



## THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

VIRGINIA CONFERENCE

POST OFFICE BOX 5606

10330 STAPLES MILL ROAD

GLEN ALLEN, VIRGINIA 23058-5606

**Sharma D. Lewis**

RESIDENT BISHOP

**Appointive Cabinet**

OF THE VIRGINIA CONFERENCE

September 23, 2021

### **District Initiative**

Beginning October 1, each of the eight District Superintendents will convene a workgroup from their districts to integrate the two districts into one. This planning will be a collaborative effort of the Cabinet and District Leadership. It will be anchored in the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, as we equip disciples who are life-long learners who influence others to serve. By centering this critical work at the district level, it will engage people who are experts on the geography, ministries, and missional needs of their communities.

The authority to set the number of districts rests with the Annual Conference, while the authority to set district boundaries rests with the Bishop. The Bishop recognizes and appreciates the collective wisdom of the laity, clergy, and the Cabinet, and is excited to see what God will do with this Spirit-led work. We anticipate that the fruit of this work will be formally presented at Annual Conference in June 2022, so the members of Annual Conference may vote on the number of districts along with any Conference Rules changes that may become necessary with the new district configuration. By forming teams and developing these plans immediately, we can begin receiving broader input across our districts sooner.

The eight District Superintendents are already finding fruitful ways to collaborate across their two districts, using connection and community to share the Good News of Christ in real and tangible ways. The current “cross-pollination” builds on models of successful shared ministry throughout the conference, including the Northern Virginia Bi-District, and the 1 DS-2 District model piloted in the Danville and Farmville Districts from 2019 to 2021. Blending sixteen districts into eight requires building structural support and missional opportunities that foster increased community presence. It also requires resourcing for clergy and laity and creating fruitful synergy and efficiencies.

We are excited to begin this important work and know that God will bless our work as committed disciples of Jesus serving together in the Virginia Conference. We ask that you cover this work in prayer, asking for the creativity, wisdom, and discernment of the Holy Spirit to guide all that we do.

Stay tuned for updates as we journey on together!

Serving with you in Christ,

Bishop Lewis and Appointive Cabinet