



**Clergy Session**  
**243rd Session of the Virginia Annual Conference**  
**Wednesday, June 11, 2025**  
**The Performing Arts Center**  
**Roanoke, Virginia**

**To view the full minute questions that are referred to in the Clergy session, [click HERE](#)**

The Clergy Session was called to order at 2:32 PM by Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director of Clergy Excellence who welcomed the assembly and offered necessary announcements.

The American Sign Language Interpreters for this session were: Virginia Bryant and Katherine McMullan.

The Call to Worship was led by Rev. Lisa McGehee, Chair of the Order of Deacons, and Rev. David Edinger, Chair of the Associate Members.

Rev. Jae Song offered the Sermon titled, "Two Coins."

Following worship Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director of Clergy Excellence, shared announcements:

The Clergy Session will be completely paperless. All items to be voted upon will be on the screens; going paperless saved the Conference over \$4,000.

The Annual Conference is offering up to \$200 in assistance for clergy housing since the conference started a day earlier than usual. The Conference Treasurer will be contacting clergy following the conclusion of the Annual Conference.

Rev. David Edinger, Rev. Lisa McGehee, and Rev. Jae Song led the Reaffirmation of Ministry.

Following worship, announcements, and the Reaffirmation of our Ministry, Mr. John Fuller, Director, Virginia United Methodist Pensions, provided a presentation on the Compass Savings program followed by a short session of Questions and Answers.

Following the COMPASS presentation, Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop of the Virginia Annual Conference, addressed the body and with Rev. Tammy Estep, Chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry, led the Clergy Business Session.

Key points of the Bishop's address included:

- "Church as places of moral people doing nice things"
- We need to focus on personal holiness and social holiness.
- "Contemplation" = "With a template" - A contemplative life is to have a template that makes us like Christ.

The Bishop thanked the Board of Ordained Ministry for developing the Social Media Guidelines.

A review of the Core Values of the Board of Ordained Ministry was led by the Rev. Tammy Estep, Chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry.

The bar of the Clergy Session was set as the lower level of the Performing Arts Center.

Those who have a voice without a vote on the business of the Clergy Session are licensed local pastors serving under appointment, provisional members, associate members, clergy on loan from other annual conferences, and clergy of other denominations appointed in Virginia.

The following individuals were admitted with voice and no vote: all diaconal ministers, the administrative staff in the Bishop's Office, including the Bishop's Executive Assistant Terri Biggins, those on minute question 16, the Conference Chancellor Heather Hays Lockerman, and the American Sign Language Interpreters who were present.

Candidates for full membership were voted on individually - requires a three-quarter vote:

- Nilse Furtado-Gilliam - approved
- Claire Burgess-Miller - approved
- Julie Anne Diggs Nitzsche - approved
- Elizabeth Anne Nordan - approved
- Isaiah Jennifer Hyun Jung Park - approved
- Rachel Gordon Plemmons - approved
- Glenn Paul Riggs - approved
- Troy Steven Sims - approved
- Seokchane Suh - approved
- Eduardo Alberto Carrillo Tonche - approved
- Ryan Scott Ware - approved

- Bertina Jayne Hardison Westley - approved

Associate members voted on individually - requires three-quarter vote

- William R. Mac McKenney - approved
- Owen M. Taylor - approved

Continuing as active associate members – three-quarter vote - approved

Provisional members voted on as a group - three-quarter vote needed – approved

- Scott Bach-Hansen
- Taeshin Kim
- Young Min Kim
- Aaron Dale Miller
- Taehwan Roe
- John Francis Rowe, Jr.
- Matthew Devin Seaton
- Chrystal M. Woodard

MQ26 Those who are continued in the provisional status and process. This requires a three-quarter vote - approved

MQ17 - 17 addresses Licensed Local Pastors. All were approved as a group - requires three-quarter vote

- Louis Berkeszi
- Elizabeth Paige Dalton
- Atul Manohar Dhanawade
- Victor Jerome Drummond III
- Eric Scott Fury
- Sarah S. Gholson
- Robert Goodwin
- Sadie Cabaniss Hawthorne
- Rebecca Lynn Leathers
- Emilee S. Ogden
- Ruth Elizabeth Perry
- Joyce Marie Zwirnbaum Rodgers
- Brenda Lynne Studeman
- Margaret Joan Van Siclen
- Alexis Danielle Ward

MQ17A – Addresses the licensed local pastors who will be serving full-time. All were approved as a group - requires three-quarter vote.

- Sandra L. Butts
- Greg Evan Miller
- Kendra S. Powell
- Rebecca Trovalli-Cook

MQ17B – Addresses the licensed local pastors who will be serving part-time. This requires  $\frac{3}{4}$  vote – All were approved

MQ17F.1 & 2 – Address the licensed local pastors, we present those who have requested an extension of the prescribed time limit to complete the course of study in paragraph 319.3. A majority vote needed – All were approved

MQ 47b and MQ 49 – Address the clergy who are retiring. A majority needed – All were approved

MQ 13 - Rev. Tammy Estep, Chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry, affirmed that all clergy members are blameless in life and official administration -

Rev. Dr. Victor Gomez, Dean of the Cabinet, affirmed that the Appointive Cabinet do believe that the licensed, commissioned, and ordained clergy are earnestly striving after perfection and are blameless in their life and in their official administration.

MQ 14 – Reflects the leadership of the chairs of the Administrative Review Committee, Conference Relations Committee, and the Committee on Investigation. All these committees were voted on for the new quadrennium last year.

MQ 15a-c lists all certified candidates, including those who have transferred into the Virginia Conference from another Annual Conference and those who have had their candidacy accepted by a District Committee on Ordained Ministry in another conference. No vote is required.

MQ15d - Addresses those who have been discontinued as certified candidates. This requires a three-quarter vote. All were approved.

MQ 15e – Addresses those who have been reinstated as certified candidates. Bishop, this required three-quarter vote. All approved.

MQ 16 – Addresses those who have completed the studies for the license as a local pastor, are approved, but are not currently appointed. All were approved.

MQ 17g – Addresses retired licensed local pastors who are serving an appointment in retirement. No vote is required.

MQ 18 - Addresses those who are discontinued as licensed local pastors. No vote is required.

MQ 20a & b - Address those who are serving on loan from other annual conferences and those serving from other Methodist denominations. No Vote is required

MQ 22 Addresses clergy are who are in good standing in other Christian denominations who have been approved to serve appointments or ecumenical ministries within the bounds of the Virginia Conference while retaining their denominational affiliation. No vote is required.

MQ 23b - Addresses those who are affiliate members without vote. Requires a two-thirds vote. All were approved.

MQ 38 – Addresses those who have been transferred out to other annual conferences of The United Methodist Church (§416.5)? No vote is required.

MQ 38b – Addresses those who are voluntarily discontinued as provisional members. This requires a majority vote. All were approved.

MQ39b - Addresses those who are discontinued by the expiration of the eight-year time limit. No vote is required.

MQ40a – Addresses those who have had their conference membership terminated by withdrawal to unite with another denomination or faith community. No vote is required.

MQ 40b – Addresses those who have withdrawn from the ministerial office. No vote is required.

MQ42 – Addresses the deacons, elders, associate members and licensed local pastors active and retired who have died this year. We will celebrate the lives of these pastors at the Memorial Service on Friday, June 13<sup>th</sup>.

MQ43 – Addresses the provisional and ordained members (elders and deacons) who have received appointments in other Annual Conferences of The United Methodist Church while retaining their membership in this Annual Conference. No Vote is required.

MQ44a – Addresses those on voluntary personal leave or family leave. This requires a majority vote. All were approved.

MQ 44b – Addresses those on transitional leave. No vote is required

MQ46 - those who have been granted medical leave. This requires a majority vote. All were approved.

MQ 51a - Addresses those who are granted honorable location. This requires a majority vote. All were approved.

MQ56 – Addresses individuals granted the status of administrative location-retired. This requires a majority vote. All were approved.

MQ58-70 – Address the candidates in process for various types of certifications, and lay ministry, including certified lay ministry, lay supply, and deaconesses. No votes are required.

MQ67a & 71a – Addresses associate members and elders (full and provisional) who are approved for appointment to less than full- time service. This requires a two-thirds vote. All were approved

MQ71b – Addresses deacons in full connection and provisional deacons that are approved for appointment to less than full- time service. No vote is required.

MQ72 – Addresses those who have been appointed as interim pastors since the last session of the annual conference. No vote is required

MQ 73 – Addresses the elders, deacons (full connection and provisional), associate members, local and supply pastors who are appointed or assigned to ministry to the local church. No vote is required.

MQ74 – Addresses changes that have been made in appointments since the last annual conference session through the mid-year appointment list.

MQ75a-b Addresses Elders, Deacons, (full connection and provisional), associate members, local pastors who are appointed to extension ministries for the ensuing year . No Vote is required.

MQ75c – Addresses Elders, Deacons, (full connection and provisional), associate members, local pastors who are appointed to extension ministries to other valid ministries. A two-thirds vote is required. All were approved.

MQ76 – Addresses 76, those who are appointed to attend school. No vote is required.

MQ79 - Addresses where and when the next Conference Session will be held. The next Virginia Annual Conference will be held June 17-20, 2026, in Harrisonburg, Virginia. No vote is required.

Rev. Tammy Estep, Chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry offered closing remarks.

Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference offered closing remarks and a blessing.

Final announcements were made by Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director of Clergy Excellence.

Rev. Colwell adjourned the meeting at 5:01 PM



**Daily Proceedings**  
**243rd Session of the Virginia Annual Conference**  
**June 12, 2025**  
**Morning Session**  
**The Berglund Center - Roanoke, VA**

Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Presiding  
*"Movement of the Heart"*

The June 12 morning session of the 2025 Virginia Annual Conference began with worship led by Rev. Drew Willson, Rev. Josette Franklin, and Rev. Kyungsuk Cho.

The American Sign Language Interpreters for this session were: Virginia Bryant and Katherine McMullan.

**Worship:**

Speaker 1 ([00:06:03](#)):

Oh let everything, let everything in, Lord, Lord, Lord, glory, Lord, Lord, Lord. Praise him. Praise Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord.

Speaker 2 ([00:08:29](#)):

All right. The glory He is worthy. All the praise. I love to call him. I love to live.

Speaker 1 ([00:09:32](#)):

Glory

Speaker 3 ([00:12:46](#)):

Jerusalem 537 BC: The people of God come together, mourning the years lost to the Babylonian exile and ready to rebuild the house of God. Praise the Lord!

Speaker 4 ([00:13:00](#)):

Roanoke, Virginia, 2025 AD: The people of God come together after decades of strife ready to rebuild our relationships with God in one another. Praise the Lord!

Speaker 3 ([00:13:14](#)):

The foundation of the temple has been laid and the priests clothed in their vest and carrying their trumpets and the Levites with their symbols arise to praise the Lord. Praise the Lord with trumpet sound; praise the Lord with lute and harp!

Speaker 4 ([00:13:32](#)):

The foundation of our life together has been laid through the grace of Christ, the gathering of the body of Christ, and our call to praise the Lord. Praise the Lord with tambourine and dance; praise the Lord with strings and pipe!

Speaker 3 ([00:13:51](#)):

All of the people shouted with praise, gave thanks to the Lord. Singing God is good, God's graciousness for Israel lasts forever. Praise the Lord with clanging cymbals; praise the Lord with loud clashing cymbals!

Speaker 4 ([00:14:12](#)):

All the people gathered here in this place, shout with praise, giving thanks to the Lord. Let everything that breathes praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.

Speaker 1 ([00:14:33](#)):

Ready to sing? Here we go. Praise to the Lord nourish life that

Speaker 7 ([00:16:40](#)):

Hear the word of the Lord from Ezra Chapter three, verses eight through 13. In the second month of the second year after their arrival at God's house in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel, Shealtiel's son, and Jeshua, Jozadak's son, and the rest of their kin—the priests and the Levites and all who had come from the captivity to Jerusalem—made a beginning. They appointed Levites 20 years old and above to oversee the work on the Lord's house. Then Jeshua with his sons and his kin, Kadmiel and his sons, Binnui and his sons, the sons of Judah, along with the sons of Henadad, the Levites, and their sons and kin, collaborated to supervise the workers in God's house. When the builders laid the foundation of the Lord's temple, the priests clothed in their vests and carrying their trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, arose to praise the Lord according to the directions of Israel's King David. They praised and gave thanks to the Lord, singing responsively, "He is good, his graciousness for Israel lasts forever."

All of the people shouted with praise to the Lord because the foundation of the Lord's house had been laid. But many of the older priests and Levites and heads of families, who had seen the first house, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this house, although many others shouted loudly with joy. No one could distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, because the people rejoiced very loudly. The sound was heard at a great distance. This is the word of God for the people of God. Amen.



**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:19:04):**

Good morning, Virginia. Annual Conference. Good morning. You're about to get a sermon on Ezra. I bet you've heard a lot of sermons on Ezra. Huh? How many clergy have preached a sermon on Ezra? Oh, well good. He's getting some play. This is a fascinating story and I want to set the stage for you that remember the nation of Israel has been held captive in Babylon for 70 years. They have nothing. They have been enslaved, they have been persecuted. They have been under the thumb of empire for 70 years, and then a king took pity on them and allowed them to return to Israel. Indeed gave them resources to return to Israel and they come. It's interesting though that very few returned that Allah decided, you know what? We got everything established now in Babylon. We are staying. They know that because the Levites, the priestly class, the scholars say that only 10% of the Levites came to Jerusalem.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:20:23):**

So if that few of the priestly class came, we know that this was just a very small number who decided to move forward with the nation of Israel. They come back however impoverished, they have nothing, and they're charting a new course and they come having experienced the brokenness, the horror, the lostness of being an exile. Now, I don't know about you, but I've experienced some exile moments of the past few years. Have you COVID was one big exile, was it not? And then disaffiliation and all of us have the heartbreak stories of that, and I was ready to go. I thought now we can pave our new way. And January came is not a political speech. This is a gospel sermon and I can't tell you the amount of work the church has had to launch into. First of all, well, how many federal workers and federal contractors have lost their jobs?

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:21:43):**

I spent a lot of time in Northern Virginia this spring, and some of our churches have 25 to 40% of their members who are immediately jobless. That affects all of us friends. We have a time of great fear and trepidation for immigrants, whether documented or not. We have over a hundred Asian clergy under appointment and they are amazing pastors, but some of them face daily fear of not being able to continue in their parishes. We have two district superintendents, one from Liberia and one born in Mexico who are American citizens, but they drive with their passports on their dashboard or on their person. It's a hard time for the church. We also see, and as president of global ministries, I can attest to the problems we have with aid being cut off. I mean, 300,000 children have died for lack of USAID over the last few months.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:23:02):**

That causes heartbreak. I don't care how much excess and fraud you think there is, but as a Christian, we owe, owe aid to the world. Jesus commanded that directly. Right, feed the sick. You didn't say if they live next door to you, I mean feed the hungry, tend to the sick guard over the alien. Welcome the stranger. These are edicts from Jesus himself in global ministries. Getting visas is incredibly difficult and we have that affect our missionaries all the time, all the time. Now we have travel bans to many countries and we really face having my colleague bishops from the Congo who are tremendous leaders and need the support and love and the nurture we can give them personally, and we're facing travel bans. No, it's a hard time to be the church. It's a hard time to face the needs of the world and to balance the great wealth of the United States with the great need of the entire world. And I hope this isn't a political question, regardless of where you fall, I hope you are in prayer and see the great need for compassion, for calmness, for measured ideas. So we come from exile. We come at a time when the church needs to

rebuild. We come with all of things on our hearts, but we come excited and joyous because we are rebuilding the church and we are going into a new era.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:25:05):**

What I love about the Bible is it's so real, and I love how the nod is made in this text that there were folks who sobbed the folks who knew the first temple because it wasn't as grand and it wasn't as powerful, and they weren't the power that they were. The days were dwindling and the resources were fewer, and they lamented and they cried. I can't wait for Scott Erickson to speak to us. I read his honest advent, which is an excellent advent devotional. I highly recommend it, but part of it that really captured me was he said, one of the real problems that we have to face in the life of the church and in our own lives is the problem of nostalgia. Amen. He said, the problem with nostalgia and nostalgia gives you a framework in the midst of uncertainty. Amen. That there is a certain, but he said nostalgia taken too far becomes certainty and shields us from wonder.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:26:17):**

I'm going to read one sentence. I love this sentence. This is what he said. Wonder is more accessible in new situations because we don't have a narrative of what's happening. Isn't that good? Wonder is more accessible in new situations because we don't have a narrative of what's happening. Now. What would it be like if you went to Christmas morning and you spent the whole time thinking about the people who you knew in your childhood who have died and didn't pay attention to the children, right? Nostalgia cuts off wonder and it cuts off our new experience. I don't know about you, but every church I've served has had a big dose of nostalgia, right? I remember one and they were like, oh, pastor, we remember when we had to set up chairs every Easter morning. Y'all heard that that resonate. And then I started thinking about, I thought, well, they're talking about a day when this was the only United Methodist church within a hundred miles, and there were only two other churches. There was an Episcopal church and a Baptist church, and by the time we had gotten to the time I served the church, there were hundreds of churches on every corner. So I'm like, yeah, it's putting out chairs every Sunday. The other one, they were like, oh, as our 11:00 PM Christmas Eve service dwindled. Oh, this used to be the big service. This used to be we have to pull out chairs. I'm like, that's the recurrent thing.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:28:02):**

And then I researched it, and I realized, oh, that was the only Christmas Eve service. And by the time we got there, we had about four and it was televised. It was a big deal for them all to be on TV nostalgia. But boy, they missed the wonder of the new and the church and the youngsters and the joy because they were always fixated on the past. Now I'm going to show you a picture. Put up this picture. This is the picture. This is the picture of the cabinet the year I was born. All the women have gloves on every woman on the cabinet and their spouse is going to wear gloves next time.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:28:51):**

But in one picture, you see how things have changed. And I know some of you were thinking, boy, those were the good old days. If we could just get back to that. If women would just put on those gloves, we'd just get our gloves and aprons and go back to the kitchen and have lots of kids, it'd be great. I feel like I'm a hinge generation. This was 60 years ago, and last week I ordained my niece as a deacon who I baptized as an infant, exactly 30 years ago. But this is the danger, and I think we can own a lot of us more than the day. I remember in one church, I found these pictures from the fifties and the church was

packed out. I mean, those were the days where you opened the church door at 11 o'clock and just waved at people as they came in.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:29:57):**

And it was a picture of the church was packed out. The women in their hats and gloves, everybody looked so happy and joyous. They were all white, they were all older. And I know some of us, and if I have to be true to myself, I long for those days when the church was full, when you had a huge cabinet, when you had vibrant, when you had money to burn. Although that probably isn't good stewardship, but the church now lament that and say goodbye to that and free ourselves to experience the wonder that is to come because we have a tremendous opportunity. We have young people, hungering, hungering for community, for loving community. Where in this world are you going to find loving community? Where in this world are you going to find leadership that is loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, gentle, kind, faithful, generous, and self-controlled?

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:31:14):**

The world is hungry for leadership, that is compassionate for a group of people that is compassionate. Whereas I love this phrase, and I use it all the time where we love people into wholeness and the church is poised to do that. The spirit of Christ is always healing and reforming, and we learn from this new nation of Israel that this new dedication of the temple, that new eras always start. But the important part is, and I love that they hang their head on this, for the Lord is good and his steadfast love remains forever. Do you still believe God is good? Do you still believe that God is leading us into a new future? Do you still believe that the Holy Spirit is going in front of the church and saying, join me here the church of the future? I think we'll be a glorious panoply of all races and all ethnicities, all worshiping together, all ages because that's the vision that we have of the reign of God, the kingdom of heaven.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:32:28):**

This is what God desires and God will keep messing with it until we get it right and he'll keep leading saying, come on, for my body in a way that reflects my values and my joy and my love. I have three archetypal stories to tell every time I talk in Virginia like You need to tell more Virginia stories and every time I'm in north Georgia, you need to tell stories in Florida last week, you need to tell more. These are archetypal stories. These are three stories that have happened in my 30 years of ministry that I go back to time and time again that I feel like God teaches. You probably heard me tell one or two of 'em before, but I think they're important and worth telling again, first archetypal story. We served a church that started a big homeless ministry and we had, I'll call him Kenny, a guy Kenny came and he was really messed up.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:33:36):**

You name it, he was addicted to it. I rode with him one time and he showed me everywhere in our city where he had slept outdoors. And Kenny said he just kept coming back week after week. And the churches, one of the churches custodial staff saw him and befriended him and started talking to him and eventually gave him a job on our church staff. And he went into recovery and changed his life. I love Kenny. He and I share the same birth date, and he was constantly at the church. He was a hard worker. He ended up being an entrepreneur and starting his own business and he's going great guns today, and that I think is the church at its finest. But anyhow, how many of you collect a lot of junk in your churches?

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:34:33):**

It drives me crazy. And we were renovating the fellowship hall, our modern worship center at that church and Kenny, the trustee chair, and we didn't want too many people there because there's always one who says, we might need that. We've got to keep that. Don't throw that away. We used that once in 1972 and we might need it again. But anyhow, the trustee chair and I and Kenny, we had a huge pile of stuff to throw away and a huge pile of stuff to give away. And we found, I think they were candlesticks, they were the nastiest thing, encrusted. I couldn't even tell what they were made of. They were so nasty. And Betsy, the trustee chair, said, we used to have somebody who would do that, but now I don't think we could afford to restore whatever those are. And she said, just put 'em in the giveaway pile.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:35:33):**

I said, okay. So we put 'em in the giveaway pile. About three months later, I came into that worship center after it had been renovated and there were two of the most beautiful brass candlesticks you've ever seen in your life. I thought, I don't remember ordering those. I don't know where they, and Kenny came up. He said, do you recognize those? I said, what are you talking about? He said, those are those candlesticks that you wanted to give away that I asked if I could take. He said, it took me 80 hours to buff those 80 hours to clean those up. And then he said, I just sat every night and worked on those and worked on those and worked on those. And he said, you know what, pastor? As I did it, I realized that that's what God had done for me.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:36:34):**

That God doesn't give up, that God doesn't throw us away, that God doesn't discard us no matter how long it takes. And so as we look at the future of the church, I think that we stand with people who everybody else gives up on. And I am with who to support, who to advocate for that. Jesus is standing next to the least, the marginalized and the lost. And Jesus is one who has no voice. Jesus is with the one with no voice. Jesus is with the rich and powerful. They crucified him, right? Not a good gang. So I will stand with trans people. I will stand with L-G-B-T-Q people, I will stand with undocumented folks. I will stand with anybody who has no voice and is being used as a political pawn that is not of Christ.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:38:30):**

And I think the most conservative person in this room can join enjoin, inciting with the voiceless and have compassion. There are a lot of people whose lifestyles I disagree with, who I deal with all the time. It's called being a pastor. All you got your stuff, all of you got your stuff. But I think of Kenny and I think of God never giving up on any human being, and God's heart breaks for anybody who doesn't have a place to lay their head for anybody who doesn't have a country to call their own. And so in the name of Christ, let's cry out for fair immigration policies.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:39:31):**

Let's cry out for not demonizing and belittling and marginalizing people because we disagree with them. Second archetypal story, actually, I got to remember it second, okay? Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Second archetypal story, I get lost. I was on a fresh expressions trip through England, and many of you have heard me tell this story before, but I went to a church in Sheffield and went to a Church of England, rector there, and we were sitting and talking and I said, so tell me about your church. He said, man, I never in my life wanted to be sent to this church. Amen. Anybody ever felt that? He said, I never in my life wanted to be sent to this church. But I got there and he said, I want to do fresh expressions. I

wanted young people and I got a church of 80 year olds. And he said, but you know what? I know God can use 80 year olds.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:40:43):**

And so he said, "I told them let's pray and discern together where the Holy Spirit's leading us a good practice for any church. I wouldn't do anything until you've sat as a church and prayed where the Holy Spirit's leading." So he did that, and they all came to the consensus that God was calling them to rent a bus and drive it all over England and pick up lonely old people and have tea once a month. He said, I was mortified. We have a public housing place right next door, and I wanted to be out serving the poor. My dream was a coffee shop where all the poor could come and I could share Christ, and they want to pick up people in the rural areas. But he said, you know what? If the Holy Spirit speaks, we listen. So he said, we got a bus.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:41:41):**

And darn if we didn't go pick up every person we could find in the countryside and bring them for tea once a month, he said, with much chagrin, it was a fantastic success that people shared their lives, that they had lonely people were cared for that they coalesced, that it was a lovely community. And he said, you know what? A lot of those people had those church homes. So they started sending money to my church. Then he said, they sent so much money that we built this coffee shop that we're sitting in. We built this coffee shop. And he said, and they have joined me in ministry in this housing complex. Now, that's not the best part of the story. The best part of the story that I remember the most is he had a ton of tattoos. That's one reason why he wasn't sure.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:42:34):**

He said, I wasn't sure the Anglican Church would ordain me. I'm not your average bear. And he had more tattoos than Michael Beck. If you know Michael Beck. I told Michael Beck, he's got to up his game because this guy, I'm sitting with him, he's very prim and proper. He's got his Anglican collar on. And he goes, oh, my best one's on my chest. And I'm like, dude, you got to show it. So he stood up and he took his shirt off and he had the whole last supper beautifully done on his chest. And then he said something, and this is the archetypal part, especially for clergy. He said, I really didn't think they'd ordained me. And he said, what? After praying and reflecting, he said, I realized I was ready to be ordained because I reached the point where I realized that if I wasn't ordained, I'd spend the rest of my life gathering people at the table serving them bread and wine and telling them about Jesus.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:43:45):**

And I thought, that is the heart of our call. There's no need to climb a ladder. There's no need for hierarchy. There's no need for careerism in the church, and the church will be shifting and moving, and we might have to be employed by vocation. I mean, there's a lot of stuff coming. Don't let it scare you. God is in charge. If you really believe in providence, God will provide. But I think that resonated with me because at the end of the US, clergy and laity are called to invite people to the table, preferably new people, preferably people who don't look like us, preferably people who like Jesus said, don't ask anybody ask you back. Right? We serve bread and wine and we talk about Jesus because what we do is tell the story. If you read the Book of Acts, that's all they do. They just move out and they meet people and they talk about Jesus, and more people talk about Jesus and funny, I don't need one building.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:44:57):**

We got in trouble with this, I think. Well, I'll get to the third archetypal story because that part, one of my favorite pastors, her name is Sarah Campbell. She's very unassuming. She's probably mortified on mentioning her. And she was pastor at a church in a small town and a previous pastor, I think to suit his own ego, had built a church that would hold a quarter of the city. Now there's a fine line between optimism and foolhardy, and that was foolhardy. So Sarah called me and the church probably was 15 years old by this time, she's when, and she calls me, she said, we've had leakage. And I called a contractor out to the church and the contractor told me that the mortar in this building is disintegrating and it'll cost a million dollars to fix it. I thought, that's got to be an exaggeration. So I called one of my good contractor friends. I sent Steve out. I said, go look at this church and tell me what you think. And he called me and he said, it'll be about a million dollars.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:46:16):**

Two weeks later, Sarah called and she said, there are hornets in my wall in my office at the church. I said, get out of your office right now. Two weeks later, she called me again and my assistant we're pretty much ready to not take calls anymore from Sarah. And Sarah called and said, the third of our four air conditioning handlers just blew up, and it's like 95 degrees every Sunday. So the church called a church conference, and I met with Sarah and the lay leader of that church. She was a judge, and they said, you better prepare because they are loaded for bear and they want to know how the district and the annual conference is going to pay for their church to be fixed. So I got there and I said, you know what? Don't have a million dollars. And I've learned that in most settings, and I've been in a few that are very conflicted.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:47:25):**

No, I've been in hundreds of very conflicted situations, but what I do is I watch for the Holy Spirit to show up, and it always does. If it doesn't, I'm in trouble. But this woman stood up and she had been traveling. She wasn't even a regular attendee at that church, and she stood up and she said, by God, we, oh, and we're sitting in a little library room that's about 80 degrees having this meeting. And she stood up and she said, you know what? We are the church. This building is not the church. And she said, I move that We sell it.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:48:07):**

And the church unanimously voted to put it on the market. We didn't think it would sell. Good luck with that. The state bought that property for \$1.2 million to make a school for the blind. It gets better. The people of the church were displaced. The Baptist Church invited them to come worship there and use their sanctuary. They invited Sarah to come preach. The Episcopal church housed their food bank. There was a huge movement of ecumenism in that church. The churches became closer than they'd ever been before, and the people of that church bought a small piece of property and built a lovely little chapel. And now that church is going great guns. It has added members. It is flourishing in the community and that disciple, and at some point we're going to have to decide is our mission the mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ? Or is our mission to preserve our buildings at all costs?

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:49:24):**

Is there any way God can be worshiped without huge stained glass windows in a pipe organ? Is there any way that's possible? Now, I love them. That's part of my past. That's the nostalgia, right? And we'll always have churches in Virginia with stained glass windows and pipe organs, but that just doesn't have to be the norm. And nothing breaks my heart more than to watch people just agonize and get more and



more angry and upset as they can't afford their churches anymore. And God doesn't want that. You can have a new day. You just have to let go of some of the nostalgia and some of the background and some of the, this is how it's always been and move forward. And that's the whole point of this text, the nation of Israel, the remnant of them decided we are moving forward, leaving behind all that has passed.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:50:23):**

I think I'm Paul now leaving behind all that has passed. We're moving into a new era, an era where Christ is still in charge. Amen. An era where the Holy Spirit is still calling us an era where Christ is out there saying, Hey, come help. I'm here. I'm here in the worst part of these communities. I am here begging you for help because we are still in the business of making people whole and we're still in the business of giving hope to the hopeless, and we are still helping the blind to recover their sight and we're still helping the lame to walk and we're still proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor, and that is who we are as Methodists. Now the last part of this text is they roared with joy and you couldn't hear the tears and the lament because of all the joy. So I'm inviting you as we celebrate a new era of the church, a new chapter in the history of United Methodism in Virginia, a new dedication to following where the Holy Spirit leads to stand up with great joy and say, we are ready. Ready? 1, 2, 3. We are ready. Amen. Amen. Amen. Now cheer,

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:52:10):**

I invite you to pray with me. Oh Lord, we pause united in our joy at the future, grateful for the legacy of those who brought us here, and each of us, I invite to remember now a few of the saints who told you about Christ and are responsible for your place here today. And you're welcome to name them aloud and to rejoice at their memory. And Lord, we know that they are watching as the communion of saints, that they will join us at this communion table and they will speak words of encouragement and hope to us for we need to continue what they started so well. And Lord remind us that your is a spiritual dwelling much more so than a physical dwelling. It is a dwelling, you knit faithful people together to make through the centuries. And we are all knit together and bound together into a great structure and you have promised that you will come and live in it.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:53:43):**

So oh Lord, help us take our place in this structure as we commit our lives into this wonderful web of connection, this wonderful structure in which you live a structure which says, oh Lord, we are ready to go where you send us and we are ready to hear what you have to say to us. And we are ready to serve you in any way that you need. Give us strength for the journey. Courage to stand up in the face of huge resistance and in a compelling sense that you are always with us and your steadfast love abounds forever, name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Speaker 9 (00:54:38):**

Please be seated. Thank you, Bishop. As we prepare to receive communion today, we are also preparing, preparing to receive our annual conference offering Throughout the arena, there will be ushers, youth, and holy rollers with buckets near the communion stations. You're invited to leave your offering in one of the buckets, or you're welcome to use the QR code on the screen to give online. And this year's offering will be used to provide disaster relief to those affected by Hurricane Helene flooding and the California wildfires. We'd also like to share that the bread that you will receive dairy communion is gluten-free, so everyone may partake and it is allergen-free of 14 items. So we thank those who prepared the bread for today.

Speaker 6 ([00:56:08](#)):

Hallelujah.

Speaker 10 ([00:56:29](#)):

Hallelujah, hallelujah. Hallelu, I said Hallelujah. Hall, Halle Hall

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference** ([00:59:28](#)):

You may be seated. I am delighted to be joined at the table with Deacon Lisa McGee and for the first time ever at an annual conference, a deacon will consecrate the elements. Oh, thank you Christ. Our Lord invites to his table all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another. Therefore, let us confess our sin before God and one another merciful God, confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart. We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done your will in your law. We have rebelled against your love, loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy. Forgive us, we pray, joyful obedience through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Hear the good news. Christ died for us while we were yet sinners that proves God's love toward us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

**Rev. Lisa McGehee, Deacon** ([01:00:49](#)):

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Glory to God. Amen. The Lord be with you. Also with you. Lift up your hearts.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference** ([01:01:03](#)):

We lift them up to the Lord.

**Rev. Lisa McGehee, Clergy, Chair of the Order of Deacons:** ([01:01:05](#)):

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference** ([01:01:08](#)):

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

**Rev. Lisa McGehee, Clergy, Chair of the Order of Deacons:** ([01:01:11](#)):

It is right and a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to you God almighty, creator of heaven and earth. You formed us in your image, you and breathe into us the breath of life when we turned away and our love failed. Your love remained. You delivered us from captivity may covenant to be our sovereign God and spoke to us through the prophets. And so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn. Holy, holy, holy Lord, God, power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. Holy are you and blessed is your son, Jesus Christ. Your spirit anointed him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty those who are oppressed and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners by the baptism of his suffering, death and resurrection. You gave birth to your church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit when the Lord ascended, he promised to be with us always. And then the power of your word and Holy Spirit on



the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks and broke the bread and gave it to his disciples and said, take, eat.

**Rev. Lisa McGehee, Clergy, Chair of the Order of Deacons:** ([01:03:09](#)):

This is my body which is given for you. Do this and remembrance of me. And when the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples and said, drink from this all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant. Pour out for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as and remembrance of me and so is your mighty acts. In Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves and praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice and union with Christ offering for us as we proclaim the mystery of faith. Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here and make these gifts of bread and wine, make them be for us, the body and the blood of Christ that we may be for the world, the body of Christ redeemed by his blood, but your Holy Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world until Christ comes and final victory. And we feast at his heavenly banquet through your son Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit and your holy church. All honor and glory is yours almighty father, now and forever.

**Rev. Lisa McGehee, Clergy, Chair of the Order of Deacons:** ([01:04:41](#)):

And now let us pray the prayer that our Lord taught us to pray. Our Father who are to heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come be done earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespassed against us. And leave us not in temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thy is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference** ([01:06:11](#)):

There are stations around the room. Please follow as you are led by the us.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference** ([01:21:15](#)):

I invite you to stand as you are able and join me in the prayer after receiving eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you have given yourself to us. Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of your spirit to give ourselves for others, for us as a gift to the world with joy or with suffering, to be used or laid aside, to be lifted up or to be made lowly, to be filled or to be empty. All for your good pleasure. We are yours. Oh God, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. I'm going to give you the benediction and then I invite you to hang out. There will be a fantastic closing song, so receive this benediction, go forth and build anew for the foundation is strong and sure. And those who have brought us here are cheering us on go in peace to love and serve the world. Amen.

**Rev. Claire B. Miller – Virginia Annual Conference Secretary** ([01:22:38](#)):

Before we recess, there's one quick announcement and that is that the candidates for ministry who are being recognized today, please come forward and sit toward the front of the stage on the floor over by box eight, which is to my left. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference** ([01:26:21](#)):

Folks. 15 minutes break please.

**The business portion of the 243<sup>rd</sup> session of the Virginia Annual Conference was called to order at 10:45 AM, on June, 12, 2025 by Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference**

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([01:45:31](#)):**

Okay. I now call to order the 243rd session of the Virginia Annual Conference. We will begin by singing and are we at Alive, a hymn that has been sung by persons gathering for holy conferencing since the beginning of the Wesleyan movement. Please rise as you're able embody your spirit as we join together to sing.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([01:50:23](#)):**

I'm now going to call upon Jacob Riggs, one of our great conference youth to come offer the opening prayer and he's also responsible for the little Jesus on the podium. So thank you Jacob.

**Mr. Jacob Riggs, Youth Member, Living Waters District, Virginia Annual Conference: ([01:50:39](#)):**

All right, let's go to God in prayer. Lord, I thank you for today in this business session of the Virginia Annual Conference. Lord, I bless every person here for that. They may have your Holy Spirit move through them in any way possible that they need Lord, and we thank you for our bishop Bishop Sue. We thank you for how much he has done for our conference. Lord, we thank you for our districts and we thank you for all who are here. Lord bless this business session and may it help the church. Amen.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([01:51:15](#)):**

Amen. I want to see his proud. Mama and daddy are Glen and Terry here. Where are you? There they are. There's dad. Very proud. And now it is my joy to welcome Joe Cobb, the mayor of Roanoke. And as he comes, I want you to know that after the actions of general conference last year, the Great Plains Conference restored his clergy credentials. So he's Reverend Mayor Joe,

**Rev. Joe Cobb, Mayor, Roanoke, Virginia ([01:52:12](#)):**

Thank you. Good morning, Virginia United Methodist. Welcome to Roanoke. I like that. A little over a year ago, the Reverend Leigh Anne Taylor, who also happens to be my former spouse and in a unique moment that we celebrated earlier, her first spouse and her last spouse are here today. Hugh Ballou. So a little over a year ago, Leanne told me that she wanted something to happen, Joe. She said the Virginia Annual Conference of United Methodist will be in Roanoke in 2025 and the mayor of the city welcomes the delegates. I need you to get elected mayor so that you can bring greetings to the annual conference.

**Rev. Joe Cobb, Mayor, Roanoke, Virginia ([01:53:20](#)):**

So ladies and gentlemen, from Leigh Anne's Lips to the people of Roanoke, here I am 24 years ago after discerning the very difficult decision to surrender my credentials as the United Methodist clergy in the Kansas West Annual Conference, fully realizing that I couldn't be openly gay and serve as a clergy. A dear friend of mine, knowing that I was considering moving this direction, said, Joe, why would you move to the south to come out? Moving to the south and specifically to Roanoke saved my life. It is here that I arrived to be closer to our children, Emma and Taylor. It is here that I discovered people and a city that said over and over again, this is a place where you are welcome. Bring your authentic self. Remember that you are beloved, that you are a gift, and here you can thrive. It is here that Leanne and I wrote our book, our story, our family outing, laying out a vision of coming out into wholeness as people and as a church. It is here that I met my husband James. We've known each other for 24 years together most of that time and where we were able to legally we on Father's Day weekend eight years ago, happy anniversary week, we're the proud parents of Jenny, a rising senior at Patrick Henry High School and Roanoke Valley Governor School, and JJ, a rising sophomore at Patrick Henry High School. And Leanne is JJ'S Godmother, just saying, this is how we do family.

**Rev. Joe Cobb, Mayor, Roanoke, Virginia ([01:55:33](#)):**

Roanoke is an eight time all America City, the first Hall of Fame, all America City, and the only certified welcoming city in Virginia and only of 25 in the nation. We are home to over 110 nationalities and are one of three refugee settlement communities in Virginia. And to put in quite, to put it quite directly and bluntly in Roanoke, DEI is in our DNA. We are home to the Talman Museum of Art, the Mill Mountain Theater, the Roanoke Symphony and Opera Roanoke. Our downtown is vibrant with local restaurants serving unique and amazing food, extraordinary small businesses and emerging busker and street performer community, and the magical center in the square with a rooftop six and Sky Grill. We are home to the Carilion Cardiac Care Center, the forthcoming Talman Carilion Cancer Center, the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute, and the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, one of the finest in the nation.

**Rev. Joe Cobb, Mayor, Roanoke, Virginia ([01:56:55](#)):**

We are considered the emerging growth hub of Virginia with significant investments in innovation, biotech, manufacturing and industry. But we are also a city dedicated to the difficult work of addressing and repairing our history of segregation. Through efforts centered in social justice and equity, we are openly discussing our past and working together to change the narrative of who we are becoming where we are. Gathered here this morning, prior to the mid-seventies, used to be a vibrant neighborhood of African-American citizens and immigrants with homes, businesses, and churches. During three different phases of urban renewal, the Civic Center was constructed in a telling postcard issued, celebrating its opening in the upper left-hand corner. Stand three homes like an island surrounded by a new parking lot. These were the last three homeowners who refused to move until they received fair market value for their homes. Across the street from here is the oldest cemetery in Roanoke, old Lake Cemetery, a burial place for Euro-American and African-American citizens established in the early 18 hundreds in the town of Gainesboro. During the building of the 5 81 interchange, which you likely traversed to arrive here, the remains of 933 loved ones were removed in the late 1950s to a remote cemetery in Bot County to make room for the interchange. Its history was the focus of my doctoral dissertation. We work together every day to share the stories of our past to ensure that no one's story is erased and that we can all celebrate with great joy, the remarkable diversity of our community.

**Rev. Joe Cobb, Mayor, Roanoke, Virginia ([01:59:06](#)):**

We are also home to some of the coolest United Methodist congregations in Virginia. Everywhere I go in this city, whether addressing the challenges our homeless neighbors are facing, taking on the daunting challenges of creating more affordable housing, celebrating the beauty and rights of our LGBTQ plus community, serving as a congregation in action for a local elementary school, providing a home to a nonprofit organization or an afterschool program, or making the decision to work with a nonprofit to turn their historic church building into 15 new units of affordable housing for senior adults. The United Methodist churches here and throughout Virginia are changing lives through the creative and innovative work of the Holy Spirit. As Bishop Sue mentioned just a few moments ago when general conference convened in Charlotte, North Carolina last spring, I watched closely as historic decisions were made, led by the spirit to draw the circle wide and wider Still, when the general conference created a pathway for former United Methodist clergy to request reinstatement, I wrote the Great Plains Annual Conference to request reinstatement of my credentials. This past Thursday with Leanne there with me, following a vote of the clergy session in Salina, Kansas, I was fully reinstated as an elder in full connection in the United Methodist Church.

**Rev. Joe Cobb, Mayor, Roanoke, Virginia ([02:01:16](#)):**

And so this morning I not only greet you as mayor of the city of Roanoke, but as a United Methodist colleague. So Bishop Sue and delegates of the Virginia Annual Conference, may God be with us all as we experience the movements of God's spirit and love. Have a blessed and amazing annual conference. Welcome.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:01:39](#)):**

Joe, before you go, we asked our own Karen McElfish to make you a stole. And so here, let me put, now I'm going to call upon Reverend Doug Forrester, soon to be my new assistant to come on behalf of the Valley Ridge District.

**Rev. Doug Forrester, District Superintendent, Valley Ridge District ([02:02:31](#)):**

Thank you, Bishop. I have to admit that right now I feel like on the opening act for a band who had to play after the headliner, Bishop Hauptert-Johnson, Lay Leader, Stokes, Reverend Mayor Cobb, Mayor Reverend Cobb. I don't know

**Rev. Doug Forrester, District Superintendent, Valley Ridge District ([02:02:57](#)):**

Reverend Dr. Mayor Cobb, Reverend Dr. Mayor Cobb, the bishop. I'd like to take a moment to recognize and thank the following persons, Mr. Neil Wise, our event coordinator. Yay, the absolutely incredible Valley Ridge District staff, Donna Desper, the Reverend, Dr. Dale White, the Reverend Robin Barge, and Cindy Martin, who has kind of come out of her quasi semi-retirement too. To help us with this annual conference this year, the Reverend Dr. Jonathan Page, and Mrs. Katie Mueller from the Office of Connection and Innovation and the numerous lay and clergy volunteers from our district and across the Virginia Annual Conference and the many, many people throughout our conference who have been part of making this gathering a reality. Your participation and your planning and supporting the work of the annual conference planning team has brought us here today. I would also like to recognize my dear friend and partner in ministry, our district lay leader, Larry Dickinson. I had like to recognize our retired bishops and their spouses, Ray Chamberlain and his wife Martha. I am not sure if they are here today, but we send our greetings either way. Bishop Hasbrook Hughes and his wife Mera are unable to be present, but we recognize them.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:04:50](#)):**

Doug, let me add today is Bishop Hughes 95th birthday. Wow. And I think coming up is his 75th wedding anniversary. So milestones, he's got lots of milestones and I have to say a word of thanks to these two bishops because they are so gracious and they always write letters of encouragement and support. And I heard from both of them last week and they're just tremendous colleagues and what a great reflection of Virginia they are.

**Rev. Doug Forrester, District Superintendent, Valley Ridge District ([02:05:22](#)):**

Amen. I'd like to recognize our visiting bishops, Bishop Ken Carter of the Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church. I don't think he's here yet. We'll be Bishop Nelson Furtado of the second ecclesiastical region in Brazil. Bishop Eduardo Carrillo Gonzalez, the former bishop of the Mexican church, the Mexican Methodist Church I who was unable to be present here today. And I would like to recognize our Episcopal spouse, the Reverend Allen Johnson Bishop. I move that the bar of the conference be established as consisting of the platform. The floor boxes one through five and eight through 12 and rows A through F of sections one through nine and 26 through 34. Be it further resolved that the technical and camera platforms be part of the bar. Bishop, this needs a second.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:06:37](#)):**

Okay, if I can have a second. Okay. If you would approve the setting of the bar as described, please lift a hand and the bar set.

**Rev. Doug Forrester, District Superintendent, Valley Ridge District ([02:06:47](#)):**

Thank you, Bishop. I also move that the agenda be approved as shared on pages six through eight of the book of reports.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:06:55](#)):**

Okay, is there a second to the agenda? Some. So seconded. If you're in favor of the agenda, please lift your hand and the agenda is approved.

**Rev. Doug Forrester, District Superintendent, Valley Ridge District ([02:07:05](#)):**

If I may have just a moment of privilege to offer a award of thanks. Some of you know that on early Sunday morning, May 18th, at the break of dawn, my father Mitch Forrester, transitioned from life to life everlasting as he crossed the threshold from this life to all that is to come. And I'll admit to you that in the days since, I have at times found in this wilderness of grief, feeling very lost. But what I can also tell you is that during this time I never felt alone. And it is in that spirit that I want to give thanks to you, bishop, to my cabinet family, to our wonderful district, staff and leadership, and to so many of you across the annual conference and so many different corners who have called or sent cards or reached out on social media. I've sent so many of those cards and made those calls and receiving them reminds me of what a beautiful and tremendous connection we have here as United Methodist. My father was fond of saying to my brother and my mother and me during any time of difficulty, as long as we're together, we're going to be all right. And sisters and brothers of the Virginia Annual Conference, we are together, are we not? And God is with us. And that means that all things are possible. So in my final opportunity to do this in my capacity as district superintendent, let me say to all of you, welcome to the Valley Ridge District. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:08:59](#)):**

Thank you, Doug. Appreciate it. And now I'm delighted to introduce you. Claire Miller, the Secretary of annual Conference. Claire.

**Rev. Claire Miller, Annual Conference Secretary ([02:09:11](#)):**

Thank you Bishop. A few announcements. The Ramey room in Berglund Hall has been designated as the prayer room throughout the annual conference. And just before you get to that room, which is downstairs, there is a sectioned off space in the Berglund Hall that has been designated as the area where the Eucharist will be celebrated tomorrow and Saturday morning at seven 30. Any proposals to the agenda must be approved and they must be submitted before the end of business today, June 12th. At this time, we are working with the Berglund Center to create a solution for the WIFI issues and we hope to have more information to share at the conclusion of the business meeting today, because we do believe that it is coming. We do ask that you turn off your personal WIFI hotspots as they have the potential to interfere with the building systems. Additionally, please refrain from using WIFI to do any form of streaming or high bandwidth use activities because again, that interferes.

**Rev. Claire Miller, Annual Conference Secretary ([02:10:25](#)):**

And if at any point during the conference you wish to speak at a microphone, please waive your green motion card to be recognized. If you are recognized, please be sure to note the instructions on the microphone about how to introduce yourself. There's a piece of paper on each microphone and please note also that there is a motion QR code to help you access the motion form quickly. This form is also available on the conference website, [VAUc.org/ac2025](http://VAUc.org/ac2025). The QR code is on the screen now or will be in a moment, and it is located on a sheet of paper at each floor microphone. You can scan the QR code, follow the link to fill out the form to submit your motion amendment or point of order, or you can come to the back of the platform here right behind the secretary's desk and there is an inbox with paper versions of the motion amendment, a point of order form and you can fill that out, put the appropriate copy in the other inbox that is right next to it and we will get that.

**Rev. Claire Miller, Annual Conference Secretary ([02:11:49](#)):**

One other announcement is regarding lunch labs. Just a kind reminder that if you have registered for lunch labs, they will be served. The lunch will be served in the same location as your lunch lab. So please go directly to your lunch lab location, check in with the hospitality team before getting in the buffet line. And if you have signed up for shepherding through the storm trauma-informed care for the church, you'll be in the Burglund Hall. If you have signed up, excuse me, for when the storm hits church community and disaster recovery, you'll be in the Special Event Center where the displays are floaters will be around to help you and to direct you and answer any questions you have for Friday. Please remember also the same thing. Your lunch will be in the lunch lab and tomorrow I will give information on where those particular lunch labs are located. At this time I move that for this annual conference session, Reverend Jennifer Coffey and Mrs. Katie Mueller, be assistant secretaries and Mrs. Madeline Pillow White be the editor of the journal.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:13:06](#)):**

Okay, I need a second. And then we'll vote them into office. So seconded, if you would approve these folks as assistant secretaries and editor of the journal, please lift your hands. Great. Thank you. Appreciate it. And now I invite all of you who are coming into conference leadership. If you're listed in page 142 of the book of reports, if you would please stand our new leaders. Come on, please stand if you're new, if you're listed, probably not even just new everybody who's going to be in leadership in the districts in the ANAC conference in the next year stand, that makes it easier. And the conference staff as well, I invite you to raise a hand toward them as I commission them for the next year. Let's pray together. Oh Lord, we ask that you pour out your Holy Spirit upon these new leaders and those who will be leading us in the year to come. We ask you to equip them and give them whatever they need as they lead us and show us Christ in their leadership. We pray that you will bless their leadership and that you will help them lead us to even a more fruitful year. And I thank you for your call on their lives and for their willingness to serve. Go with them and keep them. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Thank you all.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:14:46](#)):**

Okay, now, Ms. Joelle Gotwals, Chair of the Rules Committee, I invite you forward. Wait, I skipped Jesse, let's go ahead and do the rules. Come on, Joelle, let's do the rules.

**Ms. Joelle Gotwals, Chairperson, Rules Committee ([02:15:03](#)):**

Thank you. Bishop Hauptert-Johnson, Lay Leader Stokes members of the Virginia Annual Conference of 2025. Good morning. As the Bishop mentioned, I am Joelle Gotwals, Chair of the Rules Committee. This is my first year as chair and indeed my first annual conference. So I hope you'll bear with me as I share



the report of our committee's work this year. The full written report of the rules committee is in the book of reports on page 76, as has previously been done by those in my position. I will summarize the proposals and not go over them in excruciating detail highlighting key rationales or bases for the proposed amendments. The first set of amendments seek to modify the rule that describes the composition of the Board of Discipleship Rule five B four C. These proposed changes were brought to the rules committee by the Board of Discipleship who noted that the board's been operating with this framework for six or seven years without a change to the formal standing rules.

**Ms. Joelle Gotwals, Chairperson, Rules Committee (02:16:08):**

The objective of these changes is to have the standing rules be consistent with the current operations and makeup of the Board of Discipleship. The second set of amendments proposed by the rules Committee are to further clarify and refine the resolutions process found in the standing rules at Rule two B. As our former rules Committee chair Scott Diamond noted before this body last year, drafting the amendment to reintroduce resolutions to the standing rules was the first of two important steps. The second step was implementation of the resolution process, which might result in further rule changes as the resolutions and rules committees identified ways to increase precision, consistency and transparency accordingly. This year, after receiving and reviewing its first round of submitted resolutions, the resolutions committee proposed several amendments to the rules governing resolutions to better streamline the process. These amendments include technical language changes to clarify the intended meaning of previously adopted rules.

**Ms. Joelle Gotwals, Chairperson, Rules Committee (02:17:21):**

Changes to the process intended to reduce the volume of materials. The resolutions committee must review and substantive amendments that provide further explanation for the circumstances under which lay leaders may get a resolution endorsed by their church council. In addition to the recommendations of the resolutions committee, the rules committee propose an additional amendment regarding motions to table. As noted in our written report in the book of reports, the purpose of this amendment is to articulate clearly that as with any other business before the conference resolutions may also be subjected to a motion to table prior to debate. The motions to table are permitted generally under Robert's rules of Order. The rules committee recommends for consistency and clarity that the standing rules expressly state their applicability to the resolutions. Debate process. Members of the Virginia Annual Conference, I formally present these proposals for changes to our standing rules and procedures for your consideration.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (02:18:22):**

Okay, there is a second. It's coming from committee so it doesn't need a second. Ignore that. Is there any discussion about the rules? Seeing none. And we're going to move to a vote. If you would approve these changes to the standing rules, I invite you to lift a hand and they are approved. Thank you, Joel. Thank you. I have a special place in my heart for lawyers. And now I invite the Reverend Jessie Colwell, the Director of Clergy Excellence to come forward.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director of Clergy Excellence (02:19:04):**

Thank you Bishop members of the Virginia Annual Conference. Today it is my joy to have presented to you the candidates for ministry for 2025. You may know some of these candidates, they've come from your churches. You have affirmed their call and we are so excited to also once again celebrate their call on Saturday. We hope that you'll stay and be part of that important service. We have noticed that

there's a lot of boxes up here. They're strewn all around the room and they represent all of the churches at the Virginia Conference and as the bishop talked about and Ezra, we're building something and these candidates represent that as well. So today it's my joy to introduce you to the Chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry, Reverend Tammy Estep, who will help present our candidates.

**Rev. Tammy Estep, Chair, Board of Ordained Ministry ([02:19:58](#)):**

Good morning friends. Good morning, Bishop Sue and lay leader Martha Stokes. Glad to see you all. Grateful to be here. Excited to introduce to you those that will be licensed, commissioned and ordained for the class of 2025. These candidates for ministry have been recommended in their local congregations, examined according to the standards of our discipline and this annual conference of the United Methodist Church. These candidates are set apart for ministry in Christ Holy Church and we present them with prayers and support and with great joy. I invite them to step forward when their name is called. I want to invite David Edinger, who is chair of the Fellowship for Licensed Local Pastors and Associate Ministers to introduce to you the licensing local pastors class.

**Rev. David Edinger, Chair, Fellowship for Licensed Local Pastors and Associate Ministers ([02:20:59](#)):**

Good morning, Virginia Conference. I'd like to introduce to you these licensed local pastors, Louis Berghei, Elizabeth Page, Dalton Atul, Donna Wade, Victor Jerome, Drummond II, Eric Scott Fury, Sarah S Bolson, Sadie, Cavan, Hawthorne, Rebecca Lynn Leathers, Emily s Ogden, Ruth, Elizabeth Perry, Joyce Marie Wan, Baum Rogers, Brenda Lynn Tuman, Margaret Joan Van Slen, and Alexis Danielle Ward.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:22:03](#)):**

I invite you to welcome them and rejoice with them. Oh, one more.

**Rev. David Edinger, Chair, Fellowship for Licensed Local Pastors and Associate Ministers ([02:22:09](#)):**

And we have one more. Robert. Robert Godwin.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Clergy Excellence ([02:22:32](#)):**

And now I would like to invite Sarah Locke, who is head of our provisional process team to introduce our provisional elders for the class of 2025.

**Rev. Sarah Locke, Chair, Provisional Process Team ([02:22:55](#)):**

Good morning. It is my honor to present to you our new provisional class and it is so exciting to get to walk with them the next few years. So, I present to you this morning Scott Bach-Hanson, Tian Kim Young Men, Kim Aaron Dale Miller, one Row, John Francis Rowe, Jr. Matthew Devin Seton, and Crystal M. Woodard. Let's greet them.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Clergy Excellence ([02:23:56](#)):**

We have done some revisions on the board and working on our associate membership experience and we are excited to introduce to you two members that are the first to come through this new process and David Edinger will present them.

**Rev. David Edinger, Chair, Associate Members ([02:24:14](#)):**



And I'm exceptionally excited to do this because it literally doubled the amount of active associate members in the annual conference. So I'd like to present to you William R. Mack MacKinney and Owen M Taylor. There we go.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Clergy Excellence ([02:24:51](#)):**

And now to present the full membership class of 2025, I invite Jae Song, our Order of Elders chair and Lisa McGee, our Order of Deacon chair. To introduce them,

**Jae Song, Chair, Order of Elders ([02:25:21](#)):**

Nilse Furtado Gilliam, Claire Burgess Miller, Julie Anne Diggs Nitzsche, Elizabeth Anne Nordan, Isaiah Jennifer Park, Rachel Gordon Plemmons, Glenn Paul Riggs,

**Jae Song, Chair, Order of Elders ([02:26:03](#)):**

Troy Steven Sims

**Jae Song, Chair, Order of Elders ([02:26:09](#)):**

Seokchane Suh, Eduardo Alberto Carrillo Tonche, Ryan Scott Ware, Bertina Jayne Hardison Westley.

**Bishop Sue Haupt-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:26:35](#)):**

Let's welcome now, these full connection folks before you're ordained into full connection. Historically these questions which are in our book of discipline are asked and have been asked since the time of John Wesley. And so now I ask these historic questions for these candidates for full connection. Have you faith in Christ? Yes. Are you going on to perfection?

**2025 Class of Ordinands ([02:27:16](#)):**

Yes.

**Bishop Sue Haupt-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:27:16](#)):**

Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life?

**2025 Class of Ordinands ([02:27:20](#)):**

Yes.

**Bishop Sue Haupt-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:27:21](#)):**

Are you earnestly striving after it?

**2025 Class of Ordinands ([02:27:24](#)):**

Yes.

**Bishop Sue Haupt-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:27:25](#)):**

Are you resolved to devote yourself wholly to God and God's work?

**2025 Class of Ordinands ([02:27:30](#)):**

Yes.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:27:30](#)):**

Do you know the general rules of our church?

**2025 Class of Ordinands ([02:27:33](#)):**

Yes.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:27:34](#)):**

Do you know the general rules of our church really? Number one, Do no harm. Number two, Do all the good, three, Attend to the ordinances of God? Very good. We're on. We're paving new ground here. Will you keep the general rules of the church?

**2025 Class of Ordinands ([02:27:58](#)):**

Yes.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:27:58](#)):**

Have you studied the doctrines of the United Methodist Church?

**2025 Class of Ordinands ([02:28:02](#)):**

Yes.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:28:02](#)):**

After full examination, do you believe that our doctrines are in harmony with the holy scriptures? Yes. Will you preach and maintain them?

**2025 Class of Ordinands ([02:28:11](#)):**

Yes.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:28:12](#)):**

Have you studied our form of church discipline and polity?

**2025 Class of Ordinands ([02:28:16](#)):**

Yes. Yes.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:28:17](#)):**

Do you approve our church, government and polity?

**2025 Class of Ordinands ([02:28:20](#)):**

Yes. Yes.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:28:21](#)):**

Will you support and maintain it?

**2025 Class of Ordinands ([02:28:23](#)):**

Yes.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:28:24](#)):**

And then I ask this of everybody, although it's traditionally only to the deacons, but I want to spread it wider. Will you exercise the ministry of compassion?

**2025 Class of Ordinands ([02:28:34](#)):**

Yes.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:28:36](#)):**

Will you instruct the children in every place.

**2025 Class of Ordinands ([02:28:39](#)):**

Yes.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:28:39](#)):**

Will you visit from house to house?

**2025 Class of Ordinands ([02:28:42](#)):**

Yes.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:28:42](#)):**

Will you recommend fasting or abstinence? Both by precept and example?

**2025 Class of Ordinands ([02:28:48](#)):**

Yes. Yes.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:28:48](#)):**

Are you determined to employ all your time in the work of God?

**2025 Class of Ordinands ([02:28:53](#)):**

Yes.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:28:53](#)):**

Are you in debt so as to embarrass you in your work?

**2025 Class of Ordinands ([02:28:57](#)):**

No. No.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:28:59](#)):**

Will you observe the following directions? Be diligent, never be unemployed, never be trifling employed, never trifle away time. Neither spend any more time in any one place than is strictly

necessary. Be punctual exactly at the time and do not mend our rules, but keep them not for wrath, but for conscious sake. And then I always add these two for the elders. Will you go where you are sent?

**2025 Class of Ordinands ([02:29:34](#)):**

Yes. Yes.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:29:36](#)):**

Will you stay away from where you have been?

**2025 Class of Ordinands ([02:29:39](#)):**

Yes.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:29:40](#)):**

And I am delighted to ordain you on Saturday and I hope all of you will stay for this tremendous moment in the lives of these our Provisionals and our Licensed Local Pastors. Let's welcome them.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:30:05](#)):**

I do want to add that Bishop Furtado is, Nilse's Father. Stay here for a minute and he will be joining us on Saturday. And it's really just so sad to me that Bishop Carrillo, Eduardo's father will not be with us for fear of immigration and for fear of what might happen if he came to see his son ordained. It's very real in our lives. We hold him in prayer. My final thing I want to do is to offer a prayer for Dave Edinger who serves us so well as our chair of local pastors and associate members. His mother Rose is gravely ill. And Dave come forward and I'd just like to say a prayer for his mother. It's so hard when you're split two ways and I appreciate his presence here. Let's pray. "The Lord cast your healing power on Rose Edinger and I pray that in your time we entrust her to your care and rejoice that whatever comes in these next few days, you are holding her in your arms and ready to receive her whenever that time comes. I thank you for Dave. I thank you for his leadership and I thank you for your tender care when he can't be at her side. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

**Rev. David Edinger, Chair, Fellowship for Licensed Local Pastors and Associate Ministers ([02:31:38](#)):**

Thank you. Don't go in away. Bishop Sue, the licensing class of 2025 has something that they would like to share with you. Oh great.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:31:59](#)):**

Oh, this is beautiful. Oh, thank you. You'll be careful with it. Look that pretty. Thank you guys. Appreciate it. Thank you. Appreciate them. I'm getting great gifts because this is the gift from this year's class and I'm wearing the joy stole from a previous class, so none of this goes unappreciated or unnoticed, so, okay. Oh, Claire is back. So I invite Reverend Claire Miller to come up and talk to us about the consent agenda.

**Rev. Claire B. Miller, Annual Conference Secretary ([02:33:03](#)):**

I move that the annual conference approve all reports listed in the consent agenda as listed on page 71 in the book of reports. And oops, sorry about that. Just lost it.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:33:25](#)):**

Has anything been removed from the consent agenda? No. Thank you very much. So it is before you as printed on page 71 of the book of reports. May I have a second? It is seconded. If you would approve those items on the consent agenda, please lift your hand and they are approved. Thank you, Claire. It's now my great pleasure to introduce President Robert Lindgren, the President of Randolph Macon College. And he is retiring after 19 years of service, and I like to especially note that he is also a Florida Gator and that we went to law school very close in time and he's one of the few people that we've compared notes over professors that we shared. So, it is a joy to welcome you Dr. Lindgren to the annual conference this morning.

**Mr. Robert Lindgren, President, Randolph Macon College (02:34:25):**

Thank you. Thank you very much Bishop Sue for that kind introduction and wonderful welcome. I noted that you had praised a lawyer earlier and I was going to mention our somewhat checkered shared background, but you've done that for me. And I must say, having listened intently to that band of historic questions that were asked, I'm just glad the board at Randolph Macon didn't have a similar list of questions for their last president who kind of muddled in to that job. But I do appreciate being here today and I speak on behalf of the presidents of three other United Methodist colleges who are part of the Virginia Conference, Farham College and its president, Dr. Mirta Martin, Shenandoah University and its president, Dr. Tracy Fitzsimmons and Virginia Wesleyan University and its president, Dr. Scott Miller. These institutions, we date back almost 200 years for an 1830, starting with the inspirational founding of Randolph Macon College by a small but mighty band of farsighted Methodists.

**Mr. Robert Lindgren, President, Randolph Macon College (02:35:55):**

And these student institutions are succeeding today in the face of significant challenges confronting higher education, most especially because we are maintaining our steadfast commitment to providing each of our students, each of our students a rigorous, relevant and values-based educational experience on our campuses. We are all proud of our association with the United Methodist Church, grateful for the financial support the conference is able to provide us. And for that which many of you do individually and I promise, I absolutely promise that we put that money to very good use. And we are also proud that we each serve students of many face and traditions throughout active programming on our campuses. And while we recognize that budgets are tight, there remain other truly meaningful ways you can help sustain us. Most particularly by recommending to one or more of our institutions. You are to be college age sons and daughters or other family members and friends and neighbors.

**Mr. Robert Lindgren, President, Randolph Macon College (02:37:23):**

And don't forget the college bound students in your congregations as well. Encourage them to seriously consider one of our four UMC colleges and universities within the Virginia Conference. And you can be sure that those students will get a distinctive and personalized experience starting with the admissions process and running all the way through graduation, and then likely realize a multitude of good opportunities to select from as they enter their postgraduate lives. And I can guarantee that they will. Thank you for that encouragement. Now you might say, well, it's easy for Lindgren to say that after all he's a short timer. But my heartfelt remarks here are born of nearly 20 years of rich, rich experience with RMC and close and admiring observations of those three other UMC related institutions in our conference. And I would stake my reputation on the quality of the overall experience that our students derive and cherish from their time on any of our campuses.

**Mr. Robert Lindgren, President, Randolph Macon College (02:38:49):**

And since I have the privilege to speak here one last time, I will personalize it a bit more by saying I have been deeply honored, deeply honored to have had this opportunity to have served at Randolph Macon. And I'm proud to confirm that RMC is in an enviable position as I pass the baton to incoming president Michael Hill. Financially we are strong and on track to complete this month, our 45th consecutive year with a balanced budget. We have experienced record class sizes in recent years while maintaining selectivity and academic quality and becoming even more diverse, reflecting the demographic changes in the college aged population. And we continue to add compelling new programs that are aligned with the needs of our community and the interests of prospective students and their families while remaining grounded in the liberal arts such that our students graduate with a solid foundation enabling them to contribute mightily to their communities.

**Mr. Robert Lindgren, President, Randolph Macon College** ([02:40:07](#)):

And not to forget, we have whipped Hampton, Sydney, 11 straight times on the grid eye that I will take full credit for and I'm particularly pleased at RMC we have been able to maintain the quality of a program that was actually started just before I arrived back in 2006, our Pernell Bailey pre ministerial program. To date, we have had 51 Bailey scholars graduate, very many of whom, yes, let's sleep, very many of whom are serving the United Methodist Church today. And I've had the pleasure of having breakfast with seven Bailey scholars just this morning, including one who will be a freshman with us this fall. These scholars are making a difference on our campus, in our church and in our society, in what more important work for them to do than now in this singular moment. And while I am proud of our accomplishments, we still have much more to do together.

**Mr. Robert Lindgren, President, Randolph Macon College** ([02:41:37](#)):

Together. And I thank you for your kind attention today for your support of our United Methodist institutions. And I thank you for your support and kindness in sharing with me the opportunity of a lifetime. And I will finish with one thought. As we in higher education face our challenges, know that these are challenges that are best addressed as a community. As a community together, a community linked by and committed to our shared values. And it will be those shared values that inspire all of us to keep the faith, to strive mightily, to serve our great God with hope and purpose and integrity and grace. God bless you all.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference** ([02:42:43](#)):

Stay there. Stay there. Stay there. Please stay. We're not going to let you leave without blessing your retirement. Do you know how few college presidents last for almost 20 years? I think that's a record and I think it's testimony to just the pure excellence of President Lindgren's leadership. So pray with me as we ask a blessing on your retirement. Oh Lord, thank you for the gifts that you have given us through President Lindgren for his stellar leadership, for the way he has modeled integrity and competence and just kindness for so many at Randolph Macon College. We pray a special prayer of blessing on him as he enters into retirement. We know you will continue to use him and his gifts in retirement, but we thank you for putting him among us to lead to love and to show us just what exemplary academic leadership looks like. We also pray a special blessing on sister institutions, Virginia Wesleyan University, Randolph Macon College, Ferrum College and Shenandoah University, and President Fitzsimmons, Miller, Martin and Lindgren as he retires continue, oh Lord, to guide, guard and keep these institutions for they show us what is best in United Methodism in the young lives. They shape are a testimony to God and his grace. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference** ([02:44:51](#)):

Okay, I am going to turn it over to Claire Miller for any announcements.

**Rev. Claire Miller, Annual Conference Secretary** ([02:44:56](#)):

Just one, that we are still working on the WIFI solution and more information will be available following lunch.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference** ([02:45:05](#)):

Okay. I remind you that we are getting out 20 minutes early, actually half an hour early. So, remember that if we run over at other sessions, but you're getting 30 minutes, I do hope that you'll be sure to be back in your seats promptly at 2:00 PM because Scott Erickson, "Scott the Painter", is going to come and lead us and teach us and it's going to be marvelous. So I will see you at two o'clock. We're adjourned until two o'clock.

**The meeting recessed for lunch at 11:45 AM**



**Daily Proceedings  
243rd Session of the Virginia Annual Conference  
June 12, 2025  
Afternoon Session  
The Berglund Center - Roanoke, VA**

Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Presiding  
*"Movement of the Heart"*

The June 12<sup>th</sup> Afternoon session of the 2025 Virginia Annual Conference was called to order at 2:00 PM by Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop of the Virginia Annual Conference.

The American Sign Language Interpreters for this session of the Virginia Annual Conference were, Virginia Bryant and Katherine McMullan.

The June 12<sup>th</sup> Afternoon Session of the Virginia Annual Conference was called to order at 2:06 PM

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:15:13):**

Okay. If everybody will move to their seat, we'll start our afternoon session. Okay. If everybody will move to our seats, the sooner we get started, the sooner you can get off for the evening. I'm going to start calling names Tim Ward. I'm going to start calling names Beth Givens. People get upset when I do this, but it does hasten people to their seats. Okay. As you go to your seats, I'm going to ask our conference secretary to give us a couple of announcements. Claire WIFI?

**Rev. Claire Miller, Conference Secretary (00:17:17):**

Is up. Woo-hoo. The network is VAUMC and the password is all caps VAUMC and the number 25 exclamation point. That's VAUMC, the number 25, exclamation point. And it is case sensitive. A note about the WIFI - the speed of the internet will be a little slower than many of us are accustomed to. That is on purpose to ensure that everyone is able to vote on the constitutional amendments tomorrow, and so that you'll be able to do so requires limiting each user's total speed. So, consider it like all of us moving



on to perfection. There is a car parked in the south parking lot that is blocking the travel lane and it needs to be moved. It's a silver Hyundai license plate, WUL 2 7 7 9, and I believe that's all I have.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference** ([00:18:23](#)):

I have a feeling it won't be parked there very long if you don't get it. A couple of announcements as we come into our afternoon session. You'll notice in our pre-annual conference publicity that one of my dear friends, the Reverend, Dr. Candace Lewis, who is the dean of Gamma Theological Seminary, was unable to be with us. She had some medical concerns, and so we have adjusted the schedule accordingly. We'll have the teaching session this afternoon, and I'm delighted to announce that the preacher for our memorial service will be Reverend Dr. Charles Ledlum-Bates. So we're very excited to have him; and Reverend Dr. Lewis will be with us next year and is excitedly waiting for her time with us next year. So just wanted to update you on that. It is my great joy.

**Rev. Claire Miller, Conference Secretary** ([00:19:24](#)):

Yes. May I interrupt? I'm so sorry. I was just given an update to the WIFI

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:19:29](#)):

Announcement. Oh, okay, good.

**Rev. Claire Miller, Conference Secretary** ([00:19:31](#)):

It is not working yet, but it will be soon and we will continue updating you. Thank you for your patience

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:19:42](#)):

And grace. The whole WIFI thing requires high level diplomacy because for us to have adequate capacity, we have to have the City of Roanoke work with us. So the Mayor has been very helpful to help expedite our WIFI capacity. Anything else before we get started? I think we're good. Okay. I am very delighted. As I said, if you're, I don't know about you, but the two happiest times in my year are picking Lenten devotionals and Advent devotionals, and one of the best Advent devotionals I've used is Scott Erickson's Advent book. It's *An Honest Advent*. It's excellent, and I'm delighted he is with us to share and I'm inviting him to come and give us his best. So, Scott Erickson.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:18:47](#)):

I want to remind you that tonight at 7:00 PM in the Roanoke Ballroom of the Hotel Roanoke, if you'd like to come and hear more from Scott, you're welcome to attend an evening with Scott Erickson, seven o'clock tonight in the Roanoke Ballroom, and he will continue to explode your head. And I am grateful for that. I'm grateful. And also I think part of what we're called to do as followers of Christ, figure out what younger, newer, fresher generations are exploring spiritually. And I guarantee you there are a lot of folks who aren't in this room who follow him regularly and who are shaped and have a connection to Jesus because of him. So I thank him for that and I appreciate this teaching and the time with us tonight. Now we are going to move into a break and we will break until 3:15 so 10 minutes and if you'll be back in your seats at 3:15, we'll continue our afternoon business. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:32:47](#)):

Okay. We're going to get started now. If you could wind up your conversations, I'll give you the whole night if you'll Okay, we're moving into our next section and it is my pleasure to introduce you to

Reverend Lan Davis Wilson. He is our new Director of Belonging and Advocacy. Lan is a Kentucky native and a Christ follower who's been serving in ministry on church staffs since he was 10 years old. He comes to us having previously served in the Indiana and greater New Jersey conferences on conference staff. He comes from four generations of pastors and preachers and has traveled the world doing ministry. He is not only a minister and an educator, but a trained coach and consultant. Lan is also a proud father and husband to Michael, who we are excited to welcome to Richmond as well. From his early days in the small rural church to his upbringing at a dynamic church in the projects to mega and multi-sites, new church plants, historic churches, and cross-racial, cross-cultural assignments, Lan is experienced in many different church settings and enjoys connecting with churches and leaders everywhere. He is over the moon, excited to be joining us in Virginia as our new Director of Belonging and Advocacy, Lan, would you come and bless us with our prayer for this session?

**Rev. Lan Davis Wilson, Director of Belonging and Advocacy:** ([01:34:33](#)):

Beloved siblings, once you pray with me, have thine own way. Lord, y'all know that have thine own way. Thou art potter thou, we are the clay. We are the clay modus and make us after thine will, after thine will. While we are waiting, while we eternal God, our maker, we pause once again in reverence to you who has created us and sustains us, our deliverer, our provider, and protector, our strength and shield, our light and salvation, our shepherd and the shade upon our right hand, our company keeper, our heart, fixer and mind regulator. We recognize not only who you are, oh God, but what you mean to us. So with great love and respect for our siblings in creation who bow to other gods, we believe you to be the true and living God and declare today that it is in you. We live, move, and have our being.

**Rev. Lan Davis Wilson, Director of Belonging and Advocacy:** ([01:35:59](#)):

And so as we gather this afternoon and as Jacob led this sacred moment this morning, that's why we pray. It's because in exercising our faith, we believe that you not only listen but answer. And for that, oh God, we say thank you, thank you for being good and thank you for being God. And now God, as we enter into this session this afternoon, we recognize and give thanks to you for the original native owners of this land and for all of the enslaved ancestors who labored this land. And now God, our bishop is here once again to preside over us and we believe that you alone have anointed and appointed her for such a time as this, but even as she wields the gavel and sits in the presiding seat, God would you be the chair of this meeting. We have an agenda today, but would you have your way today we've brought with us burdens and baggage, but while we work, would you remove distractions?

**Rev. Lan Davis Wilson, Director of Belonging and Advocacy:** ([01:37:06](#)):

And while you're doing that, would you cancel every attack of the enemy in the name of Jesus? As a matter of fact, we ask that you would saturate once again this holy place that we've created as your tabernacle today, this business session so heavy with your anointing that the enemy would not have room to operate. Understanding that it is the anointing that breaks the yokes. Help us today that every voice and every heart would feel valued and seen. Help us today that every person who has felt pushed to the margins would feel like they have a true seat at the table. Help us when racism and xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, and misogyny try to surface again, help us that oppressors would be silenced and hearts would be pricked convicted until the comfortable would be disturbed and the disturbed comforted. Help us today, those of us that would seek to proceed in ways that seek to preserve institution.

**Rev. Lan Davis Wilson, Director of Belonging and Advocacy:** ([01:38:04](#)):

When you are calling us to revival in the movement, help us, oh God, when we conduct our business in ways that would treat our buildings as mausoleums and museums rather than community centers and hospitals, help us, oh God, that you might arise and your enemies be scattered. Help us that we might bring good news to the poor. Help us that you might be pleased with what we do today. Move in such a way that when we leave this place, we know it had to be you. And so at the end of the day, you get the glory. You get the praise God. You get the honor and oh God, leave us the blessing for it's in the strong and righteous and holy and saving and matchless and magnificent and magnanimous and powerful and resurrecting name of Jesus the Christ our savior. We pray today, let all of the people of God say

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:39:05](#)):

Amen. Amen. And now it is my honor and privilege to introduce Ms. Nancy Toscano. She is the President and CFO of United Methodist Family Services UMFS. And we are going to recognize now their hundred and 25th anniversary. Nancy,

**Ms. Nancy Toscano, President and CFO, United Methodist Family Services:** ([01:39:32](#)):

Thank you Bishop Sue. I am truly honored to be here 125 years. That is half our country's history. 125 years of compassion in action. 125 years in partnership with you, caring for Virginia's most vulnerable children. The United Methodist Conference is in many ways our founder From the beginning you have been by our side helping us to evolve from a single orphanage into an organization with 18 different meaningful services in nine locations throughout Virginia serving thousands of children every year. In that time we've had four different names and because we're amongst friends, spoiler alert will soon unveil our fifth. Don't tell anybody but in that process, many of you have responded to our call for input. You have helped us imagine a name that honors our legacy, reflects our deep connection to the Methodist church and communicates our values deeply and helps our children shine brightly. You keep showing up, you pray for our children, please continue. You volunteer, please continue. You mentor our children, you advise me, you walk with us. Please continue. Pastors in this room provide spiritual care to our children on our campus. Please continue for more than a decade. This is an example you have planned, funded, and through memory making proms for our children this year was the Harry Potter theme, which I thought was very cool.

**Ms. Nancy Toscano, President and CFO, United Methodist Family Services:** ([01:42:16](#)):

Please continue. Bishop Sue invites me to relationship partners gatherings. The bishop joined us for a recent ribbon cutting and it meant the world to us. Please continue. You have invited us to speak at your congregations, at your Sunday classes, at your neighborhood picnics so that we can find foster parents. Please continue. Many of you and I've talked to some of you today have fostered and adopted through UMFS. Please continue. You donate and in this deeply selfless act, you include us in your legacy giving. It's simply inspiring because of you. We've expanded our reach, deepened our services, and stayed grounded in faith and purpose because of you children find hope and direction. Please continue children's lives depend on it. May God bless you and may you continue to bless others. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:43:43](#)):

Before you go, I'd like to offer a prayer of blessing on UMFS as you enter your next 125 years. So let's join in prayer. Oh God, we thank you. We thank you for the selfless giving of so many throughout the last 125 years to serve countless children throughout the state. We thank you for Nancy and the other leaders past, present and those you'll provide in the future. We thank you for their commitment and their giftedness. We thank you for everyone who gives, everyone who hosts, everyone who partakes of

giving so that these ministries will continue and we thank you for the future. We pray a blessing on them and pray as they enter into 125 years with whatever fifth new name they have and we rejoice and marvel at all that has been done at all that is happening now and the promise of what will come in the future. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Thank you. One of the best gifts of coming to Virginia is having Martha Stokes as your partner in crime. I really do think of Martha as a sister. We spend a lot of hours together, have a lot of good conversations, a lot of sometimes hard conversations, but it's just been a joy and I am delighted now that she's going to come and bring our lady report. Martha...

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Lay Leader, Virginia Annual Conference: ([01:45:50](#)):**

Bishop Sue, thank you for that. I don't know if you've heard as many times as I have that people actually think sometimes we're sisters. I think they do tell us we look alike. I'm the older one, so I'll be the wicked stepsister or something along the way. But anyway, Bishop Sue, members of the annual conference and guest, I'm going to start up front by offering my thanks again to all of the laity who were on the laity session this past Sunday afternoon. It had been a very busy day and as I signed onto that session, I could feel those little tinges of the grass allergies that have been bothering me beginning that little tickle in the back of my throat. And so thank you to all of you who put up with me for an hour of trying to hide and mute those coughs that were there. So I have tried really hard to make sure that I don't do that during this laity address, but just like I started Sunday, will you all just take a moment with me for just a little bit of silence because I dunno if you're feeling the same way. It's not just the allergy possibilities, but this morning's opening worship, our prayers that have been offered already. The words from Scott Erickson have stirred some deep emotions in my heart and soul today. And so just breathe deeply with me right now and take a moment.

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Lay Leader, Virginia Annual Conference: ([01:47:35](#)):**

Thank you. I keep waiting for the appearance of our young person who is going to sit in my chair. And so wherever Lydia is at, Lydia Lenor is one of our youth cohort members and she's a member of Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Charlottesville on the Three Notch'd District, a youth leader there. She's going to be starting her senior year in high school this fall. This is actually Lydia's third annual conference, so Lydia, wherever you are, come on up here and sit in my seat. Oh, come sit in my seat up there. You want her big name in front of you.

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Lay Leader, Virginia Annual Conference: ([01:48:22](#)):**

She was just hiding in the back row and I didn't see her right. I said This is Lydia's third annual conference and she's going to be a senior in high school, so that might be her seat in the future, it might be the seat for one of our other youth cohort members. That's certainly a goal of mine to make sure it is filled in the future with positive energy and youthful spirit. And I'm grateful to be able to say at this moment too, you've heard me say it before in different places. I am extremely thankful that this year's Board of Laity is probably the youngest Board of Laity the Virginia Conference has ever had overall so appreciation to all of our district lay leaders, our district superintendents, for also helping me to work toward that goal of making space and honoring the younger voices among us.

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Lay Leader, Virginia Annual Conference: ([01:49:27](#)):**

Last year we did a new thing at the laity session by recognizing the movement of the Holy Spirit in those responding to God's call to serve as pulpit, lay supply, certified lay ministers deaconess and home missionaries. It's been necessary this year to do that recognition in different ways given that we had the

virtual laity session. An additional part of that recognition will take place just a little bit later during this address. A final piece will happen on Saturday morning during the service of calling ordination. I'm kind of lovingly calling this a recognition in three movements and Bishop Sue, I hope you laughed at that as a play on the annual conference theme, but to move this rapidly growing Methodist movement forward, John Wesley recognized the need for effective competent lay leaders. Laypeople were called upon to oversee class meetings, to teach, to lead in mission outreach and to the community.

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Lay Leader, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:50:42](#)):

And yes, even to preach it was laypeople who cared for the sick, visited prisoners, took the lead in accountable discipleship and shared Jesus's message. It was Methodist laypeople who started schools, hospitals, orphanages, just like UMFS began programs for older adults. We started as a lay led movement of renewal and revival. And today, if we're to thrive and grow and transform the world, it's up to us, the laity to make it happen. Our Wesleyan heritage teaches us that the laity are the church. We are the body of Christ alive in the world today, actively serving God and our neighbors through every aspect of our daily lives, not just a Sunday thing, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every minute of every day. It begins with our personal discernment of God's call on our lives and continues as we spend time focused on our own growth in our faith, in our understanding, practicing the spiritual disciplines.

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Lay Leader, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:52:13](#)):

Sometimes we think that call from God is only for those who go on to set apart ministry of licensed and ordained ministry to be a pastor. But no, it's our understanding that by virtue of our baptism, God calls each and every one of us to use our gifts and our talents in ministry and that changes across our lifetime just like we heard Scott Erickson describe, but we don't live out our calls separately as laity and clergy. We must be partners in ministry, ministry and leadership that's shared by the pastor and local church laity now clergy. It's up to you to help us discern how the Holy Spirit's moving in our lives. It's up to you to help us be equipped for that task. More importantly, it's up to you to utilize us and laity. It's up to us to assume full responsibility for becoming stronger disciples of Jesus Christ and to live out the great commission in a manner that we have heard over the last few months in our new denominational vision by forming disciples of Jesus Christ who empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections.

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Lay Leader, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:53:58](#)):

I've just completed my first year of retirement from professional work. Okay, I heard somebody laugh already with that, but for those of you all who are going to be honored tomorrow for your upcoming retirements, let me tell you right now, it has not been an easy year. I realized during some personal reflection time back in January that I was still calling everything I was doing for the work of the church and the conference work. I was telling Steve, my spouse that I was going upstairs to the office to do work for the conference. I was going up to that home office, the same office that had been my COVID office and had been the hybrid office ever since that time to work. I was saying to the conference staff that I had to find a new way to schedule the needed work on projects. I realized how often I asked the board of laity and many of you all for forgiveness because I was so far behind in the work that I needed to do.

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Lay Leader, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:55:20](#)):

It was a moment of great revelation for me to the extent that I knew I had to change everything about that space, about my language, about my attitude. So I cleaned out the entire office. I sold and gave away the furniture that was there. I cleaned out books and files, even painted the walls, and then when I

took everything off the walls, I even wondered what I was going to do with those diplomas that had been framed and hanging there for so long and I sat with my journal one morning, I made a long list of words to describe what I was doing or dreamed of doing in that space. I narrowed down the list to 15 words. Now when I go into my creative space, I put a sign on the door that either says, advancing, I'm instigating, I'm organizing, I'm networking, I'm generating just to name a few, but I am not working.

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Lay Leader, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:56:39](#)):

I had to realize once again that being your conference lay leader is not about the work that gets done. It's not about the items on my calendar, the meetings to be held or even a list of responsibilities in the Book of Discipline. It's about me responding to God's call in my life, honoring the movement of the Holy Spirit and following Jesus. Church leadership can easily become work which takes away the boldness can dampen the joy, can make us less courageous, but that's not what's needed for this time. It's not about doing the work. It's about responding to God's call in our lives and following Jesus.

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Lay Leader, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:57:44](#)):

This spring, I was privileged to be a part of the interviews with the conference lay servant ministry team for this class of candidates for certified lay ministry. Each candidate was asked about their ministry projects with each one of them as they described the new projects or the enhanced ministries they were taken on. This radiant joy showed in their faces as they especially talked about, new relationships that were being formed, new things they were learning, their eagerness to continue or to expand their ministries was so strong. They spoke with passion, with energy, with love for God in their communities. It was so very clear that the ministries they were called to be about at this time in their lives were not about doing work. They were responding to God's call, to the movement of the spirit and following Jesus. And I know the same is true for those who've said yes to service as pulpit lay supply for this coming appointment year. It's not about the work, it's about responding to God's call and following Jesus. So today, let us recognize those who are seated on the stage this afternoon who have said yes, it is about following Jesus. Now, not all of the persons who are going to be recognized with their names on the screen were able to be here with us today, but we have a number of them.

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Lay Leader, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:59:33](#)):

I'd like to invite Richard Spears, our Conference Director of Lay Servant Ministries, along with Joanna Dietz and Jen Robinson O'Brien, co-directors of our conference certified lay ministry program to join me here at the podium as we recognize this year's class of lay supply and certified lay ministers

**Mr. Richard Speirs, Conference Director of Lay Servant Ministries:** ([01:59:58](#)):

This day, these are witnesses who have come forth from among all of you and they are responding to their call to the Holy Spirit to representative ministries as lay supply or certified lay ministers. I'd like to ask the class of 2025 lay supply to stand and to come forward. You'll see their names on the screen. When a pastoral charge is not able to be served by an ordained or a licensed minister, the bishop has the recommendation of the cabinet, may assign a qualified lay trained lay person, lay minister, or lay missionary to do the work of the ministry of that charge. Today we naive to recognize these persons as newly assigned pulpit supply for the upcoming year.

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Lay Leader, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:01:33](#)):

Am going to ask you a couple of questions and your response is, I will with the help of God, will you oversee the charge to which you have been assigned? I



**Lay Supply and Certified Lay Ministers:** ([02:01:45](#)):

I will, with the help of God.

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Lay Leader, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:01:47](#)):

Will you be responsible to the faith and polity of the United Methodist Church accountable to the policies and procedures of the annual conference and ever responsible to your district superintendent under whose supervision you may serve? I

**Lay Supply and Certified Lay Ministers:** ([02:02:03](#)):

I will with the help, help of God,

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Lay Leader, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:02:05](#)):

Will you help me to recognize these four who are representative of a class of 18 new pulpit lay supply. And just like those of you who are clergy who know that the projected appointments can change up until Saturday morning, this list of names on the screen may change until Saturday morning or even later it might, but you never know.

**Rev. Joanna Dietz, Co-Director of the Conference Certified Lay Ministry Program:** ([02:02:51](#)):

I asked the class of 2025 certified lay ministers. Come forward, you'll see their names on the screens and at a special luncheon today they were each given a pin from the lay servant ministries team to symbolizing certified lay ministry, lay preachers, exhorters and class leaders have served the church since the earliest days. The United Methodist Church has recognized the historic call to ministry of all believers and has officially established the role of certified lay minister. A Certified Lay Minister is a qualified United Methodist layperson called to congregational leadership as part of a ministry team under the supervision of a clergy person to further the growth mission and connectional thrust of the United Methodist Church.

**Rev. Joanna Dietz, Co-Director of the Conference Certified Lay Ministry Program:** ([02:04:10](#)):

The Certified Lay Minister is provided with training, support, supervision and accountability while serving to enhance the quality of ministry to small member churches and to expand team ministry in other churches. A Certified Lay Minister is prepared to lead worship, to proclaim the gospel, to assist in program leadership, to provide a care ministry to the congregation, to be a witness in the community and to guide members in applying the gospel to their daily life. Today we recognize these persons as Certified Lay Ministers in the United Methodist Church. We commend your calling and believe that God wills the use of your gifts, graces and talents for God's service.

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Lay Leader, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:05:13](#)):

Two questions for you all as well. Your response being, "I will with the help of God". Will you evidence your desire to live out your faith following the commandment of Jesus to love God and love your neighbor as yourself

**Certified Lay Ministers:** ([02:05:31](#)):

I will with the help of God.

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Lay Leader, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:05:33](#)):

Will you be faithful in your duties as a certified lay minister? Be responsible to the faith and polity of the United Methodist Church and be ever responsive in leadership to the clergy under whose supervision you may serve.

**Certified Lay Ministers:** ([02:05:48](#)):

I will with the help of God

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Lay Leader, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:05:51](#)):

Once again, will you honor these who have completed their courses as Certified Lay Ministers

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Lay Leader, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:06:13](#)):

This day. These are the witnesses who've come forth from among us. They're responding to their call from the Holy Spirit. These persons are by God's grace commissioned as Lay Supply and Certified Lay Ministers. Those authorized by the church to inquire about them have discerned that they are persons of sound learning and of Christian character. They possess the necessary gifts and evidence of God's grace and have demonstrated a profound commitment to serve Jesus Christ. Therefore, we believe them to be duly called to serve God in their representative ministry. Let us pray together. Almighty God, the giver of every good and perfect gift. We commend to you these persons to be consecrated to ministry within your church. Grant to them a vision of service. Give them strength for the performance of their duties and understanding heart and a willingness to work with all others in the ministry of the Church through Jesus Christ our savior.

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Lay Leader, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:07:19](#)):

And all God's people did say amen. Amen. As these groups leave the stage, each person will be given a clinging cross from the Board of Laity as a symbol that we surround them with prayer and support as they begin their new ministries. Now I want to close with just one more short prayer. I subscribe to Maria Shriver's Sunday Paper email. I look forward each week to her words of hope and meaning for a time such as this, which is the subtitle of the e-newsletter. In mid-May, she opened her reflection by noting that poet Mary Oliver once wrote, "keep room in your heart for the unimaginable". Shriver concluded her reflection with this short prayer. "Dear God, help us to stay humble and open to the call of the unimaginable. Guide our hearts to unity, our words to healing and our steps toward peace. Amen." Our calling is to the unimaginable movement of the Holy Spirit. That unimaginable movement of the Spirit in the world today. Now notice I did not say unimaginable work of the Spirit but the movement, it's not about the work, it's about responding to God's call in our lives, listening for that movement of the Spirit and following Jesus.

**Bishop Sue Haupert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:09:06](#)):

Would you join me in thanking Martha Stokes as they leave the stage? I invite now Reverend Victor Gomez, the Superintendent of the Shenandoah River District and Dean of the cabinet to offer the cabinet report Victor

**Rev. Dr. Victor Gomez, Superintendent of the Shenandoah River District and Dean of the Cabinet:** ([02:09:51](#)):

Bishop Sue, Lay Leader Stokes, members of the Annual Conference. The report of the cabinet is found on pages 94 and 95 of The Book of Reports and also beginning on page five of your addendum, you will



find minute questions 10 through 12 and beginning on page 90 of your book of reports, you will find the listing of the district committees on ordained ministry and the listing of the district boards of church location and building. First, I move the approval bishop, of the District Committees of Ordained Ministry on pages 90 and 91 and the District Boards of Church Location and Building on page 92.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:10:41](#)):

Okay, if you would approve these District Committees of Ordained Ministry and the District Boards of Church Location and Building, would you lift a hand? Thank you.

**Rev. Dr. Victor Gomez, Superintendent of the Shenandoah River District and Dean of the Cabinet:** ([02:10:51](#)):

Second, I present minute questions 10, 11, and 12 in the addendum. And please note the following additions under minute question 12B under Shenandoah River District, Singers Glen Charge the numbers are 411722 and there will be a decrease from 50% to 25%. Shenandoah Valley charge 970571 and increase from 25% to 50% and John Wesley in Harrisonburg 970456. It reduced from 50% to 25%. So Bishop, I move the approval of minute questions 10, 11, and 12.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:11:48](#)):

Okay, if you would approve these minute questions, please lift your hands. And they're approved.

**Rev. Dr. Victor Gomez, Superintendent of the Shenandoah River District and Dean of the Cabinet:** ([02:11:55](#)):

Now please turn to the closure resolutions that can be found in the addendum on pages 18 to 23. And listed are the 26 detailed church closure resolutions before the body for vote, I will be reading the names of each church that we are about to vote on as a group. And as I do so, you will be able to see a picture of the church building behind me. After we vote to recognize the discontinuance of these churches as a group, the bishop will offer a prayer of recognition for the ministries of these churches that have touched the lives of people in their communities. So let us now share those churches that are before us from Coastal Virginia District, Epworth United Methodist Church. From the Living Waters District, Trinity United Methodist Church, Thrifts Chapel United Methodist Church from the Mountain View District, Providence United Methodist Church,

**Rev. Dr. Victor Gomez, Superintendent of the Shenandoah River District and Dean of the Cabinet:** ([02:13:10](#)):

St. Andrew United Methodist Church, Cascade United Methodist Church. Fairview United Methodist Church, Court Street United Methodist Church. From the Shenandoah River District, Asbury Warren, United Methodist Church. Old Bethel United Methodist Church, Hites Chapel United Methodist Church. From the Three Notch'd District Mount Horeb United Methodist Church. From the Valley Ridge District, McDowell United Methodist Church, McKendree United Methodist Church, Totten Chapel United Methodist Church, Doe Hill United Methodist Church, Mountain Valley United Methodist Church, Epworth United Methodist Church, Humphreys Chapel, United Methodist Church, Pinnell Chapel United Methodist Church, Persinger Memorial United Methodist Church, Mays Memorial United Methodist Church, Goodwin Memorial United Methodist Church, Ashwood United Methodist Church, Longdale United Methodist Church, Mount Olivet in Boones Mill. Bishop the cabinet recommends the discontinuance of these 20 churches named in disclosure resolutions contained in the addendum and listed on the screen.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:15:07](#)):**

Before we tend to this motion, let's join our hearts in prayer. Now, God it is with a sense of sadness but with gratitude that we face the closures of these churches today. We know that the legacy of these churches is not in these buildings, but in those who learned about Jesus in their pews, those who shared covered dish dinners, those who welcomed children, those who attended worship regularly, those who went to services, funeral services and weddings. We rejoice that these churches had vital and vibrant witnesses at one time in these communities. We rejoice that, they touched lives, and it made a difference. And now Lord, as always, you remind us that in every death there's resurrection. So as we face these closures, we pray that you'll give us new eyes to see as we start new churches elsewhere, as we build ministries in these communities, as we see a different future from the past, but we are grateful for their witness. And now as we have this solemn time, we commend them and those who worship there to your healing power into your comfort. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

**Rev. Dr. Victor Gomez, Superintendent of the Shenandoah River District and Dean of the Cabinet: ([02:16:57](#)):**

Amen.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference ([02:17:01](#)):**

You have now heard the report on the closure resolutions. I would again direct you to the actual text of each resolution found in the addendum on pages 18 to 23. This is what we are voting on by recommendation of the cabinet, we will now vote upon these resolutions as a whole. Is there any discussion? Seeing none? I would ask if you would approve the closure of these churches to lift your hand. Those opposed same sign and they are closed and we wait for resurrection.

**Rev. Dr. Victor Gomez, Superintendent of the Shenandoah River District and Dean of the Cabinet: ([02:17:44](#)):**

Amen.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: ([02:17:45](#)):**

Thank you

**Rev. Dr. Victor Gomez, Superintendent of the Shenandoah River District and Dean of the Cabinet: ([02:17:46](#)):**

Bishop. This concludes the report of the Cabinet.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: ([02:17:48](#)):**

Thank you, Reverend Gomez. Thank you everybody. Take a deep breath, breathe in the spirit, which is all around us and let's look to a new day. And now my sister Martha and I will come before you. And I think I am older actually, but I'll let her think that last year you can start. Martha, I'll let you start.

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Lay Leader, Report of the Extended, Extended Cabinet: ([02:18:31](#)):**

Last year we did share with the annual conference a plan for the Quadrennium. It was a document that was in the book reports and that we discussed that was entitled The Next Faithful Step, A Quadrennial Focus. That document included an underlying principle of our life together as the Virginia Annual Conference. It read this way. At God's initiative, the Virginia Annual Conference exists to support the

transformation of lives by facilitating Christ-centered connections between individuals, local churches, communities, and across the wide array of God's creation. The team discerned that for this Quadrennium, this four year cycle, our annual conference needs to make two pieces of priority to make time to grow in relationship with God and neighbor. To define the practical roles of the annual conference, the district and the local churches. Within the Virginia Annual Conference,

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:19:38](#)):

We created some key benchmarks that we wanted to have. And these benchmarks have been before the cabinet and the conference staff all year and we've held ourselves accountable to them. I wanted to report to you where we are. We continue to develop a comprehensive leadership framework where the conference staff, the cabinet, the district staffs, and everybody works seamlessly to do away with silos and to do away with ministry. That's not done in partnership and we have made great strides in that. I'm happy to report. The next part was to engage a culture of call so that in every church, in every part of the annual conference, we were continually asking people, what is God calling you to do? Laity and clergy listen for the call of God on your life and act on it. So we have had several events and we continue to plan events intentionally to bring up the call on the lives of those in our annual conference.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:20:36](#)):

I'm delighted that we've built a narrative budget, a narrative, a budget reflects the values of the people who create it. I think we see that in our national life, don't we? A lot of discussion about what values are reflected in a budget. And this year, as you see, when you look at the materials on the budget, we have crafted a narrative budget that talks about where our values are and how we're funding the work of the annual conference. Another part was to tell great stories. It seems like we get caught up in the negativity and there are great things happening all over in the churches of our annual conference. So our office of communications is really restructuring everything and working on a new website that tells the stories of the great things that are happening all over the Virginia Annual Conference. And finally, we wanted to emphasize a United Methodist catechesis.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:21:33](#)):

We believe that everybody should value and know their united Methodist polity heritage and tradition. So, in the last year, Martha and I have really had a good time doing Soul Feast. I hope if you haven't done it yet, you'll get a group together and all of the installments, the monthly installments are together now on the website. So I invite you to start the study and then view each of the webcasts as you go along. I think that a lot of folks have enjoyed the discussions of spiritual practices and the means of grace that connect us to God and really fuel our call and our life in ministry as we anticipate the 2026 annual conference. Because a lot of people have said, Bishop, what's next? What are we going to study next? Well, our focus now to the historical movement of Methodism and we will have a new monthly webinar series beginning this fall called Wesleyan Ways Exploring Our Methodist Roots.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:22:37](#)):

This series will offer participants the opportunity to explore our United Methodist heritage through the webinar conversations and additional reading resources that will be offered throughout the year. And just mark your calendars next May, and I'll give you the exact dates when I have my calendar in front of me next May. We're planning a Wesley Heritage tour to England and I will be taking the ordinances, but it is open to any United Methodist in Virginia lay clergy. Who would like to go if you'd like to go? Well, we won't ride horses where the circuit riders went, but thank goodness. But we will explore our

Wesleyan roots throughout England and see where it all began and to renew ourselves because to visit those folks is to have your pulses quickened and your heart strangely warmed all over again. And now the connectional table. Martha, I'll turn that to you.

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Lay Leader, Virginia Annual Conference: ([02:23:39](#)):**

Just a few short words about one of the steps in developing that comprehensive leadership framework out of a desire to create a model for conference leadership that can be nimble, more collaborative and strategic. The common table for church vitality is going to be living into a model this year. I don't want to really call it an experiment, but we're going to see how it works and then we'll tweak it a little bit before we come back with the standing rule changes and charter changes that would put it into place permanently at annual conference next year. There are a couple of things that you will see in both the Common Table report and in the report of the extended-extended cabinet that describe this model that we are going to be working toward. You can find that on pages 113 through 115 of the Book of Reports, since its inception, the goal of the common table has been to create strategies and plans that benefit the work of the local church and of our connection.

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Lay Leader, Virginia Annual Conference: ([02:24:48](#)):**

And despite our best efforts, as Bishop Sue has said, we have often found ourselves siloed, not talking across those boards and commissions, duplicating work, duplicating effort. Despite our best efforts, conference programs across those boards and agencies and commissions have been somewhat piecemeal. This new model we'll seek to develop a more strategically focused centralized team, which will work in collaboration with sub-teams. The sub-teams will be where our conference boards and commissions committees come together to share what they are working on, their goals and plans and to have intentional conversations about how we do that better together in the future rather than in our separate ways. So again, this newly formed connectional table will seek to live into this model for the 2025-2026 appointment year. There will be intentional reviews in the fall and in the spring modifications will be made to the plans sub-teams in the scope of the work. And then we will come back to the annual conference next year with proposals for that change to be implemented in the standing rules and the common table charter with an implementation date hopefully of January 1st, 2027. Thank you, Martha. You're welcome.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: ([02:26:20](#)):**

I think that'll do it. I always refer when I think about this, I don't know if you've read *The Boys in the Boat*. It's a great novel, but well, it's not a novel. It's nonfiction. It's about the University of Washington rowing team. And if you've never rode or know nothing about rowing, once you read that book, you'll be an expert. But it talks about how every rower works together and they have to work in perfect synchronization or their time is slowed and the coxswain is the smallest person in the boat and make sure they're all on the same rhythm and every person in the boat has a different function, but they all operate together. So what Martha and I are describing is in the scheme of things, how do we get the whole annual conference rowing together? And that is a constant challenge, but I think slowly but surely we're getting there. So thank you for just the tremendous cooperation we've had and the growth we've seen as a result of this. But that's the report and we just wanted to keep you up to date. Thank you. I shut my book and now I don't know where I am. So I think we're to the delegation. We are to the delegation. I invite last year during our session, oh no, now I'm in the right place. Now it is my joy now to introduce Reverend Lindsay Freeman and Mr. Warren Harper to offer our delegation report.

**Rev, Lindsay Baynham-Freeman, Clergy Lead, Virginia Conference Delegation to General Conference:** ([02:28:29](#)):

Good afternoon, laity and clergy of the Virginia Annual Conference. My name is Lindsay Baynham-Freeman, and it has been my joy and honor to serve as the head of the Virginia Delegation. I'm joined this afternoon by my partner in crime, Mr. Warren Harper, our head Lay Delegate. First and foremost, we want to thank each and every one of you and the communities that you represent for praying for us. And not only that, but for the work and ministry of the worldwide church, we are so grateful.

**Mr. Warren Harper, Laity Lead, Virginia Conference Delegation to General Conference:** ([02:29:04](#)):

This afternoon, we would like to take a moment to share about a major proposal that came out of the 2020-2024 General Conference. Among the hundreds of legislative petitions, there was a proposal for four Amendments to the United Methodist Constitution. Friends, this is no small feat. While most changes at the General Conference take effect automatically, these amendments include changes to our constitution. There's an additional step which includes an additional vote at each annual conference for amendments to pass. It will require a two thirds aggregate vote of all present and voting. And each annual conference across the connection conferences around the world have and will vote around these proposed amendments. And we will be voting tomorrow afternoon as your delegation. We hope each voting lay and clergy member to the Annual Conference will familiarize themselves with these proposed amendments. They each address different components of our constitution. Three in particular dealing with racial justice, gender inclusivity, and clergy. Voting rights information on each proposed amendment may be found at [vaumc.org/regionalizationamendments](http://vaumc.org/regionalizationamendments).

**Rev, Lindsay Baynham-Freeman, Clergy Lead, Virginia Conference Delegation to General Conference:** ([02:31:22](#)):

This afternoon we would like to focus on one of the four amendments that pertains to worldwide regionalization. You have heard us share about this before in our 2023 annual conference report as well as in the q and a sessions at the 2024 annual conference session. Worldwide regionalization restructures the United Methodist Church as we become even more global in nature. Under this new structure, the denomination would be organized into regions including a US regional Conference. We would stay united as one church and share in one mission and ministry while each region would be able to adapt ministries and practices to their own context. The legislation around worldwide regionalization was adopted by an overwhelmingly majority of the general conference delegates supported by 78% of those people in Charlotte. We heard from voices across the connection and around the world as to the strength with this movement towards regionalization, one key tenant was that regionalization creates equity across the church without privileging one region over and above another. While other regions are on the periphery. Currently the US is privileged over and above while other regions are outliers within the connection.

**Mr. Warren Harper, Laity Lead, Virginia Conference Delegation to General Conference:** ([02:32:57](#)):

And you may be asking, what does this mean and what will change? Existing central conferences will be renamed as regional conferences and the United States will become a regional conference. Regional conferences like Current Central conferences will be able to adapt and draft their own regional book of discipline, hymnals, books of worship and other liturgical resources, standards for licensing and ordination, reorganization of districts and conferences to best support missional needs. And perhaps more importantly, here is what will not change. All regional conferences will share our constitution, doctrinal standings and our theological task. The ministry of all Christians and our social regional conferences

cannot change our articles of religion and confession of faith. Furthermore, the following will be maintained with a move towards regionalization. Our Council of Bishops, our Judicial Council, our General Agencies, General Conference, and Jurisdictional Conferences.

**Rev, Lindsay Baynham-Freeman, Clergy Lead, Virginia Conference Delegation to General Conference:** ([02:34:53](#)):

As shared previously regionalization requires amending the Constitution of the Book of Discipline, which includes a vote at each and every Annual Conference. And that's where you come in Voting members will have the opportunity tomorrow afternoon to vote for each of these four amendments separately. The first vote will be around regionalization as your delegation. We hope you will prayerfully consider voting in favor for regionalization. We believe that it is a faithful path forward for the United Methodist Church. It unites us in mission and ministry and calls us to be a connectional church that celebrates and values diversity around the world as scripture puts it to be witnesses in Jerusalem and all of Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. If you'd like to learn more about regionalization or if you have questions, please visit our display booth in the special events hall. We will be there during meal times and happy to answer any questions that you might have. You can also find additional information about regionalization at [vaumc.org/regionalization](http://vaumc.org/regionalization). And lastly, we would like to give a huge thanks and appreciation to the entire delegation. Would y'all stand? Keep standing. Keep standing. My goodness, my goodness. These persons have gone above and beyond to represent Virginia and to represent the greater church in the world. I want to thank each and every one of you for your commitment of time, talent, joy, advocacy, labor, faithfulness and thoughtfulness. We are so grateful. Bishop Sue, members of the Virginia Annual Conference, this concludes our report. Thank you both.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:37:03](#)):

A great round of applause for Job Well done. Thank you. Remember last year when it came to the floor debate, we had a floor debate around an annual conference apology to the L-G-B-T-Q community and we had pretty much an equal vote, I think in a moment of tremendous grace. In the wake of that debate, members of the annual conference came together to propose a third way a task force, which has come to be known as Journey in Understanding was assembled and populated by people from a variety of theological and geographic perspectives. To engage this conversation in a fuller and deeper capacity, I'd like to introduce Reverend Mark Ogren, who will now give the report of this task force and their work.

**Rev. Mark Ogren, Chair, Journey in Understanding Task Force:** ([02:38:04](#)):

Bishop Sue, Lay Leader Martha and Delegates. I have served as the convener for the Journey in Understanding project through the last year. It's one of the highest honors of my ministry to be part of this work and this team. So to begin, on Saturday, June 22nd, as Bishop Sue's referring you, the Virginia Conference approved a motion to form a committee to seek a more excellent way in lieu of taking a vote on the resolution, calling for an apology to the LGBTQ plus community. The motion directed that Bishop Sue would identify the committee members who would begin to work in the fall and report back to this annual conference following this action on Saturday, June 22nd, Bishop Sue, prayed a prayer, a prayer that our committee, our team has used as our guide and our inspiration. And so it's our desire to begin our report today by having us listen to Bishop Sue's prayer from last June 22nd.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:39:36](#)):



Gracious, God gracious God, this is a momentous time in the history of the Virginia Annual Conference as we seek a more excellent way, a way in which we hear everyone's voices, in a way where we approach every person where they are, where we honor theological difference, where we truly strive to be, a place where we serve you first and foremost, where we focus on serving Christ and being him in the world and where we seek to be as we are told ambassadors for him and agents of reconciliation. This morning we have discussed what, well, throughout the day yesterday, we saw that maybe reconciliation might be what we're commanded to do as followers of Christ. So we ask that we live into this door that has opened, that all of us seek to see the best in each other, to seek Christ in each other, that we seek to really listen to one another and not discount, not to humiliate, not to negate anyone. Oh Christ, may we truly be like you exhibiting your fruits. And may our churches also be places of reconciliation for folks from all backgrounds who all need to know you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Rev. Mark Ogren, Chair, Journey in Understanding Task Force:** ([02:41:23](#)):

Amen. After the 2024 annual Conference, Bishop Sue reached out to the Reverend Dr. Gary Mason. Gary is a Methodist minister and the executive director of Rethinking Conflict, a conflict transformation organization in Belfast, Ireland. He's spent 27 years as a Methodist Parish pastor in Belfast, and he has played an integral role in the Northern Ireland peace process. Gary served as our guide in the past year, meeting with us by Zoom and participating with us in person during our April retreat. Here is a word of greeting from Reverend Dr. Gary Mason,

**Rev. Gary Mason, Executive Director, Rethinking Conflict:** ([02:42:19](#)):

Colleagues, sisters and brothers at the Virginia United Methodist Church. Let me introduce myself. I'm one of the faces today. Most of you will not know, but my name is Gary Mason. I'm a Methodist clergy person, part of the Methodist Church in Ireland. I've been ordained over 30 years and grew up really in what was known as that SEC cockpit of Northern Ireland. Lived through 30 years of a very difficult internal civil war. Looking at the whole concepts of political and religious polarization today, the church has set me aside for doing more work on an international basis. So I spend about six months of the year in the island of Ireland, three months in the United States and three months in the Middle East. So last August, at Atlanta Day, I had an email from a person you all know very well, Bishop Sue, saying she'd like to do a zoom call with me sometime when I was in Atlanta.

**Rev. Gary Mason, Executive Director, Rethinking Conflict:** ( [02:43:19](#)):

We had that call and she asked me would I accompany your conference as you attempted to wrestle with some of the issues around human sexuality, it was around that stage that I was introduced to a person that I've got to know very well. A person, all of you, I'm guessing in the room today, will know very well, Mark Ogren. And in those early days, Mark and I, as we talked together, realized we needed to hear all voices or literally to ensure that every person with something to contribute would be at the table. So Mark asked DSs to pick a number of people, which we come up with five designated as traditional, five designated as progressives. I've never, to be honest, been really fond of those titles. But we had to use some labels to get people around the table. In the early days, we wrestled with, what should we call this experience, this ongoing process, which as I sit here today, actually in Virginia, ran from August to April.

**Rev. Gary Mason, Executive Director, Rethinking Conflict:** ([02:44:22](#)):

It was almost a nine month pretty intense process for those involved. I put on my thinking cap. But went back to the early 1990s when I developed a program called Journey in Understanding, and I was bringing

together really religious leaders and religious leaders from both sides of the political divide in that Northern Irish context. So it was never going to be journey in agreement because we didn't agree. But it was a journey in understanding. And I often quote the New York Times journalist, Brett Stevens, who's had brilliant quotation where he says, in order to disagree, well, we need to understand well. So really that nine months process was a conversation of understanding, of listening well, of hearing one another's positions of humanizing one another. Naturally, me being almost 4,000 miles away in the island of Ireland; a lot of these meetings took place by Zoom. Papers were written and papers were exchanged.

**Rev. Gary Mason, Executive Director, Rethinking Conflict: (02:45:28):**

But today, in this recording, I'm actually sitting in your conference office in April and joining colleagues you will all know, well, literally the team that we put together for a 24-hour retreat and a conversation. Theology in our space, I must be honest, influenced us quite profoundly sadly influenced many of us so badly that we ended up killing each other for 30 years. It was never a religious war, but I often say that what I would call theologies of superiority influence us profoundly in the Irish context. And I really think it is the rule of the church to these competing tensions together no matter what your theology is. I think as you've moved forward, no one was going to deny the diety of Christ or salvation by faith or rewrite the Apostles Creed. This is an issue in which godly well-meaning people actually disagree. And I remember a person when I was doing theology, the Evangelical Anglican.

**Rev. Gary Mason, Executive Director, Rethinking Conflict: (02:46:34):**

John stopped at the end of his life, struggling with the whole reality of a literal hell. And I know within the Methodist Church of Ireland back home when I'm reasonably sure it'll be the same within the Virginia Conference, there are people there who hold to universalism; people to a literal hell. Those who believe in annihilation. I saw an evangelical writer there two years ago, who wrote a book on the topic of postmortem salvation where people after they die will be given another chance. So in many ways, the church to my mind is about holding these competing opinions together. The brilliant Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, talking about the way Jews wrestle with the scriptures, dissect the scriptures. I sometimes think within our Protestant or Reform tradition, we read the Bible almost like a novel. There are many texts that do contradict each other that we wrestle with, and my plea would be to your conference as you move through the next while, that as you look at these issues to realize the person who disagrees with you is not doing it to irritate you or irk you or pour scorn on you.

**Rev. Gary Mason, Executive Director, Rethinking Conflict: (02:47:52):**

I'm working on the assumption that most of us take time through prayer, conversation, and reflection to come to these conclusions and I think it would be an amazing witness, and I've said this often to many of your colleagues that you chose not to take a vote. You choose the more excellent way you choose to wrestle with these things. You choose a process rather than immediately running for your Robert's Rules, and I want to commend you for that, and I really wish you well as you continue to have these conversations to negotiate and to find that more excellent way.

**Rev. Mark Ogren, Chair, Journey in Understanding Task Force: (02:48:36):**

The first step that Gary recommended was for Bishop Sue and the cabinet to invite 10 members, five laity, five clergy who would represent both traditional and progressive viewpoints. The report you are about to hear was written by this team who entitled their work, Journey in Understanding

**Rev. Hung Lim, Member, Journey in Understanding Task Force: (02:49:09):**



Lay Leader Martha and members of the Annual Conference and guest, I'm Hung Lim Clergy serving at St. John's United Methodist Church on Valley Ridge District. At our first meeting, each member of the task force struggled to understand our purpose, even though we had been given the charge of exploring a more excellent way. The path ahead was not immediately clear. Through deep and honest conversation, it became evident that the traditional model of truth and reconciliation didn't fully apply to our context. We brought with us a range of expectations, hopes, and tensions. In many ways, we represented a microcosm of the wider church. Acknowledging this reality was not easy. It required humility, vulnerability, courage, trust, and above all love. Rather than aiming for a resolution or delivering a set of recommendations, we committed ourselves to building trust. We shifted our mindset toward a posture of journeying in understanding. We recognized that our role was not to solve but to listen first to one another, then to the Spirit's leading. Over time, we experienced the quiet transformative work of the Holy Spirit within us.

**Rev. Hung Lim, Member, Journey in Understanding Task Force: ([02:50:58](#)):**

Through deep listening, shared prayer and mutual vulnerability, we began to understand one another, not just as task force members, but as siblings in Christ. This led us to our central question, "what does it mean to be the church?". We have come to believe that to be the church is to be the family of God. A spirit formed community gathered at the Lord's table as described in Acts chapter two, through the presence of the Holy Spirit, we share in the bond of love that God has already established among us. This is not something we create. It is something we are invited to recognize, to honor and to live into the more excellent way, as described in 1 Corinthians 12 and is the way of Jesus. It's a way of love. It's a way of the cross. It doesn't call us to win debates or claim victories but to lay down our lives for one another.

**Rev. Hung Lim, Member, Journey in Understanding Task Force: ([02:52:22](#)):**

Jesus chose to forgive. He chose to live he chose to die. And through his love we are saved and reconciled. Our purpose then is to not to offer conclusions, but to call the conference to repentance and through repentance to authenticity, the church becomes the church not through a strategy or votes, but through a surrender to the Holy Spirit who alone brings healing and reconciliation. The United Methodist Church after General Conference is often described as a big tent, yet we find ourselves drawn to a different image, one that better reflects the spirit we long to embody rather than a tent where some stand at the edges while others remain at the center. We envision a round table, a place of openness, welcome and hospitality where everyone has a seat. Every voice matters. So again, we ask what does it mean to be the church? It means being a spirit formed community bound together in the love of Christ and being at the Lord's table. It means choosing the way of love, the way of humility, the way of the cross because love does not insist on its own way. That's the more excellent way and that's the journey we now commend to this body.

**Mr. Alton Keel, Member, Journey to Understanding Task Force: ([02:54:25](#)):**

Bishop Sue, my brothers and sisters in Christ. My name's Alton Keel, member of Laity of the tiny but mighty South River Methodist Church, Staunton, Virginia, Green County, the sixth smallest county in the state we affectionately refer to it as a drive-through county. If you're going south on 29, it's the county you drive through to get from Madison to Albemarle tomorrow. My role this evening is to review with you the relevant actions of the 2024 General Conference with respect to this committee's mission. Given that the impetus for the resolution at our 2024 Annual Conference calling for an apology to the LGBTQ+ community was in large part the actions of the 2024 General Conference. The committee believed that it was imperative that it review and understand the relevant actions of that conference.

**Mr. Alton Keel, Member, Journey to Understanding Task Force: (02:55:31):**

The entire record of the proceedings of all 15 sessions covered over 10 days was reviewed. In case you're wondering it was torturous, it was worse to be there. Bishop says worse to be there and she shared at least two of those sessions. Chairman Ogren asked me, well Alton, what's the most important thing you learned? I said that I never want to go to a General Conference. Our review focused on actions relating to the LGBTQ+ community as well as for traditionalists. It confirmed as you'll see, that the 2024 General Conference actions can and should be seen as an effort to remove discriminatory language and restrictions on the gay community from the social principles and the Book of Discipline, while still assuring traditionalists holding a different theological belief that they're welcome in the United Methodist Church. Some actions of the General Conference are well known, some not so much.

**Mr. Alton Keel, Member, Journey to Understanding Task Force: (02:56:46):**

It's well known that the provisions of the Social Principles and the Book of Discipline stating homosexuality is against Christian teaching and preventing homosexuals from being ordained were removed. Language is also removed that forbade homosexual unions being performed by ministers and in churches. Language was added stating all clergy have the right to exercise and preserve their conscience when requested to perform any marriage union or blessing of any couple. So no clergy can be compelled or prohibited from performing such services including for same sex couples, explicit procedures as you know, were also added to the Book of Discipline for reinstating clergy defrocked due to sexual orientation or due to performing same gender marriages. Also the conference legislative committee petition that deleted the disaffiliation paragraph 2553 from the Book of Discipline was adopted. What is perhaps not as well known is that an addition was added and adopted requiring that each conference shall develop procedures for the reaffiliation of churches if they wish to do so.

**Mr. Alton Keel, Member, Journey to Understanding Task Force: (02:58:12):**

It is also known that revisions were made to the marriage paragraph and the Social Principles to delete the phrase "shared fidelity between a man and woman" and the phrase defining marriage as "the union of one man and one woman." What's not so well known is that when the proposed revised marriage definition referring simply to two people of faith was offered on the floor, it was amended on the floor to add to the definition an adult man and woman of consenting age or two adult persons of consenting age. So this amendment carried by substantial vote assured that at least one definition of marriage was there being between a man and a woman. Judicial council decision number 1503 was issued at the General Conference stating in effect that each church through its trustees may decide whether or not to conduct same sex marriages. This ruling at the time of the general conference was reassuring to traditionalists.

**Mr. Alton Keel, Member, Journey to Understanding Task Force: (02:59:21):**

However, this judicial decision was superseded by a new judicial council decision 1516 released just this past April the 29th. The new ruling leaves the discretion of whether or not to hold same-sex weddings in the church with the pastor, not the trustees. I must say from a personal point of view, I was disappointed in the new ruling. It risked exacerbating the fear of traditionalists expressed to us coming forward to committee that their theological beliefs would not be honored. Nonetheless, the net effect of this new ruling is that the imperative of bishops honoring theological differences in making pastoral assignments is even more paramount. Bishop Sue, as well as other conference bishops gave this assurance prior to the recent ruling. Bishop Sue has reiterated this assurance to our committee subsequent to this

recent ruling. She also rightly emphasized that it is equally important that clergy progressives or conservatives honor theological differences.

**Mr. Alton Keel, Member, Journey to Understanding Task Force:** ([03:00:38](#)):

The conclusion of our committee remains the 2024 General Conference actions can and should be seen as an attempt to assure that those in the LGBTQ plus community and traditionalists each honoring different theological beliefs are all welcome in the United Methodist Church. In reading all those proceeding records, we saw many references to the need for a big tent. As you'll hear today, we think a more apt metaphor than a tent is a big table, the Lord's table and consistent with a Methodist tradition. Everyone's invited at the table and we honor theological differences. Thank you and praise be to God.

**Ms. Claire Kent, Laity, First United Methodist Church, Three Notch'd District:** ([03:01:35](#)):

Bishop Sue, lay leader, states and all. Good afternoon. As you've heard initially our group was uncertain about what our process would look like intuitively and via life experiences. We knew that listening to others and respecting views builds relationships and creates a sense of connection and trust. As a group, we were still trying to understand our charge and determine how we could connect with others in the Virginia Conference who had a story to tell. As we began formulating a process, we found ourselves often using the terms, deep listening, intentional listening, and finally wholly intentional listening. The more we focused on wholly intentional listening, the more we began to sense the Holy Spirit's movement in our efforts to build a supportive and nonjudgmental space. The process we formed was based on creating listening sessions and inviting three representative groups to share their stories. These groups included members of the LGBTQ+ community, progressives and traditionalists.

**Ms. Claire Kent, Laity, First United Methodist Church, Three Notch'd District:** ([03:03:01](#)):

During these sessions we listened intently for about two hours each. Our invited guests were given open-ended questions ahead of time. They were, "What is your experience as a United Methodist Following the action of the General Conference 2024?", "How has living through the long season of the United Methodist Conference discord regarding full inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals impacted your experience as a United Methodist?" And finally, "What are your hopes for the United Methodist Church moving forward?" After our guest departed from each listening session, we spent the remaining meeting time processing what we heard. As we processed and shared, we found ourselves expressing feelings that work was indeed rooted in sacred listening. We experienced some interesting surprises. One guest shared with us insights regarding the metaphorical tent that we in the United Methodist Church refer to. We sometimes visualize ourselves all under the same tent. This particular guest shared what led to an important aha moment and it was this, A tent narrows toward the center, pulling some close while others linger at the edges, a round table and invites a different kind of gathering where each person finds a seat and a voice.

**Ms. Claire Kent, Laity, First United Methodist Church, Three Notch'd District** ([03:04:37](#)):

These words inspired us to question how we see ourselves. What is God's vision for us? Collectively, we sensed a shift occurring. We could see ourselves and others gathered around a huge table with Christ at the center. Rather than us moving about under a tent as a group, we grew and saw ourselves working through differences of opinion. We formulated takeaways and recommendations as our process unfolded. Because we recognize and value the growth process we experienced, we commend the following resources to you. Perhaps they can inform your next steps in being the church around high stakes issues. The first resource is a book on Dignity by author Donna Hicks. Her 2011 publication, *Dignity, its Essential*

*Role in Resolving Conflict* was recognized by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu who wrote the foreword for the book. Her book begins with a new model of dignity. There are three additional resources we suggest.

**Ms. Claire Kent, Laity, First United Methodist Church, Three Notch'd District** ([03:05:46](#)):

We've made an intentional effort to provide resources that are rich in content and do not identify preference for theological leanings or bias. The first deals with active listening and empathetic listening, author of *Active Listening, Three in One*, Emily Weber shares how active listening is a form of communication that goes beyond the surface level of exchanging words and delves into building genuine connections and community. The next resource identifies the difference between good conflict and high conflict author Amanda Ripley helps us understand how high conflict traps us and leads us to a state where the brain behaves differently. We become more and more mystified by the other side. People do escape high conflict. To find out how we invite you to engage the book and the final resource we offer is one that inspires us to move toward hope. This engaging resource is called *Hope is Here* by author Reverend Dr. Luther Smith, Jr. Resource information is available at [vaumc.org/journey](http://vaumc.org/journey), and I thank you so much for your time.

**Rev. Gennie Bowles, Member, Journey in Understanding Task Force:** ([03:07:13](#)):

Good afternoon. My name is Gennie Bowles. I am a queer clergy woman and I've been tasked with sharing what we've learned. My section of the report will be a little more personal because the work we were asked to do is relational work and that's personal. I know each member of our team has learned from our experience and will gladly share what they have learned with you. I'm going to speak specifically to what has been meaningful to me. We heard stories from a diverse group of Virginia United Methodists, and I want to start by thanking all of those who are willing to offer themselves and their stories to our team. It requires huge amounts of courage, trust, honesty, and vulnerability, and to the queer community. I just want to say I am so proud of you for hanging in there. It's a testament to your faith that you have been so compelled.

**Rev. Gennie Bowles, Member, Journey in Understanding Task Force** ([03:08:18](#)):

It is a testament to your faith that you have been so compelled by the gospel of Jesus Christ that you have fought and sacrificed so much to have a place in Christ's holy church. There were a number of themes that I heard across the spectrum of theological diversity, and I'd like to lift up some of these and really highlight two things that I've been thinking a lot about from every group, the LGBTQ community, the progressives and traditionalists. We heard stories of fear, hurt, anger, institutional distrust, anxiety over the state of the church and the world, and also stories of courage, tenacity, prayer and devotion to scripture. Across these stories, two things stood out to me, so I'd like to highlight them and share what I hope we can learn. The first is trauma. I know we throw the word around a lot. Please bear with me.

**Rev. Gennie Bowles, Member, Journey in Understanding Task Force** ([03:09:16](#)):

Trauma is our emotional response to an event in which our lives are touched by great harm, pain or suffering. I think every story we heard involves some experience of trauma or the lingering effects of generational or institutional trauma. In this particular context, the queer community carries a particularly fresh experience of trauma in relationship to the church, but the sins of racism, sexism, ableism, colonialism, all sins of othering continue to perpetuate stories of trauma. When I was in seminary, I worked for the Office of Worship, and we had a pitcher a lot like this one that we used in the communion liturgy. The juice was brought in in a pitcher and poured at the table and one day the handle of this pitcher

sheared off and we glued it back together and the Office of Worship got very specific instructions. When people use the pitcher, you've got to use two hands. If you hold it like this, it may well break again. I sang in the choir and I will never forget sitting helpless, watching someone bring in the elements, holding that picture by the handle, seeing the presider at the table use the handle to fill chalice with juice. I have never prayed so hard in my life.

**Rev. Gennie Bowles, Member, Journey in Understanding Task Force ([03:10:50](#)):**

I sat there and I prayed, Lord God, please don't let it break. Living with the experience of trauma, which to some extent is pretty universal, is like handing someone our hearts glued, like glued together pieces of pottery and each of us is silently praying, God, please be gentle. It's been broken before, please don't break it again. I would love to see the church acknowledge this reality and find ways to help us remember that the people we're trying to be church with all have fragile handle with care warning labels stamped on their foreheads. The other thing I learned through the hard holy work that we did together is that we really are better off together than we are apart. And I know some days it seems like that work is just too difficult to do, but it is the work we are called to do. We need spaces where our thinking is challenged, not constantly or with the intent to change, but where we engage questions that don't have clear answers and are invited to consider the voices and experiences of others as we construct our understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ in the brokenness of our world.

**Rev. Gennie Bowles, Member, Journey in Understanding Task Force ([03:12:09](#)):**

Something I heard from traditionalists who came to share with us was a concern that the church was changing its theology on justification of sin. And I did some self-reflection. And I think personally for me as a queer person, I absolutely did have an underdeveloped theology of justification of sin. Of course, why would I have spent time engaging in a theological concept that in my experience had been consistently used as a cudgel meant to inflict pain meant to keep people in line. So I've been doing some reflecting and have found myself reclaiming the traditional evangelical doctrines of our faith. And by using the lenses of queer and liberation theology, I've found genuinely good news.

**Rev. Gennie Bowles, Member, Journey in Understanding Task Force ([03:12:55](#)):**

We need to hear from each other about what it means to be made in the image of God, about how we offer repentance and forgiveness, about how we think about sin, death, atonement, and the cross. We need to hear from each other about hospitality, grace and what it means to be welcome. I think whoever named the parable of the prodigal son, the parable of the prodigal son, did us all a great disservice because the whole family in that story seems to be prodigal at one point or another. Henri Nouwen has an incredible book on the return of the prodigal son and he talks about this, how each of them, both sons and their father needed a deeper understanding of grace and love and how the story is left unresolved. I wonder what we would be able to hear from the parable if the parable's name was this dysfunctional family. Sure is a lot like the kingdom of heaven isn't it? It sure is. It's not like the kingdom of heaven because it lacks dysfunction, but because in spite of the dysfunction, in the midst of the dysfunction, there is repentance and forgiveness, grace and reconciliation, and an invitation to celebrate together around the table.

**Rev. Gennie Bowles, Member, Journey in Understanding Task Force ([03:14:24](#)):**

Friends, this is the mess that we find ourselves in as we continue to learn how to be the church together. The work we are called to is difficult. It's heavy and it's personal work. Our team did a lot of work, but we can't do it on your behalf. This is personal work. But I believe that by engaging in this work,

by having hard conversations, listening deeply, handling each other with care and praying that the Holy Spirit will guide our path, that we can find a way to walk together, not just tolerating each other's presence but better off because of it. Amen.

**Rev. David Jimenez-Cardenas, Memorial United Methodist Church, Coastal Virginia District: (03:15:14):**

Good afternoon. As it has been outlined by our team, the Journey in Understanding focuses on a faithful discernment, grounded in grace and the spirit's relational work. We presented a shift in perspective from the image of a big tent to that of a sacred table where everyone has a seat. This is a space of belonging, a space where healing begins not with conformity, but with our intentional presence. Therefore, we recommend that we move away the language of voting ontological issues as our primary conduit for conversations. Voting may settle matters on paper, but it rarely does so in our hearts. True transformation happens through relationships, through the slow, often messy work of sitting together, listening deeply and choosing to love Jesus did not say speak through your vote. He did say love your neighbor as yourself. Relationships and intentional listening are the first step. For this reason, we invite you into a practice of holy, intentional listening, listening that is rooted in prayer, attentive to your unique context and open to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

**Rev. David Jimenez-Cardenas, Memorial United Methodist Church, Coastal Virginia District: (03:16:39):**

You might consider dedicating a year or even to a season of Holy Wonder, opening your ears and hearts to those who call on Jesus as Lord and Savior and seek to live faithfully in Him. This kind of listening is not passive, it is active, generous and sacred. If your congregation feels a stirring to begin or continue this journey, members of the Journey in Understanding are available to meet with you, share what we have learned and walk with you through the process. We use a general outline of this process along with some reflections from our experience. These can also be found on page 159 of the Book of Reports. Likewise, you're welcome to reach out to Reverend Mark Ogren whose contact information is available at [vaumc.org/journey](http://vaumc.org/journey) to express your interest. Members of the Journey are available to visit your church and discuss how to engage an intentional listening.

**Rev. David Jimenez-Cardenas, Memorial United Methodist Church, Coastal Virginia District: (03:17:48):**

They can share more details about their process and how it has been transformative for them. We offer these not as final answers, but as faithful companions for the road ahead. Through our journey in understanding, we have already seen what this can do. We have seen hearts soften. We have seen the kind of fruit that no vote can produce. As we share this report, we honor the real and beautiful diversity among us. We strengthen the ties that bind us all together and most importantly, we bear witness to the reconciling love of Christ. A love that invites us to the table, sets a place for each one of us and says, come sit, listen, be made new. So, if your heart is as my heart, let's join hands and walk together on this journey in understanding. Thank you.

**Rev. Hungsu Liim, St. Johns United Methodist Church, Valley Ridge District: (03:19:01):**

Taskforce team doesn't want to take this on as an item on agenda. We want to have a moment of worship and prayer because this might be the beginning of what God is bringing into our conference. So as we bring the Journey in Understanding report to a close, we invite you to enter into a time of worship and prayer. May God's work which has begun in us, through us and even in spite of us; continue through this sacred time together at this annual conference. So let us take a moment to breathe in God's presence, in the name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Spirit. We gather as one body seeking the peace and love that bind us together.



**Jill Gaynor, Laity, Three Notch'd District:** ([03:20:12](#)):

Please join me in the call to worship. We are one body with many members. Each us is part of it. If one suffers all suffer, if one rejoices, all rejoice, love each other in Christ. Let us follow the way of love, the most excellent way.

**Rev. David Edinger, Chair, Clergy, Member, Journey in Understanding Task Force:** ([03:20:50](#)):

Hear now a reading from Paul's letter to the Corinthian church and to this body of Christ, there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers all suffer together with it. If one member is honored, all rejoiced together with it, now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And I will show you a still more excellent way if I speak in the tongues of humans and of angels but do not have love. I am a noisy gong or a clanging symbol. Love is patient, love is kind. Love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable. It keeps no records of wrong. It does not rejoice in the wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things endures all things. Love never ends. This is the word of God for the people **of God. Thanks be to God.**

**Darcey Johnson, Clergy, Three Notch'd District:** ([03:22:16](#)):

So y'all heard that during our time together we moved from the image of tent to table. Table. Thank you. Yes, we did. It became a central image for us. So I invite you to take a moment if you would, I invite you to close your eyes. Just take a moment and I invite you in your sanctified imagination to image a table. Maybe it is your kitchen farm table. Maybe it's your grandma's table. Now set the table with holy communion. There is the bread, here is the cup. It is fresh and full. And most importantly, it's a table that extends wide deep out until it cracks and it creaks, but it holds steady. Can you see it? Can you see it? Amen. Now imagine that the living God invites you to this table, but not just you all, each and every, we're invited to this table, not because we are perfect, but because we are loved. This is Christ's table to table of mercy, of reconciliation and grace. And at this table we remember that Christ gave everything for us and that in his self-giving love, we are made one here we are not strangers but kinfolk here, divisions are healed and the spirit knits us together in peace. So we invite you to come to this sanctified and wondrous and imagined, but real table, not because you must, but because you may come not to prove anything but to receive everything. And so let us join together our voices in prayer.

**Annual Conference Attendees:** ([03:24:20](#)):

Gracious God, we thank you for inviting us to this holy table. Pour out your spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and cup, make them be for us, the body and blood of Christ that we may be the body of Christ for the world, redeemed by His, reconciled by his mercy and united in his spirit. Make us one in love, one in mission, and one in hope, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Amen.

**Ms. Margie Hernandez, Laity, Braddock Street United Methodist Church, Shenandoah River District:** ([03:25:09](#)):

Beloved, you are members of the body of Christ. Diverse yet one, go into the world as instruments of God's peace, love without condition, serve without fear, reconcile without delay. Let the love described in one Corinthians 13 Shape your every word and action we go in the name of Christ to love and to reconcile. Amen.

**Bishop Sue Hupert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([03:26:01](#)):

Wow. What a tremendous gift these folks have given to us.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([03:26:31](#)):

Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([03:27:11](#)):

I will recognize a card at microphone two.

**Rev. Ryan LaRock, Campus Minister at the College of William and Mary, Mission Rivers District:** ([03:27:18](#)):

Thank you, Bishop, Ryan LaRock, Mission Rivers District Campus Minister at the College of William and Mary. In the spirit of what we've just heard in the spirit of reconciliation and being a crowded table, I would motion to amend our agenda so that resolutions two, three, and four are no longer on our agenda in the interest of doing no harm and doing good for the good of the body. And if I have a second, I'll speak to it.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([03:27:46](#)):

Second. Do we have a second? I see a second.

**Rev. Ryan LaRock, Campus Minister at the College of William and Mary, Mission Rivers District:** ([03:27:49](#)):

I don't want to speak long, but I think what we've just heard is that the best way that we can go about healing and our reconciling work is not through semantics and verbiage and words, but that we intentionally spend time talking to each other. And I feel that those particular resolutions relevant to this subject in two, three, and four, speak to things that could further perpetuate harm and some of the things that we have already stood for in this conference today.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ( [03:28:19](#)):

Okay. The motions being properly before us to remove those items from the agenda. Do we have a speech? We've had one speech in favor. A speech against. Okay. Seeing none, we'll move it to a vote. All in favor of removing resolutions from the agenda, please lift a hand. And that passes. I think I commend to you to read their report carefully. I commend you the resources they've given. I've only read two of the four and I can't wait to get to the other two. But I also hope you'll accept their invitation for them to work in your churches for them to bring this process to reality, and I'm thinking of Amanda Ripley's book, *High Conflict*, which is on the list. And I think she makes the point that whenever you're moving things toward a vote, the subject matter ceases to be of import and it all becomes about winning and losing. And so I hope we can move past the idea that there's a winning side and a losing side and that somehow that helps the body. But I think at this table as we go forward, let's strive to honor each other, to not demonize each other. And man, if we can do that, we will be profoundly.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([03:30:00](#)):

Amen. Amen. I see a card at microphone two or what's back there? Five. You're nearest to five.

**Ms. Catherine Roth, Laity, Shenandoah Valley District:** ([03:30:15](#)):

Good afternoon, Bishop. May I take a minute for a personal privilege?



**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: (03:30:21):**

Absolutely. Tell us your name and Lay or Clergy.

**Ms. Catherine Roth, Laity, Shenandoah Valley District: (03:30:25):**

Catherine Roth Laity Shenandoah Valley District. As few as 15 years ago if had I been questioned about my family, I would've replied. My husband and I had three sons. That all changed seemingly overnight when our oldest son then almost 30 told us that he would be transitioning through the use of hormone therapy and surgery. It shattered our world because we had not expected anything like this. Our son had done all the typical boy things, enjoying trains, matchbox cars, and when he was in the church as an older youth, he was in the choir and led the men's group. He joined a blacksmith's club and built a blacksmith shed in our backyard and picnic tables for the picnic shelter at church. So for him to say that he was not happy as a man was quite a shock to our family. We were angry, surprised, blaming the new people he was with.

**Ms. Catherine Roth, Laity, Shenandoah Valley District: (03:31:41):**

Depressed, blaming ourselves for what we didn't know. We were embarrassed and mourned the loss of our son, the church to which we belong for over 30 years, had a meeting with the outcome that our child no longer belonged there. It has been a difficult journey for our daughter and ourselves. Our middle son did not invite his sister to his wedding, but our youngest son did, encouraging reconciliation among the three. My mother and siblings no longer invite our daughter to participate in family gatherings. It's been tough, but in spite of this, we have never stopped loving our child. Our current pastor has been the greatest help to us questioning us and answering our questions. The biggest takeaway that I want to share to both sides of the aisle is the word grace. Show grace to one another. For those who have made the decision to change their identity, show grace to your parents, siblings, co-workers, and others with whom you come in contact. It's difficult to change your mind set about a person you've known for a long time, particularly if you gave birth to that individual, to the families and friends of those transgender individuals showed grace because that decision was not made lightly. Above all, show love, follow Christ's command to love your neighbor, whoever they are. And I try to keep in mind Micah 6:8 and "What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Thank you. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: (03:34:02):**

I think that will serve as a benediction to a perfectly lovely day. Oh, do we have somebody else? We have another card in the back.

**Rev. Carl Perez, Clergy, Mission Rivers District: (03:34:12):**

Carl Perez, Mission Rivers District, Elder. I was going to ask, is that video going to be on? I looked at the Journey website, the video from Reverend Dr. Mason. Could we have that on there as well as the video for this Annual

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: (03:34:28):**

Conference uploaded? Certainly. We'll be glad to put that on there.

**Rev Carl Perez, Clergy, Mission Rivers District: (03:34:30):**

Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: (03:34:32):**

Okay. Any others? Seeing none. I'll turn to our Conference Secretary for any last announcements. Claire? Yes,

**Rev. Claire Miller, Clergy, Conference Secretary, Virginia Annual Conference: (03:34:44):**

The WIFI system. The WIFI system update is that the system is programmed and you can log into it though it will not have internet at the moment, but you can log in. Why not hold on. The center engineers are getting the wiring straight and we all feel confident the system will be available and functional in the morning. So say some prayers.

In other news, right now we have only 13 out of 48 slots signed up for the blood drive, which is scheduled for tomorrow. And we do need more people to sign up for the blood drive. You can sign up for that and make an appointment at [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org) and search for the sponsor code VAUMC. So that's at [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org) and search for the sponsor code VAUMC. Also, if Bobby Hunley is in the building, please go to the listening device table as they have something that belongs to you.

Also, we have leftover communion bread from this morning. And if you would like to take some home to reverently consume or to return to the earth, you are welcome to pick up a loaf in the robing area of the Berglund Hall.

Finally, a reminder that if you would like to hear more from Scott Erickson to include some time of questions and answers with him, you're welcome to attend an Evening with Scott Erickson being held at 7:00 PM tonight in the Roanoke Ballroom at the Hotel Roanoke this evening. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: (03:36:46):**

Okay, we stand adjourned till tomorrow morning. Thank you all. Have a wonderful evening.



**Daily Proceedings  
243rd Session of the Virginia Annual Conference  
June 13, 2025  
Morning Session  
The Berglund Center - Roanoke, VA**

The June 13<sup>th</sup> Morning Session of the 2025 Virginia Annual Conference was called to order by Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop of the Virginia Annual Conference, at 9:08 AM.

The American Sign Language Interpreters for this session were Ms. Virginia Bryant and Ms. Katherine McMullin.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:09:36](#)):

Okay. I am going to call us to order and I'm going to look to our secretary for a couple of announcements.

**Rev. Claire Miller, Conference Secretary, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:09:43](#)):

Good morning. If you do not yet have your voting credentials, please stop by the registration area between 9:00 AM and noon and volunteers will provide them to you. The arena internet is now working. Yay. Woo-hoo. The network name is VAUMC2025, VAUMC2025 and the password is VAUMC2025!. VAUMC2025!. All caps and the network bandwidth is limited per user to more reliably support the voting later today. So as a reminder, you do not have to use WIFI to vote. You can use your device if that works for you. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:10:51](#)):

Okay, thank you. It's my pleasure this morning to introduce Reverend Dr. David McAllister Wilson, who is the Dean of Wesley Theological Seminary, an institution we're very proud of and I'm delighted to serve as part of its board and many of you, if you're on the board of Wesley, would you stand? We have several. I don't see them. They're not here, but Reverend McAllister Wilson is and I'm delighted to have him come give our prayer this morning.

**Rev. Dr. David McAllister Wilson, President, Wesley Theological Seminary: (00:11:32):**

Thank you Bishop. Good morning conference. Forty years ago, I began the process of ordination in the Virginia Conference. We took pride then in being the largest conference with the history, almost as old as the Blue Ridge Church. We full churches on Easter guaranteed appointment, a strong connectional system and ample financial reserves. We lived in a church friendly culture. The blue laws were still in effect in Old Dominion. There was no soccer on Sunday morning and no social media, certainly no WIFI if you think about it. It was all a kind of a security blanket. It was a safety net which we all took for granted though it was already starting to fray, to unravel more and more ever since. I've spent 40 years at Wesley thinking about how to revitalize the church and I confess I've been paying too much attention in that time to how things used to be so I want to pray my way out of that mindset and invite you to join me back to the future of Virginia Methodism, which will be driven by the movement of the Holy Spirit as it was in the beginning on the day of Pentecost.

**Rev. Dr. David McAllister Wilson, President, Wesley Theological Seminary: (00:13:17):**

As I pray, may I ask that you hold each other's hands, kind of weaving ourselves together in the eyes of God. As we pray, let us pray God of grace, we come to you aware. We are now working without Annette except the one we form with the blessed tie that binds us hand to hand. Heart to heart in this conference help us fly through the air with the greatest ease relying on the lift of the Holy Spirit. Grace beneath our wings. Let us not dwell on the former things once our silos were full. Now we have only five loaves and two fishes, but these are the ingredients of miracles, something you can work with. Let us see through the eyes of Christ and hear his voice as we vote and deliberate today to see that what seemed like the decline and separation has really been preparation. Your work of prevenient grace, we come to you as United Methodist spirituality with an attitude and an agenda. Remind us we are to be the salt of the earth, not the sugar. Bless and sanctify our conferencing with your guidance. Turn our faces towards Jerusalem, our mission in our communities and the open our eyes to the fact we're going to need a bigger table trusting there is growth and grace and power to resist the evils. We deplore. God of grace and God of glory on thy people. Pour thy power. Grant us wisdom. Grant us courage for the facing of this hour. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen. Amen.

**Bishop Sue Haupt-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: (00:15:18):**

Thank you so much.

**Bishop Sue Haupt-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference (00:15:28):**

It's now my pleasure to introduce one of the hardest working people on the face of the planet. Mr. John Fuller, who is our Executive Director of Pensions and Benefits and he's going to offer the pensions report. John,

**Mr. John Fuller, Director, Virginia United Methodist Pensions: (00:15:47):**

Good morning, Virginia Conference. Bishop Haupt-Johnson, Lay Leader, Stokes members and guests of the Virginia Annual Conference as the director of Virginia United Methodist Pensions, it is my pleasure to present our report and recommendations. Virginia United Methodist Pensions, which is commonly referred to by the acronym VUMPI is the Virginia Conference Agency that administers our conference sponsored health plans for active and retired clergy along with our denominational pension and welfare plans at each year's annual conference, VUMPI presents several reports and recommendations for annual conference consideration. VUMPI'S reports begin on page 101 of your Book of Reports. These reports are intended to be informational and provide details about the various benefit programs that we

administer. I would like to note VUMPI'S report number two in particular, which describes the work of a clergy benefits task force that was formed in 2024 to consider various aspects of the benefit programs made available to Virginia Conference clergy.

**Mr. John Fuller, Director, Virginia United Methodist Pensions:** ([00:16:53](#)):

That task force, which included leadership representing a variety of perspectives across the Virginia Conference, concluded its work at the end of 2024 with the release of several recommendations. Those recommendations were then considered by the bumpy board of directors and several of those are included among the recommendations that are now being presented by bumpy for annual conference consideration. One of the task force's recommendations has already been adopted with the elimination of the active Clergy Health Plan apportionment in 2026 and the implementation of a new health plan direct bill structure beginning in 2026 bumpy will bill the salary paying unit \$1,660 monthly for each health plan eligible clergy person. This approach to funding the conference sponsored health plan matches the billing methodology that is used in almost every other annual conference. The task force's recommendation to adopt the new health plan direct bill structure is based on the belief that it results in a more equitable and transparent methodology in funding the conference health plans.

**Mr. John Fuller, Director, Virginia United Methodist Pensions:** ([00:18:02](#)):

Further analysis indicates that a majority of Virginia Conference churches will see a reduction in costs associated with funding the conference sponsored health plans as a result of this change. Also during last year's annual conference, a question was received from the floor about the possibility of extending conference health plan eligibility to clergy who are serving in 75% appointments. That inquiry was referred to the clergy benefits task force for review following a detailed evaluation of the potential change in eligibility guidelines including both financial and non-financial factors, the task force elected not to recommend any changes in the eligibility guidelines For the conference sponsored health plans, I would like to thank Reverend Jesse Colwell, the Director of the Center for Clergy Excellence and David Domnisse, the conference's CFO and Treasurer for co-leading the task force with me last year. I would also like to express my gratitude to all who served on the task force.

**Mr. John Fuller, Director, Virginia United Methodist Pensions:** ([00:19:03](#)):

This year VUMPI has nine recommendations for conference consideration. These recommendations begin on page 106 in your Book of Reports. All of VUMPI'S recommendations pertain to internal conference-controlled policy and if approved will be implemented effective January 1st, 2026. Our first recommendation, which came from the clergy benefits task force, involves the adoption of the VIA benefits program for Medicare eligible clergy beginning in 2026. The VIA benefits program will offer retired Medicare eligible clergy, the opportunity to enroll in a range of Medicare supplemental health plans along with ancillary health plans like dental, vision and hearing. The Virginia Conference will contribute funding to a health reimbursement account for each retiree based on years of full-time ministry in the Virginia Conference and those funds can be used to offset the premiums for the selected health plans. The primary factor supporting the recommendation of the adoption of the VIA benefits program are the limited plan choices in the current program.

**Mr. John Fuller, Director, Virginia United Methodist Pensions:** ([00:20:11](#)):

Specifically the lack of access to ancillary plans like dental insurance along with the potential for significant volatility and plan pricing in the current program In 2025, plan premiums for the conference sponsored group Medicare Advantage plan increased by 28.5%, primarily driven by changes resulting

from legislation. As this level of cost increase could not be fully passed along to our conferences, churches and plant participants, VUMPI is absorbing nearly \$1 million in higher costs due to that unexpected Wespath. Our denomination's general agency that administers pension plans for United Methodist clergy has partnered with VIA benefits to make the program available to each annual conference. Currently there are 28 other annual conferences that have already adopted the VIA benefits plan more are electing to join the program each year. The VIA benefits program will be offered as an option to current retirees, but transitioning to VIA benefits will not be mandatory.

**Mr. John Fuller, Director, Virginia United Methodist Pensions:** ([00:21:19](#)):

Health plan coverage through VIA benefits will be the only program offered to clergy who retire in or after 2026 for 2026. As is detailed on page 108 in your book of reports, bumpy is recommending conference health reimbursement account contributions that are intended to match the value of the current program prior to this year's significant cost increase. Specifically the monthly subsidy amounts are recommended as follows. For clergy with 30 or more years of full-time conference ministry, the monthly subsidy will be \$250 for those with 25 to 29 years, the monthly subsidy will be \$200 for those with 20 to 24 years, the monthly subsidy will be \$150 and those with 15 to 19 years, the monthly subsidy amount will be \$100. Clergy with fewer than 15 years of conference ministry will still have the ability to evaluate and enroll in health plans through via benefits but will not be eligible for a subsidy.

**Mr. John Fuller, Director, Virginia United Methodist Pensions:** ([00:22:20](#)):

Also, as is the case in the current retiree medical program, eligible spouses of retired clergy who enroll in coverage through VIA benefits will receive the same monthly subsidy amount as the retiree VUMPI will share additional details with Virginia Conference retired clergy via videos and webinars near the end of 2025 in order to assist retired clergy with evaluating plan options for 2026. VUMPI'S second recommendation, also coming from the clergy benefits task force addresses benefits eligibility for retired clergy who elect to withdraw from the UMC. The recommendation is to terminate eligibility for the conference sponsored retiree health plan and the conference supplemental life insurance benefit for any retired clergy who withdraw from the UMC in or after 2026. This recommendation is based on the identification of administrative issues that could inadvertently create significant financial liabilities for bumpy and it is not intended to be punitive. This recommendation would also not be retroactive and would not impact benefits eligibility for any retired clergy who have already withdrawn or those who withdraw prior to the end of 2025.

**Mr. John Fuller, Director, Virginia United Methodist Pensions:** ([00:23:37](#)):

I would like to note that the task force intentionally recommended that the remainder of 2025 be available for any clergy considering withdrawal to do so without losing eligibility for these benefits. VUMPI'S third recommendation involves the PPO 500 health plan that is currently only made available to clergy receiving CPP disability benefits and surviving spouses and children of clergy. The recommendation is to close this health plan to new enrollment in 2026 while allowing any health plan members enrolled in the plan at the end of 2025 to remain enrolled in the plan. Clergy newly awarded CPP disability benefits in 2026 and thereafter along with newly eligible surviving spouses and children of clergy will be able to remain enrolled in the conference Sponsored health plans for active clergy at active clergy rates. The motivation for this change is the observation that the plan design structure of the PPO 500 health plan can inadvertently create new financial liabilities for newly enrolled members. As the plan has separate deductibles from medical and prescription drug coverage. Transitioning members from the active clergy Health plans to the PPO 500 plan can also result in member disruption



resulting from the administrative processes involved in mid-year plan transitions. So this recommendation is intended to improve the member experience in both financial and administrative ways.

**Mr. John Fuller, Director, Virginia United Methodist Pensions:** ([00:25:05](#)):

VUMPI's. Fourth recommendation pertains to the 2026 participant contributions for the conference Sponsored health plans for 2026 VUMPI is recommending an increase of about 5% across all health plans across all enrollment tiers for all plans made available to active and retired clergy Specific recommended participant contributions are detailed on page 107 and 108 in your book of reports. This recommendation is based on ongoing increases in overall health plan costs and is intended to maintain consistency in the participant's costs as a percent of total plan costs VUMPI's. fifth recommendation involves the past service rate that is used to calculate pension benefits under the pre-'82 pension program. Currently the past service rate is \$626 in order to recognize increases in the general cost of living. VUMPI is recommending that the past service rate be increased to \$659 in 2026. This reflects an increase of approximately 5.3%. The six recommendation pertains to the billing methodology that is recommended in order to pay the premiums for the denominational Comprehensive Protection Plan or CPP and the conference's. Supplemental Life Insurance Program currently bumpy bill is 4.4% of clergy total plan compensation for those programs and this recommendation is to continue billing 4.4% of total plan compensation for the CPP and supplemental life insurance programs.

**Mr. John Fuller, Director, Virginia United Methodist Pensions:** ([00:26:42](#)):

The new Compass Retirement Savings Program includes features such as automatic enrollment and automatic escalation. These features are intended to help our denominations clergy prepare adequately for retirement. VUMPI's seventh recommendation is for automatic enrollment in Compass at 4% of total plan compensation increasing by one percentage point per year to a maximum automatic escalation at 10% of total plan compensation. The automatic escalation will be implemented in January of each year VUMPI's. Eighth. Recommendation pertains to the methodology that VUMP will use to bill churches and other salary paying units for Compass contributions consistent with West Path's. Recommendations - VUMPI is recommending a billing methodology referred to as precise billing with full match. This will result in VUMPI billing the church for the precise participant contribution elected by the Compass Plan participant along with the full matching 4% that is included in the Compass plan design. And finally, VUMPI's ninth recommendation is a resolution addressing the clergy housing tax exclusion for the 2026 tax year which is allowed under IRS code section 107.

**Mr. John Fuller, Director, Virginia United Methodist Pensions:** ([00:28:01](#)):

In order for our clergy to be eligible to take advantage of this tax exclusion, a resolution must be approved each year at annual conference. Upon conference approval, VUMPI will make the resolution available to our clergy on the VUMPI website for income tax filing purposes. Bishop Hauptert-Johnson, before I officially conclude my report, I would like to express my gratitude to the VUMPI Board of directors and to my VUMPI staff colleagues for all that they do throughout the year to maintain these important benefit plans for our conference's clergy. This concludes my report. I now present VUMPI's recommendations one through nine for annual conference approval.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:28:38](#)):

Great. The recommendations of the committee are before you. Is there any discussion or questions? Seeing none if you would approve this report. Oh, there's one up there way up there. Microphone nine.



**Rev. Thomas James, Clergy, Extension Ministry, Northern Virginia District:** ([00:29:02](#)):

Morning Bishop Thomas James Elder serving in extension ministry in the Northern Virginia District. I'm an adult male who uses he, him pronouns. John indicated that the direct bill system is one that has been already approved by CF&A and is built into the conference treasurer's plan, but I was hoping for just two questions of clarification around the implementation of that plan. Go ahead. The treasurer's report on page 174 indicates that there will be a cost savings of about \$1.35 million through the implementation of this plan, but in your report you just indicated that the cost of healthcare is actually going up and some of those expenses are being passed on to clergy and are withholdings. Is there an actual, can you just clarify is there an actual savings? Are we paying less money in healthcare with this direct bill shift than we would otherwise?

**Mr. John Fuller, Director, Virginia United Methodist Pensions:** ([00:29:50](#)):

So that's a great question. I would say in the aggregate the impact of moving from a health plan apportionment to a health plan direct bill structure that change itself will not reduce aggregate health plan costs. What we are essentially doing is taking a fixed cost and changing the form by which we allocate that to the various entities that will pay that cost. So there is not a direct savings resulting from that change itself. I think, and I will not presume to speak for what is in the treasurer's report, I'll leave it to the treasurer to address that. However, I believe that what is being reported could be an indication of the expected increase in the rate of payment of a direct build structure as it compares to an apportioned structure. As I think most are aware, apportionments typically are not paid at 100% and so there is a shortfall in apportionment payments because of the transition to a direct bill structure. One might presume that we will be closer to 100% in that billing and because of that improvement in the rate of payment, there could be an offset in other costs or perhaps a redirection of VPI reserves that otherwise would've had to cover that shortfall in the apportionment payment. So to answer the question as simply as I can, the change from an apportionment to a direct bill structure will not lead to a reduction in aggregate health plan costs in our health plan.

**Rev. Thomas James, Clergy, Extension Ministry, Northern Virginia District:** ([00:31:23](#)):

My second question is regarding the retired clergy health. Again, on page 174 in the conference treasurer's report it indicates that the actual cost of retired clergy health is going from 5.4 million up to 7 million, which indicates a 30% increase in costs for retired clergy health and I know with the recommendation of via benefits that there will be some changes, but is a 30% increase in retired clergy costs what bumpy is actually expecting for 2026?

**Mr. John Fuller, Director, Virginia United Methodist Pensions:** ([00:31:50](#)):

Yes. In fact, as I just reported in my report, the conference premium for our conference sponsored Medicare advantage plan increased by 28.5%, which would round to 30%. So I think that that is simply a reflection of the increase in cost that we saw this year, which we expect to carry through to next year as well. So there is an increase in costs. Again, you're referencing something that is not in a bumper report, so I would need to defer to others for the specifics on what's in that report, but I would say an increase that would round to 30% is a legitimate increase and I would not be surprised that that would be something that would be reported. Thank you. Certainly.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:32:30](#)):

Okay, other questions? Discussion on this report, I'm looking up high. Here's one microphone three,

**Rev. Timothy Barth, St. Lukes, United Methodist Church, Mountain View District:** ([00:32:41](#)):

Oh, sorry, I had to check and see what microphone I was at. Reverend Timothy, boy St. Luke's United Methodist Church, Disability Commission and also a disabled person. One of my questions that I keep coming back to is there is a huge cost to things like human aids and medical accessible equipment. I'm thankful that my church helped me buy human aids this last time at the cost of \$5,000. I understand it does not cover anything towards those prices and I understand that because it's expensive. So I was wondering if the task force had had a chance in any way, shape or form to evaluate what it would look like to offer medical assistant funds for those kinds of the devices?

**Mr. John Fuller, Director, Virginia United Methodist Pensions:** ([00:33:28](#)):

Sure. That's a great question and thank you for that input. What VUMPI can do, we have a supplemental benefits committee that evaluates the specifics of the conference sponsored health plans throughout the year and so I will take your comment and I'll take that back to the committee and we will work with our external consultants to evaluate the potential to add coverage for those types of products and services and to see what the potential impact on the aggregate cost on our health plan could be. And so thank you for that again and I will take that and we'll take that up with the committee and the VUMPI board of directors.

**Rev. Timothy Barth, St. Lukes, United Methodist Church, Mountain View District:** ([00:34:03](#)):

Thank you. And please no, I appreciate all that you and you do for the conference. Thank you. Jonathan.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:34:09](#)):

Microphone one is that one or is it? No, it's four. It looks like a one to me but I think it's a four.

**Rev. Sarah Harrison-McQueen, Central United Methodist Church, Northern Virginia District:** ([00:34:16](#)):

Thank you Bishop. I'm Sarah Harrison-McQueen. I serve on the Northern Virginia District serving at Central and I'm clergy. I use she, her pronouns. I just need to understand a little better the distinction between the apportionment and direct billing. For clergy who are not on the conference healthcare plan, will their churches get a direct bill or not?

**Mr. John Fuller, Director, Virginia United Methodist Pensions:** ([00:34:36](#)):

Yeah, so it will be billed to every church for each health plan. Eligible clergy. There will not be a distinction made based on whether that clergy enrolls in the health plan or not. So hopefully that's clear. An explanation is needed as to why I can do that. But

**Rev. Sarah Harrison-McQueen, Central United Methodist Church, Northern Virginia District:** ([00:34:52](#)):

No thank you. I just wanted to understand if it would or not.

**Mr. John Fuller, Director, Virginia United Methodist Pensions:** ([00:34:54](#)):

Okay. Yes.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:35:01](#)):

Okay. Others? Seeing none, I always say that because then I listen for the groan or the shall, but I think I've seen them all. I think we're ready to move in to a vote to approve the Board of Pensions report and recommendation if you would. So approve Lift a hand. Thank you. Those opposed? Same sign. Thank you, John Fuller, you are a gift to the annual conference. Now I'd like to introduce Reverend Tom Durance, the Chairperson of the Equitable Compensation Committee,

**Rev. Tom Durance, Chair of the Equitable Compensation Committee:** ([00:36:09](#)):

Bishop Hupert-Johnson, Lay Leader Stokes, members of the Annual Conference. You can find the Equitable Compensation Commission report on page 97 of the Book of Reports. In 2024, the Equitable Compensation Commission continued to provide financial aid to those churches requiring supplementation to strengthen their ministries in the communities in which they're located and to provide minimum salary or salary supplement for the pastors. Beginning on January 1st, 2025, the Equitable Compensation and partnership with the cabinet and the Church Development Team (CDT) determined that salary funding and other support related strategic appointments would come from CDT grant and be overseen by the Cabinet. With that mission change for us in mind, the Equitable Compensation still continues to focus on two primary areas. Number one, recommending the minimum compensation schedule for full-time clergy each year. And two, providing salary support for full-time clergy who are experiencing a compensation arrearage. Can we show our slide this year the Equitable Compensation Commission added two new categories to our recommendation for minimum salaries. We have included two new levels differentiation for licensed local pastors based on their education and we've added a new category, Associate Members placed above Provisional Members due to their lifetime status. These changes came from recommendations from the Just Compensation Task Force, which I participated in the last two years. The commission in consultation with the cabinet recommends an increase of 3% for the 2026 minimum compensation schedule as shown on the screen.

**Rev. Tom Durance, Chair of the Equitable Compensation Committee:** ([00:38:24](#)):

Bishop Hupert- Johnson, I move that the recommended minimum compensation schedule be approved as presented.

**Bishop Sue Hupert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:38:33](#)):

Okay, thank you. I see a card microphone five.

**Rev. Andrew Lebar-Dietz, Deacon, Peakland United Methodist Church, Mountain View District:** ([00:38:41](#)):

Thank you Bishop, Andrew Lebar-Dietz, Deacon in full connection Mountain View District, he him pronouns. I have two questions. My first question is do we have an idea on where Virginia Conference will rank compared to other United States annual conferences on minimum salary?

**Rev. Tom Durance, Chair of the Equitable Compensation Committee:** ([00:39:03](#)):

Alright, we've got an answer for that in my report. We'll speak to that in the next report. Okay. If you wait, wait for the Just

**Rev. Tom Durance, Chair of the Equitable Compensation Committee:** ([00:39:11](#)):

Compensation. Okay.

**Rev. Tom Durrance, Chair of the Equitable Compensation Committee:** ([00:39:12](#)):

Alright.

**Rev. Andrew Lebar-Dietz, Deacon, Peakland United Methodist Church, Mountain View District:** ([00:39:13](#)):

My second question is do we know how many churches will be able to afford two clergy people at the minimum or better salary? For instance, a senior pastor and an associate or an elder and a deacon?

**Rev. Tom Durrance, Chair of the Equitable Compensation Committee:** ([00:39:28](#)):

I don't have those statistics. Okay. You can query the, actually Chris Malak is the keeper of the database and he could answer that question. Okay, thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:39:47](#)):

Alright. Okay. Microphone. I can't see what it is, but go ahead Reverend Isernhagen.

**Rev. Brett Isernhagen, First United Methodist Church, Shenandoah River District:** ([00:39:56](#)):

Thank you, Brett Isernhagen, Clergy and Shenandoah River District at least for the next 48 hours. I like to speak against the motion, not that I think the work was done in bad faith and not that I think it's not needed or deserved, but I'm troubled every year as we raise the minimum that we are pricing churches out of full-time and elder ministry and in doing so, we're limiting the amount of truly missional appointments that can be made as there are churches that might be able to use ministry of elders and full-time folks and simply can't afford it. And just following the logical trajectory of that, it's not an encouraging picture if it's not part of a more nuanced solution. I think asking churches to just keep raising salary with money they don't have that can't be it. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:40:56](#)):

Thank you. Okay. We've had a speech against microphone three.

**Rev. Joshua King, Cave Spring United Methodist Church, Valley Ridge District:** ([00:41:03](#)):

Joshua King, Cave Spring United Methodist Church, Valley Ridge District. I just had a question about the local pastors completing course of study. Does that also include local pastors who have completed their MDiv?

**Rev. Tom Durrance, Chair of the Equitable Compensation Committee:** ([00:41:16](#)):

That's the intention. Okay. So if you're a local pastor who has an MDiv you're not required to go to Course of Study.

**Rev. Joshua King, Cave Spring United Methodist Church, Valley Ridge District:** ([00:41:29](#)):

Okay.

**Rev. Tom Durrance, Chair of the Equitable Compensation Committee:** ([00:41:29](#)):

So we're just saying it's an incentive to get the course of study or education done. That was the intent behind the

**Rev. Joshua King, Cave Spring United Methodist Church, Valley Ridge District:** ([00:41:38](#)):

Thank you. I wanted to be clear that that also included those with an MDiv.

**Rev. Tom Durrance, Chair of the Equitable Compensation Committee:** ([00:41:42](#)):

Fair enough.

**Rev. Joshua King, Cave Spring United Methodist Church, Valley Ridge District:** ([00:41:43](#)):

Thank

**Rev. Joshua King, Cave Spring United Methodist Church, Valley Ridge District:** ([00:41:44](#)):

You.

**Rev. Tom Durrance, Chair of the Equitable Compensation Committee:** ([00:41:44](#)):

Excellent.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:41:45](#)):

Okay, microphone five.

**Kathleen Monge, Retired Clergy, Charles City Memorial United Methodist Church, Mission Rivers District:** ([00:41:49](#)):

Kathleen Monge, retired clergy serving in the Mission River District at Charles City Memorial United Methodist Church. My question concerning the equitable salary and I haven't found it in the report but it may be there. So the question is, is there a place or is there an amount that a church must come up with to qualify for assistance? If a church was looking at we really would like a Provisional and the proposed salary is 44,000, what would a church have to come up to qualify for assistance?

**Rev. Tom Durrance, Chair of the Equitable Compensation Committee:** ([00:42:38](#)):

I could answer that. That's no longer under equitable compensation. That will be dealt with the grant from the CDT to the cabinet and the cabinet will make those determinations as they see fit on how to spread that grant out to churches that have needs.

**Rev. Tom Durrance, Chair of the Equitable Compensation Committee:** ([00:42:58](#)):

Okay, so that is coming from a grant as opposed from,

**Rev. Tom Durrance, Chair of the Equitable Compensation Committee:** ([00:43:01](#)):

As opposed from equitable compensation. Yes ma'am.

**Kathleen Monge, Retired Clergy, Charles City Memorial United Methodist Church, Mission Rivers District:** ([00:43:05](#)):

Thank you.

**Rev. Tom Durrance, Chair of the Equitable Compensation Committee:** ([00:43:05](#)):

So we no longer have to calculate basis. That's all done through the cabinet.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:43:12](#)):

Thank you. Microphone two.

**Rev. Lisa Nordan, Clergy on Loan to Mountain Sky Conference, Ray United Methodist Church:** ([00:43:21](#)):

Good morning, Bishop. My name is Lisa Nordan, Clergy. I am on loan to the Mountain Sky Conference right now and serve the church of Ray United Methodist Church. I speak for this amendment, this change as a single parent who has been a clergy person for a little while now, the pay that we have been receiving against the lack thereof with our housing allowance has caused me many times more than I would care to count to have to go to food closets to wonder if I'm going to be able to feed my kids and pay my bills. And don't forget medication. I understand the hardship of the churches as a person who also gets to enjoy the budget time, but your clergy need to be able to work in a way that doesn't cause us to worry if we're going to pay the bills and feed our kids against working and serving the community we're sent to. So I speak for this and trust that God will somehow balance it all out and maybe that's foolish, but I also speak for those who just don't have enough money to make ends meet. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:44:52](#)):

Microphone. Let's hold our applause. Microphone four.

**Rev. Bryan Buckles, Redwood United Methodist Church, Mountain View District:** ([00:44:58](#)):

Bishop, Bryan Buckles, Mount View District. Clergy, he him. I've lost count. Forgive me. Do we already have two in favor?

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:45:05](#)):

No.

**Rev. Bryan Buckles, Redwood United Methodist Church, Mountain View District:** ( ([00:45:05](#)):

Okay. Bishop, I rise to speak in favor of the

**Rev. Bryan Buckles, Redwood United Methodist Church, Mountain View District:** ([00:45:08](#)):

Proposal.

**Rev. Bryan Buckles, Redwood United Methodist Church, Mountain View District:** ([00:45:11](#)):

Bishop, I echo the comments just made by my esteemed colleague. I can't count the number of colleagues I have that graduated from seminary in their twenties and are middle aged and still paying off loans. I too have served wonderful churches for well over 20 years now. I love them and they have loved me and I understand the hardships. I would respectfully request that we discern our way into a new reality in which perhaps we look at other priorities and apportionment of things. So these churches that are struggling understandably or equipped to pay this new minimum salary because all of us know our pastors spend a lot on education and there are a lot of personal expenses and there is indebtedness and the system we have in place which is loving and nurturing certainly is far from perfect and the least we can do, especially when you consider that our colleagues just to the south of it's in North Carolina already have a minimum salary for elders of 51,000. Okay? I think it is prudent for us to take this step for the benefit of taking care of our pastoral families. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: ([00:46:20](#)):**

Thank you. Microphone. I can't read that. Hey, do not yell. Do not yell. I do not like that. That is not proper etiquette for the annual conference. Everybody who wants to speak will get to, I saw this gentleman at this microphone and I can't see the number of it to say my life, but he knows I'm looking at him and he will talk. Now this is the second time y'all got scolded

**Mr. Brian Lamb, Laity, White's Chapel, Mission Rivers District: ([00:46:48](#)):**

When I came up to a microphone, I just want to say, but Brian Lamb, Laity Mission Rivers District White's Chapel. I rise in favor of the motion and I just have two simple points that I want to make to the laity in particular. If you want a full-time clergy, you have to pay an equitable salary for a full-time clergy. Secondly, I work nine months a year, seven and a half hours a day, five days a week. And my starting salary was \$48,000 six years ago. And we're expecting our pastors to be on call 24-7. And as a past pastor, I understand what that expectation is. I understand what it felt like to not be able to pay my bills, to have to put my loans in forbearance, which by the way, that process is now under attack with many individuals.

**Mr. Brian Lamb, Laity, White's Chapel, Mission Rivers District: ([00:47:45](#)):**

And ultimately, what are you supposed to do psychologically? You have to take care of your needs before you can take care of other needs. And when you're living day to day trying to figure out how am I going to pay that bill? How am I going to put food on my table? Pay the exorbitant bill for the parsonages. That's too big for you to have in the first place and then be expected to tend to their flock. And so for those reasons, I still don't think it's enough, but I vote for or approve that. Okay, thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: ([00:48:23](#)):**

Okay, let's hold our applause. Anybody want to speak? Have a card, lift it. High nine. Microphone nine.

**Rev. Lori Valentine, Clergy, St. James and Mount Zion Rockingham UMCs, Shenandoah River District: ([00:48:35](#)):**

Thank you. Bishop. Lori Valentine, Clergy Shenandoah District St. James United Methodist Church and Mount Zion Rockingham. I want to thank Reverend King for his question. Mine kind of follows that for the local pastor tier, did the committee consider those who are either halfway through their MDiv at say 40 hours, which is academically the equivalent of the Course of Study or those local pastors who may already have a MTS certificate because those would be different academic pieces that would be completions that personally and a lot of my colleagues, it's much more expensive than just a Course of Study.

**Rev. Tom Durrance, Chair of the Equitable Compensation Committee: ([00:49:15](#)):**

We'll take that under advisement.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: ([00:49:17](#)):**

I think that we need some clarification so the committee will take that and will give us clarity on that.

**Rev. Lori Valentine, Clergy, St. James and Mount Zion Rockingham UMCs, Shenandoah River District: ([00:49:24](#)):**



Thank you very much. You raise your hand, as someone who's been blessed by the generosity of this conference, it would help a number of us if that was considered as part of this. Thank you. Thank

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:49:33](#)):

You. Any other cards? We've had several speeches for, is this a question or a speech against? Don't yell at me. I can see way back in the back.

**Rev. Ryan Ware, Clergy, Smith Memorial United Methodist Church, Mountain View District:** ([00:49:50](#)):

Good morning, Bishop. Ryan Ware, Clergy Smith Memorial United Methodist Church on the Mountain View District. I have a question. I appreciate the question that my colleague Andrew Lebar Dietz brought before us and while I appreciate that that answer is contained in the next report, I think it might be helpful for the body before we vote on our minimum compensation to understand where our conference rates versus other annual conferences. So if we could get that part of the next report, I think that might be beneficial for the body. Thank you very much.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:50:22](#)):

Okay, thank you. What do you think? Would you like me to give that statistic? Why don't you just give us that statistic Reverend Colwell? I think that'd be helpful.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([00:50:31](#)):

So part of the just compensation report this year was to study the statistics and that included looking at other annual conference, especially within the Southeastern Jurisdiction. WesPath just did a report this past year and one of their findings is that the Virginia Conference was the second lowest paid conference in the Southeastern Jurisdiction over the Appalachia Conference. One of the reasons that we think that that is, is we have many small rural churches and few larger churches, and so that brings our salaries down. We're going to talk a little bit more about what that looks like for us and some recommendations in the next report. But the average salary for pastors, and we separated this by male and female in our report, is the mean average is 65,747 for females and for males it's 72,305 and nationally the average pastor salary is \$80,000. So it's not too much lower, but this is something that we're actively working on, but this is where we are at this moment in time.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:51:44](#)):

Thank you. Just going to gauge, is the body ready to vote on the Equitable Compensation recommendations? Lift the hand if you're ready. Okay. The report is before, if you would approve the report of the Equitable Compensation Committee, please raise your hand. Okay. Those opposed, same sign and it is accepted. Thank you Reverend Durance. Appreciate it. Thank you. And now Reverend Jesse Cowell will grace us with her presence again and her posse.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([00:52:32](#)):

Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Secretary Reverend Claire Miller and conference Lay Leader Martha Stokes. I'm Jessie Colwell, the Director of Clergy Excellence and also the chair of the just Compensation task force. My committee stands behind me today and we have spent many, many hours friends studying our very own statistics and the statistics of other annual conferences across the nation and in the southeastern jurisdiction. It is my joy to present to you our findings and some recommendations.

Last year you voted for us to continue our work studying salary statistics including documented inequities regarding clergy status, district, gender, race, ethnicity, and years of service. Reverend Mike Nelson made a motion to also include parsonage standards, which was added to the work of this committee. I present to you a summary of our findings, which can also be found on pages 98 through 99 in the Book of Reports. This year, we enlisted the help of statistician, Dr. Kwang Yoon,

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence: (00:53:38):**

who did a statistical analysis on the following, the Virginia Conference, United Methodist 2024 salaries starting on July 1st, 2024, for full-time clergy relating to gender, race, and ethnicity district status, including licensed local pastors, provisional members, associate members, and full members in years of service. Once the data was collected, our team decided to take out some outlier information which we believed may skew the results including deacons and those serving an extension ministry. Our most important findings included the following, one in the Virginia Conference UMC, we have a gender gap in pay. Female pastors on average received \$1,774 less annually than their male peers. Some of this can be explained by the fact that there are more male clergy than female clergy and that female clergy were more often in the role of associate pastor rather than lead pastor. However, we found that within two out of our eight districts, female pastors were the highest earners. Still this gap is notable. Second, we found there was a race/ethnicity gap. African-American pastors received on average 797 more than their white peers while Hispanic and multiracial pastors received 4,637 less than their white counterparts.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence: (00:55:18):**

One explanation for why African-American salaries are higher than those of their white peers is that there are fewer African-American pastors, which means one or two higher salaries raise the whole average much more than in a larger sample size, resulting in a higher mean. Also most receive higher salaries due to longer years of service. The same is true for our Hispanic multiracial pastors. There is such a small group that one or two lower salaries lowers their mean. Our third finding was years of service. On average, pastors were paid \$217 more per extra year of service. Our fourth finding was that among the eighth districts, this may be no surprise to you, the Northern Virginia district had the highest clergy salaries. The unadjusted mean salary difference between Northern Virginia and other districts was \$8,727. However, considering the higher cost of living the adjusted mean difference shrank to \$4,193. Our fifth finding was unlimited itinerancy. Those pastors who were on limited itinerancy were paid 1080 \$8 less than their counterparts. Our six finding average worship attendance for each worship attendee the pastor's salary increase by \$28. For example, if the average worship attendance increases from a hundred to 200 members, the pastor's salary would increase by \$2,800. You can see all of this data and more findings and their supporting numbers, tables and matrices on the conference website if you would like to see that in detail.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence: (00:57:16):**

As we continued our studies, we had several celebrations. The first celebration is based on the task force findings. As you just heard in the previous report, the Equitable Compensation Commission added new categories to the recommendation for minimum salaries including the differentiation of licensed local pastors based on their education and the new category of associate members placed above provisional members due to their lifetime status. Our second celebration was following the just compensation task force spearheaded by the parsonage subcommittee. The cabinet updated its policy on minimum standards for a parsonage. Updates to this policy include required measures to be proactive about

safety and health hazards, technology needs, heating and air conditioning and maintenance. And two of my favorite examples of this policy include an addition of a health and safety section in which the church charge responsible for regular inspections of the parsonage for health and environmental hazards such as radon, mold, asbestos, lead paint, water, cleanliness, carbon, carbon monoxide, mercury, and electrical hazards. The last policy stated that central air conditioning is desirable everywhere whereas the new policy requires it. Amen.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:58:46](#)):

I feel a cool breeze.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([00:58:47](#)):

I know it feels so good in here. And you can read the report of the parsonage subcommittee, which was created by Reverend Dr. Mike Nelson on page a hundred, a hundred of the book. What else are we doing today? A hundred of the book of reports and you'll be able to see that final cabinet document very soon and it will be on the cabinet policies. So be on the lookout for that on the conference website. Our third celebration is the task force celebrates the statistical services of Dr. Queen Y, a lay member of Korean United Methodist Church of Greater Washington, who is one of our Virginia Conference UMC members. He graciously donated his time and expertise for this important work and the only thing he allowed us to pay for was a software in which we needed to use in order to incorporate the multiple regression statistical analysis. Thank you Dr. Yu.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([00:59:54](#)):

Having studied all these statistical findings, we've made several recommendations. The only financial impact on the annual conferences budget will be the continued use of Dr. Yoon's services, including the software which will total \$5,000 for the statistical software needed over four years, which be approximately \$1,250 per year. The remaining recommendations all involve further study and do not require immediate action. The recommendations before you include recommendation one. We recommend retaining Dr. Kwang Yoon's Statistical services for the next four years so that the annual conference can do a comparative statistical analysis annually. We estimate the service would cost up to \$5,000 total for the four years. The second recommendation is we recommend dissolving the just compensation task force and entrusting this work to the Director of Belonging and Advocacy of the Virginia Conference UMC, who will work alongside the Virginia Conference boards and agencies as related to this work, these groups would continue to study the statistics of the Virginia Conference clergy annually focusing on clergy status, district, gender, race, ethnicity, disability, and years of service.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:01:22](#)):

We ask that they present any recommendations to the 2026 annual conference recommendation three. We recommend the Director of Belonging and Advocacy as a member of the cabinet in consultation with the order of Deacons study and establish a just salary policy for deacons serving full-time within the local church. This statistical study would include years of service, housing allowance and salaries based on deacon's education and clergy status. Our fourth recommendation, we recommend that the Committee on Finance and Administration and consultation with the Office of Pensions and Benefits study the possibility of creating a system in which the Virginia Conference UMC would administer payroll processing and tax related reporting for all clergy appointed to local churches within the VA UMC. We asked after they study this information, they present any recommendations to the 2026 annual conference. The fifth recommendation. We recommend the Equitable Compensation Commission

researches models a minimum based compensation based off of the status education, years of service and economic variables including cost of living. There is a wonderful example from the Western North Carolina conference that we included in our report where they have a table of years of service to try to determine clergy salaries. We ask that they present any recommendations to the 2026 annual conference. And finally our last recommendation, recommendation six. We recommend that the cabinet use findings from this report to inform their conversations about setting clergy salaries with staff pastor parish relations committees. These recommendations are now before you.

**Bishop Sue Haupt-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:03:18](#)):

Okay. The floor is open. The report is before you microphone one or microphone

**Rev. Dr. Sarah Calvert, District Superintendent, Mountain View District:** ([01:03:24](#)):

Two. DS Calvert. Hello, Sarah Calvert, District Superintendent of Mountain View District. For the moment. I am she, her. I am none of the other things. I need to say I'm clergy. So, questioning the recommendations of turning over the work of this committee. One of the things that wasn't mentioned was education status. I wondered if you considered that or if maybe that's something we could amend the report to suggest?

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:03:53](#)):

Yes, I think that's wonderful. I think that is part of what our task was for the Equitable Compensation Commission and that they will continually be looking at that as well when they're setting salaries. But we will include that in the work.

**Rev. Dr. Sarah Calvert, District Superintendent, Mountain View District:** ([01:04:04](#)):

So it wasn't in the recommendation that education would be part, it was along with disability and all those things, but education wasn't mentioned.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:04:10](#)):

Yes. We're happy to add that to the study. Thank you Sarah. Make that as a friendly

**Rev. Dr. Sarah Calvert, District Superintendent, Mountain View District:** ([01:04:13](#)):

Amendment.

**Bishop Sue Haupt-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:04:13](#)):

Oh, there's not a friendly amendment but if the house would approve adding that. Lift your hand. Okay. Thank you. I didn't think there'd be a big problem. Friendly amendments never are. Microphone two.

**Rev. Youtha Hardman-Cromwell, Retired Clergy, Northern Virginia District:** ([01:04:39](#)):

I'm Clergy. I am in Northern Virginia. Retired clergy. Retired elder African-American. Okay. I have a question that I read about on page 98 when you were talking about the findings and you did the district one. You said that Northern Virginia, I thought I heard correctly was \$8,727 ahead of the others. But when I look at 98 it says \$18,727,

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:05:21](#)):

Which it is, so it was \$18,000 however, with the cost-of-living variable that brought it down to a lower number.

**Rev. Youtha Hardman-Cromwell, Retired Clergy, Northern Virginia District:** ([01:05:31](#)):

When you said \$8,727, that was not what you meant to say. Is that correct?

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ( [01:05:37](#)):

Let me see what I said. Let's see.

**Rev. Youtha Hardman-Cromwell, Retired Clergy, Northern Virginia District:** ([01:05:39](#)):

I think you just misread the number.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ( [01:05:40](#)):

I might've misread the number. I apologize.

**Rev. Youtha Hardman-Cromwell, Retired Clergy, Northern Virginia District:** ([01:05:43](#)):

Okay. Because I was really startled when I read this number at home.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ( [01:05:47](#)):

Sure.

**Rev. Youtha Hardman-Cromwell, Retired Clergy, Northern Virginia District:** ([01:05:47](#)):

And then when you said it was less, I was like, okay, which number is the correct one? Thank you.

**Rev. Youtha Hardman-Cromwell, Retired Clergy, Northern Virginia District:** ([01:05:53](#)):

No, great question. Thank you. I apologize.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Conference:** ([01:06:00](#)):

Okay, I saw a card. Microphone five, you're already there. And then

**Dr. Allison Hickey, Member at Large, Mission Rivers District:** ([01:06:06](#)):

Good morning. My name is Dr. Allison Hickey. I'm a recent DMin graduate from Wesley Theological Seminary. So I wanted to acknowledge the prayer this morning by our great leader. I am laity unusual for a DMin, but my project for this effort was really focused on women and girls. And in the course of that project I had the opportunity to interview many women clergy and their thoughts in and around what makes it ease of work for them to do the Lord's work they're called to do. I am a Mission River District Member at Large, but I'm also a member of Peace United Methodist Church. I am a she, her and a strong advocate for the community that helps us do that gender identity. It's a long introduction to say as an advocate for women and girls in all walks of life, I have been blessed in my life to live and work in environments that made salary gender neutral. There were no gender opportunities for having different genders. I'm also a 24 year member of, a retired member of the military. Genders did not play into salary negotiations and salary discussions. And while I really appreciate the work that's been done by this committee, the data is really a good and powerful way to understand what's happening. The recommendations feel like kicking the can once more. We have been reviewing and looking at the

differences between male and female pay equity for a really long time and my question is when do we make the recommendation that there has to be parity between male and female members of the clergy?

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:07:58](#)):

Thank you for that.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:08:03](#)):

And I would say we collected our statistics that way to be able to see if there was a gap, but I think the goal is to equalize the pay structure. And that's something the hard part about the Virginia Conference is that we are so vast and wide and we encompass so many different geographical areas and that also the cost of living in all of those areas influences what some of these salaries are. And so they greatly vary across the Virginia conference and they greatly vary also by district. And the reason that we can't come today and share a number like some annual conferences do is because it varies so much that we're unable to do that in a way that is just for every clergy person. And so while we've done the work and the statistical analysis, we feel that we need to spend more time to be able to create some kind of equation table to make sure that there's equitable pay for all. It is hard. We are so large and we are so vast and wide. That's why we would like to do further study because it's more complicated than we had first envisioned when we started doing this work.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:09:15](#)):

Okay. Microphone five. Excuse me. I see you over here.

**Ms. Katie Fruman, Laity, Trinity United Methodist Church, Three Notch'd District:** ([01:09:20](#)):

Thank you. My name is Katie Fruman. I'm here today as LA from Trinity UMC Orange in the Three Notch'd District. I have a question about dissolving the committee and referring that work. The recommendations all sound like a lot of work. How do you kind of envision that working and does that seem like too much work for one person and maybe should the committee continue or should it be another committee or a smaller committee? Because as a former SPRC person, even just kind of looking at centralizing, administering payroll sounds like a whole lot.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:10:03](#)):

That's a great question. And so we have never had a conference person dedicated to this type of work before I was tasked to do this work due to virtue of my role. But now we have someone coming in who's going to be doing that work all across the annual conference and having those findings. So we believed that that was the best person and we also left it open enough that they could include any other, as many committees and agencies as they thought was necessary to spread out the work as well.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:10:33](#)):

Okay. Microphone Three.

**Mr. Rob Getty, Laity, Mission Rivers District:** ([01:10:35](#)):

Rob Getty, Laity, Mission Rivers District, you comment about having the averages being skewed by having a few outlier, high or low salaries. Can you provide any information about what the median salaries are for the 50/50 break off? My church was in financial distress last year and we're looking for



trying to get a cheaper pastor and we didn't have a lot of data for what we were trying to, Hey, when you can't pay your apportionments, you got to find something.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:11:05](#)):

I hear you. And so our last, I'm sorry. Sorry. There's not that data other than the equitable compensation line. So you're going, okay, as long as we're above that, is that fair? There's no median data to actually say is what we're offering reasonable.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:11:21](#)):

So we provided those two mean salaries for the male to female. But our last recommendation was to have the cabinet use this information as they're working with churches to set those salaries. So that's the hope that the cabinet brings that information as well to be able to give you a starting point as to what that would work for your church, how that would work. We're looking at creating something like that. I mean if you look at the Western North Carolina policy, they actually have a table of your service and different things that help I think would help churches be able to have that information and that's what we're asking to be created in this next year.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Conference:** ([01:11:59](#)):

Good. Microphone three.

**Mr. Steven Amra, Laity, Northern Virginia District:** ([01:12:01](#)):

Good morning. My name is Steven Amra from the Alexandria District. I want to thank the last speaker for the data on the analysis performed and to piggyback on the previous speaker the question he asked, I was wondering why the statistician used the mean rather than the median. Given that we all know incomes are not normally distributed, the media is a more reliable indicator of the general picture of the pay of individuals. So in future analysis I'm volunteering the conferences you have to pay me, I would like to partner with that statistician to have a more accurate analysis. Thank you.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:12:48](#)):

Absolutely. Thank you. And we provided both of those numbers in our report as well. We have the median and the mean so you can see all that information. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:12:57](#)):

Okay, microphone six.

**Rev. Andrew Lebar-Dietz, Deacon, Peakland United Methodist Church, Mountain View District:** ([01:13:01](#)):

Thank you Bishop. Andrew LaBar-Dietz, Deacon in full connections serving the Peakland charge Mountain View District. He, him, I know it's an outlier but I was wondering if we had or if we could hear the difference between the average compensation of deacons versus elders.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:13:21](#)):

So that wasn't something that we had ready to present. What we found with the deacon salaries is that they widely varied as some work in the local church and many work in extension ministries, sometimes



all over the world. And so that is the work that we hope to be able to bring by doing the deacon study next year. But we don't have that information to present today. But it is an excellent question.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:13:42](#)):

Okay, thank you. Okay, thank you. Let's do five and then nine. I see you way back there in 11 too. Barely. Barely. But I see you. Go ahead. Microphone five.

**Kathleen Monge, Retired Clergy, Charles City Memorial United Methodist Church, Mission Rivers District:** ([01:13:54](#)):

Reverend Kathleen Monge, retired Elder Mission River District presently serving Memorial United Methodist Church in Charles City. In your studies or in the discussions, was there any portion to include where pastors have been reappointed or are being appointed to a new appointment where a lowering of the salary was used to have a congregation accept a female clergy or a clergy non-white male?

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence** ([01:14:34](#)):

So one of the factors of our study was to see was there an impact on clergy move just in general. But we did not do a study based off the question that you just asked. So maybe that information can be included. Recommendation,

**Kathleen Monge, Retired Clergy, Charles City Memorial United Methodist Church, Mission Rivers District:** ([01:14:49](#)):

May I add that as a recommendation to be included for the cabinet? To look at their pattern of discussing with potential congregations, the matching of not gifts and graces or years of service but to eliminate the gender. Thank

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence** ([01:15:12](#)):

You. Thank you. I'll add that salary lowered one a female or other.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:15:17](#)):

Good. Thank you. Microphone nine. And then microphone 11.

**Mr. Tyler William, Youth. Member to Annual Conference:** ([01:15:24](#)):

Hello, my name is Tyler Williams. I am a youth member at annual conference. I am 16 and I go by he, him pronouns. So I have a question about the dissolvment of this committee. So do you think it would be possible to instead of do dissolving the committee and putting that responsibility on one person, do you think it would be possible to appoint someone to take on those responsibilities together with the current committee so that instead of putting it all on one person, you have one person that specializes in it but can work together with all of the people who are already experienced with this kind of thing? I remember in the report you were talking about having this person learn about it. I feel like it would just be a more efficient way to go about this if you maybe just added another member and kept the committee doing what it has been doing for a long time.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence** ([01:16:25](#)):

Thank you for that. Yes, we thought about that. We thought about that and I think that when Lan is doing this work, he can invite any of us to be part of it. But since this is the sole, one of his sole

responsibilities is to make sure that he is being an advocate for all in the conference included lady and clergy. We thought that that would be a more natural person to lead it than myself as the director of clergy excellence. And that's really kind of would be the only change is we'd have a change in leadership and he would've access to all of the same people to do this work. But we also wanted to respect him coming in and what he saw and what he thought might be needed, which might be different than what we're doing. So we didn't want to limit him by having a committee that continued when he might need something completely different to do this work.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:17:14](#)):

Okay. Microphone 11. Way in the back.

**Rev. Kori Robins, Clergy, Mission Rivers District on Loan to North Carolina Conference:** ([01:17:20](#)):

My name is Kori Robins. I'm an ordained elder. My charge is in the Mission Rivers District, but I serve on loan in North Carolina. I'm female white. My preferred pronouns are she, her. Just a request for information. I was shocked when reading the report and realizing... I'm short. I'm sorry.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:**

It's okay. I can see you Kori,

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:17:47](#)):

I see you. You're kind of blocked by the paper. I see you, but you have a lovely

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:17:51](#)):

Forehead.

**Rev. Kori Robins, Clergy, Mission Rivers District on Loan to North Carolina Conference:** ([01:17:57](#)):

I'm short in stature. Mighty invoice. So question you said when we fell right above the Appalachia conference and he said we think that's because we have more rural churches. I appreciate that thought. But I'd like the research because I can't think of any other conferences in the southeastern jurisdiction that don't have a lot of rural churches. So could we find out if that's why or if it's just been a long time of not paying our clergy?

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:18:38](#)):

Well we can do that research.

**Speaker 27** ([01:18:40](#)):

Thank You.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:18:41](#)):

We also are just, that's part of it too. We have been low for such a long time. It's going to take us a minute to make it higher.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:18:50](#)):

Okay. We'll continue at microphone 11

**Rev. Katie Gooch, Campus Minister, The Pace Center, Three Notch'd District:** ([01:18:57](#)):

Thank you. I'm a little taller. I'm Reverend Katie Gooch, clergy ordained elder, campus minister, the Pace Center. Three Notch'd District. I'm an adult. She, her. My question is in regards to the parsonage, as we increased the standards for minimum parsonage standards, does that affect at all the suggestion that we have for housing allowances? If, so then my question is as we're increasing minimum parsonage standards, are we asking churches and the conferences employees to increase housing allowances to be able to meet these same standards?

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:19:56](#)):

So that's a great question, Katie. At this moment in time, our housing policy that was created as a cabinet policy was to pick three locations nearest to the church in housing in order to divide that to get an equitable housing salary and that is the formula to get that and the parsonage standards at this point are not weighed against the way that we're setting housing, but I think that's an important thing to keep in front of the cabinet as they do their policies.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:20:25](#)):

Okay. Microphone two.

**Rev. Jonathan Page, Clergy, Director of Innovation and Creativity:** ([01:20:30](#)):

Jonathan Page, Clergy on extension working in the Conference Office, Three Notch'd District. I'm an adult white male and I use he, him pronouns. I rise on behalf of our Director of Belonging and Advocacy, incoming Director of Belonging and Advocacy who I'm sitting next to who requested that I stand since he is not yet in that role, and share that he will be leading this work but not doing this work. The work is ours to do collectively.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:20:58](#)):

Thank you. Thank you. Microphone five.

**Rev Drew Ens, Cergy, RISE Campus Ministry, Northern Virginia District:** ([01:21:02](#)):

Hi, my name is Drew Ens. I'm a clergy person at a RISE Campus Ministry in the Northern Virginia District. I am an adult male using he, him pronouns and one of the questions I had was, especially after the last question we just took around minimum clergy salaries has the task force taken up the thought of the cabinet putting out a cost of living increase that should be adopted by the local church. This might give local churches more time for planning instead of here at conference and may take away the awkwardness of clergy people having to share their stories and advocating for their own minimum salary in front of the entire conference. And I'm just wondering if that was something maybe that the task force had considered.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ( ([01:21:55](#)):

I believe that that is a factor that the Equitable Commission takes into consideration each year when they set the minimum salary. Tom, is that so? That is something the Commission Equitable compensation includes when they present the minimum salaries each year?

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:22:10](#)):

Thank you.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ( [01:22:11](#)):

And the Treasurer's office .

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:22:12](#)):

Way in the back. I see you David. We see you. Don't yell. We'll get to you. You'll have a turn, but right now I'm looking in the back, I don't know what mic you're nearest to but find the one nearest to you and go ahead. Seven microphone seven.

**Rev. Devin Maust Earl, Clergy, Campus Minister, Wesley, University of Virginia:** ([01:22:31](#)):

Reverend Devin Maust Earl. I am an ordained elder serving as the campus minister and director at Wesley at UVA, Three Notch'd District, young adult. My question is if the task force or whoever moves forward with this could consider conference employees, which includes our Wesley Foundations in the fair housing consideration with housing allowance. Right now conference employees get \$15,000 a year, which is \$1,250 a month for housing and I know in Richmond that's probably not a totally paying for your housing as well as in a lot of places where we are.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:23:24](#)):

Thank you. Okay, microphone three. Was this who you were yelling about? Okay, there's one up there. Okay. Just want to clarify. It's dark up there so go ahead. Microphone three.

**Ms. Annette Patrick, District Laity at Large, Mountain View District:** ([01:23:39](#)):

My name is Annette Patrick, I'm from Mountain View District Laity at large. She her. Is that all you need

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:23:51](#)):

To know? I think we're good. Yeah.

**Ms. Annette Patrick, District Laity at Large, Mountain View District:** ([01:23:52](#)):

Okay. I have three questions and a lot of it will be guesswork to answer. Do you anticipate that equalization for pay based on gender will be recommended in a single year, like next year maybe?

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:24:12](#)):

I think, I'm not sure if that can happen within the context of a year. I think what we're trying to work on in tasks the next committee is how can we make it just in equitable, not just based on gender but also on education, years of service and cost of living and those kinds of factors. So I don't know if that can be rectified in a year. I mean that's great. That would be amazing, but they will continue to do that work to close that gap.

**Ms. Annette Patrick, District Laity at Large, Mountain View District:** ([01:24:43](#)):

Second question, do you anticipate that there will be equalization based on the cost of living rather than across the board equalization based on all those other factors?

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:24:56](#)):

Cost of living is something that we look at, but it varies so greatly that it is a factor that's difficult to use in the equation.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:25:05](#)):

I don't know if Tom wants to speak to that. So with the 18,000 that is actually 4,000, basically difference between Northern Virginia and the rest of the state may or may not go away. It may not because if the cost of living is higher, the salary will probably be higher to compensate for that.

**Ms. Annette Patrick, District Laity at Large, Mountain View District:** ([01:25:30](#)):

Okay. Last question. How do you anticipate that these changes will affect apportionments?

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:25:38](#)):

I'm not sure I'm the person to answer that question.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:25:41](#)):

Doug, would you like to answer

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:25:43](#)):

Doug or David?

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:25:44](#)):

David, one of you.

**Mr. David Domnisse, Conference Treasurer and CFO:** ([01:25:50](#)):

I'm going to apologize. It's hard to hear the question standing back there and I have 58, 57-year-old heavy metal ears and was not able to hear the question. Fully

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:26:04](#)):

Poor choices.

**Mr. David Domnisse, Conference Treasurer and CFO** ([01:26:14](#)):

I fully own my full choices and enjoyed many of them.

**Ms. Annette Patrick, District Laity at Large, Mountain View District:** ([01:26:22](#)):

The question again was how do you anticipate that these equalization changes will affect apportionments?

**Mr. David Domnisse, Conference Treasurer and CFO** ([01:26:34](#)):

I don't know that there's going to be any correlation between the equalization and apportionments. Obviously clergy salaries are a part of the apportionment formula, but if we do it on a conference wide basis, which is what I think this is doing, it should not have too much impact on the apportionments because the budget will stay the same. It's just how it's allocated. So if every church moves in the same direction in any one issue, the apportionments do not change for particular churches. Did I answer your question to

**Ms. Annette Patrick, District Laity at Large, Mountain View District:** ([01:27:17](#)):

Probably as best you could. Thank you.

**Mr. David Dommissie, Conference Treasurer and CFO** ([01:27:21](#)):

I give it my best. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:27:23](#)):

Over in the dark. Microphone 13. Shine some light on her please. Yay.

**Rev. Judy Worthington, Retired Clergy, Coastal Virginia District:** ([01:27:31](#)):

My name is Judy Worthington. I'm retired clergy from the Coastal Virginia District and my pronouns are she and her. I speak in support and gratitude for the work of the Just Compensation Committee, but I just like to remind everyone that compensation affects your entire life. Our pensions are lower because of the compensation differences. Our social security benefits are lower because of the compensation differences and I'd like to maybe encourage some work that looks at pensions not to change our pensions. Our pensions are what our pensions are, but looking at them and the disparities between them for the different race, gender, and all of the other issues because it does affect our lives in the long-term. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:28:50](#)):

Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:28:51](#)):

Microphone Four.

**Rev. James Bowers, Clergy, St. Andrew's, Coastal Virginia District:** ([01:28:54](#)):

James Bowers, Elder in full connection, St. Andrew's, Portsmouth, Coastal Virginia District. I just have a question for information. I was wondering in your research, was there any comparison in gender compensation relative to roles served pastors, associate pastors and so forth?

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:29:18](#)):

No, we didn't really focus our work on that, but that's a great question.

**Rev. James Bowers, Clergy, St. Andrew's, Coastal Virginia District:** ([01:29:21](#)):

Alright, thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:29:23](#)):

Okay. I saw microphone five in the middle here. Blue blazer or Gray Blazer or Blazer type.

**Rev. Bob Talbott, Clergy, St. Thomas-Guilford, Coastal Virginia District:** ([01:29:38](#)):

Bob Talbott, Coastal Virginia District, Licensed Local pastor and he, him. One thing, and I may have misinterpreted what I read, but one thing that we've not talked about that I think is huge that I understand that you're looking at the conference paying pastors salaries through the conference office instead of the churches paying pastor's salary. Did I?

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:30:03](#)):

That's a great question. And so what we have proposed for them to review is what would it look like for churches to pay their pastor's salaries to the conference and the conference would distribute that to the pastors and also would take care of all of the W-2's and paperwork like that. That's so difficult for churches to complete sometimes.

**Rev. Bob Talbott, Clergy, St. Thomas-Guilford, Coastal Virginia District:** ([01:30:26](#)):

To me that's huge.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:30:29](#)):

So we're looking at that

**Rev. Bob Talbott, Clergy, St. Thomas-Guilford, Coastal Virginia District:** ([01:30:30](#)):

Because it takes a lot of stress off of pastors. I don't know if you've ever served in a place where it was hard to get your paycheck. Sure, exactly. Exactly. But...Yeah, it takes a lot of stress off of pastors as well as it gives the conference flexibility in equalizing salaries and it lets the cabinets send pastors where their gifts and graces are really needed.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:30:56](#)):

I think you need to clarify, it's administrative and not

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:30:59](#)):

Yeah, so what we're recommending for them to review is just the administrative task of receiving the salaries and then distributing them directly to the pastors. I think down the road it might be something to consider as they're doing that research to look at how would that also affect our ability for more just compensation.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:31:19](#)):

Okay. Way in the back to my right microphone. I can't see the microphone numbers. Whatever. Go to the microphone nearest to you. Oh, you're at a microphone.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:31:31](#)):

I know you can't see. It's

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:31:32](#)):

True. Okay. Yes, that's you. Whatever number is in front of you that I can't see because their head's in front of it.

**Rev. Michelle Matthews, Clergy, Kingstowne Communion Charge, Northern Virginia District:** ([01:31:38](#)):

Hi. Thank you. Bishop Michelle Matthews, Elder in full connection in the Northern Virginia District Kingstowne Communion charge. I have noticed we have - First thank you for your report. Thank you for the VUMPI report - I've noticed that we've had a couple of reports that affect each other and wondering how your task force took into account the decisions being made this year related to direct bill health. I



know personally at my church it's going to affect our ability to increase pastor's salary to be direct bill paid and significantly, significantly impacted. So there seemed to be competing desires and competing expectations and wondering if the two can work together.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:32:43](#)):

Thank you, Michelle. So John was a member of our committee and we formed the committee that these were changes that would be occurring and I think part of what we're asking churches to do is just to do what we've asked them to do is to pay the pastor's salary and pensions and benefits and this is an additional level of accountability for that to happen. So that certainly was part of our conversation and that's why John and David are both on the committee and Tom Durrance as well. But our work was more what our statistics, what are our findings and how can we make more just compensation. That is something we had before us, but it wasn't something that was part of our statistical analysis.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:33:25](#)):

Okay. Somebody else in the dark? I think 12. Okay. Microphone 12. I see you back there.

**Rev. Ellis Crum, Clergy, Wallace Memorial, Mission Rivers District:** ([01:33:34](#)):

Good morning. I'm Ellis Crum, Clergy Wallace Memorial in Hampton. He, him and I'm also the President of the BMCR. So I rise, I'm a little concerned with the recommendation that the work of this committee will be now I guess pushed over to the new Director of Advocacy and Belonging. With all that has to happen in the initial year, I'm a little lost at how we are setting that position up for success by slinging it with the compensation question when there's so much to learn outside of compensation. So I'm just rising as a point of concern.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:34:15](#)):

Thank you.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:34:22](#)):

So I would say he still has access to all of these people and all the research that we have done and we will certainly make sure that he's supported by us. He does this work and like he said, has he tasked others to continue to do this work?

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:34:35](#)):

Microphone, whatever that is. I have no idea. Six. Okay, y'all help me. Six.

**Rev. Andrew Ware, Beech Grove, United Methodist Church, Coastal Virginia District:** ([01:34:46](#)):

Bishop Andrew Ware, Coastal Virginia District, Beech Grove United Methodist Church. I am an adult male using he, him pronouns. I'd like to ask about the understanding of the future of bi-vocationalism for pastors. As cost of living continues to go up in our culture and unfortunately there is a response that in a lot of ways churches can't respond by continuing to give their pastors raises. The conference often doesn't have the full ability to be able to make sure that pastors can make up to that amount. This would probably be a good question, both for Jessie, the board, just compensation about what it would look like for some of our pastors to be bi-vocational, what role the conference could help us play in that. Obviously that also means having a job that isn't within the church. I know we have that in a lot of ways

now, but as something that's recommended for churches to be able to both afford a pastor and for a pastor to be able to afford a cost of living. Thank you.

**Rev. Jessie Colwell, Director, Center for Clergy Excellence:** ([01:35:51](#)):

Thank you. Yes, thank you.

**Rev. Doug Forrester, District Superintendent, Valley Ridge District:** ([01:35:59](#)):

I just want to offer to you, oh, I'm Doug Forrester, the Valley Ridge District Superintendent, adult, he, him pronouns. I just want to let you all know, let the whole body know that one of the best things that I've seen in my five years as a District Superintendent is work that's being done through the Lewis Center at Wesley Theological Seminary. That's called the Religious Workforce Project and it is an in-depth study with both quantitative and qualitative data on exactly what you just asked about bi-vocational ministry across the country and across different denominations. It's a great resource to see a very accessible, very deep dive on exactly that question. I'm familiar with it because I was a very small part of that process, but I'm familiar with it as well and I offer it to you just as anytime that conversation comes up. The cabinet can attest to this. I always tell people to go to the Lewis Center website and look up the Religious Workforce project. I believe the URL is religiousworkforce.com. Thanks.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:37:14](#)):

Okay, microphone over there. One, not one four. Can I ask that we have different numbers next time that I can see it would be helpful.

**Mr. Brody Cameron, Youth Delegate, St. Mark's Manassas, Northern Virginia District:** ([01:37:29](#)):

Brody Cameron, St. Mark's Manassas.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:37:32](#)):

We need Mike four on please.

**Mr. Brody Cameron, Youth Delegate, St. Mark's Manassas, Northern Virginia District** ([01:37:37](#)):

Brody, Cameron St. Mark's youth delegate and I would like to call the question. Okay,

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:37:49](#)):

The question has been called and we will immediately move. We have a second and we immediately move into a vote if you would approve. I heard a second. We're good. I think we're ready to go and it doesn't have any, if you have 75 seconds it really doesn't matter. But anyhow, if you would like to move this on for a vote, lift your hands. Okay, we have a two thirds vote and we will move immediately into a vote. If you would approve the recommendations of this task force, would you please lift your hand? Thank you. Those opposed And I would like to thank all of you for a lot of time and energy and I let this discussion go on because this is an adaptive challenge and not a technical challenge that as we have increasingly shrinking churches and increasingly higher costs of living, those two don't work together.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:38:53](#)):

And so we're going to have to be creative together and figure out new ways of funding pastors so that they have satisfactory living conditions that churches can handle and it's going to take all of our creativity and all of us working together to do it, but to approach a question, you first have all have to

know what the issues are and I think you have done a good job and I think it's really to Virginia's credit that we are looking at this stuff for the first time in a long time with hard lenses and trying to figure some of this out. So I thank you for your work. It clearly is ongoing. It clearly will have, but we need as much creativity. I think we can say we know the problems really well and thank you for establishing all the problems this morning, but now we need to move in. How do we creatively address these issues in ways they've never been addressed before? So thank you all, we appreciate it. Thank you Bishop. Okay, we're going to move into a 15 minute stretch break and we will be reconvening at 10:47. Okay. So please be in your seats at 10:47.

**The body took a break from the Business Session for 15 minutes and reconvened at 10:47 a.m.**

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: ([01:56:45](#)):**

Okay. Before we get started, I want to correct an error I made and I unintentionally offended some Wesley Seminary folks. I am from, I have been more familiar with Candler's piety and the "dean" is the head kahuna, but at Wesley he's the president. So, President David McAllister Wilson who is going to retire this year, but I'm very hopeful we'll see him next year at our retirement or maybe speaking at our memorial service, but I probably should talk to him before I suggest that, but you might encourage him if you see him, but he has been such a tremendous asset and a valued member of the Virginia Annual Conference, so I wanted to correct that unintentional error. Okay, microphone five.

**Ms. Ashley Parker, Lay Member, Northern Virginia District: ([01:57:41](#)):**

Thank you Bishop. My name is Ashley Parker. I am a lay member here on behalf of the Northern Virginia District. I'm a white female and if you'll allow me, I would just like 60 seconds to call attention to something. Sure. First of all, I want to thank you and everyone on the stage for all the work you're doing and acknowledge that everyone in this room is doing their very best and I mean that with all sincerity. As I'm sure you've noticed, there are some microphones that are very hard for you to see between the darkness, the cameras in the way, heads in the way. A couple of items ago, a couple of reports ago, I noticed someone standing at microphone, I want to say nine very first and was the seventh person called on the last report? Someone was standing at microphone seven as five other people at microphone two five went ahead of them and the got called before they got to speak. I do not know the solution and I know that you have noticed the problem, but

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: ([01:58:48](#)):**

I just Well, I'm just going to say I don't see it as a problem in the sense that we want everybody to speak

**Ms. Ashley Parker, Lay Member, Northern Virginia District: ([01:58:55](#)):**

Yes.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: ([01:58:55](#)):**

And the order doesn't really matter.

**Ms. Ashley Parker, Lay Member, Northern Virginia District: ([01:58:57](#)):**

I just want to make sure we're being

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: ([01:58:59](#)):**

Equitable for all if and if somebody calls the question by virtue of calling the question debate will be cut off. So I would say as long as debate goes on, just be patient at whatever microphone you're at, wave your card, don't yell and we will get to everybody in due time. Okay.

**Ms. Ashley Parker, Lay Member, Northern Virginia District: ([01:59:19](#)):**

Thank you, Bishop.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: ([01:59:19](#)):**

Okay, thank you. I appreciate that. Microphone three.

**Rev. Bill Davidson, Retired, Three Notch'd District: ([01:59:24](#)):**

Thank you. Bishop, Bill Davidson, retired, Three Notch'd District, male, he, him pronouns. I'd like to make a motion to reconsider if we can the reporter, the just compensation task group to make a motion. Would it be in order for me to read that for full information in that regard?

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: ([01:59:44](#)):**

Yes.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: ([01:59:45](#)):**

Alright. I move that the clergy housing policy be revised to include conference staff, which would also include campus ministers.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: ([01:59:54](#)):**

Okay. I think first of all, we have to weigh the motion to reconsider. So my question is did you vote no on the, it would require it's out of order unless somebody voted yes on the previous one.

**Rev. Bill Davidson, Retired, Three Notch'd District: ([02:00:11](#)):**

I'm on the Task force. It's a little hard to vote against it, I guess Bishop.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: ([02:00:14](#)):**

Okay.

**Rev. Bill Davidson, Retired, Three Notch'd District: ([02:00:14](#)):**

Perhaps one of my colleagues will take up that.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: ([02:00:18](#)):**

Well, I think what I would say is I do think that conference staff housing is a problem and I would ask the task force to consider that, but it also is a matter that needs to go to CF&A for, budgetary too. So I think we will ask them to look at that. Okay. Take on. Okay. Okay. Now moving on. I think looking around and I'm so grateful I have a chart of microphone, so I do have help up here. So now I have the chart. Yay. See, some problems can be solved. We've spent most of the morning on problems that are very hard to solve, but that one was solved. Now we're moving into our Treasurer's report, and I am delighted to invite our Conference Treasurer, Mr. David Dommissie forward for that report.

**Mr. David Dommissie, Conference Treasurer and CFO: (02:01:15):**

Thank you. I remembered last year I cut mine short when I read the room we got an hour, so I think I can fill the whole hour this time. Oh, I'm just kidding with you guys. Good morning, Bishop Hauptert-Johnson, Lay Leader, Stokes and members, guests and friends in the Annual cConference. I'm to present the report of the treasurer for the Virginia Conference. This is more than a collection of numbers. It is a testimony to the faithfulness, the generosity, and the mission-driven work of our congregations across the commonwealth. As we reflect on the close of 2024, we give thanks for the vitality of our conference. We stand as a connectional body of 861 churches and faith communities serving 250,000 members. Our average worship attendance of more than 75,000 weekly participants speaks to a vibrant worshipping community, both in person and online who remain deeply engaged in the life of the church.

**Mr. David Dommissie, Conference Treasurer and CFO: (02:02:32):**

Even admitting change in challenge, God is clearly at work. In 2024, we celebrated 1,746 professions of faith and 1,280 baptisms over 41,000 individuals engaged in small groups underscoring our commitment to discipleship and community building. These numbers are not just data, they are stories of transformation and grace. Our mission impact continues to expand in bold ways. Nearly 39,000 individuals served in missions reaching more than 1.5 million people and significantly, 7.8% of all church revenues were dedicated to mission work, a testament to our collective priority to be the hands and feet to Christ and the world. Moving on to more financial data, I'd like to talk about our financial commitment report in 2024. Apportionment receipts totaled over 22.4 million with a collection rate of 82%. This marks a 1.7% increase from the prior year and we are deeply grateful for the commitment of our churches to the apportionment structure.

**Mr. David Dommissie, Conference Treasurer and CFO: (02:04:09):**

Second mile giving or conference or Benevolences also saw an increase rising by more than 281,000. This growth reflects a shared investment in the ministries beyond our walls. On page 1 68, you'll find the conference balance sheet. This has significant changes, so I want to highlight the nearly 50% growth in assets and the related increase in net assets with restrictions is almost entirely due to the estimated value of closed church property, which is now being held by our trustees. These numbers are reflective as of December 31st, 2024, we were still in the process of bringing churches in from our districts. We will have a full update that will come out in our second quarter report. I want to make you guys aware, we are now doing quarterly reports, financial reports that are coming out on the website. But you will see the value of all the estimated value of all of the closed church properties held at the conference.

**Mr. David Dommissie, Conference Treasurer and CFO: (02:05:29):**

Our unrestricted reserves can be found on page 1 69. In 2024, our unrestricted reserves fell by 108,000 down to roughly 1.8 million. Our apportionment collection shortfall exceeded our investment earnings despite having a good return in the market. This is not sustainable for the annual conference. We cannot drain our reserves because our reserves is the local church and we do not want as an annual conference to have to go to the local church for funds. I am grateful that in the CFA report that it includes changes to address this issue and we remain committed to responsible fiscal practices that support both current ministry and long-term sustainability.

**Mr. David Dommissie, Conference Treasurer and CFO: (02:06:30):**

I have provided a list of the individual funds that are accounted for by my office. They are found on pages one 70 to 1 72. I will trust you. We'll read those and I will not read them to you. Thank you. But it

should you have any questions, please contact my office on any individual one as I'm always help. Would love to share that data with you. Since I have a little bit of extra time, I want be careful. I would like to update everybody on an initiative that my office started in conjunction with the foundation and our pensions office. And that is to create a clergy debt relief ministry.

**Mr. David Dommissie, Conference Treasurer and CFO:** ([02:07:29](#)):

We are ready for a soft launch and we would love people to come in and be the Guinea pigs as we work through this. But the ministry is designed to help clergy refinance student loan debt and consumer debt. We will refinance student loan debt at a 2% interest rate for up to 15 years. And we will take clergy debt, I mean sorry, consumer debt. It's all clergy debt. Sorry for five years at 5%. Our goal is to help clergy. We ask them not to be in debt so that embarrasses them. This is totally confidential. There's only five people who will know you applied.

**Mr. David Dommissie, Conference Treasurer and CFO:** ([02:08:18](#)):

Just the people, the minimum number of people who need to process the program. That is myself, Carol Draper, Tina Gudel, John Fuller and Courtney Howell in our Foundation's office who's a long-term banker and has expertise in that area. And we encourage you to apply. We want to help you have a strong financial future. I can't do anything about clergy salaries. We're in a declining organization, but we can help you with the money. You do have to go farther than help you stretch it farther. So come by. We have a booth in the display area. We have a pamphlet. Come talk to any one of the five people I named. We are here to help you go through this. We anticipate a full online presence, but we want to just start kind of slow and build into that. But I want to thank pensions who allocated a million dollars to kickstart this to help fund the loans and the foundation for investing their staff time and helping bring this to life too. So Bishop, this concludes the report of the treasure.

**Bishop Sue Haupt-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:09:43](#)):

Okay, thank you. Any questions for our conference Treasurer? Microphone three.

**Rev. Tizzy Von Trapp Walker, Clergy, Marquis Memorial, Valley Ridge District:** ([02:10:03](#)):

Reverend Tizzy Von Trap Walker soon to be retired, old adult. She, her.

**Bishop Sue Haupt-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:10:14](#)):

Wise, excuse me. Wise I think would be the better.

**Rev. Tizzy Von Trapp Walker, Clergy, Marquis Memorial, Valley Ridge District:** ([02:10:18](#)):

Well thank you very much.

**Rev. Tizzy Von Trapp Walker, Clergy, Marquis Memorial, Valley Ridge District:** ([02:10:20](#)):

I will take that. I want to thank you for doing this because I have been one of those clergy that I confess has lied for the last 25 years and saying that I'm not in debt to embarrass the conference. So this gives me hope for those who are following me. One of the reasons why I will continue serving for a little while longer is so I can reduce my debt and then I'll be free to volunteer with other people. But that is a hard reality and I'm not proud of it and I never feel bad about what I'm not making until I come to annual conference. I'm quite content. So my husband and I have never had aspirations to be wealthy. We have



done what we've loved and we wouldn't do it any other way. But I do thank you for this. It is a wonderful, wonderful thing to do. It's grace.

**Rev. Tizzy Von Trapp Walker, Clergy, Marquis Memorial, Valley Ridge District:** ([02:11:26](#)):

Thank You.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:11:27](#)):

Microphone Five.

**Lori Roberts, Member at Large, Northern Virginia District:** ([02:11:34](#)):

Thank you. I'm Lori Roberts. I'm a Northern Virginia delegate at large, a member of Springfield United Methodist Church and also a surviving clergy spouse. Regarding the issue of clergy debt, I think it's wonderful something we can do to support our pastors. However, will there be a requirement or expectation for some financial planning, financial literacy to help avoid getting back into debt and helping clergy to keep their finances in order as best as possible?

**Mr. David Dommissie, Conference Treasurer and CFO:** ([02:12:15](#)):

Yes, depending on the situation, we will recommend or maybe require if it's severe that there'll be some financial counseling may not be the right word, but support and our foundation and pensions already have a program that we can refer them to and West Path has agreed to have an advisor as well to help any clergy with the financial literacy and how to properly use debt. So yes, there are financial resources that come with the program.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:13:01](#)):

Thank you. Okay, microphone five. I see you in the back there.

**Ms. Samantha Perez, Laity, Northern Virginia District:** ([02:13:14](#)):

Hi, my name is Samantha Perez, Laity, Northern Virginia District, White. She, her pronouns. I'm curious on the mechanism of the debt assistance with the refinancing. Is the conference purchasing the debt? Is there a partner that we're working with to get this specific rate? How does the refinance happen?

**Mr. David Dommissie, Conference Treasurer and CFO:** ([02:13:37](#)):

The mechanics is we have a new ministry called Clergy Debt Relief, the Virginia Conference Clergy Debt Relief LLC because that just rolls off your tongue. Okay. But it is descriptive. It's a separate entity that will pay off the current debts and if you have a credit card, it will pay off the debt and then you will close the credit card. That is to protect. The goal of this is to help you get out of debt, not to have debt more cheaply. So the purpose of this, the clergy debt relief LLC will own the debt. It'll be a loan with them, they will pay off the other debt and you will have a signed loan agreement with them. For student loans, it's individuals, it's your student loans, not your spouses. If it's joint debt for consumer debt, both the clergy and their spouse can participate in that. But we actually pay off the debt and then the conference doesn't own it. The clergy debt relief owns it. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:14:55](#)):

Microphone 13.



**Rev. Shaun Smith, Clergy, Lower Short, Charge, Coastal Virginia District:** ([02:14:58](#)):

Good morning, Bishop, Shaun Smith. That's a lot of light. Shaun Smith, the Eastern Shore part of the coastal District Lower Shore Charge. Yes, he, him. So, David, thank you so much for all of this and the debt relief program that you're talking about. One of the things that I'm hoping that we can look at going forward if we're not already, is to help us as clergy understand the tax benefits that are available to us. The last time we had training, which was a couple years ago during COVID, unfortunately the person that trained us was about three or four years behind on tax laws. And so that's behind us, but there are so many, there's the housing exclusion, the reimbursable expenses, and of course it's very cumbersome to do what we have to do to keep those records. But nevertheless, I know from last year's licensing class, excuse me, that class, they did not know what the breaks were. And so I don't know that we're teaching that. So anyway, that's just my recommendation.

**Mr. David Dommissie, Conference Treasurer and CFO:** ([02:16:11](#)):

I appreciate that feedback and that is something I can put on my development calendar and we'll look for partners with VUMPI, the foundation and WesPath to bring that kind of training to the clergy and work with the cabinet as the best way to deliver that training.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:**

Great. Microphone six.

**Rev. Janelle Watson, Clergy, Oak Hill and Embrace, Valley Ridge District:** ([02:16:33](#)):

Janelle Watson, clergy Valley Ridge District, Oak Hill and Embrace, and she, her pronouns. How does student loan debt transferring that to the conference affect Clergy's ability to participate in the student loan forgiveness program .

**Mr. David Dommissie, Conference Treasurer and CFO:** ([02:17:00](#)):

Once there are so many changes to student loan, but the way it stands now, I believe that will eliminate you from the government student loan forgiveness program if you refinance it. So that's part of the discernment process. If you contact us, what's the best way? I'm not seeing a political climate that's really leaning in towards forgiving student loans. I'm not political either. I just deal with the reality that I see in front of me at the interest rates that people are paying student loans. It is obviously a risk reward. If you can lower your interest and pay down more principal, you're going to be farther ahead. But you do give up the ability to have student loans forgiven. Now if you hold onto that high debt and keep paying it and it never comes to fruition, you might be paying that debt until you retire. I mean, in some cases, and there are no easy answers and I am not going to try to predict the political climate in the United States. I just want to create a low interest option for our clergy to provide relief today.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:18:29](#)):

Okay, I'm

**Mr. David Dommissie, Conference Treasurer and CFO:** ([02:18:30](#)):

Going to, but I don't want to minimize the fact that clergy are stuck having to make that decision,

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:18:35](#)):

Right. Sure.

**Mr. David Dommissie, Conference Treasurer and CFO:** ([02:18:36](#)):

I mean that is a major decision and if there is a debt forgiveness, I am not sure that this would qualify. We are writing it so it still is considered student loan debt, but I think it's going to be classified as private student loan debt and not federal student loan debt.

**Rev. Janelle Watson, Clergy, Oak Hill and Embrace, Valley Ridge District:** ([02:18:57](#)):

May I ask a follow up question?

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:18:59](#)):

Yes. I'm trying to move us along, but go ahead.

**Rev. Janelle Watson, Clergy, Oak Hill and Embrace, Valley Ridge District:** ([02:19:02](#)):

Will your office be able to help clergy advise us or look at what the best option would be?

**Mr. David Dommissie, Conference Treasurer and CFO:** ([02:19:11](#)):

Yes, we will help put pencil to paper and figure out and give you your options in that process.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:19:19](#)):

Thank you. Okay. I think that all of us want to express our gratitude to David Dommissie and I will any other questions about this to his office, but I'm excited and appreciate his service. Now I'm going to call on Ms. Angie Williams to give our CFA report. Angie.

**Ms. Angie Williams, President, Council of Finance and Administration (CF&A):** ([02:19:53](#)):

Greetings, Bishop Hauptert-Johnson, Lay Leader Stokes and the beautiful people, the members and guests of the Virginia Annual Conference. As President of the Council of Finance and Administration, it is my pleasure to present to you our annual report, which can be found on page 173 of your Book of Reports. And to get us started, I actually want to reflect on a few of the words that our bishop shared with us yesterday morning during our opening worship. It is a time when it is hard to be the church. We are in a time of exile when the church needs to rebuild and yet we are excited and we are joyous because we are rebuilding the church and we are going into a new era. It's with these words that I want to make a few highlights and give to you some context before we get into the details and the numbers of this report.

**Ms. Angie Williams, President, Council of Finance and Administration (CF&A):** ([02:20:58](#)):

First of all, I hope that you all had the chance to read the first ever narrative that was produced in close collaboration with our conference ministry staff as part of again, what our bishop and our lay leader shared with us yesterday. The faithful next step to implement this for you. The narrative budget is meant to be a communication of the mission and the purpose that we have behind the numbers. So next I want to just name and again reiterate what our bishop shared yesterday about the reality that we have had in these last five years. We have survived COVID, we have gone through disaffiliation and then also a change in our administration. And no matter where you stand politically, we must acknowledge that this administration has made unprecedented changes impacting the federal workforce. And in case

you didn't know, Virginia has more federal employees than any other state except for California. So the pain is real. The pain is real for our people and therefore for our churches.

**Ms. Angie Williams, President, Council of Finance and Administration (CF&A):** ([02:22:19](#)):

But we will prevail. We know that stabilization can happen. We know that God's grace is sufficient to see us through. And although change is hard and I would argue may be harder for us, the people called Methodist than anyone else, we will rebuild and we will live into this future that God has given us and the vision that our bishop shared with us yesterday. And so lastly, as we kind of get into the budget, into the numbers, there's three things that we ask that you consider. Number one, that we have in fact reformatted our budget this year. We have restructured apportionments. And finally, as our treasurer already reflected, we are working hard with our investment Lay Leader Martha Stokes said yesterday, keep your hearts open to the unimaginable.

**Ms. Angie Williams, President, Council of Finance and Administration (CF&A):** ([02:23:26](#)):

I would say that perhaps it does in fact seem unimaginable that apportionments would ever go down, but that is our long-term plan. That is our strategy and that is what we are working towards as we work with our investment committee of the Council of Finance and Administration. And so the 2026 proposed budget includes changes to the format, which is now presented in two ways. The conference budget reflects the overall spending categories. The conference apportionments reflect the specifics of how these categories are apportioned, and this essentially just offers two different perspectives on the same financial information. So let's take a look first at the 2026 proposed conference budget. As shown on the screen, the budget for conference mission and ministries is \$6,806,000. And here we would like to speak specifically to the 4.7% increase and explain the details of that to you. \$480,000 is for healthcare of our District Superintendents, our campus ministers, and our clergy conference staff.

**Ms. Angie Williams, President, Council of Finance and Administration (CF&A):** ([02:24:45](#)):

These dollars were previously apportioned. And now with the change to direct bill, all of that comes directly into the conference budget. So that \$480,000, that is a healthcare increase that comes directly into the conference budget for those healthcare expenses. And then there was a \$130,000 addition for the salary and benefits of our new cabinet level position. And we all know that that position of belonging is so vital for our conference. So this equals \$610,000 total. So what you see when you're looking at the \$306,000 increase, what that means is that there was actually a \$304,000 decrease in conference staff and programs in essence matching the increase with cuts. And because so many of our local churches have also had to make cuts, I think it is important that we name for you that we have also made those considerations in our conference budget in kind the cost related to retired clergy health at 5,240,000, which this increase, as we have already heard this morning, is due to changes in federal legislation as previously reported in our pensions and health report. And then finally, the cost for Worldwide connection remains the same at 4 million and 60,000. You can see here that the active clergy health moving to direct bill has reduced the overall apportioned amount by 8.5 million, bringing our total proposed 2026 budget to 16,106,000 and almost 35% decrease from last year.

**Ms. Angie Williams, President, Council of Finance and Administration (CF&A):** ([02:26:43](#)):

Next, we will take a look at the 2026 proposed conference apportionments. These categories have been consolidated into four funds, 101 through 104. Committed funds are those that have already been allocated for the conference to spend expected funds support the resourcing and ministries throughout the conference. And the last two funds are the same as the conference budget, retired clergy, health

and general and Jurisdictional ministries. And finally, in the last section of our report, you will find the policies. There are three changes that we want to highlight for you this morning being recommended in this section as we have shifted the format of the budget in 2026, it is important that churches fund the 101 apportionment, mission and ministries committed to be paid in full by the end of the year. The second policy is to support our district superintendents increasing their salaries by 3% in 2026, which will result in \$103,000 annual salary for our district superintendents. I think it is important to remind you and to note that there was no change for our district superintendents last year. And finally, the last policy is to adjust the mileage reimbursement. So it is in line with our IRS rate for both staff and volunteers. Bishop Sue, on behalf of the Council of Finance and Administration, I move to adopt the 2026 CFA report in full.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:28:25](#)):

Okay, the report is properly before you from committee. Any discussion, the floor is open now. I don't want to cut off all, I'm going to hold you off a little bit on that. I don't think it's appropriate to cut off all discussion. I see a hand, microphone nine.

**Rev. Thomas James, Clergy, Extension Ministry, Northern Virginia District:** ([02:28:52](#)):

Bishop, Thomas James, Northern Virginia Elder and full connection serving extension ministry white, adult male. He, him pronouns. I rise for a speech against the report. I am deeply grateful for the work of the CFA and for the Conference Treasurer and for the conference business office. And I'm deeply grateful for the necessary conversations that are taking place around how we can fund the work of the conference to ensure that we are offering our local churches a strong system in which they can thrive in carrying out the mission of the United Methodist Church. But I am troubled by the financial implications of section 1.b. On page 173 of the Conference Treasurer's report with the removal of the ACT clergy health from the proposed to apportionments. Many of our local churches, especially our smaller churches with plan eligible full-time clergy, will find their out of pocket church expenses increasing. I fear this will further hinder the ability of small churches to provide equitable compensation to their clergy.

**Rev. Thomas James, Clergy, Extension Ministry, Northern Virginia District:** ([02:29:51](#)):

And we'll see an even further divide in the compensation workbook, which as a conference we haven't seen since the spring of 2023. I'm also concerned that as line 407 active clergy health is removed from the apportionments, all churches are still going to be paying apportionments related to active clergy health. As Angie shared just a few moments ago, apportionments will still be needed to cover the healthcare costs for plan eligible clergy serving in the district and conference offices. And finally, while I'm grateful for the desire to support the healthcare costs of our retired clergy, I'm troubled that with the direct bill shift, the funding from the bumpy reserves that is used to support the cost of healthcare is being budgeted to support the retired clergy healthcare costs while asking churches to cover the full cost for active clergy healthcare. To be honest, I'm really not against the CFA report because I'm not sure if the direct bill shift is wholly faulty, but at the same time, I'm not convinced that the financial difficulties it will cause for smaller churches will be a benefit for the overall ministry of the Virginia Annual Conference. And I'm concerned how this shift will negatively impact the ability of our churches to fairly compensate their clergy, which as we have heard earlier this morning, is a very important issue for the Virginia Annual Conference. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:31:08](#)):

Okay. We've had a speech against, do we have a speech for Okay. Seeing none, I'm going to move this to a vote. If you would approve the report and recommendations of the conference council on finance and administration, please lift your hand. Thank you. Opposed? Same sign and it carries. Thank you very much. We appreciate her so much. Okay. Microphone two.

**Rev. Youtha Hardman-Cromwell, Retired Clergy, Trinity, United Methodist Church, Northern Virginia District:** ([02:32:02](#)):

Youtha Hardman-Cromwell, retired clergy. Trinity Alexandria is my charge conference in Northern Virginia District. I am a seasoned adult, wise. I'd put wise in there too. She, her, I have a question. Okay. I know that we are talking a lot about resources that we really need to support ministry and mission, but there's a line in the report from the Conference Treasurer that refers to real estate health for sale or to be determined. I was greatly grieved to hear all of the 26 churches that we closed, but I know that there is a policy in place for what to do with properties that are no longer being used for ministry. My question is, and I'm sure it's not an answer right now, but I hope that it's being considered. What are we going to do with the monies that come from these churches that have been closed and will they be still confined the money, be confined to the policies that we already have in place for church properties? Because I think that needs to be thought about before we are trying to make decisions about what to do with that money. Are there ways that we can relieve some of the things that we've talked about today that will support our ministry, support our clergy, support the small churches that we may? That's my question.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:33:46](#)):

Very good question. The good news is we've been thinking about that nonstop day and night, and I'd like to call upon David Domnisse and if Amanda Miller Garber is in the house, I'd love for her to come up if she's here because we have started a procedure for assessing how we use those close church monies in ministry. So Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:34:06](#)):

Okay. David, are you around? Good. I hear him. Microphone three please.

**Mr. David Domnisse, Conference Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer:** ([02:34:21](#)):

I'm sorry. And I did not hear the question again. I'm sorry.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:34:28](#)):

What I'd like for you to do, and there's Amanda Garber, you can tandem this. Just briefly talk about what we're doing to assess missional uses for closed church monies.

**Mr. David Domnisse, Conference Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer:** ([02:34:44](#)):

Oh, okay. I'll just go through the whole process because I'm sure everybody's anxious about this. When a church closes, there's a process that takes place with a partnership between the trustees, the conference property advisory team, district leadership, and other people from that community to assess the state of the church, what it can be used for. And a study is done on a hierarchy. Can the church be used for a new faith community? And if that answer is yes, then that tends to be where we go. If that's not a yes, then we look, is there a way for it to be used in a missional way to help that community? And

Mandy can come in here and join in, but it is done cooperatively through multiple people with plenty of places for feedback to look to see what that property could be used for on a missional basis.

**Mr. David Dommis, Conference Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer:** ([02:35:59](#)):

If the answer is we do not see it's not suitable for a missional purpose, maybe it's not in the right location, maybe the structure is not safe or whatever the situation is, then the trustees look, is there a way to hold onto that property and use it as an investment property where in the future things might come about where we could again use that for either a church or a missional purpose. And if that does not hold come true, then we look at that time to sell it. Selling is the last resort of the process is once you sell a property, you don't get it back. So we go through all painstakingly long study time sometimes to figure out what's the best use and only after that do we sell it. In some churches it's a relatively easy process. Others, it's a much longer process. But I think Amanda can talk more detail about the, that's kind of the steps. You want to give them some more detail.

**Rev. Amanda Miller-Garber, Director of Missional and Community Engagement:** ([02:37:05](#)):

The main thing I would add is that the Property Advisory Team is developing clear and transparent processes that we intend to share on the conference website and in other ways. And we are eager to answer your questions. So please contact me or any member of that team and we're going to clearly share who that is as well because we want to be transparent in the way we make decisions. And I think that once we

**Bishop Sue Haupt-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:**

Have an accumulated sufficient funds from church closures, then we will look at grant processes, what we should use, how we can help our existing churches, how those monies should be used. And that all will be analyzed, but rest assured that that money is being held in trust and carefully scrutinized. So these properties are being sold as we go along and use Missionally if need be. But I think probably our next annual conference so we can have a full really in depth report because all of this groundwork has been laid with the fine leadership of these two and their teams. So I appreciate your work on that. Okay. Microphone five.

**Ms. Anne Swank, District Member At-Large, Valley Ridge District:** ([02:38:28](#)):

Okay. Anne Swank, Valley Ridge District Member at Large, Greene Memorial United Methodist Church. Pronouns she, her, I just want to suggest to the committee working with the people, and I mean these churches that are left over, if they are viable to look at possibly putting them into a situation where the school buildings in particular could be used for housing. Green Memorial and Trinity United Methodist joined in this past a little over a year ago, and that Trinity School Building is going to be put into housing for seniors, which is part of our mission. And that is going to become harder for people to find our homes to live in that they can afford. So I would urge them to look at these kinds of situations where they could utilize those school buildings if they're viable to turn into something for housing for people who will no longer be able to find it.

**Bishop Sue Haupt-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:39:41](#)):

Thank you. Excellent. Microphone five.

**Ms. Nina Cortado Winkler, District Member, Three Notch'd District, Aldersgate Church:** ([02:39:52](#)):



Thank you, Bishop. I'm Nina Cortado Winkler from the Three Notch'd District, member of Aldersgate Church and District Delegate. In reading the financial reports, I see that we have an extraordinary, certainly once in a lifetime, maybe once in many lifetimes accumulation of wealth from all of these closed churches. I worked in government budgeting for many years, and I know there is a tendency when you have money to spread it around through as many constituent groups as you possibly can in order to keep people happy. I would like to challenge the conference to think extremely strategically about how to use this vast amount of money in order to make a huge leap forward for this conference rather than spread the money around to all the many, many needy groups that we have. I don't know what that means. Is that a huge evangelism move? Is it a huge anti-poverty move? Is it a fix? All the churches make everything handicapped, accessible mood? It could be many, many, many things, but I hope that you, Bishop and the cabinet will think boldly. You'll never have a chance like this again. Let's not let it pass.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** [\(02:41:27\)](#):

Thank you. That's a good word. Thank you. Okay, microphone four.

**Rev. Steve Hundley, Clergy, Shepherds Charge, Mission Rivers District:** [\(02:41:38\)](#):

Steve Hundley, Mission Rivers, retired living in Tappahannock, serving in retirement. Two small churches Shepherds and Mizpah. Great little places of mission and ministry, pay a hundred percent of their apportionments and they suffer through me. However, my contention here and my concern is that we have almost completely weakened our districts over the last five or six years. It used to be we would present a resolution at annual conference for a closed church, and the district would have say so in what was going to happen with the assets from that church that the resolution would return the assets, for example, to the Roanoke, then Roanoke District Board of Missions. Now, I'm happy to say we didn't close a single church on the Roanoke district when I was here, but I do believe that the concern I have that the answer I want to know is, and this has gone on for 50 years since I've been coming to conference, is that there is this sense coming that it seems like that the conference center and the annual conference is the best arbiter of what to do with churches and with those funds.

**Rev. Steve Hundley, Clergy, Shepherds Charge, Mission Rivers District:** [\(02:43:08\)](#):

I don't necessarily think that's true because in the past, the people in a community where we lost a church or the people closest to it would know what to do for the ministry and mission of a United Methodist presence in those places. So that's one. And number two is, I haven't heard anybody talk about United Methodist deserts in our conference since we've had disaffiliations. No one has explained to me and I haven't been able to hear it. Where is it that we have deserts and what are we doing? I know Appomattox held forth and I'm so proud of Appomattox for doing what they did, but I think they're the two biggest concerns that I sense and feel out here. And I wanted to be sure that I expressed that on behalf of anybody else who may agree. But I do believe that I represent now small churches and also remember a great strong district structure, which we now have weakened. Thank you very much.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** [\(02:44:12\)](#):

Okay, thank you. I think the districts still are the arbiters of what happens to the closed church property. They weigh in and they have the missional input as to what that should be. And I can guarantee you that the cabinet and the connectional table, as we are reconfiguring it over the next year, we talk about deserts all the time. Amen. Cabinet, how much time have we spent talking about that? So we just as, and I really appreciate the comment about we have a unique opportunity here, so we're going to weigh



things carefully and do this well. And part of that is we'll probably do it differently than it's been done in the past. Seeing that we are having huge shifts in population in Virginia, that the whole makeup of the annual conference is changing over time. And we want to be in a position where we can build new churches and have new ministries throughout the annual conference and not have some districts incredibly wealthy and some with nothing. And so we're trying to establish a sense of parity, but we're also looking to the districts to tell us how best to use these closed church properties. I see a card right here, microphone one or two. Why don't you come to two? That's probably you're equidistant.

**Rev. Charles Townsend, Retired Clergy, Shenandoah River District:** ([02:45:55](#)):

Thank you, Bishop Sue. I had no intention of speaking before annual conference this year. Charles Townsend retired Elder Superannuated, retired elder on the Winchester, excuse me, Shenandoah River District. I was surprised when I read the report that one of the charges that I had earlier in my ministry, all four churches have been closed under exigent circumstances. I know nothing of the details, but can I assume that they have looked at the possibility of making that four point charge into a two point charge so that it might be possible to have less than a full-time person covered? I know I was plenty busy covering four churches as full-time. I hate to see the wonderful people in these churches be without a church, United Methodist church somewhere that they can go to. So can I assume that among the avenues that have been explored, you're talking about consolidations?

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:47:00](#)):

Yes. I think that if anything else, our cabinet, they're all expert chess players and they try to figure out every possible configuration. And I would guess that there weren't enough folks in all four of those churches together to form a viable charge. Victor can speak to that. No. Oh, that was Doug. Okay. Yeah, just show them. We do think about these things, please. You talk about it.

**Rev. Doug Forrester, District Superintendent, Valley Ridge District:** ([02:47:29](#)):

Yes. Okay. So Reverend Townsend's question was about the churches of the McDowell Charge, which are four churches that are between Stanton and Monterey. If you know your Virginia geography, those four churches last summer a year ago declared themselves to be no longer United Methodist. They just made a decision and they were closed under what are called exigent circumstances under paragraph 2549 of the United Methodist Book of Discipline, which allows in similar situations for the conference to the properties close the churches immediately for the benefit of the denomination. And that was the case of what happened with those as well as a couple of the other churches on my district this year as well. But what I can, to the bishop's point, the cabinet works extremely hard to find every way we can to keep churches and ministry. I have a multi-point charge on the Valley Ridge District where the churches are in Fairfield, Brownsburg, Stanton and Lexington, which if you've ever driven that, it's a pretty good hike. But it was what we did in order to keep these important churches doing viable ministry. So we weave them together, we stitch them together the best we can because we also want to preserve as many full-time appointments for our clergy as we can.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:49:11](#)):

Thank you. And I would encourage you, if you have questions, for example, of charges you served or situations, by all means call the superintendents. They're people, they talk to people, they take phone calls. But if you have questions, by all means ask. We're not trying to, we want to be as reasonable and fair as we can, and we want you to know there's no reason you can't know the reasons behind these. So if you have particular situations that give you heartburn, that's a term I use a lot. What's given you

heartburn, by all means, call the superintendent or call my assistant. But we want you to know exactly what's going on. We just presume that for the most part, things rock along as they can. And you're not that you let it go, right? But if you have concerns or you see something that bothers you, by all means let us know. And that's one of those situations. Okay, microphone five.

**Mr. Jaydee Hanson, Laity, Co-chair, Conference Board of Church and Society: (02:50:19):**

I'm Jaydee Hansen, the lay co-chair of the Conference Board of Church and Society. I worship in Arlington, Virginia. One of the things that we have a very active conference, caretakers of God's creation. There are communities where there is virtually no parkland in the poorest parts of the community. Know if any of these properties are in particular areas that lack places where local kids can get out and play. But I would urge that the committee look at the environmental and the ecological health needs of a community,

**Mr. Jaydee Hanson, Laity, Co-chair, Conference Board of Church and Society: (02:51:18):**

And there might be some properties that would best be served providing a place for the community to serve. In Arlington where I live, the Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions has worked with churches and the Mormon Church, not the one that you normally associate with doing ecological programs, provided half of the funding for making green, the low income housing in South Arlington. Nice, and I'll stop there, but there may be some parts of our greening God's world, again that can be supported by these properties. And I'll just say that we add that to the things that we look at.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: (02:52:16):**

Thank you. Fantastic idea. Okay, microphone two.

**Rev. Joshua McCauley, Clergy, Director Wesley Foundation, Old Dominion University, Coastal Virginia District: (02:52:28):**

Good afternoon, Bishop members of Annual conference. Reverend Joshua McCauley, serve on the coastal Virginia District and the Wesley Foundation at Old Dominion University. Asking for a moment of personal privilege,

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: (02:52:40):**

Certainly.

**Rev. Joshua McCauley, Clergy, Director Wesley Foundation, Old Dominion University, Coastal Virginia District: (02:52:42):**

I'm going to invite my colleagues who are sitting over in the corner there to stand up. It is with great joy to stand before you all, although you're behind me as one of your campus ministers and to speak about the incredible work being done through the campus ministries of our conference. Our campus ministries are vibrant, dynamic communities where students, faculty, and staff are growing in their faith, sharing their gifts, and transforming lives from large universities to small colleges. These ministries are the hands and feet of Christ on campuses across our conference, whether through Bible studies, service projects, worship services, or providing a safe and inclusive space for all students. Your campus ministers are doing the holy work of making disciples and being present in the lives of those who are navigating the challenges and transitions of college life. This hard and holy work is being done to

develop the leaders of the local church when they graduate, but to continue and to strengthen this work, we need your help.

**Rev. Joshua McCauley, Clergy, Director Wesley Foundation, Old Dominion University, Coastal Virginia District: (02:53:50):**

I ask you to share the names of your students from your churches and your community who are heading to our campuses this fall. We want to reach out, we want to connect. We want to be in relationship with them early on before their feet touch campus so that they feel supported, welcomed, and encouraged as they start in the fall. Further, if you're an alum of these campuses, we want to invite you to share your story. We want to know your experiences, your connection and involvement with these ministries can make a lasting impact on the next generation of students. You'll find all the information needed to share with us over at our table, and I encourage you because each of our districts have a campus ministry of one way or another. Ecumenical Wesley Foundation, our United Methodist Schools connect with us. We want to be in relationship with you. Lastly, I'm so thankful for our local boards, the work of the Board of Higher Education and all the support that we receive. Thank you for your ongoing support and partnerships in this vital work. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: (02:55:04):**

Thank you, Josh. I want to add to what Josh said. I work three years in residence life at Emory University, and our mantra was you get them the first two weeks or you don't get them at all. And so it is vitally important for you to get them their names before these students get to campus because they need to issue the invitations and get them into our campus ministries the first two weeks of class or they won't ever get them. That's just how college life works. So I am so grateful for the ministry they do for their impact on young lives, and it's an embarrassment of talent that we have in this annual conference in campus ministry. So thank you all 13. Okay, microphone five, and then we'll go to microphone 13 and we're headed toward lunch. So remember that. Go ahead.

**Rev. Timothy Barth, Clergy, St. Luke's United Methodist Church, Mountain View District: (02:56:24):**

Timothy Barth, St. Luke's United Methodist Church, mountain View District, young Adult Disabled. I want to take a moment, Bishop, to encourage our churches and our laity to dig into their mission insight. We're talking about creative use of buildings after they close, and to me that's just ridiculous. We need to talk about creative use of buildings while they're open. Helpful. I am proud to say that St. Luke's has one of the only licensed childcare centers in its building because we read doubt. And now that person who was very skeptical of being an organized prevention is not only a member of St. Luke's, but now a certified lay minister. So reach out, look at your Mission Insite data. And for the love of God, there is so many things that are needed. For example, Danville is a childcare desert. It's a affordable housing desert, and your communities have the same issues. Childcare desert, for example, is across the whole state. So how can your buildings be used for the betterment of the entire community, not just to worship? Do on Sunday morning.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: (02:57:35):**

Thank you. Good word. Microphone 13.

**Mr. Sean Morris, Laity, Wesley Foundation Old Dominion University, Coastal Virginia District: (02:57:40):**

Hello, Sean Morris Laity representing the Wesley Foundation at Old Dominion Coastal Virginia District. Firstly, thank you to Josh for speaking. He actually got me in his first two weeks. Good job, Josh. All right. And secondly, to piggyback off of the questions over churches and church deserts. In my experience in the United Methodist Church, we have areas of oversaturation of United Methodist churches. I live in Hampton, Virginia, and in Hampton, as far as I can remember, there are eight United Methodist churches. Most of those churches report an average Sunday attendance of around 15 people, 15, 20, maybe 30 on Easter. But the question is, how can the Virginia Annual Conference improve the missional capabilities of these oversaturated regions where these churches are sort of spread thin while being overly dense at the same time?

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:59:10](#)):

And we'll let that hang in the air as that's a huge issue. And the issue is often those 15 people don't want to change just saying. So thank you for raising a huge problem that we're going to have to work on together. Thank you. Thank you. Okay, I'm going to move us toward lunch. I'm going to turn to our conference secretary for any announcements.

**Rev. Claire Miller, Secretary, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:59:43](#)):

Thank you, Bishop. We have several announcements. Okay. First is there is a Toyota Corolla, Virginia license plate, TRW-5252, and the Roanoke police have advised that this vehicle may be towed very soon. There are also some missing car keys, coincidentally from a Toyota. Do not know whether that is the same Toyota, but the car keys, this is important too, have a red tag that says "Remove before flight", and they are on a yellow carabiner. There is an air tag that indicates that those keys are someplace in the conference center. So please be on the lookout for Toyota Keys with a red tag that says, "Remove before flight". And if you find them, take them to the Usher's desk. Will the retirees who are being recognized this afternoon, please gather on the floor by box eight, which is to my left at 4:45 PM box eight for the retirees at 4:45 PM.

**Rev. Claire Miller, Secretary, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([03:00:59](#)):

And during this afternoon session, our tech desks will be located on the floor level. You'll notice there are many tech decks around the arena now, so that members may get needed technical assistance while we are voting and just to have more access to help. And just a kind reminder, if you're registered for a lunch lab, they will be served in the same lunch, will be served in the same location as your lab, so please go directly to that location. Check in with the hospitality team before getting in the buffet line. And if you have signed up for ears to the ground, hearts open, community listening is love and action. You'll be in Berglund Hall if you've signed up for Click to Christ Re-Imagining Ministry in the Digital age. You will be in the Special Event Center where our displays are, and floaters will be available to answer questions. Finally, we've had a number of questions about the food truck vendors. They unfortunately are no longer able to be here with us. However, there are concession stands that are open throughout the arena, and one including in particular, is by gate number nine. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([03:02:21](#)):

Okay, thank you. We will be in recess until 2:00 PM. I invite you to be back here probably at 1:45, but we'd like to have everybody in place so we can start right at two with our memorial service, which I know you won't want to miss. This is always a highlight of annual conference every year as we remember those who have meant so much to us. So we stand in recess until two o'clock, but show back up at 1:45.

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**Daily Proceedings  
243rd Session of the Virginia Annual Conference  
June 13, 2025  
Afternoon Session  
The Berglund Center - Roanoke, VA**

Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Presiding  
*"Movement of the Heart"*

The Friday, June 13<sup>th</sup> afternoon session of the Virginia Annual Conference Service of Remembrance began with worship led by Rev. Drew Willson, Rev. Kyungsuk Cho, Rev. Josette Franklin and the 2025 Annual Conference band. Rev. Dr. Charles Ledlum Bates, Mission Rivers District Superintendent, offered the sermon.

The American Sign Language Interpreters for this session were Ms. Virginia Bryant and Ms. Katherine McMullan.

The afternoon session began with the Memorial Service and was followed by the Business Session.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:25:02](#)):

Make your way to your seats so we can get started again. Okay, everybody, I invite you to sit down. We're right on time and I don't want to mess it up. Wasn't that a beautiful worship service? Yeah. Also, I want to let you know that I untimely retired president David McAllister Wilson. He's still working on, so yeah, I think he'll work. I don't know how long he'll work, but it's in our best interest that he works every day possible, right? So, okay, I'm now going to call upon Ms. Allison Malloy, a lay person from Floris United Methodist Church in the NOVA District to give our prayer opening prayer.

**Ms. Allison Malloy, Laity, Floris United Methodist Church, Northern Virginia District:** ([01:26:59](#)):

Friends, please join me in prayer. Gracious and loving God, we give thanks for the opportunity to gather in your name. We recognize that this ability to gather is a real privilege that not all of our siblings around

the world enjoy. As we do your work this afternoon, please guide our hearts, minds, spirits and actions. Might we lean into your call for us on this day? In your name we pray, amen. Amen.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:27:34](#)):

And now I invite Deaconess Carla Blackmon and she's going to come and recognize the work of Deaconess and Home Missioners in our annual conference.

**Deaconess Carla Blackmon, Laity, St. Paul United Methodist Church, Northern Virginia District:** ([01:27:47](#)):

Bishop Sue, Martha and Secretary Claire along with Laity and Clergy, it's a pleasure to be here this morning speaking on the office of Deaconess and Home Missioners. I am Carla Blackmon. I'm a Deaconess for the United Methodist Church. I'm a professional dog trainer, a veterinary technician, and the Communications Director at St. Paul United Methodist Church in the Northern Virginia District. My pronouns are she and her in the words of my Deaconess sibling, Dr. Caitlyn Hanson. When people ask What is a Deaconess, I love to share about our unique calling to lifelong ministry rooted in love, justice, and service. However, there's often some confusion about what a Deaconess is not. A Deaconess is not a female Deacon. We are not Lay Supply Pastors, nor is our title something that disappeared when women could be ordained. I am a Deaconess. We are still here and our work continues.

**Deaconess Carla Blackmon, Laity, St. Paul United Methodist Church, Northern Virginia District:** ([01:29:05](#)):

The Methodist Episcopal Church established the Office of Deaconess in 1888 and it has persevered for over 135 years. Deaconesses founded hospitals, schools, and community centers embodying Christ's love and justice in action. In 2004, the Office of Deaconess added the home missionary relationship to be inclusive of all genders. Today, Deaconess and home Missioners continue to serve in vast varieties of roles as advocates, chaplains, teachers, social workers, healthcare providers, and even dog trainers. We stand among the large marginalized communities and vow at our consecration to make Jesus Christ known in the fullness of his ministry and mission, which mandates that his followers alleviate suffering, eradicate causes of injustice, facilitate the development of full human potential and share in building global community through the church universal in every community we serve. Deaconess and home missioners are theologically and vocationally trained laypeople who commit our lives to full-time ministry. As part of the lay order of the United Methodist Church, we are consecrated, commissioned and appointed by the bishop to our ministries. The Office of Deaconess and Home Mission is administered by the United Women of Faith. For more than a century, the Office of Deaconess and Home Mission has innovated and expanded to meet the church's call for us today. Today our order is growing. Our order is thriving, so please join us in celebrating the contributions of the Deaconess and home missioners in the life of the United Methodist Church and beyond. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:31:01](#)):

Thank you. If there are other Deaconesses and Home Missioners in the house, would you please stand? There are our Deaconesses and home missioning. Let's pray for them though it's a great, if you're interested in a full-time lay ministry like this, please by all means go to the United Women in Faith website or talk to Carla Blackmon and get information about our deaconess and home missioners. Let's pray together. Oh God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon the deaconess and home. Missioners mightily at work throughout our connection and we thank you for their continued witness, their ministry and in all sorts of places and how they represent you so well, wherever they serve. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Now I am going to introduce Reverend Matt Benton, who gets the fortunate task of being the Head Teller and will lead us in voting on the constitutional amendments.

**Rev. Matt Benton, Clergy, Head Teller, 2025 Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:32:14](#)):

Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Lay Leader Stokes, members of the Virginia Annual Conference. This afternoon we will vote on four ratification ballots that would amend the United Methodist Constitution via action taken at the 2020/2024 General Conference. I want to begin by reminding the body about who is eligible to vote on these matters. Elders and Deacons in full connection as well as all lay members of the annual conference are eligible to vote and should have been sent voting credentials. Provisional members, Licensed Local Pastors and Associate Members are not eligible to vote this afternoon. If you're a part of this ineligible group, I imagine this is frustrating. If you feel excluded or like your voice is not being heard. Let me say that I am sorry. However, please know this is not a Virginia rule. This is a Book of Discipline rule and this afternoon we are simply administering a vote based on the rules that we currently have. We'll be voting electronically on these matters. My thanks to the Annual Conference planning team, particularly Neil Wise, Jonathan Page and Chris Malak for their work in vetting and establishing our relationship with Vista Comm. I want to add my thanks to Scott and Christina Casey and their team at Vista Comm for their work in helping to facilitate our vote today and to the City of Roanoke for allowing us to access their WIFI network.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:33:39](#)):

Woo-hoo. The mayor came through. We're so glad.

**Rev. Matt Benton, Clergy, Head Teller, 2025 Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:33:46](#)):

Before we vote on the ratification ballots themselves, we want to make sure that everyone can get onto the platform and we want to conduct a practice vote. So with your personal electronic device, please either scan the QR code right there, there's a few around the arena as well, or go to [www.vpoll.mobi](http://www.vpoll.mobi). If you typed in that web address, you're going to need to enter an access code, which is VAUMC2025 and click "Join."

**Rev. Matt Benton, Clergy, Head Teller, 2025 Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:34:25](#)):

Okay? We'll take a few minutes and make sure everybody gets logged in. If you have problems, raise your hand and we'll get somebody to help you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:10:15](#)):

We're done with practice ballots, so we're going to move forward and we're going to move on to the ratification ballots themselves. The first ratification ballot can be found on pages 39 to 68 of the Book of Reports. It amends a number of paragraphs from nine to 61 and adds a new paragraph 13 for the purposes of creating regional conferences. This ballot is now before us. You'll be voting on the ratification of proposed constitutional amendment one found beginning on page 39 of the Book of Reports. Remember that this amendment cannot be amended, but is there any discussion before we vote limited to two speeches for or two speeches against microphone? Four please.

**Ms. Michelle Clary, District Member at Large, Living Waters District:** ([02:11:16](#)):

Michelle Clary. I represent the Living Waters district, district member at large Lawrenceville UMC. Just to clarify on section 32, article one, it states United Methodist Women, shouldn't it be United Women of Faith?

**Rev. Matt Benton, Clergy, Head Teller, 2025 Virginia Annual Conference: (02:11:46):**

Can I phone a friend?

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: (02:11:47):**

Yeah.

**Rev. Matt Benton, Clergy, Head Teller, 2025 Virginia Annual Conference: (02:11:49):**

There are some members of our delegation at Microphone five who are smarter than me on this and all things, so if I may phone a friend.

**Ms. Kim Johnson, Laity, Director of Communications, Northern Virginia District: (02:11:57):**

Good. Thank you. Kim Johnson, Northern Virginia District layperson. The United Women of Faith are "operating as" so it's a business designation, so it's okay that it still says UMW because they have a "designated as" status, so it's cool.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference: (02:12:20):**

Okay, thank you. That was a good phone call. Microphone four.

**Mr. Joe Rech, Laity, Shiloh United Methodist Church, Valley Ridge District: (02:12:30):**

My name is Joe Rech. I'm from Valley Ridge District. I'm in Laity Tabernacle Charge Shiloh Church. I have a major problem with the concept of regionalization contained and alluded to in each one of these four constitutional amendments as proposed and to be voted on today by the Virginia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Regionalization is really is a nice word that means division exclusion and inequity. Ephesians four, four through six tells us there is one body, one spirit just as you're called for one hope that belongs to your call. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is overall and through all and in all just as God the Father, Jesus God the Son and each believer are to be one with each other. I thank the United Methodist Church and the United States under these constitutional amendments advocates to become united with the world instead of with united with God.

**Mr. Joe Rech, Laity, Shiloh United Methodist Church, Valley Ridge District: (02:13:45):**

1 John 2:15-16 tells us, "do not love the world or the things of this world. If anyone loves the world, love the Father is not in him. For the devil that is the world and the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life is not from the Father but from the world." Romans 6:1-14 admonishes us to "be dead to sin and alive to God". Romans 6: 15-23 tells us we are slaves to be slaves of righteousness and to forsake the sins of the world and live daily for God. My greatest fear in today's United Methodist Church is that Jesus comes tonight calling his people the church to himself. Tomorrow morning there will be Bishops, District Superintendents, Elders, preachers and members of the United Methodist Church who will still be here tomorrow, and it'll be eternally destined for the eternal lake of fire. Found in Revelation 20:15 because of their association and acceptance of the ways that this world, the thing of it is each one of us is called to love the center.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:15:07](#)):

Sir, your time is up. Summarize

**Mr. Joe Rech, Laity, Shiloh United Methodist Church, Valley Ridge District:** ([02:15:10](#)):

And I taken basically tells you that basically to go take and vote. You should vote against this because it's not united, but not with our brothers and sisters in Africa, Philippines, Europe, or the United States.

**Mr. Joe Rech, Laity, Shiloh United Methodist Church, Valley Ridge District:** ([02:15:28](#)):

You vote against it.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:15:29](#)):

Thank you. We've had a speech against a speech. Four microphone, five.

**Rev. Dan Kim, Clergy, Trinity United Methodist Church, Mission Rivers District:** ([02:15:34](#)):

Thank you. Dan Kim, adult clergy, Trinity United Methodist Church, mission Rivers District. Thank you. Bishop Sue, Lay Leader, Martha Stokes and Friends of the Virginia Annual Conference. Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord I rise in support of worldwide regionalization. The vision statement of the Worldwide regionalization plan is as follows. We envision a church that connects globally, engages a mission together, respects contextual ministry settings, and celebrates the diversity of God's creation in its many beautiful expressions. I want to highlight a core piece of this vision, namely its vision of the United Methodist Church that respects contextual ministry settings and celebrates the diversity of God's creation in its many beautiful expressions. Earlier in the Annual Conference, the metaphor of a table, a large table, the Lord's table was used and described this shared sense of community and ministry that we have together. I really like that metaphor.

**Rev. Dan Kim, Clergy, Trinity United Methodist Church, Mission Rivers District:** ([02:16:36](#)):

So be patient with me as I run with it. I have one minute, 10 seconds left. I like kimchi. Not everybody, I get it. Not everybody likes kimchi. That's okay. Let me eat my kimchi. I always bring extra if you want to try it. I haven't had tuna casserole that I like. I'm sure there are many here that like tuna casserole and make delicious tuna casserole. I like that you like tuna casserole. I'm willing to try it. So bring your tuna casserole to the table Friends. Imagine the United Methodist Church as this large expansive, welcoming banquet table with a heavenly feast of all kinds of wonderful, delicious and diverse foods. Respecting the allergies. Of course, worldwide regionalization means that while it's one table, it's laid out with diverse array settings, foods perfectly suited to the specific needs, cultures, and traditions of those gathered at that part of the table, ensuring everybody feels truly nourished and truly belonging. Jesus said in Matthew 8:11, "I say to you that many will come from the east and west and will take their place at the feast of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." Friends, let's feast at this large table together. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:17:57](#)):

Thank you. Okay, let's hold your applause. Let's hold your applause. We've had a speech against and a speech for, do we have another speech against Mic 11.

**Rev. Chuck Cole, Clergy, St. John's United Methodist Church, Valley Ridge District:** ([02:18:18](#)):

Thank you Bishop. Oh sorry. I am pastor Chuck Cole. I'm clergy. I've serve at St. John's and the Valley Ridge District. I just rise to, stand against this motion because I have concerns as to the representation that was present at the 2020-24 general conference because the delegations were elected prior to disaffiliation. I feel like the United States was overrepresented in the body and I'm afraid that voices that should have been part of the conversation were not present. So I cannot in good conscience, support regionalization and these particular amendments, although I am not opposed to the concept. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:19:17](#)):

Okay, thank you. Of another speech for, microphone nine.

**Mr. Jesse Burdette, Youth Laity, Coastal Virginia District:** ([02:19:30](#)):

Wow, that is really bright. Jesse Burdette. I'm a youth member from the Coastal Virginia District and I'm speaking for regionalization to be good connectional brothers and sisters in faith across our Methodist connection. We must take all ideas and all cultures in mind. As a youth very involved in our Methodist connection, I realize the necessity to respect all who come to our table isn't that Jesus's one of Jesus's only two commandments is to love him and love one another and to be loved is to be seen at the table. What may work in the United States of America's Discipline may not work in many other countries across the globe for laws, for culture, for tradition. So seeing that, I truly believe that regionalization will be the next best step for the United Methodist people because we are all seen and we are all represented and we are all welcomed. And as a denomination so inherently rooted in the fabric of social justice, we know how hard it is to not feel seen. So once this regionalization, if regionalization passes, we move toward our next step of truly of every single person represented in our Methodist connection. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:21:03](#)):

Okay, please hold your applause. We're now going to move toward a vote. I invite you to take your devices out. A couple of things. Please be sure you're logged in when you vote. Wait until I open the vote to vote and then vote and hit the button once. A couple of reminders: We will not announce the vote count. The vote count here is immaterial in the sense that we have to get the votes in from all over the world. Then they're counted all together and then we see if there's a two thirds ratification vote. So this will be an aggregate vote. And so as not to influence other annual conferences, we won't have announced the votes to make sure that everybody shows up and votes all over the world. Are we ready to vote? Everybody okay? Yes. Just hear me. Microphone Two. Just come up. It's right here.

**Rev. Kathy Talley, Clergy, Retired, Three Notch'd District:** ([02:22:16](#)):

Kathy Talley, Richmond District retired. She her, whatever else I'm supposed to say. You're good. You're good. Bishop. I've been trying really hard to use my device and I've gotten help from multiple sources and I have no confidence that I'm going to be able to vote and that really troubles me

**Rev. Kathy Talley, Clergy, Retired, Three Notch'd District:** ([02:22:37](#)):

For this particular vote.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:22:38](#)):

Right. Could you check over where is Chris Malak? Chris could you,

**Rev. Kathy Talley, Clergy, Retired, Three Notch'd District:** ([02:22:47](#)):

I don't know where Chris is.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:22:51](#)):

He's coming to you. Oh good. He's given you another device. Do any others have this concern? Please talk.

**Ms. Rosemary Wagner, Laity, Bethany, Shenandoah River District:** ([02:23:47](#)):

Microphone 13. Hello, Rosemary Wagner from Bethany on the Shenandoah River District. Oh, it's she, her. I wanted to offer a little bit of tech advice. So I'm an instructional technology teacher on my day job, God bless you. So my nephew's also a district delegate from our district and on the practice and just now one of us can't get in or it doesn't show up. But if you go back to your email and click the link, then it will show up and you can usually do that within the three minutes and that for some people that might be a few little clicks, but it is so far working for us. It just kind of refreshes that connection.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:24:42](#)):

Okay, thank you. Microphone 11.

**Rev. David Hindman, Retired Clergy, Mission River's District:** ([02:24:55](#)):

David. Whoa. Hello. David Hindman, Mission Rivers District retired. He, him. I understand that we can't know what the vote results are, but to enhance trust a little bit, I wonder if we might at least be able to know how many votes have successfully been recorded.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:25:17](#)):

Yeah, I think that wouldn't be fine. Thank you. Okay, is everybody logged in? We'll log in. Okay. Is everybody logged in the last microphone? Seven. Microphone. Seven.

**Ms. Rachel Hunley, Laity, Mission Rivers District:** ([02:26:18](#)):

Bishop. Rachel Hunley, Laity from the Mission Rivers District. She, her. I just want to make sure we're all on the same page because I and several people around me already received the question and voted. So I'm concerned about if we're all voting at the same time and everything's going to go through correctly. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:26:38](#)):

Okay. We've had about 600 people vote.

**Rev. Matt Benton, Clergy, Head Teller, 2025 Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:26:44](#)):

They've already voted, but it'll count.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:26:46](#)):

Okay. I'm going to open the vote. If you've already voted, that's fine. As long as you've gotten the question, go ahead and vote and we'll have three minutes so that they can be tallied.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:27:23](#)):

Is it moving?

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:27:53](#)):

You can read your part. They left your name out. That's why I read your part. Okay.

**Rev. Matt Benton, Clergy, Head Teller, 2025 Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:27:58](#)):

Do you want me to read it out for the second one? Yeah. Okay.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:28:21](#)):

I think we're okay. I think we're good. We have a lot of, I think we're good.

**Rev. Matt Benton, Clergy, Head Teller, 2025 Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:28:58](#)):

Can they try a refresh? They might need to go all the way back out and come back into the system again.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:29:12](#)):

Microphone seven.

**Rev. Cheryl, Harrison-Davidson, Retired Clergy, Three Notch'd District:** ([02:29:15](#)):

Cheryl Harrison Davidson. Retired clergy. Ashland District. Duncan Memorial, United Methodist Church. She, her, I don't know whether everybody is aware of this, but anybody who is not voting needs to get off the internet, that would help a lot. Just a suggestion.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:29:55](#)):

Okay. The ballot is closed. Microphone nine.

**Mr. Carlton Brinkley, Laity, St. Johns United Methodist Church, Valley Ridge District:** ([02:29:59](#)):

Bishop. I'm Carlton Brinkley. I am Lay, St. John's United Methodist Church. Buena Vista. Valley Ridge. Due to what just transpired with the speeches for and the speeches against, could the person be more specific as to where that church is? Because in the Valley Ridge there is more than one St. John's Church. For clarity purposes, I think the person should be more specific as to where the church is located.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:30:37](#)):

Okay, thank you. We'll take that from here on out. If you have a church that has a name that's all over, tell us where it is. Microphone nine.

**Rev. Wayne Snead, Retired Clergy, Three Notch'd District:** ([02:30:48](#)):

Bishop, Wayne Snead. Three Notch'd District, older adult. He, him, Bishop. Mine just stopped working and I can't even bring up the voting site and so I talked to one of the tech people who advised me to go up and make notice that mine, I can't vote. It's not working.

**Rev. Wayne Snead, Retired Clergy, Three Notch'd District:** ([02:31:16](#)):

It was working when we were doing practices, but it's, it's not working either.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:31:19](#)):

Okay, got it. Why don't we take a five minute break, get out all your nervous energy. We're going to figure out where we go from here to make sure we have an accurate ballot. So everybody enjoy each other's company while I kick some minutes. I think

**Rev. Matt Benton, Clergy, Head Teller, 2025 Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:40:00](#)):

Bishop, If their vote was recorded the first time, they will get a message that says you have already voted.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:40:06](#)):

Okay. Thank you. Okay. Okay. How are we doing?

**Rev. Matt Benton, Clergy, Head Teller, 2025 Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:40:22](#)):

Over 12.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:40:39](#)):

Microphone. Eight.

**Rev. Mike Nelson, Clergy, Deep Creek United Methodist Church, Coastal Virginia District:** ([02:40:43](#)):

Thank you Bishop. Mike Nelson again. So you said if we vote this time and if we had voted before and we got the message that our vote was

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:40:59](#)):

Accepted, ignore that there's only one ballot open. That still just, I think it's just going.

**Rev. Mike Nelson, Clergy, Deep Creek United Methodist Church, Coastal Virginia District:** ([02:41:05](#)):

Yeah. So yeah, but many people were able to cast their ballot the first time and then I believe they just heard that if you voted this time that you would get a message that says your vote has already been counted.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:41:25](#)):

No, that's not what I said. I think we're going fine.

**Rev. Mike Nelson, Clergy, Deep Creek United Methodist Church, Coastal Virginia District:** ([02:41:29](#)):

Okay.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:41:30](#)):

I think we're good. Good

**Rev. Mike Nelson, Clergy, Deep Creek United Methodist Church, Coastal Virginia District:** ([02:41:30](#)):

Clarification.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:41:31](#)):



I think we're good. Okay. Has everybody cast their vote? Okay. If you're having a problem, go get help. Don't wait for, sorry. Just keep, if you have a problem, make a beeline. Raise your hand if you're over here to help.

**Rev. Matt Benton, Clergy, Head Teller, 2025 Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:42:13](#)):

1296, 1296.

**Ms. Martha Stokes, Conference Lay Leader, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:42:20](#)):

Do we know what our total possible vote count is?

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:42:22](#)):

The hard part is we don't know how many people. We don't. We don't. We don't. And you know the reality...

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:43:10](#)):

We voted

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:43:18](#)):

Okay. I see no hands. Oh, there's one over here. This is like Jesus. He's going after the one vote, leaving the 99. Actually this is probably the most valid vote ever because I've never taken a vote at General conference when there weren't 10 or 20 invalid votes. So, okay. Are we ready? Are we good? Okay. The ballot is closed. Matt, how many votes did we have?

**Rev. Matt Benton, Clergy, Head Teller, 2025 Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:44:36](#)):

1,318.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:44:38](#)):

Okay. Thank you.

**Rev. Matt Benton, Clergy, Head Teller, 2025 Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:44:46](#)):

Thank you all for your patience and truly thank you to the tellers and tech desk volunteers for helping everybody out. Ratification. Ballot number two can be found on pages 68 and 69 of your book of reports. It amends. Paragraph four, adding gender and ability to the list of categories that cannot be used to exclude persons from membership in the United Methodist Church. Bishop, this ballot is now before us.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:45:19](#)):

Thank you Matt. We proceed to the second ballot and I'll be voting on the ratification of proposed constitutional amendment two found beginning on page 68 of the book of reports. Remember that this amendment cannot be amended, but is there any discussion before we vote limited to two speeches? Four and two speeches against? Okay, I don't see a card, so I'm going to move us to the vote. Okay. Remember the rules. Do not vote until I say the ballot is open. Are we ready? Are we ready? Okay. The ballot is open. You may vote now. Now if you get a weird message back or if for any reason you don't

think your vote has been accurately tallied, move immediately to the help desk so that we can get your vote entered.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:48:22](#)):

Everybody voted? Looks like one or two. How many are open? How many are left? Anybody having problems? Okay, there's one there. Does that mean you're available to help or there's a problem? Go. Go. Okay. Any other failures to launch? Okay. I am declaring this vote closed. Matt, would you give us the total vote?

**Rev. Matt Benton, Clergy, Head Teller, 2025 Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:48:56](#)):

1,323.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:48:58](#)):

Okay, thank you. Okay, moving right along.

**Rev. Matt Benton, Clergy, Head Teller, 2025 Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:49:04](#)):

Ratification ballot number three can be found on page 69 of your book of reports. It amends. Paragraph five, concerning racial justice. Bishop, this ballot is now before us.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:49:15](#)):

Thank you. We proceed to the third ballot. You'll now be voting on the ratification of proposed constitutional amendment three found on page 69 of the book of reports. Remember, this amendment cannot be amended, but is there any discussion before we vote? Limited to two speeches for and two speeches against microphone. Eight.

**Rev. Bruce Johnson, Clergy, Pender United Methodist Church, Northern Virginia District:** ([02:49:48](#)):

Bruce Johnson, Pender United Methodist Church, Northern Virginia District. I rise to speak against the constitutional amendment in rereading both the proposed amendment and the original statement, it strikes me that the original statement, the existing statement is very clear, it's concise, it's born of a lived history of the battle against racism and in recognition that there's still work to be done. I think it's a wonderful statement. My concern about the proposed constitutional amendment is that it is filled with ideological jargon that's polarizing and divisive rather than unifying us in this ongoing battle against racism, I fear will have the opposite effect. Look at those words that are in there and what's been added and that's my great concern is that we will intend one thing and end up with another outcome. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference** ([02:50:53](#)):

Okay, thank you. That was a speech against a speech for microphone five.

**Ms. Caitlyn Kristy, Laity, Ebenezer United Methodist Church, Mission Rivers District:** ([02:51:10](#)):

Hi, good afternoon. My name is Caitlyn Ty. I am sorry, I'm reading as I'm talking Caitlyn Kirsty. I'm Laity from Ebenezer United Methodist Church in Stafford, Virginia. We are in the Mission Rivers District. I am. Oh, I'm a regular adult. I'm a woman. I'm white and my pronouns are she and her. I wasn't planning to speak, but I just read the language and I'd like to speak in support of adopting the language. I can understand as a white person how it is uncomfortable to see the words white privilege and how that

makes us feel, but after undergoing a lot of work and a lot of education surrounding racial equality and racial justice, I think it's important that we confront those things and not try to hide them and not allow them to be polarizing. It's okay to sit with discomfort, the discomfort that we have created over the last several hundred years, so I rise in support of the amendment. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:52:19](#)):

Thank you. Please hold your applause. Do we have a speech against any other speech for seeing none? I'm going to move us to a vote. Here are the instructions. Do not vote until I tell you the ballot is open. Good. Okay. The ballot is open. You may vote now. If you get anything or any indication that your vote is not being tallied, please move directly to the help folks around the room and have them help you with the issue. I don't see any problems. There's a hand over there. Is that a problem or not? Okay. Okay. That he's coming to be helped. Okay. Are we good? Okay. Are you waving or is there a problem?

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:56:34](#)):

Good. I heard a no. When one suffers, we all suffer. Okay. The ballot is closed. Matt, how many votes are we?

**Rev. Matt Benton, Clergy, Head Teller, 2025 Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:57:11](#)):

1,337 votes.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:57:13](#)):

Oh, we're getting better. Yay. Okay, good.

**Rev. Matt Benton, Clergy, Head Teller, 2025 Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:57:19](#)):

Okay. Ratification ballot number four can be found on page 70 of your book of reports. It amends paragraph 35 concerning educational requirements for clergy to be eligible to vote for clergy delegates to general conference. Bishop, this ballot is now before us.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:57:36](#)):

Thank you Matt. We proceed to the fourth and final ballot. You'll now be voting on the ratification proposed constitutional amendment four found beginning on page 69 of the book of reports. Remember that this amendment cannot be amended, but is there any discussion before we vote? Limited to two speeches for and two speeches against? Okay. Seeing no cards will move directly to a vote. Now remember, do not vote until I open the ballot. If you get any indication that something might be not right or incorrect about your ballot, go directly to the help desk and get help. Okay, are we ready? The ballot is now open. How are we doing? Has everybody voted? We have a couple of problems. Okay, let's get those straightened out. No problem. God bless you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([03:00:31](#)):

Anybody else? Okay, I declare this ballot closed. Matt, how many?

**Rev. Matt Benton, Clergy, Head Teller, 2025 Virginia Annual Conference:** ([03:00:34](#)):

Votes? 1,323 votes.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([03:00:40](#)):

Okay, good.

**Rev. Matt Benton, Clergy, Head Teller, 2025 Virginia Annual Conference:** ([03:00:48](#)):

There was confetti. Confetti.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference** ([03:00:58](#)):

Okay. Woo. That was some heavy lifting. Okay, Now I get to reward you. No ice cream, better than that. We're going to commence tomorrow morning at 8:30 instead of 8:00 AM However, if you'll agree to this agenda change by a show of hands, let me just suggest where I think we go. We have some retirees who we really need to recognize at five o'clock, so we will do that and then tomorrow morning at 8:30, I suggest that we come and have a time of prayer as some of our Asian ministers lead us and usually they do it at 5:00 AM so this'll be a nice break for us, but at 8:30 I think it would be lovely to start with the prayer time with them, so if you'll be here at 8:30 for prayer time and then we'll recognize new faith communities. We will have a monitoring report. We still have one resolution to do. We'll fix appointments and then we'll move into the ordination service. Is that everybody okay with that? Good. Okay, so why don't we take an eight minute break and promptly at five o'clock we will recognize our retirees. Thank you.

**At the conclusion of the Retirement Recognition, the business portion of the afternoon session of the Virginia Annual Conference continued.**

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([03:42:56](#)):

I am addressing the retirees. Never think lightly of the great good that God has wrought through you. Continue to be true to your calling. May God's love and power be with you always God of grace. You fill your servants with the vision. You empower your servants with your spirit. We give thanks for the ministry of these clergy and for the ways in which you have ministered to us through them. Give them a sense of your abiding presence that they may continue to love and serve you and ever grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen. For everything there is a season, a time for every matter under heaven. So too there is a time for movement, new adventure, fields of service, not yet touched with love. We send you forth in the spirit of John Wesley, may the world be your parish and all the people said, amen. Blessings.

I want to make sure that you know that we're not leaving out the awards. They will come tomorrow morning too. I know that caused a little concern, but what we'll do is we'll just follow whatever's left on our agenda in the morning. Remember 8:30, if you get here at 8:00 AM you'll be hating life and sorry that you got here early, but we will reconvene at 8:30 and our conference secretary has a couple of announcements.

**Rev. Claire Miller, Conference Secretary, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([03:45:03](#)):

I couldn't let you go without some. Of course not. A reminder for those who are being recognized in the service of Call and Ordination - immediately after this session, which means now, there will be a rehearsal for those being recognized at the Service of Call and Ordination and please meet over by box eight.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([03:45:24](#)):

Okay. We stand adjourned until 8:30 in the morning.



**Daily Proceedings  
243rd Session of the Virginia Annual Conference  
June 14, 2025  
Morning Session  
The Berglund Center - Roanoke, VA**

Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Presiding  
*"Movement of the Heart"*

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:12:23](#)):

I am delighted to have Tony Clement from the Youth Delegation come and give us an opening prayer, Tony. Okay, we'll move on. Tony will be with us later. We'll make sure he gets his chance at prayer. Now I'm going to introduce to you Reverend Jiyeon Kim and members of the Asian American Ministers Association, and they're going to lead us in a time of prayer as well.

**Rev. Jiyeon Kim, Clergy, Wesley United Methodist Church, Northern Virginia District:** ([00:13:06](#)):

Good morning friends, Bishop Sue, Martha Stokes and members of Virginia Annual Conference. We are humbly honored to lead this time of a prayer as representatives of the Asian American clergy community of Virginia and your conference today, we invite you into a form of a prayer known as a Tongsung Kido, which may be unfamiliar to many of you, though it is included in the United Methodist Book of Worship. Tongsung Kido means praying all aloud in Korean. While it is often associated with the Korean Christian practice, its roots are very biblical. Though I do not regularly practice this form in my personal prayer life, I believe deeply in the power of a communal prayer, especially when we cry out together with one voice. As a church, we are called to grow, stretch ourselves, and respond to the movement of the spirit with the openness, courage, and the willingness to be challenged.

**Rev. Jiyeon Kim, Clergy, Wesley United Methodist Church, Northern Virginia District:** ([00:14:19](#)):

Today we open our hearts to the ways God may move among us, perhaps in of unfamiliar but deeply powerful ways. I encourage you all to pray in the language that brings you closest to God. Lift your voice whether in English, Korean, Spanish, or any language that connects your soul to God. Do not worry about being heard by others. Just know and trust that God hears every single voice, every cry, and every

word. You may raise your hands very high or open your arms if your space allows or have your palms upward as a sign or gesture of your desire for the spirit to move within and among us. A part of the tradition of a Tongsung Kido is to call out to the Lord three times very loud before praying aloud all together soon you will be invited to call out from the depth of your heart, loud enough to fill the space and star your spirit. Each of us will now lead a part of this time of prayer, but I know that maybe our spirits are not ready fully to this form of a prayer. So, I'd like to invite all of us to sing together Spirit of the Living God, so that the Spirit is really moving among us and within us.

**Rev. Grace Han, Clergy, Trinity (Alexandria), Northern Virginia District: (00:16:41):**

Hold fresh me, melt me and mold me, Melt, me. Mold me. Feel me. Feel me. Use me, me. Let us see. One more time, God, spirit of the living God, spirit of God, me, mold me,

**Rev. Jiyeon Kim, Clergy, Wesley United Methodist Church, Northern Virginia District: (00:18:13):**

Virginia United Methodists, I invite you to open your hearts and yourselves to the Spirit, the same Spirit who moved powerfully among the disciples on the day of Pentecost. Let us pray for the presence of the Spirit to be among us to bless the work we have done and continue to do as United Methodist. Let us pray for the unity of the church even in the midst of our differences and disagreement. Now let us call out together to the "Lord" three times and pray with the loud voice for the work of the Spirit among us and the unity of the church. Lord, Lord, Lord, we just ask for your holy Spirit among us so that we are not the individuals we are united as one faith, one baptism, and one Lord, the Lord. You are the only one who can bind us all together. Lord, help us to erase all the differences and disagreements among us, but we only allow you to work among us. Lord, be with us. Be with us. Lord, work through us. Help us to be the United Methodists, not in anything else but in you. Lord, we believe in the work of your Holy Spirit among us and within us. Help us to open ourselves fully to your work with complete trust and to respond to your way with the joy and thanksgiving. Lord, your will be done. Amen.

**Rev. Hungsu Lim, Clergy, Valley Ridge District: (00:20:08):**

Lord, the beauty of Tunsung Kido is that we raise our voices as one. Though each of us offers a personal prayer. We do so united as one body in Christ. There's no need to listen to those around you. Simply focus on your conversation with God. So I invite you now to lift your voice boldly, loudly in prayer. We like to pray for those on immigration status, federal workers, unemployed, underemployed, the poor, the marginalized, all those who experiencing marginalization. So let us pray, church, use whatever language the Holy Spirit leads you to speak because the early church was multilingual, multi-generational, multicultural, multiethnic. We are that church once again. Let us cry out together on your faith and desperation, crying, saying loudly, Lord. Three times ready. Lord, Lord, Lord, (Korean language prayer), workers, unemployed, underemployed, (Korean language prayer).

**Rev. Hungsu Lim, Clergy, Valley Ridge District: (00:22:22):**

Lord, we come before you seeking your guidance and wisdom as we face challenges of life each day. Today we specially lift up those living with uncertain immigration status. We have heard their stories, stories filled with fear, anxiety, and longing. Many live under the constant burden of carrying their passports, afraid of detention or deportation. Lord have mercy on them. Bless them and protect them. Show us the path of compassion and justice. Teach us to see and treat immigrants through your eyes. Eyes full of grace, mercy, and love. We also lift up our immigrant clergy and their families, Selma facing urgent and pressing challenges related to their immigration status. Lord bless them, strengthen their spirits. Touch their hearts with your peace. Show us how to stand beside them offering love, empathy,



compassionate support for you Lord have always cared for poor, the vulnerable, the marginalized child. Jesus was a stranger in a foreign land, lived in poverty.

**Rev. Hungsu Lim, Clergy, Valley Ridge District:** ([00:23:42](#)):

He fully knew their burdens and struggles. May we remember this truth and walk faithfully in his example. Lord, we also lift our federal workers, those who have been laid off and all who are underemployed and unemployed may are Many are discouraged, confused, unsure what lies had, their labor has often gone unseen or undervalue. But you Lord, see what is hidden and know what is just and right and blessed them with new opportunities. Lead them to work that brings dignity, purpose, and provision. Lord, we confess that our hope is only in you. You are the social peace that surfaces all understanding. Make us instruments of that peace. Help us be a church that radiates hope, challenges, injustice embodies your kingdom here on earth. We are Easter people. We are Pentecostal people because Christ is the reason we proclaim. The hope is never lost because the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon the church. We cannot remain silent. Mold us, shape us, empower us. Use us for your kingdom as the only church who went out with courage. Proclaim the goodness of Jesus Christ boldly. Pray for your will. May we do the same. Make us your church. Make us your people. We are yours. We are Christians, follower of Jesus Christ disciples who are walking in his footsteps. Let it be so. Let your will be done on earth as it has happened, Lord, your will be done.

**Rev. Grace Han, Clergy, Trinity (Alexandria), Northern Virginia District:** ([00:25:55](#)):

As we conclude this time of we're going to ask you to pray for your churches. We all come here from individual churches, but when we gather here, we become one church. And so we cry out to God to pray for our churches. I invite you to join me to lift up your prayer hands. We'll say "Lord" three times again and we'll pray for our churches. Lord, Lord, lord

**Rev. Grace Han, Clergy, Trinity (Alexandria), Northern Virginia District:** ([00:26:22](#)):

God. We ask that you pour out your Holy Spirit upon your church just as your Holy Spirit came upon your church at Pentecost, we pray that your spirit will come upon your church Once again. We remember this is not our church, not the Virginia Conference or even the United Methodist Church, but your holy church, the body of Christ. So pour out your spirit upon your church. Pour out your spirit on your churches, from Roanoke to Richmond, from Portsmouth to Petersburg, from Harrisonburg to Hampton, from Eastern Shore to Emporia. Pour out your spirit upon your church to let your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young will see visions and your old will dream dreams and everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. We pray that just as you invite all to your banqueting table, we can be a church that sets a place for all to feast together. A church that serves kimchi and tuna casserole, a church that washes the feet of the tired, the broken, the lonely, a church that loves with the generosity of spirit and the abundance of your incredible grace. A church that has the humility to die at the foot of the cross so that we may be resurrected with Jesus Christ into a new future and a new hope united by your Holy Spirit. So God, we pray for your church. Make us one with you and your spirit, Lord, your will be done. Amen.

**Rev. Jiyeon Kim, Clergy, Wesley United Methodist Church, Northern Virginia District:** ([00:28:11](#)):

And now let us lift our voice once again with our song Spirit of the Living God. This time we are changing the word me to us. Let us sing together.

**Rev. Jiyeon Kim, Clergy, Wesley United Methodist Church, Northern Virginia District:** ([00:28:28](#)):



Spirit of God, us mold us, us, us

**Rev. Jiyeon Kim, Clergy, Wesley United Methodist Church, Northern Virginia District:** ([00:30:31](#)):

Lord. Your will be done. Amen. Amen. Amen.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:30:49](#)):

Thank you so much. It's 8:45 and I've already lost my mascara so that that's done. Now I'd love to introduce to you who you already know her, but I'll introduce her. Anyhow, Reverend Amanda Garber, our Director of missional engagement and Reverend Stephanie Parker, chair of the church development team for the recognition of new faith communities and charters,

**Rev. Stephanie Kimec Parker, Clergy, Chair, Church Development Team, Virginia Conference:**

([00:31:17](#)):

Bishop Hauptert-Johnson, Lay Leader, Stokes Lay and Clergy members of the Virginia Annual Conference and guests. I am Stephanie Kimec Parker, and I am blessed to serve as the Chair of the Virginia Conferences Church Development Team or CDT.

**Rev. Amanda Miller-Garber, Clergy, Director, Office of Missional and Community Engagement and Conference Developer:** ([00:31:31](#)):

And my name is Amanda Miller Garber, and I serve as the director of the Office of Missional and Community Engagement and the conference developer. I'm also the conference staff liaison for CDT.

**Rev. Stephanie Kimec Parker, Clergy, Chair, Church Development Team, Virginia Conference:**

([00:31:46](#)):

Early in 2025, members of CDT made the courageous decision to push, pause and embark on a journey of deep listening and discernment. This decision was rooted in our collective realization that the world and the church have changed significantly since the church development team initially launched in 2008 with all things new.

**Rev. Amanda Miller-Garber, Clergy, Director, Office of Missional and Community Engagement and Conference Developer:** ([00:32:10](#)):

Thus, CDT is trusting the Holy Spirit to guide and equip us as we listen deeply to persons throughout the Virginia Annual Conference and persons in communities throughout the commonwealth of Virginia. We trust that the spirit will enable us to discern a renewed sense of purpose and vision as we step into God's future. We encourage you to read CDT's report in the 2025 book of reports for more information and Stephanie and I both really hope that you will contact us with specific questions related to CDT's season of discernment. And now as we transition to our recognition of new faith communities and chartered churches, we know you're going to be really excited and want to applaud, but we'd ask that you hold your applause until the end.

**Rev. Stephanie Kimec Parker, Clergy, Chair, Church Development Team, Virginia Conference:**

([00:33:02](#)):

At this time, we are delighted to recognize and celebrate Nooma a new faith community that launched in January, 2025. Nooma is a new kind of church, fully digital that grew organically when Reverend Jeremy Steele's social media ministry that connects with over a million people each month. Last year he

realized that unbeknownst to him the Holy Spirit had been forming a church from people who said they would never go to church again. Through online content and community they study, they have meaningful dialogue and support one another through hospital visits, through all types of grief, job changes and spiritual uncertainty. Reverend Steele and DS Kirk Nave are representing the Nooma community.

**Rev. Amanda Miller-Garber, Clergy, Director, Office of Missional and Community Engagement and Conference Developer:** ([00:33:51](#)):

Today we'd also like to take a moment to celebrate two churches who have chartered since last Annual Conference. First, we celebrate the chartering of Restoration Reston, a church that was planted out of Floris United Methodist Church 10 years ago. They officially chartered last Sunday and celebrated three baptisms. In the midst of that chartering worship service, Reverend Daniel Park, Reverend Isaiah Park, Mary Ann Crow, and DS Kurt Nave are representing Restoration Reston this afternoon,

**Rev. Stephanie Kimec Parker, Clergy, Chair, Church Development Team, Virginia Conference:** ([00:34:25](#)):

Today we celebrate the chartering of Common Table, a church that emerged from a Spirit led partnership between Boulevard United Methodist Church and Center Church, a church plant that was rooted in the Evangelical Covenant Church tradition. If you haven't heard the Common Table story, we encourage you to do so. Common Table chartered in May of this year. Reverend Stephen Poore, Reverend Drew Willson, Lauren Legget, Maggie Hasselback and DS Hyo Lee are representing Common Table today.

**Rev. Amanda Miller-Garber, Clergy, Director, Office of Missional and Community Engagement and Conference Developer:** ([00:35:02](#)):

Okay, I love the joy. Friends, let's take a moment to joyfully celebrate the ways the Spirit is always doing a new thing among us.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:36:01](#)):

All right. Now I want to invite Dwayne Stinson who will lead us in the presentation of three special awards. Dwayne,

**Mr. Dwayne Stinson, Director of Discipleship and Congregational Vitality, Virginia Conference:** ([00:36:19](#)):

Good morning, Virginia Annual Conference members, lay members, clergy members, Bishop Sue, Martha. We have churches doing amazing ministry in this conference and we have individuals doing amazing ministry in this conference and it's a time this morning that we can actually celebrate some of the things that are happening that the Holy Spirit is doing moving through this place, not this place, but the whole conference and hopefully the whole world. So I'm pleased this morning to start our award ceremony with the Board of Discipleship's representatives, Chair Tim Hazlet and Robin BeMiller will be presenting the Denman and one Matters awards. Then we will follow with a video of our Francis Asbury Award winner for support for campus ministry and then the Green Church Award. We are so gifted with so many faithful disciples in this conference and I thank you for your diligence, for your faithfulness, for your openness to the Spirit and I hope that these awards inspire you and your church to take some steps to reach out into your communities and to transform the world.

**Rev. Tim Hazlet, Clergy, Chair, Board of Discipleship, Andrew Chapel, Northern Virginia District:**  
(00:37:37):

Good morning. Our first award from the Board of Discipleship is the One Matters Award. This award recognizes one church turning zeros into positive numbers with a renewed focus on discipleship. This award is offered through the Discipleship Ministries of the United Methodist Church. The selection process is directed by the Board of Discipleship here in Virginia and all nominations are collected through the nomination process set by the board the award which includes a thousand dollars, and a One Matters Discipleship award plaque is being presented to a congregation which has done significant work to make its zeros from previous years become positive numbers. Criteria for the award is a church with a history of zero baptisms and zero professions of faith for a minimum of four years and significant increases in these two areas in 2024. It is with great joy that we present this award this year to St. Mark United Methodist Church in Manassas, which grew weekly worship attendance from 22 to 40 and turned their zeros from previous years to two baptisms, five professions of faith and they've already increased those this year and they had held their first confirmation class in 15 years. Reverend Scott Bach-Hanson is the pastor, and their Lay leader is Ms. Pam Bryan.

**Rev. Tim Hazlet, Clergy, Chair, Board of Discipleship, Andrew Chapel, Northern Virginia District:**  
(00:39:51):

And now to the Harry Denman Evangelism Awards. Just to give you a brief history, the Harry Denman Evangelism Award honors a United Methodist clergy youth, young adult, and layperson in each annual conference who has exhibited outstanding efforts in Wesleyan evangelism by faithfully carrying out the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ. The award is named for the late Dr. Harry Denman, a distinguished lay evangelist whom Dr. Billy Graham called "my mentor in evangelism". The awards are made possible by the Foundation for Evangelism founded in 1949 by Dr. Denman who felt it was the business of every Christian to be an evangelist. It is most fitting that annual conferences today honor persons who carry on the spirit of Harry Denman, those eligible for this prestigious award practice, the great commission. This can involve personal witnessing, speaking and inspiring individual persons or the local church to be actively involved in helping people experience God's transforming love through Jesus Christ. This year's recipients of the Harry Denman are first for our youth, Nate Birchfield of the Valley Ridge District and a student at Virginia Tech. Nate is unable to be with us in person to receive this award because he is doing what he loves to do, spreading the message of Jesus Christ by serving on the staff at Camp Altamons, so he's not here to accept that award. Robin.

**Rev. Robin BeMiller, Clergy, Member, Board of Discipleship, New Hope (Fredericksburg), Mission Rivers District:** (00:41:46):

So the lay recipient is Lauren Easter of Beaver Dam, UMC, who wanted her daughter and other teens in the community to experience Christ through Youth Group. What began as a small group of teens has grown from two to seven in the first year and has led to four youth being baptized and three new families regularly attending Beaver Dam UMC. You'll be seeing a presentation of Lauren receiving her award later on.

**Rev. Tim Hazlet, Clergy, Chair, Board of Discipleship, Andrew Chapel, Northern Virginia District:**  
(00:42:19):

And our clergy recipient is Reverend Josh Orndorff of the Shenandoah River District. Josh has brought Wesleyan evangelism to rural local churches, academic settings, and to teaching coaching in large settings. Josh's evangelism started in high school and college and programs such as Teens Opposing

Poverty impact on the Valley and Habitat for Humanity. He created a thriving children's ministry in a small rural church with no children but his own with a member leader. At this same church, he established a program for young adults, young adults rise to learn life skills, live as Christians and discover their call. Our recipient Josh Orndorff

**Rev. Robin BeMiller, Clergy, Member, Board of Discipleship, New Hope (Fredericksburg), Mission Rivers District:** ([00:43:32](#)):

The Deman Evangelism Award will be changing in 2026 and as a result, the Conference Board of Discipleship plans to work with conference leadership to determine what awards will be given next year, perhaps even a new award yet to be defined. Stay tuned. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:43:52](#)):

Thank you both. Appreciate it. And now I'd like to introduce Mr. Brian Christoffersen who will present the Green Church Award. Brian,

**Mr. Brian Christoffersen, Chair, Creation Justice Team:** ([00:44:41](#)):

Good morning. Bishop Sue, Lay Leader Stokes and fellow members of Christ's body here in the Virginia Annual Conference. As we gather to recognize the work of advocacy and stewarding of God's end of creation justice, I need to share, oops, I need to share that my soul is troubled by the many ways we continue to harm God's creation and the most vulnerable among us. I am troubled by the tearing apart of farm workers from their families who are among the closest to the land, often laboring and challenging conditions without the benefit of a fair day's wage. I am troubled that in Virginia, disadvantaged communities continue to lack access to clean and affordable energy and water. I am troubled that over a hundred plant and animal species are endangered within Virginia and I believe these are examples of a time in hope seen in the book of Romans chapter eight, verses 21 and 22 that I'll read that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

**Mr. Brian Christoffersen, Chair, Creation Justice Team:** ([00:46:24](#)):

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. While my soul has been troubled, I am also hopeful thanks to the just work being done by the children of God across our connection. Even as recent as two days ago, I think now the Board of Church and Society's luncheon, I was inspired by the Reverend LaKeisha Cook, the Executive Director of the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy as she reflected on the story of Zacchaeus from Luke 19:1-10, where the church's purpose is proposed to be the sycamore tree upon which others like Zacchaeus might climb to see Jesus and encounter and be transformed.

**Mr. Brian Christoffersen, Chair, Creation Justice Team:** ([00:47:33](#)):

Today let us lift up the Sycamore trees working for creation justice in the face of these troubling times, including participants from earlier this year, including Bishop Sue in the Climate Summit Hope and Action for Creation of Justice, the three new 2025 General Board of Discipleship Earth Keepers and the six churches which we recognize today. So today we honor six churches that have demonstrated exceptional commitment to environmental stewardship and creation care with the Green Church and sustaining Green Church Awards. Now let us recognize for the Green Church Award, Aldersgate UMC, Northern Virginia District, if you're here for some reason they're not all here this morning, but it's all right. Sydenstricker UMC, Northern Virginia District. Please step forward if you're Wesley United

Methodist Church, Mission Rivers District. To clarify, the Green Church Award are new, those who are newly recognized for doing creation justice within their congregations and we have the Sustaining Green Church Award, which is recognizing those churches who are continuing in this ministry area and for the Sustaining Green Church Awards, Bethlehem, UMC, Mountain View District, St. Stephens, UMC, Northern Virginia District, Wesley Memorial, United Methodist Church Three Notch'd District. Congratulations all for your awesome work.

**Mr. Brian Christoffersen, Chair, Creation Justice Team:** (00:50:12):

Great. Thank guys. Thank you. Please join what you have already, but I ask you to please join the Green Church movement today as we congratulate these congregations. Thank you so much.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** (00:50:34):

Okay, now I'm going to call upon Reverend Lauren Wright, the chair of the commission on the status and role of women to offer our monitoring report. Lauren Microphone three. Good morning, Bishop

**Rev. Randy Timmerman, Clergy, Epworth, Coastal Virginia District:** (00:50:59):

Bishop Sue, Lay Leader Stokes, members of the cabinet and colleagues, peers and friends of the Annual Conference. I am Reverend Randy Timmerman, pastor of Epworth in Exmore on the Eastern shore Coastal Virginia District. He, him. I would like to ask for a moment of personal privilege. Friends, I would like to continue in the spirit of celebration of these awards of evangelism, spiritual formation and caring for and celebrating God's creation while also rising to speak on behalf of a large but often forgotten ministry of the United Methodist Church that as we gather here, is actively training and engaging in the busiest time of their calendar year. A ministry that reaches out to and teaches the love of Christ and the outdoors to our children, our youth, and our young adults. I'm speaking of course about our United Methodist affiliated summer camp and retreat centers.

**Rev. Randy Timmerman, Clergy, Epworth, Coastal Virginia District:** (00:52:04):

We in the Virginia Annual Conference are blessed to be the home for five such camping and retreat ministries, Alta Mons in the Valley Ridge District, a name which we just heard through one of our Denman Award recipients Camp Highroad in Northern Virginia. Occohannock on the Bay in Coastal Virginia, Overlook on the Shenandoah River and Westview on the James, Three Notch'd and Mission Rivers districts and I am grateful for the gift of these ministries. As I myself not only benefited from the gift of having a place apart to call home where I could enjoy the outdoors for six years as a camper, but also a place that ultimately helped me cultivate my call to ministry over the seven years that I spent on staff at camp, there are many of us in Virginia and across our connection who either are or know someone who has been spiritually shaped and formed by an experience at camp, whether week long, residential camp, adventure trek, day camp or a we can retreat for confirmation fellowship or personal renewal in a world that is rife with the noise of technology, busyness and unrest.

**Rev. Randy Timmerman, Clergy, Epworth, Coastal Virginia District:** (00:53:05):

Camping ministries remind us that sometimes the best place to reconnect with God is within and among God's original sanctuary of creation. Where did Elijah go when he feared for his life and needed retreat and rest the wilderness? Where did our Lord go to pray, recharge and prepare for what came next? The wilderness. The wilderness is a blessed place. I know a few other places where someone can hike through the woods, splash in a lake, cook over an open fire and gather in community to worship God all in a few short hours than at camp. Over the course of this summer, thousands of campers will walk the

acreage of these camps and do all of that and much, much more. Many of these campers have little to no connections to church, some of whom may never have heard the word of God shared before arriving to camp.

**Rev. Randy Timmerman, Clergy, Epworth, Coastal Virginia District:** ([00:53:52](#)):

In many ways, our summer camps may be our best and most effective means by which our churches are able to reach and cultivate faith among our youngest generation. Even as we continue to see or worry about decline in church attendance, you'll not be able to read about the impact of camping ministries in our book of reports, but if you ask around and find a camp person, we are more than happy to tell you how God is working through camp and as the weeks roll on, the impact of these ministries will become apparent in every child who sings camp songs on their way home who have learned a bit more about the loving and welcoming God we serve and who have been lucky enough to find a second home at camp. These things speak volumes to the missional need that camping and retreat ministries uniquely meet.

**Rev. Randy Timmerman, Clergy, Epworth, Coastal Virginia District:** ([00:54:39](#)):

And so I would like to humbly request that the members and churches of our Annual Conference be in prayerful remembrance over these vital ministries in connection with the UMC over the coming weeks. Pray over the directors, Rhonda Wimmer, Chad Herbeck, Joel Coleman, Amy Hemenway and Anthony Gomez, and beyond that you can visit the camp and retreat center table in the exhibit hall, but more importantly, reach out to the camp that is nearest your church when you get home and find ways you can support them now and throughout the year. Consider them for a church or small group retreat, organize work days, hold a fundraiser to support their mission or even encourage your children to attend, clergy. Consider volunteering for a week as a chaplain, I recognize that many of us may hesitate when it comes to the idea of the outdoors and camp we enjoy our soft beds, our creature comforts and our warm and cozy ac, but we are reminded in scripture that in everything God made, we see God's eternal power and divine nature. I promise once you get out there, the beds are not as uncomfortable. The bugs are nowhere near as scary nor the heat as stifling as one may think. For those in all other self-imposed barriers, we may have all pale in comparison to the beauty of God's creation and that may well be the greatest gift that these ministries have to offer. Thank you and God bless.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([00:56:03](#)):

Thank you. Thank You.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference** ([00:56:10](#)):

Very well said. Thank you. Okay,

**Rev. Jenny Day, Clergy, Dayton United Methodist Church, Shenandoah River District:** ([00:56:17](#)):

Good morning, Bishop Sue, lay leader Stokes and siblings of the Virginia Annual Conference. I am Jenny Day clergy serving at Dayton UMC in the Shenandoah River District. According to my age, I am an adult. I'm a white female and use the pronouns she and her.

**Rev. Lauren Wright, Clergy, Co-Chair, Commission on the Status and Role of Women:** ([00:56:35](#)):

And I'm Lauren Wright. I am a young adult clergy women serving Messiah UMC on the Coastal Virginia District. I'm a white female and I use she, her pronouns.



**Rev. Jenny Day, Clergy, Commission on the Status and Role of Women: (00:56:46):**

We are the co-chairs of the commission on the status and role of women or COSROW as it's better known and we are glad to be back again this year with another exciting monitoring report. But first, we want to thank all of the conference staff and DS Doug Forrester who were invaluable in getting us what we needed to be able to monitor more effectively. We have amazing people working in our conference office and we are so grateful for each and every one of you.

**Rev. Lauren Wright, Clergy, Commission on the Status and Role of Women: (00:57:15):**

This is the first year that we were able to study the demographics of our lay delegates before we gathered for annual conference. That information was submitted via Unity Web. Did you know of our 2,474 lay delegates who answered and reported their information, 54% are male, 45% are female and 1% is non-binary. Of those that reported their race, and this won't add up to a hundred percent because not everyone chose to share this information. 58% are white, 6.6% are black, 5.2% are Asian and 0.9% are Latino. The average age of those that shared as 62, although the majority of our lay delegates are in their sixties and seventies.

**Rev. Jenny Day, Clergy, Commission on the Status and Role of Women: (00:58:06):**

While there's certainly more work to be done today, we want to focus on some of the celebrations of our time together. First, we celebrate the intentionality by our worship team in using gender inclusive language in the hymns and songs and when speaking about God,

**Rev. Lauren Wright, Clergy, Commission on the Status and Role of Women: (00:58:24):**

We also celebrate the diversity in our speakers, musicians and presenters.

**Rev. Jenny Day, Clergy, Commission on the Status and Role of Women: (00:58:29):**

We celebrate all of you who spoke and so beautifully embraced the introduction pieces that help us to monitor effectively and to help us gain a clearer picture of who is represented and where there is room to invite others into this space.

**Rev. Lauren Wright, Clergy, Commission on the Status and Role of Women: (00:58:46):**

As we prepare to leave our conference time together, though our work continues. If you know me in just about any capacity, it's not a lot of shock to hear that I've spent a lot of energy in my life striving for control, but what I've learned, if I'm honest and I'm still working on applying that one there, is that it's far healthier and more efficient to focus instead of control on how I might use my influence to create change. This is where we all come in together. We all have influence in different pockets of our conference and connection rather than trying to control the uncontrollable, we at COSROW encourage you to take your next right step, whatever that may be, either beginning or continuing conversations with your churches and ministry settings around the work of full inclusion. This work is before us and it continues. Friends,

**Rev. Jenny Day, Clergy, Commission on the Status and Role of Women: (00:59:43):**

Thank you, Virginia Annual Conference for the hard work you have already done and the hard work you continue to do. We look forward to continuing to celebrate together when we gather in Harrisonburg next year just right down the road from my house. So thank you for choosing that and we are looking



forward to celebrating and honoring the 75th anniversary of full clergy rights for women. See you next year.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:00:10](#)):

Thank you. Okay, we are going to take a five-minute stretch break so we can mic up our next teaching presenter and I'm excited that Reverend Dr. Edgardo Colon Emeric, who is the Dean of Duke Divinity School, will come and teach us next. So five minute stretch break. Don't go far, thanks.

United Methodist Camping Promo Video: ([01:01:13](#)):

Let's head to Central Virginia on the banks of the James River. Our next stop is Westview on the James Adventure is around every corner, zip lining through the trees, swimming in the river and spending nights under the stars, but beyond the fun, Westview is a place to deepen your relationship with God and experience God's presence and the beauty of the outdoors. Come with me over the mountains of southwest Virginia. Our next stop is Alta Mons with breathtaking trails and a stunning waterfall. It's the perfect place for nature lovers and thrill seekers alike. Here you can find space to reflect, pray and listen for God in nature. Fun fact, that's an Ignatian spiritual practice. Thanks soul feast. Let's travel along the Shenandoah Mountain range. Our next stop is Camp Overlook. Meet God on the mountain in a Christ-centered environment. Whether galloping through the mountains on horseback or rock climbing, adventure is always calling at Camp overlook. One more stop. Let's head to Northern Virginia to our final stop camp Highroad, a place where friendships are made, faith is strengthened and laughter echoes through the trees. For the adrenaline, try the high ropes course and for a relaxing time, take a peaceful hay ride throughout the woods, leave with a renewed spirit and a heart full of God's love. From summer camp opportunities to planning your next retreat, connect and support these camps by visiting [vaumc.org/campsretreat-centers](http://vaumc.org/campsretreat-centers). See you at camp.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:07:54](#)):

Find your seats. I usually know the Duke alumni during basketball season because they hit a new level of obnoxious. Right, but being a Florida Gator, it didn't bother me so much this year. Yeah, I knew that would prompt that. If you're a Duke alumni or we're shaped by the school, please stand just we got a bunch of you and it is our joy if we could quiet the house so we can move on. I don't want you to miss a word. It is my very high honor and privilege this morning to introduce somebody who probably needs no introduction to most of you, but this is Reverend Dr. Edgardo Colon Emeric who is the Dean of Duke Divinity School and he is coming to teach us this morning. Let's give him a warm Virginia welcome.

**Following the teaching by Reverend Dr. Edgardo Colon Emeric, Dean of Duke Divinity School, the business session continued.**

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:54:51](#)):

Okay, we're going to move into the fixing of appointments. So if the superintendents will start moving this way, I am going to invite the dean of the cabinet, Victor Gomez, to come and begin our ceremony.

**Rev. Dr. Victor Gomez, Dean of the Cabinet:** ([01:56:59](#)):

Bishop Hauptert-Johnson, Lay Leader, Stokes members and friends of the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church. The time has come to fix the appointments of the 2025-2026 conference year and as the first Latino Dean of the cabinet, I can affirm that all of the appointments go on. Yes, I can

affirm that all of the appointments in each district are correct. The appointment listing can be found at [www.vaumc.org/ac2025](http://www.vaumc.org/ac2025) or by using the QR code. As I call out each district in alphabetical order, I invite the District Superintendent and Lay Leader of that district to come forward. If there is a change in the leadership of the District Superintendent in a district, I am one, the newly appointed District Superintendent will come forth as well. Our Bishop will introduce the new Superintendents and the passing of the leadership mantle represented by the transfer of a stole from the outgoing to incoming district. Superintendent will be made Coastal Virginia District

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:58:49](#)):

Invite all of the clergy moving into the Coastal Virginia District to stand. Thank you.

**Rev. Dr. Victor Gomez, Dean of the Cabinet:** ([01:59:09](#)):

Living Waters District,

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:59:18](#)):

I present the DS of the Living Waters District Jay Carey and Lay Leader Tommy Johnson. And I invite all the clergy moving into the Living Waters district to stand. Thank you.

**Rev. Dr. Victor Gomez, Dean of the Cabinet:** ([01:59:35](#)):

Mission Rivers District.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([01:59:42](#)):

We say farewell to DS Charles Ledlum Bates. And we're so appreciative of the great memorial sermon he gave. Are we not? Reverend Ledlum Bates will be spending a lot of time in Liberia and feels called by God to help strengthen the church. There it is a time of great transition and upheaval in Liberia and so we're grateful that God will use his gifts there. I'm excited that he will pass the mantle now with Lay Leader Judy Craun to Lindsey Baynham Freeman. Lindsay has been serving at the Welborne Church and she's very, very well known throughout the Annual Conference and the general church as well. And we are excited for her to use her gifts as DS of the Mission Rivers District. I invite all moving to the Mission Rivers District to stand. Great thank you.

**Rev. Dr. Victor Gomez, Dean of the Cabinet:** ([02:01:15](#)):

Mountain View District.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:01:18](#)):

Here we have District Superintendent Sarah Calvert and Lay Leaders, Tammy Burdick, Catherine Ware, and Susan White. I invite all clergy moving to the Mountain View District to stand. Thank you.

**Rev. Dr. Victor Gomez, Dean of the Cabinet:** ([02:01:40](#)):

Northern Virginia District,

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:01:45](#)):

District Superintendent Kirk Nave and Lay Leader Tom Feeney. And now invite all moving to the Northern Virginia District to stand.

**Rev. Dr. Victor Gomez, Dean of the Cabinet:** ([02:02:06](#)):

The Shenandoah River District.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:02:12](#)):

We say farewell on the cabinet to District Superintendent Victor Gomez. We appreciate his years of service. He will be going to serve a church in Winchester and to work on our behalf at Shenandoah University. So we're grateful for that. I invite him to pass the mantle to Reverend Dr. Kyungsuk Cho with Lay Leaders, Abby Garber and James Robinson. Reverend Dr. Kyungsuk Cho has served with distinction at the Old Bridge Church in the Northern Virginia District. He is a faithful servant in just a kind and compassionate presence wherever he is and I look forward for him coming on the cabinet to serve the people in churches of the Shenandoah River District. Welcome to him. I invite all clergy moving to the Shenandoah River District to stand. Alright,

**Rev. Dr. Victor Gomez, Dean of the Cabinet:** ([02:03:41](#)):

Three Notch'd District.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:03:44](#)):

District Superintendent Hyo Lee and Lay Leader Elizabeth Farrell serve this district. I invite all clergy moving to this district to stand before we attend to the Valley Ridge District. I'd like to recognize an important transition in our Episcopal office. The Reverend Dr. Steve Summers is transitioning to become the president of the Virginia United Methodist Foundation and we have been a great team and I have had a tremendous time working with him since I arrived in Virginia. Let's honor Steve Summers.

**Rev. Dr. Victor Gomez, Dean of the Cabinet:** ([02:04:46](#)):

And last but not least,

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:04:47](#)):

Wait, wait, wait, wait. We've got to do a little more there.

**Rev. Dr. Victor Gomez, Dean of the Cabinet:** ([02:04:51](#)):

I'm so ready.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:04:52](#)):

The Reverend Doug Forrester is transitioning to become the Assistant to the Bishop and the COO of the Virginia Annual Conference. Doug is, let's just say he has an exquisite gift for attention to detail, which I desperately need and he is also a compassionate and generous leader and I am grateful that he is coming to take the mantle from Steve Summers and assist me in my work. So welcome to the Reverend Doug Forrester and now for the Valley Ridge District.

**Rev. Dr. Victor Gomez, Dean of the Cabinet:** ([02:05:50](#)):

So the Valley Ridge District.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:05:55](#)):

As part of our continuing work to reconfigure and to be efficient in our work, I am delighted that DS Sarah Calvert and DS Jay Carey will work together to lead the Valley Ridge District when Doug Forster moves into our office. And so I am delighted that they with their tremendous Lay Leader, Larry Dickinson will serve the Valley Ridge District. So I'm introducing to you Reverend Dr. Sarah Calvert and Reverend Carey and I invite Doug to say a word of thanks or appreciation for them, although they don't need to exchange a stall.

**Rev. Doug Forrester, District Superintendent, Valley Ridge District:** ([02:06:48](#)):

So friends I formally introduced to you, people who need no introduction, the Reverend Dr. Sarah Calvert and the Reverend Jake Carey who will be superintendent the Valley Ridge District. Thank you Bishop.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:07:02](#)):

Okay, thank you Doug. I invite those moving to the Valley Ridge District to stand. Great, thank you. I now invite everyone to stand in affirmation the new and existing appointments and the leadership of the district superintendents, especially our newest ones, Lindsey Baynham, Freeman, Kyungsuk Cho and Jay, Sarah and Doug in their new locations. I now declare as Bishop of the Virginia Annual Conference that these appointments are fixed and I invite you to join me in prayer. Let us pray. Gracious God, we thank you for the privilege and the joy of serving you throughout this wonderful annual conference. We thank you for what is indigenous and characteristic of each of our districts for they each have their own beauty and their own context and their own way of being. And we rejoice that you pull us all together into one big table called the Virginia Annual Conference.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:08:28](#)):

We pray that your Holy Spirit will be mightily at work in the hearts of everyone in our districts. And we pray that this will be a fruitful and joyous year as we go forth to serve you throughout the annual conference. We pray that your Holy Spirit will be at work in all of the superintendents and that you especially you'll give the new superintendents a special dose of the Holy Spirit as they enter into this work and adjust to life in a new way. We are grateful and so thankful to you that you have given us everything we need to serve you. And we rejoice at the opportunity to proclaim your love and compassion to those who have never met Jesus Christ as we go forth in his name to make those introductions. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Okay, I need to some of you are probably wondering where DS Beth Givens is. She is still a DS and she looks forward to serving Coastal Virginia. She is participating in an ordination service of one of her dear friends in North Carolina at the same time as our ordination service today. So that is where she is and we pray for her leadership in Coastal Virginia as well. So I should have mentioned that earlier. Okay, we have some announcements from microphone three.

**Rev. Jennifer Coffey, Assistant Secretary, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:11:20](#)):

Congratulations. Thank you Bishop. We have just a few announcements to share following this service of call and ordination. Conference members are invited to take a plant or flowers from the front array. We invite you to plant these in your community or to use it to be a blessing to someone in your community as we extend the joy of this gathering across our conference. The boxes throughout the arena represent the 861 churches across our eight districts that make up our annual conference. They're not just a great symbol of God's building us church by church, brick by brick, stone by stone into God's future. They're also yours to find, take pictures with and take home to your individual community of faith. At the close

of annual conference, please take time to find your box and carry your church into the world as our time here comes to an end.

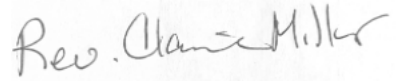
**Rev. Jennifer Coffey, Assistant Secretary, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:12:15](#)):

Our third announcement is in parking lot E. There is a town and country black minivan with Virginia plates, the BD-5887. The left passenger door is wide open and cannot be closed without a fob. The note says this is not an emergency unless it starts raining, but we wanted to make y'all aware. And lastly, the youth delegation are taking a special offering at the break for the youth service fund. This offering goes to support conference and international mission that our youth led benefit youth with funds raised by youth. Youth members will be stationed at each exit with buckets and QR codes. So we encourage you to support their offering today. Thank you.

**Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, Resident Bishop, Virginia Annual Conference:** ([02:13:07](#)):

Okay, thank you. I guess I adjourn the Annual Conference since the ordination service is a worship service. So it is my I thank you for your attention. I thank you for a great Annual Conference. I thank you for bearing through voting and surviving that experience together and I hope that you will go back to your churches inspired, enthused, and ready to go. And with that we will be in recess for 30 minutes. I hope you will stay for the service of licensing, commissioning and ordination. It is the highlight and what we build to in every annual conference. And so with that, I call us in adjournment until this adjourns, the 243rd business session of the annual conference and we will be in break for 30 minutes until the service begins.

Signed: Rev. Claire B. Miller, Annual Conference Secretary

Handwritten signature of Rev. Claire B. Miller in cursive script.

Signed: Rev. Jennifer Coffey, Assistant Annual Conference Secretary

Handwritten signature of Rev. Jennifer Coffey in cursive script.

Minutes Committee certified on June 26, 2025; signed below:

Handwritten signature of P. Ala Lape in cursive script.Handwritten signature of Alan Wan in cursive script.

Leticia D. Borden