

## T1: United as One: Virginia Annual Conference 2021



When available, you can view the archived livestream of the 239<sup>th</sup> session at [www.vaumc.org/AC2021](http://www.vaumc.org/AC2021).

Other content from AC 2021 including pictures and other resources can be accessed on the same webpage.

The 239<sup>th</sup> session of the Virginia Annual Conference was a virtual, two-day event from Friday June 18 to Saturday, June 19.

The theme for the 2021 Virginia Annual Conference was “United as One.” The conference Scripture was John 17:20-23.

Bishop Sharma D. Lewis called the session to order at 9:30 a.m. on June 18, and welcomed clergy and lay members to the virtual session. She gave thanks to the many people who helped make the session possible.

Other aspects of a normal annual conference session were planned for different times with prerecorded services:

- Retirement Worship Service, Premiere Stream at 6:30 p.m. Thursday June 17
- Service of Ordering of Ministry, 7 p.m., Friday, June 18
- Laity Celebration Worship, Premiere Stream at 11:00 a.m. on Sunday, June 20
- Service of Remembrance, Premiere Stream at 6:30 p.m. Sunday, June 20
- Service of Licensing of Local Pastors & Deaconess Commissioning, Premiere Stream at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, June 21

These prerecorded services will soon be moved from the Annual Conference 2021 virtual platform, EventMobi, and placed at [www.vaumc.org/AC2021](http://www.vaumc.org/AC2021).

Conference Lay Leader Martha Stokes addressed the conference on June 18. Stokes talked about a book by Sister Joan Chidester and the choices of the world we have to choose.

“We have a world that defies everything we have ever been taught and we all have a prophet within ourselves. We must find out what we really stand for and what we have done to prove it,” Stokes said.

Chidester said we either become prophets or remain simply church goers. “I believe this type of spiritual prophecy is what we are called to by virtue of our baptisms. We must find a new way to talk about our call to ministry. We must change our language around call. We are a team, laity and clergy together, both with 100 percent responsibility of outcomes.”

Stokes talked about new programs that will be coming. She said we must stand witness to the pandemic of COVID and racial injustice. She talked about the video episodes of “Diversity Kitchen” that are modeling how people can come together through food and conversations. She is part of the conference workgroup looking at racial justice. View her full remarks at:

<https://vaumc.org/remarks-from-martha-stokes-conference-lay-leader/>.

## **Conference Business**

Eight churches were voted on and discontinued: Arlington Forest UMC, Arlington District; Browns Chapel UMC, Farmville District; Early’s Chapel UMC, Lynchburg District; Fieldstone UMC, Roanoke District; Jollett UMC, Harrisonburg District; Mount Clifton UMC, Harrisonburg District; Mount Hebron UMC, Harrisonburg District; and Pamplin City UMC, Farmville District.

Browns Chapel UMC voted to amicably exit the denomination and, at the conference, they were also voted on and discontinued.

Four new faith communities launched this year: Thalia UMC Microchurch Network, Elizabeth River District; The Mission at Washington Street UMC, James River District; NOVA Missional Hub, Rappahannock River and Alexandria Districts; and Indian Church RVA, Richmond District.

The 2022 budget that was presented to the conference body included upcoming expenditures for recommendations related to the District Alignment Team (DAT) and Implementation District Alignment Team (iDAT). A motion was made to remove this spending from the 2022 budget. The motion was approved, and the 2022 budget was approved without these expenditures included.

### **Closing Worship Service**

A Closing Worship Service was held on June 19 to end the Annual Conference session. Bishop Lewis preached on the theme “United as One.”

She was asked why she chose, “United as One,” for the theme. The person pointed we are not united on human sexuality issues. “The question remains today,” she said, “What does unite us? Does God not give humanity the grace to feel passionate about certain life issues? Does God expect us to agree on all matters? I chose this theme because I believe God is calling us now more than ever to be one with Christ.” She said the annual conference logo captured the hands pointing to God.

“Why do we worry about this denomination?” Bishop Lewis asked. “Why do we put a limit on God? We’ve seen the word unity displayed this week, but unity has varying degrees of interpretation. Unity is a very important matter. In the last moment of Jesus’ earthly existence, he prayed for unity. He entrusted his own future to God. But the question remains, how do we maintain this unity in the midst of disunity in our culture and denomination.”

She said, “Before we can love God and each other, we must love ourselves. We must proclaim Christ as the Savior, as the Messiah in our own lives.”

“Let us not fall for the trick of the enemy who comes to kill and destroy,” Bishop Lewis said. “Let us not be so divided that we cannot see Christ in each other.”

“We are mandated to share the Good News in season and out of season, that Jesus Christ is the living son of God. God loved us so much he sacrificed his only son. Our priority is to win souls for Christ. Can Jesus be the heart of the matter?”

“What we can agree on is Jesus,” Bishop Lewis said. “Jesus died for us to be reconciled.”

Following the worship, approximately 30 sites around the Virginia Conference were places of mission as conference members dropped off canned food, hygiene and school kits, and

other area-specific items to benefit the specific community needs of the location drop-offs. View a wrap-up video of this mission event at: <https://youtu.be/QDU6PifWyHY>.

### **Service of Remembrance and Retirement Service**

The Rev. Lydia E. Rodriguez preached for the Service of Remembrance in which clergy and laity who died since the last Annual Conference were remembered. This prerecorded service premiered June 20. At this year's service, 25 retired clergy, two active clergy, eight spouses of clergy, 11 spouses of deceased clergy, and seven lay members were named. The Memorial Booklet for the service can be found at [www.vaumc.org/AC2021](http://www.vaumc.org/AC2021).

The Rev. June Carpenter preached for the Retirement Service. This prerecorded service premiered on June 21. Fifty-seven clergy retired at this year's service. Their combined hours of service was approximately 1,225 years.

### **A Service for the Ordering of Ministry**

Ten clergy were ordained during the June 18 Service for Ordering at 7 p.m. in a prerecorded video. These clergy were: Mi Sook Ahn; Genevieve Mitchell Bowles; Dawn McGahee Compton; Barbara Ann Cousar; Arum Kim; Minoo William Kim; Jonathan Jennings Lamb; David Ryan McWilliams; Yosub Namgung; and Sarah Elizabeth Payne.

One Associate Member, David Paul Edinger, was recognized. Two clergy, James Philemon Bowers and Yun Goo Kang, had their orders recognized.

Pictures from the event are on the [conference Flickr page](#).

### **A Service for Licensing and Commissioning**

A Service of Licensing of Local Pastors & Commissioning of Deaconess was shown as a prerecorded service on Monday, June 21.

Imelda De Los Santos was commissioned as a deaconess.

Thirty-two individuals were licensed as local pastors. These individuals are: Paulette D. Almond, Joseph Henry Amend III, Evelyn Morrissey Archer-Taminger, Lynn Marie Barbour, Timothy Matthew Blake, Daniel Chun, Tammy Cox, H. Ellis Crum, Elizabeth Lee Davis, Gary George Denette, Alyssa M. Densham, Nilse Furtado-Gilliam, Angeline Meadows Hoen, Betsy Taylor Hudson, Lacey Charles Hughes, Taeshin Kim, James Arnold Lewis, Michael Wayne

Lewis, Michael A. Liskiewicz, Mario Velez-Lopez, Joseph Stanley Maslanka, Dennis Carter Morgan, Bland Sadler Newman, Isaiah Jennifer Park, Elizabeth W. Petry, Michele M. Pettway, Kendra Sue Powell, Kwangmin Shin, Hosub Sung, Jeffrey Michael Thompson, Phillip Patrick Urban, and Charles Stewart Winner II.

### **A Service for Licensing and Commissioning**

The Commissioning was shown as a prerecorded service on Friday, June 18. Ten clergy were commissioned. These individuals are: Joshua Kendell Blakely, Chad Thomas Beck, Jonathan Steven Greer, Joshua Martin Hagstrom, Claire Burgess Miller, Robert Norman Riggles, Glenn Paul Riggs, Keith Lee Vernon, Bertina J.H. Westley, and Han Yi.

### **Awards**

The Green Church Award is presented by the Caretakers of God's Creation to a church that affirms the importance of healing and defending God's creation in their mission as a local congregation. The recipient for 2021 was Monumental UMC in Portsmouth, Va.

### **Glory Sightings video series**

The "Glory Sightings" video series, which started in 2017, continued this year with two videos. Due to time constraints, these videos were shared after the conference to highlight mission and ministry that represented the conference theme, "United as One," throughout the Virginia Conference. A video about the food pantry at the Gathering at Scott Memorial, Elizabeth River District; and March for Justice at Woodlawn-Faith, Alexandria District.

### **Wrap-up stats**

The Conference Statistician and Treasurer David Dommissie reported apportionment receipts were down but second mile giving was \$828,568. He said the conference is in a strong financial position. He addressed the increase to legal expenditures in the past year due to the pandemic and the Boy Scouts issues.

There were some 1,121 professions of faith and over 600 baptisms. Small groups still met virtually and awareness of needs in communities was higher than ever. Some 46,000 people reported to be serving in mission.

The “Fixing of Appointments” took place on June 19. You can find the full list of appointments at: <https://doc.vaumc.org/ac2021/2021appointments.pdf>. Of note, as of July 1, 2021, there will be eight district superintendents overseeing the 16 districts of the Virginia Conference.

The conference offering was taken online and through mail. The offering will be collected through August 2021. The total will be shared at a later date. Some 50 percent of this year’s Annual Conference offering was designated to Virginia area food pantries and 50 percent to Virginia Partnerships of Hope International Ministries—formerly called Initiatives of Hope. The Virginia Conference Partnerships of Hope ministries are Methodists in Brazil, Cambodia, and Mozambique.