reading the Bible daily:

- Start reading the Bible today.
- Set aside a specific time and place each day. Set your schedule and then stick to it. Mornings are great; but feel free to use any time that works consistently with your schedule.
- Get a good study Bible to help to illuminate the meaning of the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek text.
- Choose a translation to use during your reading.
- Say a short prayer to God before you begin, asking the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom and understanding.
- Dive in and enjoy the richness of God's Word! Apply God's Word to your life. Bible study should be practical and applicable. These seven steps will help you begin a journey in becoming a "lifelong learner" of God's Word.

[Click here to link to Virginia Conference web page about the Bible Challenge.](#)

