



## THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

VIRGINIA CONFERENCE

POST OFFICE BOX 5606  
10330 STAPLES MILL ROAD

GLEN ALLEN, VIRGINIA 23058-5606

**Sharma D. Lewis**  
RESIDENT BISHOP

TELEPHONE: 804/521-1102  
FAX: 804/521-1178  
E-MAIL: [terribiggins@vaumc.org](mailto:terribiggins@vaumc.org)

March 19, 2021

### **Violence Against Asians and Asian Americans**

Dear Virginia Annual Conference,

As I reflect upon living in the Atlanta area for 28 years, my heart was heavy and saddened to hear of the shootings on Tuesday by a lone gunman at three Atlanta-area spas. Six of the eight persons killed were Asian Americans.

Unfortunately, we are witnessing an increase in crimes targeting Asians and Asian Americans. Anti-Asian hate crimes are up 150 percent during the pandemic, according to the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino.

Please join me in prayer for the loss of life in the Asian and Asian American communities. We extend prayers of sympathy to all the victims' families and their communities. I would like to acknowledge the names of the identified individuals who were killed in these shootings:

Xiaojie Tan, of Kennesaw, Ga.;  
Daoyou Feng,  
Delaina Ashely Yaun Gonzalez, of Acworth, Ga.;  
and Paul Andre Michels of Tucker, Ga.

Four other individuals have not yet been identified by authorities. I also would like to acknowledge Elcias R. Hernandez-Ortiz who sustained a critical injury during the shooting.

This massacre demonstrates the resurgence of Anti-Asian discrimination and violence in the United States.

Virginia Conference, let us continue our work to dismantle racism and hatred in our local contexts and through our work in the Racial Reconciliation Work Group, the Commission on Ethnic Minority Concerns and Advocacy (CEMCA), Virginia Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR), the Ethnic Caucuses, the Board of Laity, and the Virginia Annual Conference Cabinet.

Peace and Blessings,  
Bishop Sharma D. Lewis