

Mission and Ministry Workgroup Releases Statement on Summer 2021 Mission Trips
February 24, 2021

For the spring and summer of 2021, the Bishop and Cabinet are permitting and encouraging congregations to engage in mission work in their local communities. It is the hope of both the Mission and Ministry workgroup and the Cabinet that this local mission work in 2021 will enable churches strengthen relations with neighbors and organizations in their local area, and even foster new relationships in their local communities.

Mission work described here does not necessarily need to take place over the course of a week as many trips do, but can happen, for example, on successive weekends. Churches will need to be creative in their summer mission endeavors, just as they have exhibited such persistent and remarkable creativity throughout this pandemic as across the Conference, we have sought to “do no harm” and “love our neighbors as ourselves.”

Plans for these mission experiences must be submitted for approval to the District Superintendent at least a month prior to the start of the event and should include means for working within our “five layers of mitigation,” which are sanitation, distancing, face coverings, health screenings, and ventilation. Mission teams must also plan to abide by the Commonwealth’s current 25-person limit for non-worship gatherings.

Participants in these missions will sleep and eat at home, except for a brown bag lunch they may pack and bring to a worksite. Participants will also need to provide their own transportation to and from worksites or be transported by a member of their own household.

Both the Mission and Ministry workgroup and Cabinet expressed concern about the risks of mission trips where a team from the church travels together and eats, sleeps, and works in close proximity. There is also a concern regarding the potential risk of a mission team infecting persons in the community to which they were sent to serve by means of an asymptomatic carrier of COVID-19 who is participating in the trip. It is for reasons such as these that the Cabinet is restricting mission work for the spring and summer of 2021 to the kind of local missions described above.

Throughout the year, the congregations of the Virginia Conference are a blessing to their local communities, and this spring and summer will continue to offer opportunities to know Christ and make him known in ways both familiar and new as together we live our Conference vision to be “lifelong learners who influence others to serve.”