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Equipping local churches for ministry and providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church

May 10, 2021

Dear Annual Conference member,

United As One is the theme of the 239th session of the Virginia Annual Conference. Our theme is based on John 17:20-23. In John's gospel, Jesus prays that we, God's children, will be one just as he and God are one. The blessings realized through our commitment to and work toward being one in Christ is transformative — as Jesus states, *"I'm in them and you are in me so that they will be made perfectly one. Then the world will know that you sent me and that you have loved them just as you loved me."* While virtual in nature as it was in 2020 due to safety concerns with the COVID-19 pandemic, our gathering as the body of Christ to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ and order the life of our Annual Conference will continue as it has for the previous 238 sessions in the power of the Holy Spirit. The proclamation of this call to unity as the gathered body of Christ will be shaped by our worship and teaching together:

Worship:

Thursday evening (June 17): Retirement Worship Premier Stream with Rev. June Carpenter preaching
Friday evening (June 18): Service of Ordering Premier Stream with Bishop David Graves preaching
Saturday morning (June 19): Service of Mission and Ministry with Bishop Sharma D. Lewis preaching
Sunday morning (June 20): Laity Celebration Worship Premier Stream
Sunday evening (June 20): Memorial Service Worship Premier Stream with Rev. Lydia Rodriguez preaching
Monday evening (June 21): Service of Licensing and Deaconess Commissioning Service with Bishop Sharma D. Lewis preaching

Teaching:

Rev. Dr. John Kinney will be leading teaching sessions on Friday and Saturday mornings

In preparation for annual conference please note that:

1. We will utilize an online platform that will allow Annual Conference members to securely participate at all times and vote on Friday using an Internet-connected device (cell phone, desktop, tablet).
2. All members, lay and clergy, will receive an email with a link to join the "Bar of the Conference." The Friday session, when voting will occur, will be from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
3. Our guests without vote will be able to view the proceedings as a live stream.
4. The digital version of the *Book of Reports* will be available on the conference website mid-May. For members who did not opt-out of a print version, paper copies will also be mailed in May.
5. Significant opportunities will be available to "Test your Tech" and learn how to electronically navigate participation and voting at the virtual Annual Conference. Notifications about these times will be made on ClergyNet, LaityNet, and posted on the conference website (<https://vaumc.org/ac2021/>).

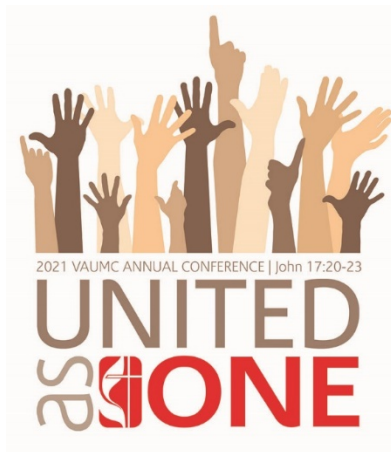
The VAUMC Office of
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The Annual Conference Planning Team is very excited to share that we will join **United in Mission and Ministry** as the Annual Conference when we worship together Saturday morning with Bishop Sharma D. Lewis' dynamic Spirit-led preaching, Fixing the Appointments, and sending us forth as Christ's Church. From 2:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. on Saturday afternoon, there will be opportunities conference-wide to be the Church in the world: **United in Learning, Influencing, and Serving**.

A special note of appreciation is extended to our Annual Conference Planning Committee and all of those involved in the exciting preparations being made for our 239th session of the Virginia Annual Conference. May we all pray in unison, in word and action, that we will be **United As One**.



In Christ's Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Steven J. Summers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steven" and last name "Summers" clearly legible.

The Rev. Dr. Steven J. Summers
Director of Connectional Ministries