



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

VIRGINIA CONFERENCE

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Stay the Course, Stay Strong: Serving God While Social Distancing

Dear Virginia Conference,

I hope you and your families had a very blessed Easter celebration. Let us remember that our hope as believers is in Jesus Christ.

Though our Easter services looked quite different this year, I hope that, especially in this challenging time of a global pandemic, you heard the Easter story anew and, with confidence assured in the resurrected Christ, said, "Alleluia! Christ IS risen!"

Thank you to our pastors, church staff and volunteers who are continuing to find creative worship opportunities through livestream, phone, print and many other communications avenues, so we can worship, promote fellowship and do the mission of the church.

The commitment of so many of you to be flexible and to take on the challenges that COVID-19 presents empowers us to do God's work effectively and SAFELY. It brings joy to our congregants, communities and the heart of God. And we must persevere.

Governor Northam's statewide stay-at-home order is in effect until June 10. As such, in-person worship cannot take place until June 11. If the Governor's executive order is rescinded or revised before June 10, we will re-evaluate the status of in-person worship.

In-person, "drive-thru" or "drive-in" worship services on or off Virginia Conference property remain cancelled until further notice.

I ask that our Virginia Conference clergy and laity stay the course by continuing to observe social distancing, proper hygiene and follow the stay-at-home directive.

This is not an easy time for any of us, but in Christian love we need to look out for our vulnerable communities and do our utmost to decrease the strain on our healthcare system and emergency services. It is hard not to be able to meet in-person as a community of faith, but we know God is not the church building. God is so much more than a building.

For information about conference resources, ways churches are staying connected, church offerings and much more, please visit: <https://vaumc.org/Coronavirus2020>.

May the promise of Easter remain with us during the pandemic and through the rest of our year.

Peace and Blessings,

Bishop Sharma D. Lewis